

LOCAL AND REGIONAL  
GOVERNMENTS' REPORT  
TO THE 2023 HLPF  
PAPER 2

# INTEGRATED AND PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING:

How local and regional governments  
enable equality through feminism,  
accessibility and proximity



#SDG11  
#HLPF2023  
#Listen2Cities

## 2023 UCLG



Published in July 2023 by United Cities and Local Governments. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO License.

United Cities and Local Governments.  
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis  
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos

Avinyó, 15 08002 Barcelona

[www.uclg.org](http://www.uclg.org)

### DISCLAIMERS:

The terms used concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, concerning delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries, or regarding its economic system or degree of development do not necessarily reflect the opinion of United Cities and Local Governments. The analysis, conclusions and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of all the members of United Cities and Local Governments.

This project is co-funded by the European Union



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of UCLG and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Graphic design and lay-out: Kanto Kreative

### Editorial board:

Anna Calvete Moreno, Ainara Fernández, Cécile Roth, Edgardo Bilsky, Conn Lee, Lucie Palanché

### Policy advisory:

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, UCLG

### UCLG World Secretariat:

Special thanks to José Álvarez, Saul Baldeh, Pere Ballester, Jean-Baptiste Buffet, Benedetta Cosco, Adrià Duarte, Gloria Escoruela, Fátima Fernández, Pablo Fernández, Amanda Fléty, Darina Gesheva, Inés Hermoso, Viviana Herrera, Sara Hoefflich, Paloma Labbé, Albert Lladó, Mireia Lozano, Marta Llobet, Kader Makhlof, Pablo Mariani, Prachi Metawala, Julia Munroe, Firdaous Oussidhoum, Carolina Osorio, Jordi Pascual, Massimo Perrino, Federico Poirier, Agnès Ruiz, Fátima Santiago, Fernando Santomauro, Maria Alejandra Rico, Juan Carlos Uribe, Rosa Vroom, Sarah Vieux and the rest of the UCLG World Secretariat

### Special acknowledgment:

Special acknowledgement is given to the authors that have vastly contributed to the five papers: Alexandre Apsan Frediani (IIED) and Camila Cociña (IIED) for their contribution to the drafting of paper 1; Daniel Oviedo (UCL) for his contribution to the drafting of paper 2; Adriana Allen (UCL) and Julia Wesely (UCL) for their contribution to the drafting of paper 3; the UCLG Committee on Culture for their contribution to the drafting of paper 4, as well as Caren Levy for her contribution to the drafting of paper 5. In particular, UCLG would like to express their deepest appreciation to Adriana Allen, Caren Levy and Julia Wesely for the excellent coordination of this initiative on UCL's side and for their knowledge and expertise.

Finally, UCLG would like to thank all the GTF networks, LRGs, LGAs and partners who responded to the GTF/UCLG 2023 Survey, those who participated in the consultations on the review of SDG 11, those who held online interviews with UCLG in April 2023 and those who submitted additional information about the state of localization in their territories.

# Contents

1. Localizing SDG 11 to  
empower communities for  
sustainable  
transformation.....04

04

3. Trends: Fragmentation,  
inequalities and planning.....08

08

5. LRG challenges and  
capacities.....20

20

7. Advancing progressive  
municipalism: LRGs' pathways  
to advance the localization of  
the SDGs.....23

23

2. Advancing action  
towards integrated and  
participatory approaches  
to urban planning and  
management.....08

08

4. Feminism, accessibility  
and proximity as pathways  
towards integrated and  
participatory approaches  
to urban planning.....12

12

6. Conclusions.....20

22

Notes.....25

25

# 1. Background. Localizing SDG 11 to empower communities for sustainable transformation

The current context of multiple and intersecting local-global crises makes accelerating progress towards the urban Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) – SDG 11 – an even more difficult, yet necessary agenda. Most notably, these crises include the climate emergency, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global cost of living and multiple armed conflicts, all of which contribute to deepening inequalities. Nevertheless, the past few years have also seen a re-energized global municipalist movement with ambitious commitments, alternative visions and bold strategies to spearhead efforts for more just and equal cities and territories.

In an increasingly urbanizing world, local and regional governments (LRGs) – with different degrees of autonomy and decentralized resources and responsibilities –

are the bedrock of achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG 11. LRGs play a pivotal role based on their deep understanding of challenges for SDG localization. They provide access to adequate housing and basic services; ground their planning strategies in feminism, accessibility and participation; reduce disaster risk; and protect natural and cultural heritage. Moreover, they serve as key nodes and drivers for advancing a rights-based approach, as well as building and strengthening multistakeholder and multilevel partnerships. The latter involves forming coalitions of actors across levels of government, civil society, local communities, the private sector and international organizations, aiming to leverage resources and capacities towards “Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

Table 1 List of cities, regions, LGAs, GTF networks and partners contributing to the papers

Paper	Contributors
<p><b>Paper 1.</b> Housing and basic services from below: How LRGs are advancing the right to adequate housing</p> <p>Drafted by Camila Cociña, Researcher, and Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Principal Researcher, at the International Institute for Environment and Development</p>	<p><b>LRGs:</b> Afadzato South District (Ghana), Barcelona (Spain), Bilbao (Spain), Esteban Echeverría (Argentina), Iztapalapa (Mexico), Montevideo (Uruguay), Montréal (Canada), Municipio B (Uruguay)</p> <p><b>GTF networks:</b> Euro-Latin American Cities Cooperation Alliance (AL-LAs), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Mercociudades, UCLG, UCLG Africa</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Habitat International Coalition, World Blind Union</p>
<p><b>Paper 2.</b> Integrated and participatory urban planning: How LRGs enable equality through feminism, accessibility and proximity</p> <p>Drafted by Daniel Oviedo, Associate Professor at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL, with support from Julia Wesley, María José Arbeláez and Caren Levy, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL</p>	<p><b>LRGs and LGAs:</b> Federation of Municipalities of the Dominican Republic (Dominican Republic), Lisbon (Portugal), New York (USA), Quilmes (Argentina), Santa Fe (Argentina), Villa Carlos Paz (Argentina), VNG International (the Netherlands)</p> <p><b>GTF networks:</b> C40, CEMR, Metropolis, UCLG, UCLG Africa</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Entrepreneurship Territory Innovation (ETI) Chair at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, General Assembly of Partners – Older Persons, Global Disability Innovation Hub, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, World Blind Union, World Enabled</p>
<p><b>Paper 3.</b> Forefronting transformative action: How local and regional governments are crafting social and environmental justice and sustainability</p> <p>Drafted by Adriana Allen, Professor of Development Planning and Urban Sustainability, and Julia Wesley, Researcher, at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL</p>	<p><b>LRGs and LGAs:</b> Afadzato South District (Ghana), Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSII), Azambuja (Portugal), Bandar Lampung (Indonesia), Barcelona (Spain), Basse Area Council (the Gambia), Barcarena (Brazil), Bogotá (Colombia), Canelones (Uruguay), Commune Haho 1 (Togo), Esteban Echeverría (Argentina), Góis (Portugal), Granollers (Spain), Johannesburg (South Africa), Nancy (France), Peñatolén (Chile), Pombal (Portugal), Rosario (Argentina), Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Terrassa (Spain), Villa María (Argentina), Viña del Mar (Chile)</p> <p><b>GTF networks:</b> CEMR, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Local Governments Associations (FLACMA), UCLG, UCLG Africa</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> World Blind Union</p>
<p><b>Paper 4.</b> A cultural boost in the achievement of the SDGs: How LRGs are promoting cultural heritage and sustainable cities and territories</p> <p>Drafted by Marta Llobet, Agnès Ruiz, Sarah Vieux and Jordi Pascual, Secretariat of the UCLG Committee on Culture</p>	<p><b>LRGs:</b> Barcelona (Spain), Bogotá (Colombia), Buenos Aires (Argentina), California (USA), Dublin (Ireland), Durban (South Africa), Lisbon (Portugal), Malmö (Sweden), Mexico City (Mexico), Montevideo (Uruguay), Montréal (Canada), Morelia (Mexico), Pombal (Portugal), Saint-Louis (Senegal), San Antonio (USA), Taipei, València (Spain), Xi'an (People's Republic of China)</p> <p><b>GTF networks:</b> Global Parliament of Mayors, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Resilient Cities Network, UCLG, Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI)</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> World Blind Union, Serhan Ada, Sylvia Amann, Enrique Avogadro, Jordi Baltà, John Crowley, Beatriz García, Enrique Glockner, Antoine Guibert, Lucina Jiménez, Tita Larasati, Alfons Martinell, Marie-Odile Melançon, Justin O'Connor, Jose Oliveira Junior, Jainité Rueda, John Smithies, Magdalena Suárez, Alison Tickell</p>
<p><b>Paper 5.</b> Multilevel governance and finance: How LRGs advocate for balanced urban systems</p> <p>Drafted by Caren Levy, Professor of Transformative Urban Planning at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL</p>	<p><b>LRGs:</b> Basque Country (Spain)</p> <p><b>GTF networks:</b> Metropolis, UCLG</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> World Blind Union</p>

Source: own compilation

This paper, together with the other four papers included in the 7th [Towards the localization of the SDGs](#) report, produced by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) in 2023, builds on extensive desk research. In particular, they draw on experiences and policies reported by cities, regions, local government associations (LGAs), GTF networks and partners via the GTF/United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) 2023 survey, several written consultation processes and interviews (see Table 1).

The five papers provide a complementary and integrated vision of the pathways LRGs are taking to achieve SDG 11 and closely related SDGs. In other words, they highlight trajectories for change, illustrated through innovative case studies, in which LRGs take an active role and forward-looking approach to promote more equitable and sustainable futures. LRGs do so through strategic decisions and concerted practices in collaboration with different urban stakeholders.\* The papers further outline enabling environments for those pathways as well as persistent challenges and deep inequalities that slow down and, in some cases, halt progress towards achieving SDG 11 and the full 2030 Agenda.

Each paper delves into a specific topic related to the localization of SDG 11:



[Paper 1](#) shows how LRGs, five years after the Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing and the Right to the City, are using a range of housing actions to recognize, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing and basic services. These actions accelerate progress towards **SDG target 11.1**.



[Paper 2](#) builds upon feminist approaches to the design and implementation of planning policies, as an entry point to foster accessibility, proximity and participation – crucial conditions for sustainable and inclusive communities – thereby working towards **SDG targets 11.2, 11.3 and 11.7**.



[Paper 3](#) focuses on LRGs' role in pursuing environmental justice and integrated and circular approaches that address the overlapping crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological overshoot, reflecting **SDG targets 11.5, 11.6, 11.7 and 11.b**.



[Paper 4](#) argues that while culture and heritage are hardly visible across the SDGs (and, indeed, should be addressed explicitly through a proposed SDG 18), they are fundamental dimensions of localizing sustainability agendas. This paper speaks particularly to achieving **SDG target 11.4**.

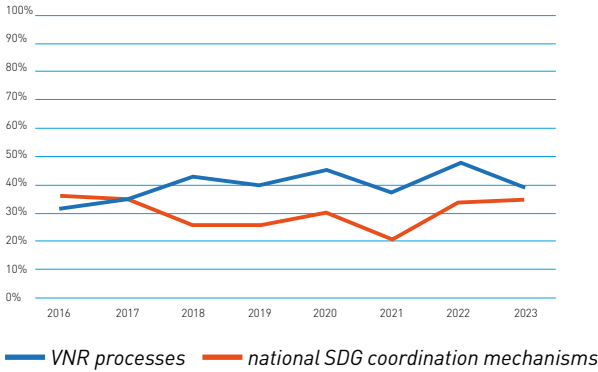


[Paper 5](#) outlines how, to achieve more balanced and equal urban and territorial systems, multilevel governance at all levels should be strengthened, based on the principle of subsidiarity and enhanced coherence of territorial and sectoral policies. National governments can open space for LRGs to work towards **SDG target 11.a** through genuine fiscal, administrative and political decentralization.

The next two pages present the highlights of the *Towards the localization of the SDGs* report, including the cities', regions' and associations' best practices mentioned in the five papers as well as the contribution of LRGs to the SDG 11 targets and the rest of the SDGs, as analyzed by the five papers.

# Highlights

% of countries with LRGs' high and medium participation in VNR processes and in the national SDG coordination mechanisms



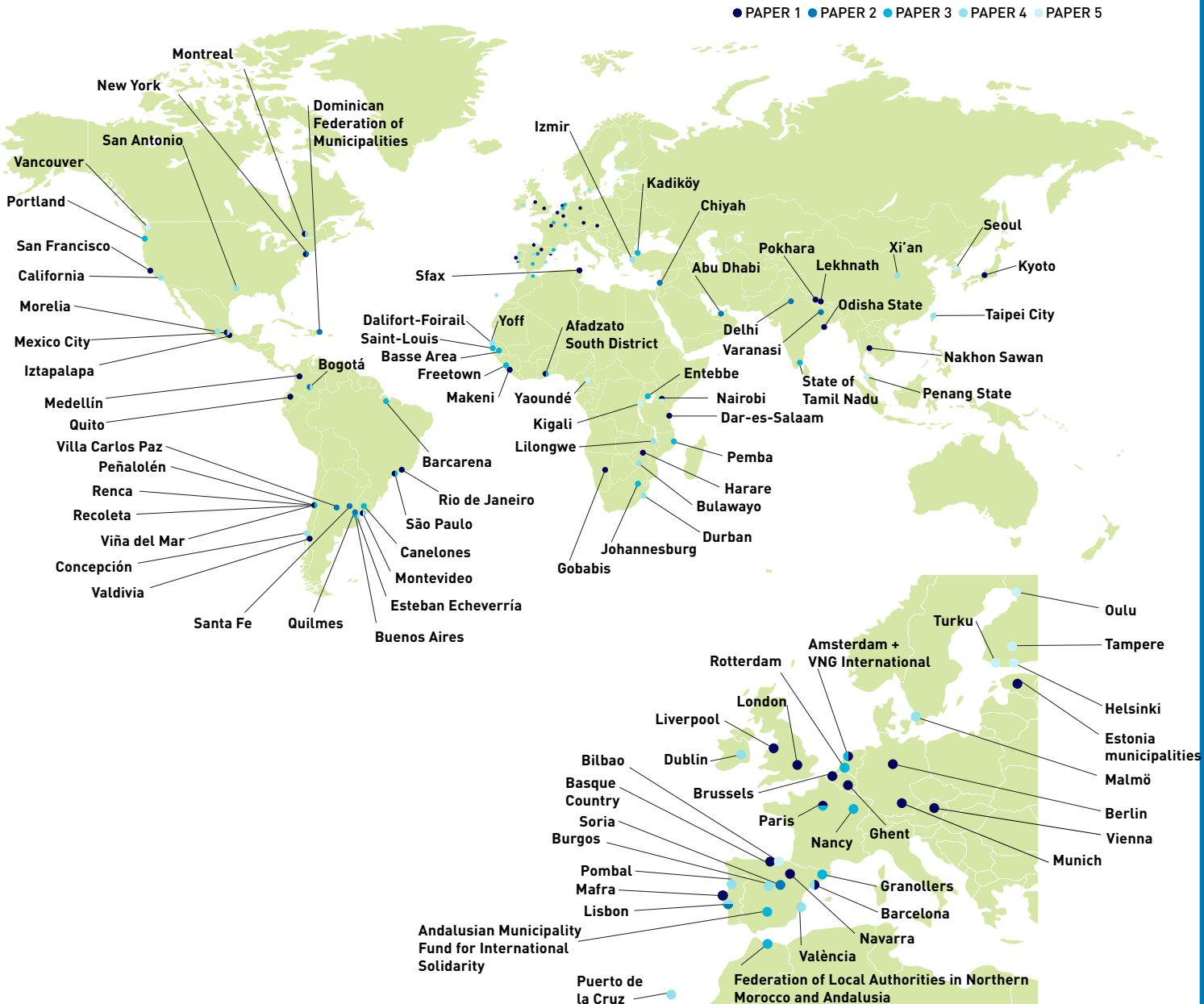
Since 2018, LRGs and their associations have produced over 240 VLRs and 37 VSRs



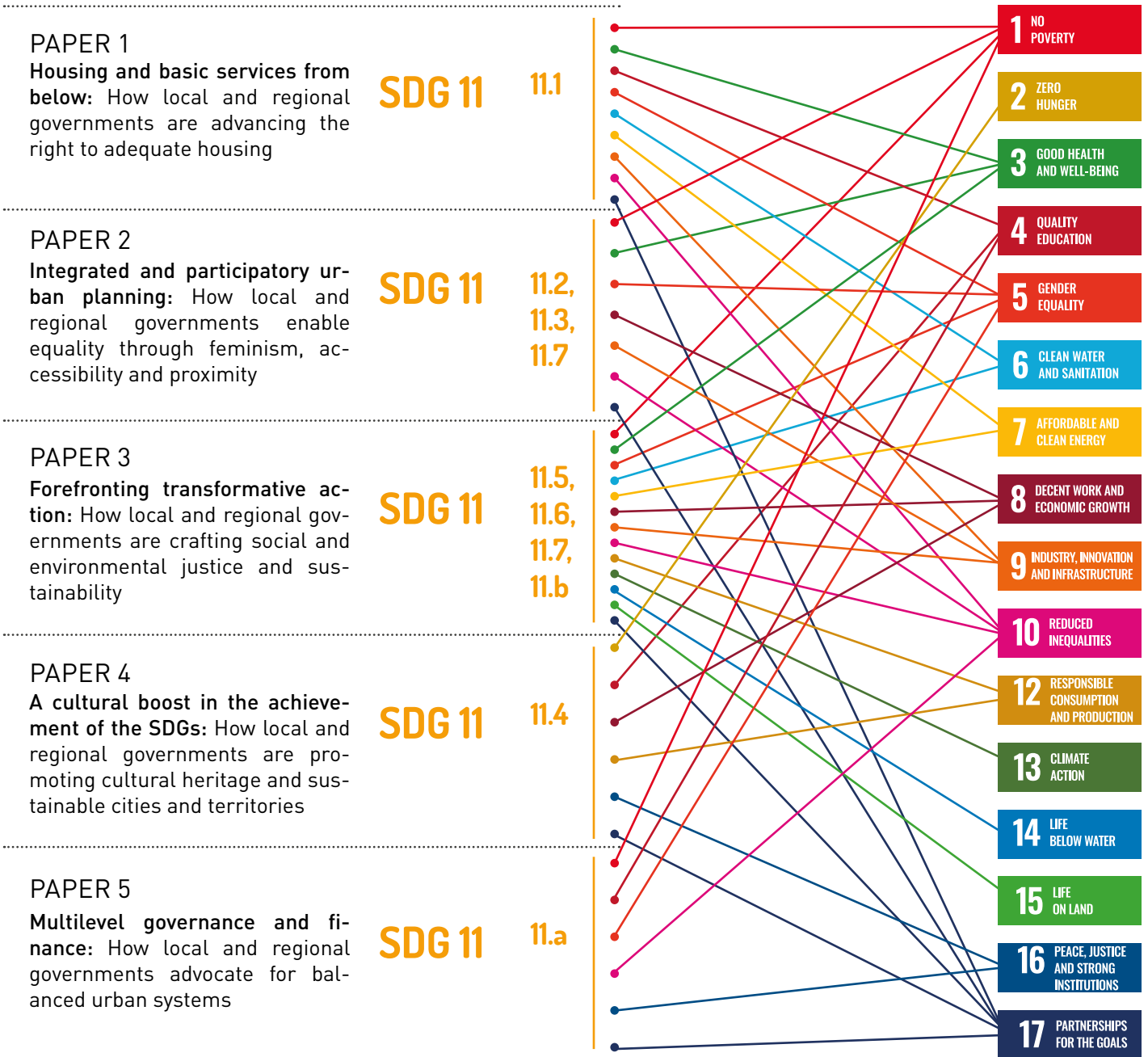
1.4 bn people  
170,000 LRGs



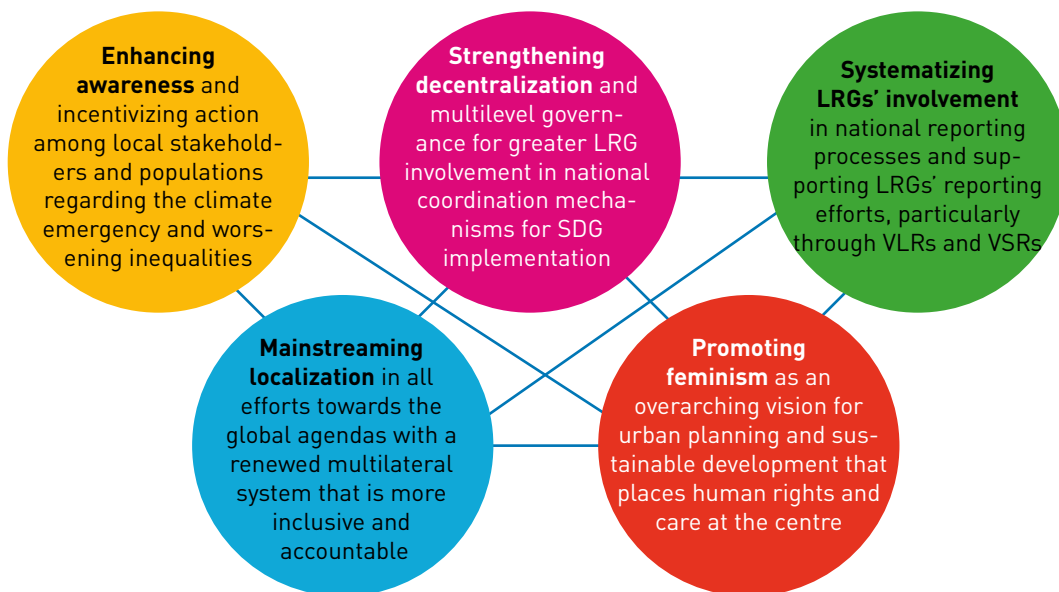
## Cities', regions' and associations' best practices mentioned in the five papers



# Contribution of LRGs to the SDG 11 targets and related SDGs, as analyzed by the five papers



## Ways forward for SDG localization



## 2. Advancing action towards integrated and participatory approaches to urban planning and management

**The 2030 Agenda emphasizes equitable access to opportunities, public services, infrastructure, connectivity and public spaces as prerequisites for building sustainable and inclusive communities.**<sup>1</sup> This paper focuses on three key dimensions of this aspiration. The first is the focus on accessibility through transport equity, as framed in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 11.2: “provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.” The second is linked to mobility in and access to public spaces, as stated in SDG target 11.7: “provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.” The third cuts across all SDG 11 targets and recognizes that achieving this goal and all inhabitants’ right to the city and territory is fundamentally interlinked with SDG target 11.3: “enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.”

The paper also contributes to reviewing progress towards SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). **Reviewing these SDGs together, the paper is concerned with integrated and participatory approaches to urban planning. It focuses on accessibility and proximity, seeing feminist approaches to urban planning as the foundation.**

The paper elaborates on these strategies and their implications based on two premises. First, local and regional governments (LRGs) possess significant capacities to intervene in critical aspects of urban development to foster sustainable trajectories. LRGs have been instrumental in driving innovations in urban planning across the Global North and South, addressing priorities for integrating accessibility across strategies, plans and practices while recognizing the diversity of needs and aspirations of people with different social identities and lived experiences.<sup>2</sup> **An integral transformation of urban development patterns requires co-creating territorial and urban systems through a human rights-based and feminist approach: one that enables cities and territories to respect, care for and empower all inhabitants without discrimination.**<sup>3</sup>

This relates to the second premise, namely, that integrated urban planning strategies need to be anchored in an inclusive and accessible city, defined as:

*“a place where everyone, regardless of their economic means, gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual identity, migration status or religion, is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic, cultural and political opportunities that cities have to offer.”<sup>4</sup>*

At the core, this premise recognizes that the “global feminist municipal movement will be central to ensuring that women and girls are not left behind.”<sup>5</sup> An intersectional feminist approach to planning addresses the rights, needs and aspirations of all city inhabitants with a justice-oriented focus. **By embracing feminist and democratic planning approaches and centring on accessibility and care, this paper elaborates on the impact of urban and territorial planning and development policies. It examines their impact on access to essential elements of a meaningful life, such as employment, education, health care and public spaces.**

Section 2 outlines three global trends related to inclusion, accessibility and participation in urban planning, examining how they have influenced access to socio-economic, cultural and political opportunities. Addressing these trends, Section 3 proposes three reinforcing pathways to strengthen inclusive access in integrated and participatory urban planning. Section 4 highlights the challenges that LRGs face in achieving these pathways and documents the capacities they are building. In conclusion, Section 5 summarizes the key messages to advance LRGs’ role in accelerating progress towards SDG targets 11.2, 11.3 and 11.7.

## 3. Trends: Fragmentation, inequalities and planning

**Targets such as SDG 11.2 are commonly associated with transport and mobility. However, this paper seeks to expand on the definitions of mobility and accessibility as guiding concepts for reframing urban and territorial planning grounded in feminist principles.** The paper recognizes that the dynamics of human mobility, encompassing travel as well as migration and displacement, are intrinsically woven into the societal tapestry. Such dynamics catalyze innovation and are a fundamental driver of urbanization. Movement is a necessity for many individuals but also a source of discrimination and a trigger for territorial imbalances. Structural changes are necessary for human mobility to signify opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

At the local scale, urban mobility can be (re)framed as the freedom and right of all citizens and residents to move in public space with safety and security – and without censure and social control.<sup>7</sup> This definition considers the role of power relations in public space and the differentiated social positions that govern the ability to move freely across the territory. In doing so, it enables reflections about the role of planning and developing public spaces that cater to the diversity of practices and experiences of diverse inhabitants in navigating urban environments.

**The following trends will inform reflections on planning based on feminist principles that focus on and reassert the importance of everyday life.** This includes consider-



ing the different uses of spaces, the way in which they are experienced and invested, the time spent there and social relations. This approach notably calls for the recognition and revalorization of all life's spheres – productive, reproductive, personal, public or political. In seeking integrated and participatory planning approaches, it is important to note that in our modern urban spaces, the execution and organization of daily care activities and relations for the reproduction of life and our societies are rendered invisible and complex. Women and racialized persons bear the brunt of this responsibility and experience multiple constraints due to societal and physical barriers in our cities and territories.<sup>8</sup> **Drawing upon intersectional feminism means, in urban planning, recognizing and responding to the needs and aspirations of inhabitants in all their diversity, taking into account the specific processes of intersecting discrimination and inequalities they experience.**

## Access to land and spatial inequalities

**Urban growth presents unique challenges and opportunities for LRGs. Understanding the drivers of and links between cities' physical growth and urban demographic changes is critical in localizing the SDGs and developing integrated and inclusive urban planning approaches.<sup>9</sup>**

An estimated 4.4 billion people (56% of the world's population) lived in cities.<sup>10</sup> Although the proportion of land that cities occupy is small (0.5% of the global land mass in 2020), as the population has increased, so has the demand for land. The rate of urban land consumption currently outpaces population growth by as much as 50%. This trend is projected to add 1.2 million square kilometres of newly urbanized area globally by 2030.<sup>11</sup> Between 1990 and 2015, the urban land area in industrialized countries grew by 80%, even though the urban population only increased by 12%. In contrast, countries in the Global South saw urban land occupation grow by 350%, with a corresponding urban population increase of 100%.<sup>12</sup> In low-income countries, the amount of land covered by cities doubled between 1975 and 2020. Differences in urban expansion rates are markedly larger since the second part of the 2010s, with African and Asian cities growing at a much higher proportion than cities in other regions. While, on average, cities have grown at 1.5 times the population rate in the past two decades, some regions are experiencing even faster urban sprawl at average annual expansion rates of 6.9% in East and South-East Asia, 5.1% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 4.3% in Central and South Asia.<sup>13</sup>

The New Urban Agenda and recent global analyses suggest that megacities and large cities grow economically faster than their smaller counterparts, leading to more localized development rather than encouraging more evenly distributed spatial development across territories. This disproportionate growth further exacerbates the urban spatial divide. This issue is particularly pertinent to intermediate cities, where populations – especially in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa – frequently grapple with multiple deprivations related to income and employment, water and sanitation, health, transport and housing (see Paper 1). Low-income countries have also experienced the largest growth in the number of cities (270%), with 4,300 new cities added between Central

and South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Today, cities of less than one million inhabitants account for 55% of the urban population in rapidly developing world regions.<sup>14</sup> This trend calls for institutional strengthening of rapidly growing intermediate cities, as well as the consolidation of planning strategies tailored to the challenges and scale of such cities.

Despite current trends in territorial expansion, cities in low-income countries remain the most densely populated worldwide, with the highest densities in Central and South Asia, Oceania and Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2015, low-income countries' average population density was 11,000 residents per square kilometre, compared to 7,000 in 1975. Meanwhile, cities in upper-middle-income and high-income countries maintained lower population densities of approximately 5,000 and 3,000 residents per square kilometre, respectively, with minimal changes observed over time.<sup>15</sup> The slower population growth in these countries has mitigated the challenges of providing sufficient housing and infrastructure, although marked racial and income-driven divides persist.

**Historical urban and territorial planning, including sector-specific plans such as transport and infrastructure, is often rooted in colonial planning approaches, exacerbating existing inequalities, including spatial segregation.** These planning approaches have contributed to sprawled and fragmented urban structures by fuelling urban expansion based on the presumed correlation between infrastructure development and economic growth. This explains the near-constant capital investment observed in recent statistics for countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, averaging 0.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) on inland transport infrastructure.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the historical lack of consideration for the needs of women and girls and the predominance of problematic gender norms in urban and transport planning have frequently resulted in urban layouts that segregate residential and commercial zones, prioritizing the productive sphere over the reproductive one. They do so, for instance, by encouraging the use of private automobiles, historically predominantly used by men, over public transport in many cities. Correspondingly, entrenched gender inequalities in the division of labour and the persistence of wage discrimination often exacerbate difficulties for women, particularly those with low incomes, to secure adequate and affordable housing in desirable locations or access personal vehicles, among other issues. These systemic barriers further underline the need for feminist urban planning and policy-making to ensure more equitable cities.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, cities, often shaped by ableist approaches, have been built without considering the needs of persons with disabilities or older individuals, leading to exclusionary environments that impede access, mobility and independent living for these populations.

In 2020, approximately one in four urban residents worldwide were found to be living in informal settlements, a figure exceeding 1 billion individuals. As informal settlements are a key response to predatory markets and restrictive neoliberal policy-making, it comes as no surprise that 85% of these settlements' residents are locat-

ed in three primary regions where systemic inequalities, market-driven development patterns and inadequate financing systems have led to widespread housing unaffordability: 359 million people in informal settlements live in Central and South Asia, 306 million live in East and South-East Asia and 230 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, an increase of 1% in urban population growth can escalate the prevalence of informal settlements by 2.3% in Africa and by 5.3% in Asia.<sup>18</sup>

**Informal occupation of territory is intrinsically related to the lack of access to formally recognized land rights.**

Approximately 70% of the world's population is excluded from formal land registration systems and only 30 nations have an effective, nationwide land administration system that acknowledges local land tenure systems. In Africa, only 10% of the land has been formally documented.<sup>19</sup>

Adding to the complexity are gender inequalities: often, women are only granted indirect land and tenure rights, typically assigned by male relatives. Despite the rising proportion of female-headed households globally, women continue to face greater obstacles than men in securing housing credit. This disparity stems from gender-based discrimination, wage inequality and a higher percentage of women engaged in the informal sector, among other factors. Tenure security and appropriate housing directly impact women's livelihoods; for example, 47.6% of women workers in Nepal, 40% in Pakistan and 31.7% in India are home-based workers.<sup>20</sup> Gender disparities are also prevalent in global agricultural land ownership, with less than 15% of landholders being women. This imbalance is notably pronounced in regions such as North Africa and the Middle East, where a mere 5% of all landholders are women,<sup>21</sup> due to factors such as inheritance laws, cultural norms and customs that continue to infringe upon women's land and property rights in many jurisdictions.

**Additionally, cities feel the pressure of rising conflicts and the ongoing climate emergency. Over half of forcibly displaced people now inhabit urban areas.** A decade ago, 42.7 million people were forcibly displaced. By the end of 2021, conflicts, violence, fear of persecution and human rights violations had pushed the count to 89.3 million people compelled to abandon their homes.<sup>22</sup> The number of internally displaced people has doubled since 2012, reaching over 50 million inhabitants worldwide. Moreover, extractive projects, infrastructure projects and market-led real estate development can engender development-induced displacement. As a result, communities endure the loss of their homes, traditional livelihoods, access to basic services and land rights as well as disadvantaged conditions for access to land and housing in the new territories they inhabit.<sup>23</sup>

Trends of rapid urban expansion, unequal land access and informal territorial occupation carry significant environmental and socio-economic implications. They can negatively impact ecosystem services and escalate energy consumption. Urban sprawl also encroaches upon large expanses of valuable agricultural land, contributing to food insecurity. It threatens natural habitats and biodiversity, further exacerbating environmental concerns (see Paper 3). When urban expansion lacks sufficient planning, poor households suffer the most, particularly those led by women. These households are often locat-

ed in precarious neighbourhoods with scant connection to public transport networks. For example, women in peripheral neighbourhoods in Latin America face a daily commute of two to three hours and are compelled to travel during early or late hours, when public transport services are sparse, heightening their vulnerability to sexual violence.<sup>24</sup>

## Inclusive and safe access to infrastructure and public spaces

**In addressing the global trends of rapid urbanization and urban sprawl, it is crucial to consider the state of public transport as a critical component of sustainable urban development,** aligning with the objectives of SDG target 11.2. Data drawn from 610 cities across 95 countries for 2019 suggests that only half of the world's urban population (49.5%) has convenient access to public transport.<sup>25</sup> While access to high-capacity public transport in Europe and North America is, on average, 32%, in the rest of the world, this figure is below 12%, with residents of cities in Sub-Saharan Africa having the lowest levels of access to this type of transport. However, there are considerable positive increases across regions.<sup>26</sup> This can be explained by a relative increase in capital investment in public transport development, particularly high-capacity systems, and the high prevalence of informal transport systems in many cities. There is growing recognition of these informal transport systems' critical role in filling gaps in connectivity, enabling opportunities for livelihoods and providing a tailored solution for many transport challenges.

Beyond physical access to transport, affordability remains an important barrier for most urban residents worldwide. In the Global South, a substantial proportion of the urban poor, particularly women, relies on walking or non-motorized transport, especially for distances under 5-8 kilometres. This is largely due to the unaffordability or unavailability of motorized public transport. Evidence shows that public transport costs are unaffordable for 20% of the poorest households in cities such as **Cape Town** (South Africa), **Buenos Aires** (Argentina), **Mumbai** (India), **Mexico City** (Mexico), **Manila** (Philippines) and **São Paulo** and **Rio de Janeiro** (Brazil). Public transport can represent up to 38% of the poorest individuals' income in cities such as **Nassau** (the Bahamas) and **Tegucigalpa** (Honduras). The urban poor spend 3.3 times the average expenditure of people with incomes closer to the mean in these cities; in extreme cases of inequality, this ratio can be six times the average expenditure.<sup>27</sup>

**Accessibility represents another significant challenge in providing adequate and reliable means of transport, designing public spaces and enabling access to opportunities for all.** Accessibility is a fundamental right and a precondition for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, older persons and other marginalized groups in society.<sup>28</sup> A more accessible physical, digital and social environment has universal benefits for all of society. It is a key enabler for achieving human rights and fundamental freedoms for all individuals.<sup>29</sup> Today, persons with disabilities make up 16% of the total urban population, with 80% of individuals with disabilities living in low- and middle-income countries. The demographic landscape

is witnessing an unprecedented shift towards an ageing population. Projections for 2050 show that older individuals will represent 21% of the total population, with over two-thirds residing in low- and middle-income nations.

Moreover, the digital transformation has expanded the digital divide for women, older persons and persons with disabilities globally. Most of today's smart cities are not accessible, and accessibility and universal design standards are often overlooked in "build back better" strategies or climate adaptation policies. This oversight leads to new, inaccessible infrastructure that further exacerbates discrimination and deepens inequalities.<sup>30</sup>

Distinct travel patterns can be observed between women and men, with women generally depending more heavily on public transport and making multiple-purpose trips more often. These multifaceted travel patterns of women are often linked to their roles in domestic work and caregiving, which necessitate coordinating school runs, travel to child care facilities, health care centre visits and shopping trips within daily commutes. Furthermore, women frequently travel accompanied by other family members, such as children and older persons. Cultural and socio-economic factors also limit women's access to automobiles and explain their use of public transport. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women constitute over 50% of public transport users on average, and in Buenos Aires, Argentina, they represent over 60% of public transport users. Despite this, most public transport systems in the region are not designed with the specific needs of women in mind.<sup>31</sup>

The entrenched cultural norms and gender stereotypes behind women's travel patterns have historically confined women to domestic spaces. This, in turn, has limited their employment opportunities in the transport sector and their ability to participate in decision-making processes, which would allow for the design of more inclusive mobility solutions for all. Thus, in addition to recognizing the differences in travel patterns between men and women, including those ages 60 and older and those living with disabilities, inclusive mobility policies should also incorporate preventive measures against gender-based violence in public transport as women are disproportionately affected by different forms of this violence, including sexual harassment.

**Biases in design and configuration of public spaces can obstruct women, girls and individuals of diverse gender identities from fully engaging or feeling at ease in public spaces.** This occurs despite evidence that women utilize streets and public areas more frequently and for a broader range of activities than men. For example, the absence of sanitation facilities such as toilets in public spaces is a problem especially for women, including those living with disabilities, older persons and individuals with children. LGBTQIA+ people often experience intense unease in public spaces due to discrimination and violence. Evidence from South-East Europe and Latin America suggests that the regular discrimination these groups experience often leads them to avoid public places.<sup>32</sup> This systemic, yet often overlooked, discomfort and feeling of insecurity within public spaces renders many women and LGBTQIA+ people, particularly those with disabilities, invisible and silenced within the public realm.



## Access to political participation in planning

SDG indicator 11.3.2 gauges civil society engagement in urban governance, with the primary modes of citizen participation being elections, public hearings and consultations. Given that this indicator relies on subjective interpretations of "direct participation" structures that "operate regularly and democratically," proxy indicators are used. These include participatory budgeting, local referenda, protests, demonstrations, neighbourhood ad-

visory committees, town hall meetings, formal petitions and social media campaigns.<sup>33</sup>

Biases based on gender, age, disabilities and other aspects of identity in urban planning and design often result from an androcentric perspective of the urban realm. This becomes apparent in planning approaches with the tendency to homogenize residents based on dominant demographics. Intersecting structural biases and discriminating processes distort urban planning and the provision of infrastructure and services for mobility, favouring the interests of dominant social identities. These biases, driven by generalizations of specific needs and interests as “universal,” establish the needs and preferences of the dominant class(es), men, adults, able-bodied citizens and dominant racial groups as the norm for designing, planning, delivering and governing urban systems.

Beyond their underrepresentation in planning and design professions, women and girls, regardless of age or disabilities, are routinely excluded from public and community planning and design processes. This exclusion stems from various factors, many of which are tied to deficiencies in the urban environment. Other contributing factors include economic pressures and both externally enforced and internalized social norms, leading to women’s limited presence in real decision-making processes in planning. **This persistent lack of representation means that women, girls and other structurally marginalized groups struggle to have their voices heard, their priorities acknowledged and their needs met in planning and design decisions worldwide. The consequences of these longstanding inequalities are far-reaching, impacting nearly every aspect of daily life for these groups.**

## 4. Feminism, accessibility and proximity as pathways towards integrated and participatory approaches to urban planning

**This section discusses three transformative pathways – grounded in feminist analysis, revindications and concrete practices – for LRGs to advance equality through participatory, integrated and sustainable planning policies, supporting inclusive, sustainable and caring urban communities.** Each pathway will be illustrated with cases informed by the documentary research and consultation process of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments’ membership and partners. To compile this information, practitioners engaging with planning, advocacy and research concerned with feminist planning, accessibility, proximity and participation in urban development shared relevant experiences, challenges and insights. **Pathways are presented and discussed drawing on a human rights-based and feminist approach to planning, supporting the right to the city for all.**

## Reshaping urban planning for inclusion through feminist approaches

**As a first pathway, urban planning should be reshaped to support sustainable and just practices for all citizens and inhabitants, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities while respecting and celebrating diversity.** Feminism and, in particular, intersectional feminism<sup>34</sup> can be a solid basis in this regard. As shown throughout the trends section, territorial and sector-specific urban planning are influenced by biases that tend to render invisible women’s diverse needs, preferences and experiences. Structurally marginalized groups, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, children and adolescents, require targeted policies to address urban insecurity and foster a sense of safety, belonging and autonomy (see Box 1). Another area frequently overlooked and/or systematically persecuted is informality in transport, housing and livelihoods.

### BOX 1

#### Safety improvements for women and girls in Lisbon (Portugal)<sup>35</sup>

Led by **Lisbon City Council**, the Safety and Perception of Safety of Women in Public Spaces and Access to Public Transport programme set out in 2017 to assess safety and accessibility challenges for women and girls in public spaces and public transport, using participatory action research. The project further piloted infrastructure changes such as the relocation of bus stops and an increase in pedestrian spaces. Through collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including the municipal bus provider, school, local youth associations and care facilities, the programme managed to put women’s and girls’ safety on the municipal agenda, contributing significantly to the municipality’s inclusive urban strategy.

**This pathway highlights ways forward in challenging, reframing and reshaping the practice of built environment disciplines with an inclusive focus inspired by intersectional feminism.** It builds on ideas and initiatives by LRGs and international organizations to prioritize historically marginalized and discriminated voices and to promote new spaces for recognition and cooperation with diverse communities, guided by a human rights-based approach.

**This pathway also challenges the practice of rendering persons with disabilities invisible and the ableist approach to urban development, practice and design.** It builds on the obligations, commitments to and principles of accessibility as a precondition to the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and older persons. This inclusion is at the heart of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2030 Agenda, New Urban Agenda and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In line with these global agendas, LRGs pledge to:

*“facilitate universal access to basic services and the redefinition of essential services by incorpo-*

*rating the right to the city as universal citizenship with renewed sets of cultural rights such as the right to discover, create, share, enjoy and protect the local community's cultural roots, expressions and resources as a building block of peace and wellbeing in all cities and regions.*"<sup>36</sup>

Feminist movements and municipalism coincide in their critique of traditional and hegemonic institutions and modalities that predominate in social, political and economic life.<sup>37</sup> **Feminist municipalism promotes new forms of leadership rooted in care, empathy and equality.** This includes equity in leadership, ensuring that women and gender-diverse groups are ensured an active voice when historically they have been structurally excluded. Feminist municipalism also recognizes the multiple roles women and diverse groups play in developing sustainable and inclusive cities and territories.<sup>38</sup>

**By addressing these aspects in urban planning, feminist approaches can create more equitable and inclusive cities that recognize the diverse contributions of all inhabitants and promote equal participation in city-making processes.** They refuse and address the traditional rupture and hierarchization between the public-productive and private-reproductive spheres and the inequalities created for people assigned to the latter. Rather, feminist approaches highlight the relationships among everyday activities. They revalorize caring practices and relations – in the domestic sphere and for the wider city – addressing structural forms of discrimination that traditionally assigned and limited women, racialized persons and persons with disabilities to certain work areas.<sup>39</sup>

Addressing the fear that makes people avoid certain spaces, services and routes is essential for creating inclusive cities. Initiatives such as the Charter for Women's Right to the City (2004),<sup>40</sup> as well as regional context-specific responses such as the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (2006)<sup>41</sup> and the Local and Regional Governments' Charter for Gender Equality in Africa (2022),<sup>42</sup> provide valuable guidance.

**Rethinking planning from a feminist perspective, particularly with cities and territories implementing public care policies as part of an inclusive future, requires adopting a life cycle approach to the safety and wellbeing of structurally marginalized groups.** This approach requires infrastructure improvements to better respond to these groups' rights and address their specific needs and aspirations. The city of **Santa Fe** (Argentina) – like many others – had to confront discrimination and high levels of socio-economic inequalities that particularly affected low-income groups' access to services. Re-designing public space for recreational and non-recreational use with a feminist lens towards inclusion has been one of the cornerstones of its planning policy to address structural inequalities.<sup>43</sup>

Viewing urban street design through a child-friendly lens can lead to enhanced road safety and mobility for all users.<sup>44</sup> Infrastructure improvements should address

fundamental needs; apply, develop and enforce minimum safety, accessibility and mobility standards; manage vehicular speeds (since child traffic fatalities can be prevented through safer speed design); and extend the street experience to encompass adjacent spaces. Safe and enjoyable streets foster a nurturing and inspiring environment for children, caregivers and the wider community, ultimately contributing to children's cognitive development and educational achievement.

In **Quilmes** (Argentina), the municipality committed to integrate a cross-cutting feminist perspective into its work. It implements the municipal plan for infrastructure works following the objective to strengthen diverse and accessible public spaces and reduce gender gaps in the district through strengthening economic, physical and social autonomy of women and gender-diverse people. One concrete initiative was designing murals with the perspective of "feminizing everything," using themes and phrases (such as "*Ni una menos*") to recover public space in the neighbourhoods. It transformed neighbourhoods into spaces for encounters, exchange and participation.<sup>45</sup>

From the perspective of feminist urbanism, urban planning needs to recognize gender (and racial) inequalities in the distribution of care work, as well as their consequences for mobility and use of public spaces and infrastructure. Both unpaid and paid care work are largely shouldered by women – often socio-economically disadvantaged, racialized and/or migrant women, who represent the city's most vulnerable segments. Many care workers hail from low-income backgrounds, have no education beyond secondary school, live with physical and mental health conditions and experience a lack of free time for self-care. **Caring needs to be considered a public responsibility. LRGs can play a key role in guaranteeing the right to care and be cared for, and in breaking with the unequal organization of cities.**<sup>46</sup>

The Care Blocks (*Manzanas del Cuidado*)<sup>47</sup> initiative within the District Care System of **Bogotá** (Colombia) addresses the demand for care services by involving the local and national governments, the private sector, communities and households. The District Care System aims to develop local communities' capacities, promote women's rights and train men in caregiving to address structural inequalities in the distribution of care work, among other actions.<sup>48</sup> Led by the Secretariat for Women, the system coordinates various services across 13 sectors of the District Administration to address caregiving needs in a co-responsible manner.<sup>49</sup> Care blocks are one example of implementing an approach to "caring cities and territories," in which the city cares for those who care for us, others and their environment.<sup>50</sup>

For migrants, national policies play a significant role and LRGs often have to address the local repercussions of decisions made by national authorities, for example, around budgets and accommodations. In any case, LRGs are crucial in providing initial contact and basic services, promoting integration and implementing policies (see Box 2).

## BOX 2

### Municipality of Chiyah (Lebanon) cares for migrant children and youth<sup>51</sup>

Although children account for approximately 10% of all migrants globally,<sup>52</sup> their experiences are rarely considered in policies to care for newcomers. An exception is the Municipality of **Chiyah** in Beirut (Lebanon). In a pilot project, the municipality brings together migrant youth from various religious, cultural, political and migration backgrounds in inter-community exchanges. The project not only shows the power of peacebuilding through developing mutual understanding but also the active role migrant children play in shaping their lives in cities.

One of the major biases in transport and urban planning is against informality. As discussed in Section 2, **informal transport forms an integral component of urban mobility systems in many rapidly expanding metropolitan regions of the Global South.** These regionwide, privately-run transport modes cater to the demand for affordable, flexible mobility options. They facilitate the movement of millions of people and employ hundreds of thousands of workers, thereby bolstering the substantial informal sector in urban economies. Despite its near omnipresence, informal transport is often relegated to the status of a local issue.

Inconsistent and discriminatory policies and regulations beleaguer the sector, and urban and transport planning discussions by policy-makers often overlook informality. LRGs can rectify this trend by recognizing and cooperating with popular transport operators. A recent effort by the United Nations Development Programme's Accelerator Labs aims to highlight these local mobility systems' critical role in urban settings and economies and position informal transport at the forefront of the global sustainable and equitable development agenda.<sup>53</sup> **LRGs have the potential to challenge traditional planning approaches that have ignored and persecuted informality by recognizing its role in addressing essential needs for large parts of the population. They can also establish partnerships for the co-production of a sustainable and inclusive system, enabling access to opportunities for all.**

In conclusion, LRGs are implementing, and should further promote, specific lines of action to reshape urban planning to support sustainable, just practices that guarantee equal rights and opportunities while celebrating diversity. Adopting an approach that builds on LRGs' ongoing efforts to build an urban paradigm shift, embodied in the model of the "caring city," places people at the centre of decisions. It considers the diversity of experiences and breaks away from the standardization of subjects, bodies, experiences and desires. Such an approach aims for spaces, infrastructure and services to adapt to individual rights and needs rather than requiring people to adjust to a space's conditions, which often present barriers, including lack of accessibility. **There is a need to move away from producing cityscapes based on a productive logic that is socially and politically restrictive. Instead, cities may start thinking about environments that pri-**

**oritize the people who will use them, radically changing the order of priorities when considering urban spaces and times.**

Key lines of action include:

- Challenging the invisibility, embedded into traditional urban planning and development approaches, of certain experiences and needs by recognizing those of historically marginalized groups, such as women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and recognizing informal systems of housing, connectivity and livelihoods
- Prioritizing safety and wellbeing across the life cycle by catering to the specific lived experiences of diverse populations
- Designing integral local policies for planning systems and public services that recognize, redistribute and reduce the care burden on women (and socio-economically disadvantaged and/or racialized persons) and promote their rights
- Reconciling public-productive and private-reproductive spheres in urban planning to support everyday activities, revalorizing caring practices and relations and eliminating inequalities in access to and use of public space and public services
- Ensuring that accessibility is an integral part of urban planning and practice by making use of accessibility standards and universal design principles in urban design and implementation, including establishing meaningful mechanisms for LRGs to engage with persons with disabilities and older persons and inform practices according to these people's expertise and lived experiences
- Developing planning training, tools and initiatives grounded in feminist principles



## Reducing inequalities in access to and use of land, public spaces and public services

**As a second pathway, the potential of urban and territorial planning should be leveraged to reduce inequalities concerning access to and use of land, public spaces, public services and urban regeneration.** This will give populations access to opportunities and significant improvements in their daily lives and environments. It will also operationalize accessibility, as defined in the New Urban Agenda,<sup>54</sup> in all areas of planning, considering the complex, specific and relational experiences of persons with disabilities. Accessibility, as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, includes:

*“measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.”<sup>55</sup>*

Accessibility underpins all other rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living, to live independently and to be included in the community. This approach goes beyond demanding access to care infrastructure and instead fosters the empowerment of people with disabilities and provides support for paid and unpaid care work.

**LRGs play a pivotal role in ensuring accessibility, fostering the full inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons, and operationalizing accessibility across governance, policy and practice. This is key to moving away from the historical “special needs” approach, allowing LRGs to champion inclusion based on human rights.** Historically, policies have focused on providing technical guidance and performance standards for accessible transport, urban infrastructure and public facilities. While beneficial in expanding access for persons with disabilities and older persons, this approach carries limitations, such as the risk of creating separate, inequitable spaces and services and the potential financial burden of retrofitting existing infrastructure. Many national-level policies continue to provide only minimum technical guidance for accessibility, typically framed within a non-discrimination context. LRGs can counteract this by mainstreaming accessibility across strategies, policies and planning to create places, spaces, goods or services within their jurisdictions (see Box 3) that will not only benefit persons with disabilities but also society as a whole.

Bottom-up approaches prove to be effective. Local initiatives, which identify functional requirements and minimum accessibility standards suitable to local conditions and capacities, provide valuable lessons for promoting accessibility on a larger scale. Furthermore, applying the principle of universal design, which combines both top-down and bottom-up approaches, is imperative. **Universal design, putting human diversity at the centre, is a concept that aims at making life easier, healthier and friendlier for all. Universal design helps to understand and recognize the wide spectrum of human abilities.**<sup>56</sup>

By incorporating accessibility as a core principle in their planning and design processes and by learning from and promoting local initiatives that have successfully improved accessibility, LRGs can help ensure that urban environments are truly accessible and inclusive for all (read about the example of Villa Carlos Paz in Box 4).

### BOX 3

#### Designing an inclusive city in Varanasi (India)<sup>57</sup>

The city of **Varanasi** (India) understands inclusive design as much as mindset and methodology as adherence to technical standards. Hence, community participation and consultation are fundamental, particularly recognizing people with disabilities not merely as beneficiaries, but as leaders and protagonists in making cities inclusive and accessible. Thinking about, and designing for, user experiences with diverse needs is essential across infrastructure and services – from water and sanitation to health and education. In a city with important cultural heritage sites (e.g. ghats), urban design thinking should go beyond physical access towards inclusive experiences.

### BOX 4

#### Planning for accessibility in Villa Carlos Paz (Argentina)

The municipality of **Villa Carlos Paz** is implementing an urban accessibility programme that includes the installation of access ramps, the construction of accessible public toilets and the creation of reserved parking spaces for people with disabilities.<sup>58</sup> Additional initiatives include the following:

- The tourism department has installed tactile signage for city visitors at the main points of attraction, using plates with information in braille. Every year, the local government staff in charge of tourist orientation receive training in adequate treatment and in sign language.
- The city aims to survey and promote hotels and restaurants that implement accessibility measures, such as menus in braille, adapted rooms or appropriate staff training.
- In 2022, a public passenger transport system was implemented with 60% of its units adapted for the use of people with reduced mobility. To guarantee easy access to the buses, ramps were built at the stops to raise the level of the sidewalks.

These initiatives in Villa Carlos Paz illustrate how the city is improving accessibility in all aspects of life for people with disabilities, to ensure their inclusion in the community in the spirit of becoming a city for all people.

Principles of accessibility and universal design should be situated at the core of planning-led territorial transformations towards compact inclusive development. A proximity-based urban and territorial model operates on three levels – city, neighbourhood and individual scale – to enhance community health, liveability and wellbeing and accelerate climate actions. **The 15-minute city model and its counterpart in medium/low-density areas, the 30-minute territory, are holistic approaches that generate systemic impacts at both neighbourhood and city scales.**<sup>59</sup> Key elements of urban and territorial proximity include developing polycentric cities or territories with multiple “complete neighbourhoods” to reduce daily commutes and enable individuals to access their daily needs within a short distance from their homes. Thriving cities or territories that adapt to people’s needs and aspirations and engage them in urban decision-making processes through participatory mechanisms are essential.

**Also, cities or territories should view access to natural and collective resources, including air, water, green spaces, biodiversity and culture, as commons. They should support collective commoning practices that protect, govern and use these and other resources in ways that resist commodification and exclusion.**<sup>60</sup> Linking social services, such as education and urban health care, and implementing policies that support the right to live independently and be included in the community advance social inclusion and contribute to a more equitable urban environment. Drawing upon feminist proposals for more inclusive planning policies, proximity is key for integrating productive and reproductive spheres in urban development.

**A precondition for transforming urban areas based on the principles of 15-minute cities is ensuring inclusive access to land.** Reflecting on the first trend presented in Section 2, a mechanism for empowering women and persons with disabilities, for instance, to construct an inclusive city is to enable and guarantee their access to land. Women with home ownership or some form of tenure security can more readily access bank loans, thus potentially enabling them to establish and grow their businesses. In Brazil, changes in the legal framework at the national and municipal levels intend to uphold women’s housing and land rights.<sup>61</sup>

LRGs have the potential to enable and monitor inclusive access to land by producing actionable information not only about land ownership documents but also about how individuals interact with and perceive the systems that govern land tenure. More detailed information about who holds land ownership documents can significantly contribute to enabling access to land. However, data on legal documentation alone is insufficient. Ensuring tenure security requires the effective and fair operation of several systems, regardless of one’s gender, race, ethnicity, ability or income. These systems encompass dispute resolution, tenure rights enforcement and land administration mechanisms, which can follow formal or customary protocols.<sup>62</sup> Monitoring perceptions of tenure security provides a straightforward yet valuable indicator to identify whether these systems are functioning adequately and equitably.

Transforming planning through a feminist lens requires localized decision-making informed by data that recognizes tenure security can differ significantly within families. In fact, the head of a household often has the most secure tenure. LRGs also need to recognize the gender-biased societal norms that frequently link a woman’s tenure security to the state of her relationships with male family members such as husbands, in-laws, sons or brothers. In addressing these norms, LRGs can reduce women’s fear of being evicted from their land if they become widowed or divorced.<sup>63</sup>

**Understanding that transport is not an end but a means for accessing opportunities, cities are encouraged to adopt transit-oriented development strategies.** These strategies should synchronize transit investments with land use plans, incorporating various functionalities such as day-care centres, offices and shopping areas around public transport hubs. This cross-sectoral approach can enhance mobility efficiency and offers a chance to address the inequalities inherent in urban spatial structures, as discussed in Section 2. Further integrated approaches involve linking development initiatives that enhance health care, education or job training for disadvantaged populations with investment in and subsidies for transport services. Within a broader policy framework, these projects can bolster coordination among transport, land use planning, housing and other sectors that share priorities of reducing poverty, inequalities and social exclusion.

Transit-oriented development projects could explore value-capture mechanisms and cross-housing subsidies for inclusionary housing measures near transit systems. These could help overcome affordability barriers for low-income groups, who often live far from formal transit networks on the outskirts of urban areas. Importantly, LRGs are formulating, and should continue fostering, transit-oriented development policies. They are initiating pilot projects based on thorough research on real estate, land and housing market dynamics. These should be part of a long-term planning process that includes citizen participation. Additionally, there is a need for more diverse, accessible and innovative affordable housing initiatives (see Paper 1). For instance, developing a range of affordable housing options connected to mass transit and other infrastructure investments could increase the availability of these projects to lower-income residents.

Improving equitable access to infrastructure and public spaces requires enhancing consideration of gender, age and disabilities within transport systems. Planners need to design and construct infrastructure that facilitates trips related to care and reproductive work. Recommendations encompass the installation of child- and adult-friendly changing stations in both male and female public transit station restrooms, digital kiosks for processing utility payments and completing bureaucratic tasks, accessible signage and maps for care-related resources, and resting areas and playgrounds near stations. **Moreover, concerted efforts should be undertaken to reduce crime and sexual harassment on public transit, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation or abilities, feel secure while utilizing public transport.**<sup>64</sup>



Additionally, fostering inclusive and cohesive communities means combatting gentrification by integrating a large range of housing options, community-based activities and services that resonate with people's needs. Implementing a compact development approach requires a roadmap that includes establishing the city-scale vision and guaranteeing representative, meaningful and constructive public participation. Coordinated actions might include prioritizing people-centred streets to encourage active, shared and low-carbon mobility options; revising zoning plans to favour mixed functions; decentralizing public services; ensuring access to decent livelihoods in each neighbourhood; supporting adequate housing; promoting open public spaces; encouraging sharing of equipment; developing smart and innovative solutions to minimize transport; and adopting and reinforcing accessibility in territorial, master and city plans.

The 15-minute city framework highlights the social, economic, health and environmental advantages of proximity-based and dense development supported by sustainable personal mobility. However, existing debates tend to concentrate on areas where urban densities and essential infrastructure exist for efficient and sustainable collective and personal mobility. Insufficient attention has been given to the structural transformations required to apply the concept, together with a strong focus on accessibility, to peripheral and disadvantaged areas, particularly in cities in the Global South.

Typical car-oriented urban models have led to long commutes, unsustainable lifestyles and poor air quality in many neighbourhoods that need more amenities and services. This highlights environmental injustice and inequalities in accessing pleasant and healthy urban environments. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published in April 2022 underlines the importance of proximity-based spatial planning to foster socio-behavioural change, radically transform lifestyles and habitats and reduce emissions. The distribution of education facilities within reasonable walkable or cycleable distances mitigates social care-related divides. It can do so through policies that reduce educational segregation, promote care-based education, integrate educational policy into community social action, develop critical citizenship and extend educational opportunities beyond formal settings.

By the same token, providing localized urban health care can ensure that primary care and innovative prevention methods are accessible to various urban population groups, improving the health and wellbeing of all communities. **Guaranteeing health involves prioritizing water and sanitation, urban planning and design for proximity and equitable access to health services. It also involves promoting non-motorized transport in safe and non-polluting conditions.** Furthermore, addressing the challenges of rural territories, such as remoteness and lack of coverage, is also essential.

In summary, LRGs advance, and should further promote, a holistic approach that combines proximity-based urban and territorial models with feminist urbanism, accessibility and targeted policies to address inequalities experienced by historically discriminated groups. Key lines of action include:

- Integrating productive and reproductive spheres in urban planning to enhance day-to-day life experiences, through urban planning policies fostering proximity (e.g. the 15-minute city model)
- Prioritizing the equitable provision of social services, such as education and urban health care, to advance social inclusion and create equitable urban environments
- Fostering safe and healthy communities through an urban environment more resilient to climate risks
- Implementing policies that care for and empower women and other marginalized groups, such as workers in the informal economy, migrants, people with disabilities, older people, LGBTQIA+ individuals, children and adolescents, mainstreaming feminist and accessibility approaches in all plans and policies
- Ensuring access to primary health care, innovative prevention methods and non-motorized transport options for all urban population groups

## Promoting informed and sustained citizen participation and representation in public life and decision-making

**As a third pathway, informed and sustained citizen participation and representation in public life and decision-making should be further promoted.** This can be achieved by shaping more participatory, accountable and transparent governance systems that incorporate various participatory mechanisms according to local communities' needs and aspirations, fostering a systemic, place-based and long-term democratic approach.

Anchoring planning for an inclusive city in the recognition of access to land for women, older persons, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups can inform participatory planning approaches across urban interventions. Active involvement ensures that LRGs are better positioned to utilize local communities' expertise and experiences in co-designing plans and projects. Such engagement will lead to solutions that align more closely with communities' needs and priorities, fostering greater impact, equality, sustainability and a sense of ownership by the communities (see Box 5 and Box 6).



## BOX 5

### Multistakeholder local governance in the Dominican Republic

As shared by the **Federation of Municipalities of the Dominican Republic** (FEDOMU), strengthening municipal development councils and participatory budget monitoring committees has improved collaboration with civil society, residents and private sector entities.

The Dominican Republic has a participation mechanism, linked to strategic territorial planning processes, that supports the coordination of participatory budgets in the country. FEDOMU is the governing entity for this mechanism's evaluation in the Public Administration Monitoring System. Since its inception, the participation mechanism has promoted gender parity in the committees' teams in charge of monitoring and controlling the community-defined project investments.

Efforts have also been made to define milestones for a gender-responsive approach and protect structurally marginalized groups in all stages of public action. This applies to the internal functioning of local governments, as well as the planning, civic participation and execution of a project investment. For example, efforts have included strengthening purchasing and contracting processes focused on female entrepreneurs and consolidating permanent gender commissions as part of designing municipal development plans.

## BOX 6

### Plan Integrar in Santa Fe (Argentina)

Santa Fe's *Plan Integrar*<sup>65</sup> is an innovative policy intervention that focuses on activities in marginalized neighbourhoods with city-wide impacts. It works in three core areas: (a) territory and environment, (b) participation and social life and (c) proximal institutions for wellbeing. The plan is integral to improving the city and its environment, strengthening community social ties and improving resources and access to care and social services for families. The plan is fundamentally feminist, as its cross-cutting interventions include removing barriers for people with disabilities, fostering new masculinities, addressing all forms of violence, building up collective memories of the city and creating cultural identity.

Neighbourhood (re)development strategies grounded in inclusive, participatory planning can ensure equitable access to, and ownership of, completed projects for women and girls participating in planning development by offering non-traditional financing mechanisms such as microfinance. By introducing microfinance opportunities such as adequate housing credits, community-based savings and loans, or long-term collective leases or land titles to community cooperatives, LRGs can enhance

women's financial independence. Initiating such microfinance mechanisms early in the project planning phase is crucial so that resources can be immediately utilized following project completion. These resources can serve as safeguards against market forces and promote the establishment of collective community structures and mechanisms that increase resilience. This strategy also fosters long-term community stewardship of project outputs, contributing to overall project sustainability.<sup>66</sup>

**Fostering open, accessible and verifiable information and data ensures transparency and promotes inclusion in urban planning.** If some groups cannot equally use information provided for or in consultations, it will impact how they can contribute meaningfully. It is critical to ensure that accessibility and reasonable accommodations are provided across online platforms or venues. Many times, accessibility is seen as the end goal of a practice or action. Yet, accessibility should also be ensured as a core part of any process that seeks to be inclusive and participatory. Participatory planning allows for co-creating multisectoral interventions with residents, addressing various inequalities that structurally discriminated groups and marginalized territories face (see Box 7).

Embracing formal and informal sources of information enhances the inclusivity of planning processes. To design socially inclusive transport and urban systems that recognize and celebrate diversity, it is essential to comprehend the diverse needs of various population groups in urban and rural settings. Mobility planning that fosters social inclusion necessitates collecting and analyzing data disaggregated by distinct population groups, including women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Such data should encompass aspects such as choice of transport mode, travel times and trip distances and purposes while being disaggregated by socio-economic factors such as sex and gender identity, age, disabilities, ethnicity, household composition and income. It is crucial to examine how users respond to existing mobility services and their specific needs and to include detailed information on various trip purposes, including chained trips related to care practices.

**To ensure that the process of designing and managing projects is inclusive of and responsive to local needs and realities, steps should be taken to foster the full participation of communities. This can be facilitated through participatory budgeting, interactive dialogue and local representation in project appraisal and evaluation processes.**

Moreover, monitoring tools, such as satisfaction surveys designed to enable comparative analysis of perceptions of a range of groups (including disadvantaged and low-income populations), are necessary during public transit systems' preparation and operation phases. These tools make it possible to provide and adjust infrastructure and services that respond to the needs prioritized by communities, thus contributing to the development of more inclusive and equitable transport systems.

For instance, in **Abu Dhabi** (United Arab Emirates), a recent initiative targeting accessibility for structurally marginalized populations involved training "inclusion champions" within government agencies to collaboratively design disability-inclusive monitoring and evaluation

## BOX 7

### We Are Able! Stimulating dialogue and knowledge exchange between people with disabilities and authorities

**VNG International**, the international department of the Association of Dutch Municipalities, is part of the consortium that implements the We Are Able! programme.<sup>67</sup> The programme is implemented in six African countries (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda) and the Netherlands.

Highly in line with SDG 11, the main goal of this five-year programme is to increase the accessibility of basic services for people with disabilities and to strengthen the position of people with disabilities in local governance. The programme aims to achieve this by actively stimulating dialogue and knowledge exchange between people with disabilities and authorities, both formal and informal, at the local, national and international levels. We Are Able! focuses on empowerment, amplifying voices and creating resilience among people (including men, women and youth) with disabilities and other excluded groups, particularly those facing food insecurity in areas of protracted crises.

indicators. This empowered local officials to monitor the progress of their policies and programmes effectively. By integrating these disability-inclusive indicators into their monitoring and evaluation systems, the Abu Dhabi government is better equipped to identify shortcomings in policies, programmes and initiatives and make necessary adjustments to enhance accessibility for and participation of individuals with disabilities. Consequently, this will lead to the development of more inclusive and accessible policies, services, public spaces and transport systems and the increased involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

The cases of **Soria** (Spain; Box 8) and **Bhi Dilli** (India; Box 9) illustrate the role of participatory planning that builds on the recognition of diverse user needs and promotes flexible engagement through data collection. They also show how participatory planning can recognize residents' lived experiences and address colonial legacies.

## BOX 8

### Soria's Urban Agenda action plan<sup>68</sup>

The municipality of **Soria** (Spain) initiated its urban agenda in line with the Spanish Urban Agenda. With support from the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, which sought to establish Soria as a pilot case for other municipalities, the action plan for Soria's Urban Agenda was developed in a participatory manner. Its development included political and technical staff of the City Council and citizens. Through working sessions and online surveys conducted in 2022, they worked to jointly build the city in alignment with achieving the SDGs by 2030. The action plan identified 450 actions and 10 programmes, which are aligned with specific SDGs and whose implementation is monitored accordingly.

LRGs and their leaders have the agency and resources to open frequent dialogues with historically marginalized communities and integrate their inputs into government functions and policy development processes. For example, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities of **New York City** (USA) meets with civil society organizations once a month in the form of conference calls.

## BOX 9

### The Main Bhi Dilli campaign in Delhi (India)<sup>69</sup>

In **Delhi** (India), a diverse coalition of civil society organizations campaigned to challenge the modernist and colonial approach reflected in the city's proposed 2021–2041 Master Plan. The Main Bhi Dilli campaign instead promoted an inclusive and more just process and outcome that reflected different lived experiences, aspirations and needs, not only of the urban elites but also of informal workers, slum dwellers and activists.

For example, the campaign underscored the importance of public space for (informal) livelihood generation and proposed a more flexible approach to land use and zoning. The process resulted in high levels of participation and innovative solutions. At the same time, it strengthened participants' capacities to engage in urban planning processes, including technical aspects of master planning.

Participatory planning is key to inclusive cities. Informal workers, dwellers and mobility providers understand their work best and are best placed to propose ways for infrastructure to support them. In summary, to promote informed and sustained citizen participation and representation in public life and decision-making, LRGs are shaping, and should further commit to, more participatory, accountable and transparent governance systems that empower citizens and inhabitants; foster active and meaningful participation; and facilitate the development of inclusive, responsive and equitable urban environments. Key lines of action include:

- Collecting and analyzing data disaggregated by distinct population groups to design socially inclusive and equitable transport and urban systems
- Ensuring open, accessible and verifiable information and data that foster transparency and inclusivity in urban planning
- Embracing participatory planning approaches that allow for co-creating multisectoral interventions with residents, addressing barriers and inequalities faced by structurally discriminated groups and marginalized territories
- Fostering the full participation of communities through participatory budgeting, interactive dialogue and local representation in project appraisal and evaluation processes
- Implementing monitoring tools such as satisfaction surveys, which enable comparative analysis of perceptions across diverse groups, and improving public transit systems accordingly



## 5. LRG challenges and capacities

### Institutional environment

Enhancing vertical and horizontal policy coherence is paramount to implementing the actions outlined throughout the three pathways in this paper and promoting the transformative change envisaged in the SDGs. This will require institutional capacities that can effectively support such coherence.

Efforts should aim to establish effective, accountable and participatory institutions. **Part of this process entails systematically improving LRGs' involvement in national coordination mechanisms and reporting processes related to SDG implementation.** This involvement should not be limited to mere consultation but should extend to regular participation and decision-making power, thus advancing more inclusive multilevel governance.

Successful decision-making for transformative actions – such as integrated and participatory approaches to urban planning and management in pursuit of more caring, inclusive and accessible cities and territories – as well as implementation, monitoring, and reporting on these actions, will require the development of mechanisms at

both national and local levels to ensure effective alignment. Strengthening LRGs' capacities and resources to contribute to crisis mitigation, adaptation and recovery is vital. Decentralized cooperation, participatory planning, transparent reporting and inclusive decision-making processes can all amplify the positive effects of these efforts. Moreover, robust financial and legal frameworks alongside effective participation mechanisms can significantly enhance LRGs' institutional capacities.

Furthermore, in light of urbanization trends and the rapid growth of new small and intermediate cities, fostering stronger networks and alliances is imperative to build and transfer capacities among LRGs. Existing global efforts should facilitate sharing challenges, policy recommendations and best practices among LRGs worldwide.

### Resources

**One of the main challenges for LRGs in transforming urban planning and implementing actions geared towards urban transformations for accessibility, proximity and the co-production of a caring city are resources, particularly financial.** The success of equitable urban development hinges on a multifaceted approach. This involves making both mainstream and targeted investments in infrastructure and public services, retrofitting existing infrastructure for universal accessibility and implementing targeted subsidies, all while ensuring an equitable distribution of interventions across all regions and social groups. This approach is intimately tied to the need for more decentralized governance, which implies decentralization of financial resources. Subnational spending, which includes spending by LRGs, plays a significant role in the public expenditure of many countries. This underlines the critical role of LRGs as public employers and as key actors in service delivery across the urban and regional spectrum.

With the pursuit of equitable and sustainable urban development, the need for targeted investments in infrastructure and public services has never been more critical. Investments in high-capacity public transport, such as bus rapid transit, are highly capital- and resource-intensive interventions. It is vital to retrofit existing infrastructure and services for universal accessibility. These efforts' scale and resource demand in certain cities entail key challenges, as the historical focus was primarily on increasing efficiency, neglecting the needs of marginalized groups.<sup>70</sup> There is also a crucial need for targeted subsidies that reduce the economic burden of access to transport for residents with diverse travel needs and preferences. Successful experiences have shown that targeted subsidies can reduce inequalities among social groups and offset some of the trade-offs residents make to access transport. These subsidies require appropriate regulatory and legal frameworks that enable differentiated pricing for specific services and facilities.

LRGs also face the challenge of testing and localizing flexible, low-cost and often short-term interventions and strategies to enact changes to the built environment. Frequently coined "tactical urbanism," this action has proven to be an effective way to achieve long-term goals related to street safety, walking and public spaces. However, like other forms of infrastructure, these positive

demonstrative interventions also tend to focus on central areas with a high concentration of commercial and business activities. LRGs have the challenge of redistributing investment to develop and promote targeted interventions in segregated and disadvantaged areas, which is critically important.

## Capacities

**Reflecting on the need for capacity building for LRGs, there are three areas of concern: technical capacity and training, inputs for planning and evaluation, and institutional spaces for representation and meaningful engagement mechanisms.** While there is a wealth of resources available for practitioners in the form of handbooks, guidelines and best practices, these are often available only in English or are not widely accessible, particularly in intermediate cities and LRGs with limited staff and resources. Networks of LRGs can address the need for resources for technical and operational practitioners in local governments. They can also develop training for administrative staff in the design of procurement processes grounded in the reframed planning principles and priorities of care, accessibility and proximity outlined in this paper. LRGs also face the challenge of breaking entrenched paradigms and practices of detachment in planning, particularly among technical staff. They can do so by exposing practitioners in the public sector to the realities of diverse groups of residents and local realities in different neighbourhoods where different areas of municipal and regional planning operate.

**Data collection stands out as a key area of focus.** LRGs' approach to data collection should be bottom-up rather than top-down. There are significant gaps in data disaggregated by gender, disabilities, age and other social identities and experiences, particularly in relation to access to land, participation and access to public transport and public spaces. These gaps underscore the need for LRGs to enhance their institutional capacities to address key challenges, such as standardizing measurement tools across all local governments and ensuring that national reports accurately reflect local realities. It is important to develop harmonized approaches to data collection and replicable protocols that reflect the needs for access to land, transport, public space and spaces for participation. In monitoring and designing for accessibility, it is critical to map user experiences, which requires more training in collecting qualitative data. This will help identify existing accessibility barriers in communities, which can inform the planning and prioritization of actions that best respond to the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and groups at the intersection of marginalized identities.

In addition to data collection, monitoring capacities are critical for successfully implementing the outlined strategies for integrated and inclusive planning grounded in feminist perspectives. Local statistical capacities to collect, monitor and evaluate data are all crucial components. **Such monitoring initiatives can provide a platform for broad stakeholder engagement, enhancing the inclusive implementation of actions.** Working with stakeholders can promote public-private alliances; facilitate evidence-based stakeholder dialogue; and poten-

tially provide more resources for monitoring, implementing and evaluating. Moreover, it helps bridge knowledge gaps.

Finally, implementing strategies aligned with the principles of the 15-minute city, universal design and accessibility also requires investment in diverse human resources, particularly public sector employees. It requires the creation and constructive utilization of committees or advisory bodies on strategies, policies, practices, projects and interventions, while providing for the perspectives of women, LGBTQIA+ people, persons with disabilities and older persons. Inclusive recruitment, retention and capacity building can strengthen the quality and diversity of LRGs' teams, thereby improving service delivery. Conversely, a lack of financial and human resources can contribute to increasing challenges in coordination, data collection and acquisition of other forms of funding.

## Participation

**LRGs face challenges, but also have opportunities, to improve participation in planning. Many LRGs are already at the forefront of this movement, revising their policies and development plans to integrate the SDGs and foster more participatory approaches.** This alignment of city plans with the SDGs has effectively dismantled existing silos, encouraged collaboration through consultative processes and fostered sustainable paths. Planning and participatory tools need to be backed up by a robust legal framework to enhance participation. Instruments that mainstream gender and accessibility in participatory planning and initiatives to widen representation in planning, such as planning education mechanisms, are essential.

Participatory budgets can act as a transformative tool, reshaping relationships and responsibilities among actors and institutions in the public domain. Participatory budgeting, which involves citizens in prioritizing the spending of public resources, can lead to measurable improvements in citizens' quality of life, as it fosters responsiveness, inclusiveness and representative decision-making. Research indicates that projects derived from participatory budgeting are often cheaper and better maintained due to community control and oversight, contributing to sustainable human settlement planning and management.<sup>71</sup>

However, there are challenges to be addressed in implementing participatory budgeting and other strategies for participation in planning. For instance, while it is a powerful tool to include everyone through many innovative solutions, it demands greater financial decentralization and local government resources. The need for bottom-up proposals can also pose a challenge, as it requires enhancing people's autonomy and involving civil society in every phase of the public policy cycle. Additionally, increasing the participation of structurally marginalized communities in participatory budgeting processes and channelling more resources towards them necessitates the creation of a supportive network among LRGs to share experiences and learnings.

## 6. Conclusions

Addressing the systemic challenges that urban, peri-urban and rural communities face across various global regions, LRGs are critical in co-creating sustainable, inclusive societies. This involves developing strategies explicitly targeting these challenges. **A vital initial step for LRGs is reimagining urban planning, fostering more sustainable and equitable practices for all citizens and inhabitants. This necessitates guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities while respecting and celebrating diversity, with planning approaches that place feminism and accessibility at the heart.**

Key actions include challenging the “invisibility” of marginalized identities, experiences and needs that is often embedded in traditional development models. LRGs need to recognize those who have been historically sidelined, such as women, persons with disabilities, older persons, racialized persons and informal dwellers. Concurrently, there is a need for reconciling public-productive and private-reproductive spheres in urban planning. This perspective supports everyday activities, revalues caring practices and relations and helps eradicate inequalities in access to and use of public spaces and services. In this vein, prioritizing safety and wellbeing is critical across the life cycle, catering to the specific needs of diverse populations. This approach requires the development of planning training, tools and initiatives grounded in a human rights-based approach. Comprehensive local policies for planning systems and public services should also be designed. These policies should recognize, redistribute and reduce the care burden on women (especially those socio-economically disadvantaged and/or racialized), promoting their rights.

**LRGs should harness the potential of urban and territorial planning to reduce inequalities collectively. This includes addressing gaps in access to and use of land, public spaces, public services and urban regeneration.**

By providing populations with access to opportunities, significant improvements can be made to their environments and daily lives. Social services such as education and urban health care should be prioritized to advance social inclusion and create equitable urban environments. LRGs can foster safe and healthy communities through more resilient urban environments, thus protecting the human rights of women and other marginalized groups, such as workers in the informal economy, migrants, people with disabilities, older people, LGBTQIA+ individuals, children and adolescents. Moreover, access to primary health care, innovative prevention methods and non-motorized transport options for various urban population groups should be ensured. Vertical coherence, which refers to financial and legal frameworks, is essential to ensure the successful implementation of these strategies.

**Additionally, LRGs need to champion informed and sustained citizen participation and representation in public life and decision-making.** This involves shaping more participatory, accountable and transparent governance systems and aligning participatory mechanisms with local communities’ varying needs and aspirations. This

sustains a systemic, place-based and long-term democratic approach. Such horizontal coherence and participation are key to successfully localizing the goal of building sustainable and inclusive communities. Key actions include ensuring open, accessible and verifiable information and data that foster transparency and inclusivity in urban planning. Participatory planning approaches should be adopted to co-create multisectoral interventions with residents, addressing various inequalities that structurally discriminated groups and marginalized territories face. To design socially inclusive transport and urban systems, LRGs should collect and analyze data disaggregated by distinct population groups, including data on the barriers they face. Communities should be encouraged to participate fully through participatory budgeting, interactive dialogue and local representation in project appraisal and evaluation processes. Lastly, monitoring tools such as satisfaction surveys should be implemented, enabling comparative analysis of perceptions across diverse groups; public transit systems can be improved accordingly.

**LRGs have a crucial role in promoting participation in monitoring and evaluating SDG 11-related policies and incorporating the results at the national level.**

A key challenge is to standardize measurement tools across all local governments, ensuring a standardized methodology at the national level and enabling comparable results. LRGs can also effectively promote and support each other in the context of existing platforms and collaborations. For example, they work together through the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, identifying and sharing policy challenges and recommendations tailored to their specific contexts. This promotes decentralized cooperation, allowing for more efficient use of resources and enhanced development (see Paper 5). LRGs can play a key role in encouraging participation from other LRGs and stakeholders for collaborative SDG 11 localization.

## 7. Advancing progressive municipalism: LRGs' pathways to advance the localization of the SDGs

The five papers have presented **initiatives from over 100 local and regional governments (LRGs)** throughout the world, while analyzing how these initiatives contribute to accelerating progress towards the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, and through it, the SDGs in general. These examples show how LRGs, in alliance with their communities, are contributing to the different dimensions of SDG 11 by focusing on fulfilling the right to adequate housing and basic services (SDG target 11.1); promoting feminist approaches to sustainable, inclusive and participatory planning (SDG targets 11.2, 11.3 and 11.7); pursuing environmental justice and integrated and circular approaches (SDG targets 11.5, 11.6, 11.7 and 11.b); protecting and safeguarding culture and heritage (SDG target 11.4); and promoting more balanced and equal urban and territorial systems (SDG target 11.a).

**Innovative LRG experiences, drawing upon engagement across networks of LRGs and with diverse public, civil society and private institutions, have become the cornerstone of progress towards sustainable, inclusive and just cities and territories.** LRGs' experiences further elicit why realizing SDG 11 requires a human rights-based approach that advances equality in full recognition of people's diversity, as well as a perspective that goes beyond urban boundaries and recognizes urban impacts at the regional, national and global levels. Rearticulating principles and practices based on a multilevel governance approach, which in itself serves as an enabling environment for SDG localization, becomes a pressing need.

Together, the papers propose different pathways – routes for transformative actions to advance and accelerate progress – towards SDG 11. However, as the assessment of trends in each paper demonstrates, the efforts that have been put into the implementation of SDG 11 to date remain insufficient to reverse the structural inequalities as well as social and environmental injustices exacerbated by multiple, intersecting crises.

**The papers advance policies and practices that could accelerate progress towards SDG 11 and propel urban transformation,** including:

- Policies that adopt an active approach to **acknowledge, protect and fulfil the right to housing and basic services**: These include policies that respond to evictions and address exclusion and discrimination by promoting and enforcing regulations of land and housing markets. They also support more inclusive and responsive forms of tenure security and universal access to basic services, including through the acknowledgement of and support for commoning practices.

- Policies that **foster urban planning to reduce fragmentation and segregation**: Mainstreaming an intersectional feminist approach to urban planning is key to foster more inclusive and equal cities. Emphasizing accessibility, proximity and care ensures that the exercise of rights and the use of public space are inclusive and accommodating for all, particularly structurally marginalized populations.

- Policies that emphasize the need to **prevent extractivist approaches to natural resources and the depletion of the public commons**: Such policies address the challenges of green gentrification and work towards rectifying historical deficits and their current manifestations in socio-spatial inequalities. Revitalizing and restoring urban ecological infrastructure through inclusive citizen engagement are crucial. The promotion of just re-naturing processes to ensure healthy cities and planet preservation hinges on the decoupling, restoring, localizing and commoning pathways. It also requires advocating for circular cities and regional initiatives to reduce pressure on natural resources.

- Policies that **acknowledge and resolutely act on cultural dimensions to accelerate SDG implementation**: Cultural rights-based actions, programmes and policies strongly influence the achievement of the SDGs. It is essential to link them with the promotion, protection and preservation of heritage, as well as cultural diversity, intersectional feminist perspectives and climate action. This approach should be at the core of effectively promoting local economic development, reimagining growth-oriented models and making a commitment to sustainable management of heritage sites and tourism attraction.

- Policies that seek to **advance effective multilevel governance**: Unbalanced and unequal urban systems require multilevel governance arrangements with respect for the principle of subsidiarity at the core. The redistribution of powers, responsibilities and resources, as well as enhanced democratic participation, transparency and accountability, can promote pluricentric and inclusive urban and territorial systems that leave no one and no territory behind.

The different papers also highlight four key cross-cutting elements that should be mainstreamed across LRG policies, practices and governance arrangements:

- **Addressing historical and contemporary structural inequalities from a feminist perspective**: This involves recognizing the diversity of entitlements, needs, experiences and capacities of people who disproportionately face discrimination and margin

alization, to ensure that no one and no place are left behind.

- **Strengthening meaningful, transparent and sustained citizen participation and inclusive engagement, while tackling deeply ingrained power asymmetries:** This entails informed and sustained citizen participation in decision-making processes and requires inclusive governance systems to co-create interventions with marginalized groups.

- **Developing institutional arrangements and regulatory frameworks that seek to decentralize powers, responsibilities and resources based on the subsidiarity principle:** Strengthened national, regional and local policy and planning can help to achieve balanced and equitable urban and territorial systems.

- **Adopting rights-based, intersectional and often explicitly feminist approaches to planning, policy and practice:** Such approaches expand the imagination of the roles LRGs can play, as well as their room for manoeuvre, in realizing SDG 11 to counter exclusion, marginalization and discrimination against people in light of their class, gender, age, ethnicity, race, religion, disabilities and sexual orientation. The advancement of concepts such as “human rights cities” has already manifested in the creation of human rights departments and offices for non-discrimination, in addition to the safeguarding of property’s social function.

Finally, the five papers evidenced the call for stronger urban and regional roles in localizing the SDGs. Concerted actions propel community-led and LRG-supported initiatives that promote inclusiveness, address inequalities and exclusion and co-create more just and sustainable urban and territorial futures. Change is not only a matter of resources but also of fundamentally reshaping relationships and roles or, in other words, a governance approach. Embracing the synergies between human rights, intersectional feminism and multilevel governance, a progressive municipalist movement may drive forward the localization of the SDGs.





## Notes

\* For more information on the notion of pathways, see United Cities and Local Governments (2022) *GOLD VI. Pathways to urban and territorial equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies*. Global Observatory of Local Democracy and Decentralization, United Cities and Local Governments, Barcelona, October 2022.

1 This paper has been drafted by Daniel Oviedo at University College London (UCL) with the support of Julia Wesley, María José Arbeláez and Caren Levy at UCL. Support was also provided by Cécile Roth, Julia Munroe, Federico Batista Poitier and Adrià Duarte from the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) World Secretariat, as well as Hannes Lagrelius and Benjamin Dard from the World Blind Union.

2 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies' (Barcelona, 2022), <https://bit.ly/436ETAq>.

3 Tim Schwanen, 'Inequalities in Everyday Urban Mobility', GOLD VI Working Paper Series (Barcelona, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3JhCc7m>

4 Global Campaign on Inclusive and Accessible Cities, 'Inclusive and Accessible Cities. #CitiesAreListening Town Hall Track' (Durban, 2019), <https://bit.ly/3WeAsRv>.

5 UCLG, 'Pact for the Future of Humanity. The Daejeon Political Declaration', 2022, <https://bit.ly/3WiLPHZ>.

6 The multifaceted factors contributing to these movements, such as the impacts of climate change, pervasive inequalities and various forms of oppression and conflict, increasingly compel populations to relocate under exceedingly challenging conditions. This surge in migration intensifies demographic shifts, fuels workforce concentration and propels rapid urbanization. As a result, the decision to depart from one's place of origin becomes especially challenging for groups who face systematic discrimination, whether based on gender, age, race, religion, sexual identity and orientation, disability or other factors. In this context, it becomes increasingly crucial for LRGs to adopt a holistic and inclusive approach to address the complexity of these issues, recognizing the role of human mobility in shaping our urban futures and its relevance beyond the confines of geopolitical borders. UCLG, 'The Lampedusa Charter for Dignified Human Mobility and Territorial Solidarity', 2022, <https://bit.ly/45Sp5TA>.

7 Caren Levy, 'Travel Choice Reframed: "Deep Distribution" and Gender in Urban Transport', *Environment and Urbanization* 25, no. 1 (2013): 47–63.

8 Col·lectiu Punt 6, *Urbanismo Feminista. Por Una Transformación Radical de Los Espacios de Vida* (Barcelona: Virus Editorial, 2022), <https://bit.ly/45U3gmz>.

9 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities' (Nairobi, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3o8Me3o>.

10 World Bank, 'Urban Development', Understanding Poverty, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3CiTU6t>.

11 World Bank.

12 UN-Habitat et al., 'Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements', ed. Robert Ndugwa et al., SDG 11 Synthesis Report (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2018), <https://bit.ly/3Cly7uM>.

13 UN-Habitat et al.

14 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities'.

15 UN-Habitat.

16 OECD, 'Statistics Brief. Spending on Transport Infrastructure', International Transport Forum, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3oXvT1J>.

17 Nora Ruth Libertun de Duren et al., 'Gender Inequalities in Cities', 2020, <https://bit.ly/42ul1pF>.

18 United Nations, 'The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022' (New York, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3MqW20r>.

19 GIZ, 'Secure Land Tenure Rights for All: A Key Condition for Sustainable Development' (Eschborn, 2019), <https://bit.ly/43unvpw>.

20 Martha Chen and Shalini Sinh, 'Home-Based Workers and Cities', *Environment & Urbanization* 28, no. 2 (2016): 343–58.

21 FAO, 'The Gender Gap in Land Rights', 2018, <https://bit.ly/45NWL5>.

22 UNHCR, 'Global Trends Report', 2021, <https://bit.ly/42x8H8m>.

23 United Nations General Assembly, 'Global Crises, Climate Change, Global Inequity and Displacement Undermine Development Efforts, Delegates Highlight in Third Committee', Seventy-Seventh Session, 21st & 22nd, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3WUdQGk>.

24 Libertun de Duren et al., 'Gender Inequalities in Cities'.

25 This is defined by populations' proximity to low-capacity transport systems, such as buses and trams, within a 500-metre walking distance and high-capacity systems, such as trains, subways and ferries, within a 1000-metre distance. See UNDESA, 'Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable', SDG Indicators, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3N02pls>.

26 UN-Habitat, 'UN-Habitat Urban Data Site', 2022, <https://bit.ly/43wTBky>.

27 Lynn Scholl et al., *Transport for Inclusive Development: Defining a Path for Latin America and the Caribbean* (Inter-American Development Bank, 2022), <https://bit.ly/449Co0z>.

28 United Nations, 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', Sixty-first session of the General Assembly by resolution A/RES/61/106, 2006, <https://bit.ly/3KFWjL8>.

29 UCLG, 'Recommendations for Implementing the Pact

- for the Future', Accessibility Caucus Position Paper, 2022.
- 30 UCLG.
- 31 Libertun de Duren et al., 'Gender Inequalities in Cities'.
- 32 World Bank, 'Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design' (Washington, DC, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3CmaYIP>.
- 33 United Nations, '2018 Review of SDGs Implementation: SDG 11 – Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable', High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3J71pkC>.
- 34 Katy Steinmetz, 'She Coined the Term "Intersectionality" Over 30 Years Ago. Here's What It Means to Her Today', *Time*, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3oNRlX3>; UN-Women and UNPRPD, 'Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit. An Intersectional Approach to Leave No One Behind', 2022, <https://bit.ly/3NlbdDr>.
- 35 Metropolis, 'Improving Safety, Mobility and Access for Women and Girls.', Urban Sustainability Exchange, 2017, <https://bit.ly/3qEF6fH>.
- 36 UCLG, 'Pact for the Future of Humanity. The Daejeon Political Declaration', 11.
- 37 UCLG Women, 'The Transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality', 2021, <https://bit.ly/3LddxyT>.
- 38 UCLG Women.
- 39 An intersectional feminist approach recognizes that not all women are equally impacted by the care burden (depending, for example, on their socio-economic situation and racial inequalities) and that non-female persons are also working as caregivers (particularly in the Global North, where migration backgrounds are significant in defining care roles).
- 40 World Women's Forum, 'Charter for Women's Right to the City', 2004, <https://bit.ly/3Pw08Fv>.
- 41 CEMR-CCRE, 'European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life', 2006, <https://bit.ly/3NG4yHW>.
- 42 UCLG Africa and REFELA, 'Local and Regional Governments' Charter for Gender Equality in Africa', 2022, <https://bit.ly/45UyEBD>.
- 43 Santa Fe response to the GTF/UCLG 2023 consultation.
- 44 National Association of City Transportation Officials, 'Designing Streets for Kids', Global Designing Cities Initiative, 2020, <https://bit.ly/43PY1T7>.
- 45 Government of Quilmes, 'Plan Municipal Para La Igualdad de Género', 2020, <https://bit.ly/43xvfgC>.
- 46 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies'.
- 47 Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 'Manzanas Del Cuidado', 2023, <https://bit.ly/3oTHcbj>.
- 48 Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 'Sistema Distrital de Cuidado', 2023, <https://bit.ly/3P5HxIH>.
- 49 Bogotá response to the GTF/UCLG 2023 Survey.
- 50 Col·lectiu Punt 6, *Urbanismo Feminista. Por Una Transformación Radical de Los Espacios de Vida*, chap. Fundamentos para una ciudad feminista.
- 51 UCLG, 'Chapter 5: Caring', in *GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality* [Barcelona: United Cities and Local Governments, 2022], <https://bit.ly/3INSuED>.
- 52 IOM, 'Child and Young Migrants', Migration Data Portal, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CLSDvr>.
- 53 The partnership's objective is to understand the functioning of various informal systems, explore what hybrid models could entail and assess the relative risks and benefits of a strategy that prioritizes formalization. The partners are committed to expediting testing and generating actionable data on informal transport systems, local culture and effective and innovative policy approaches. Such a collaboration aims to produce specific policy notes and an institutional framework. This will assist in recognizing opportunities in informal mobility as a crucial element of sustainable development. See: UNDP, 'Informal Transportation: A New Research Agenda for the UNDP Accelerator Labs, in Partnership with NewCities' Global Partnership for Informal Transportation.', Accelerator Labs, 2021, <https://bit.ly/43uyyio>.
- 54 UN-Habitat, 'The New Urban Agenda' (United Nations, 2017), <https://bit.ly/3MBVeEt>.
- 55 United Nations, 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.
- 56 World Blind Union and CBM Global Disability Inclusion, 'AccessibilityGO! A Guide to Action', 2020, <https://bit.ly/43yQfNZ>.
- 57 GDI Hub, 'Inclusive Design and Accessibility of the Built Environment in Varanasi, India', AT2030 Case Study, 2021, <https://bit.ly/43JXwu8>.
- 58 Gabriela Yalangozian, 'Buscan Que Villa Carlos Paz Sea Un Destino Turístico Ciento Por Ciento Accesible', *MDZ*, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3NowWRV>.
- 59 See the Global Observatory of Sustainable Proximities, initiated by the ETI Chair, UCLG, C40 and UN-Habitat in 2022, as well as Carlos Moreno et al., 'Introducing the "15-Minute City": Sustainability, Resilience and Place Identity in Future Post-Pandemic Cities', *Smart Cities* 4, no. 1 (2021): 93–111; Zaheer Allam et al., 'Proximity-Based Planning and the "15-Minute City": A Sustainable Model for the City of the Future', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Sustainability*, ed. Robert Brinkmann (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 1–20; Zaheer Allam et al., 'The "15-Minute City" Concept Can Shape a Net-Zero Urban Future', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9, no. 1 (2022).
- 60 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality', 2022, <https://bit.ly/3INSuED>. In particular see Chapter 4 on Commoning.
- 61 In addition, the social housing programme "My House My Life" gives precedence to low-income households led by women and ensures the protection of women's housing rights in situations such as divorce. Libertun de Duren et al., 'Gender Inequalities in Cities'.
- 62 Tim Hanstad, 'Gender Equality: Women, Land, and

Data', World Bank Data Blog, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3CkIhf9>.

63 Hanstad.

64 Scholl et al., *Transport for Inclusive Development: Defining a Path for Latin America and the Caribbean*.

65 Radio de Noticias, 'Jatón Presentó El Plan Integrar Santa Fe Ante Referentes de Las Redes de Instituciones', Locales, 2020, <https://bit.ly/42Allg2>.

66 World Bank, 'Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design'.

67 VNG International, 'We Are Able!', 2023, <https://bit.ly/3P50Fi5>.

68 Ayuntamiento de Soria, 'Agenda Urbana Soria 2030', 2021, <https://bit.ly/3J60z7Z>.

69 Shalini Sinha, Malavika Narayan, and Avi Majithia, 'Claiming Space for Informal Work in Master Planning: Reflections from a People's Campaign in Delhi', WIEGO Policy Brief No. 28, 2022, <https://bit.ly/42tc14p>.

70 Constraints to financing transit related to political cycles, institutional capacity, lack of coordination and the need to maintain low operating costs can limit the degree to which discriminated and marginalized groups can enjoy the benefits of projects. This can result in unintended adverse impacts, such as longer walk times, unaffordable fares or the divisive effects of large infrastructure that cuts through neighbourhoods, fragmenting communities and natural habitats and reducing accessibility.

71 Yves Cabannes, 'The Impact of Participatory Budgeting on Basic Services: Municipal Practices and Evidence from the Field', *Environment and Urbanization* 27, no. 1 (2015): 257–84.



Supported by:



Co-funded by the European Union

Facilitated by:

