LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS' REPORT TO THE 2023 HLPF

PAPER 5

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE:

How local and regional governments advocate for balanced urban systems

GLOBAL TASKFORCE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Facilitated by:

UCLG United Cities and Local Governments

#SDG11
#HLPF2023
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2023 UCLG

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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
Paper 1. Housing and basic services from below: How LRGs are advancing the right to adequate housing Drafted by Camila Cociña, Researcher, and Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Principal Researcher, at the International Institute for Environment and Development	**LRGs:** Afadzato South District (Ghana), Barcelona (Spain), Bilbao (Spain), Esteban Echeverría (Argentina), Iztapalapa (Mexico), Montevideo (Uruguay), Montréal (Canada), Municipio B (Uruguay) **GTF networks:** Euro-Latin American Cities Cooperation Alliance (AL-LAs), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Mercociudades, UCLG, UCLG Africa **Partners:** Habitat International Coalition, World Blind Union
Paper 2. Integrated and participatory urban planning: How LRGs enable equality through feminism, accessibility and proximity 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	**LRGs and LGAs:** 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) **GTF networks:** C40, CEMR, Metropolis, UCLG, UCLG Africa **Partners:** 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
Paper 3. Forefronting transformative action: How local and regional governments are crafting social and environmental justice and sustainability Drafted by Adriana Allen, Professor of Development Planning and Urban Sustainability, and Julia Wesely, Researcher, at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL	**LRGs and LGAs:** Afadzato South District (Ghana), Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI), 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), Peñalolén (Chile), Pombal (Portugal), Rosario (Argentina), Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Terrassa (Spain), Villa María (Argentina), Viña del Mar (Chile) **GTF networks:** CEMR, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Local Governments Associations (FLACMA), UCLG, UCLG Africa **Partners:** World Blind Union
Paper 4. A cultural boost in the achievement of the SDGs: How LRGs are promoting cultural heritage and sustainable cities and territories Drafted by Marta Llobet, Agnès Ruiz, Sarah Vieux and Jordi Pascual, Secretariat of the UCLG Committee on Culture	**LRGs:** 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) **GTF networks:** Global Parliament of Mayors, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Resilient Cities Network, UCLG, Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI) **Partners:** 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
Paper 5. Multilevel governance and finance: How LRGs advocate for balanced urban systems Drafted by Caren Levy, Professor of Transformative Urban Planning at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL	**LRGs:** Basque Country (Spain) **GTF networks:** Metropolis, UCLG **Partners:** World Blind Union

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**.

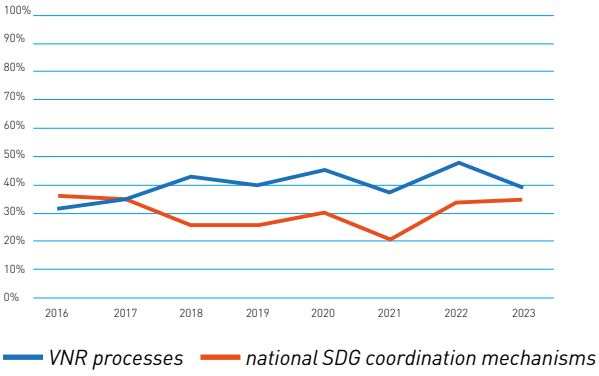
Paper 4 argues that while culture and heritage are hardly visible across the SDGs (and, indeed, should be addressed explicitly through a proposed SDG 18), they are fundamental dimensions of localizing sustainability agendas. This paper speaks particularly to achieving **SDG target 11.4**.

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

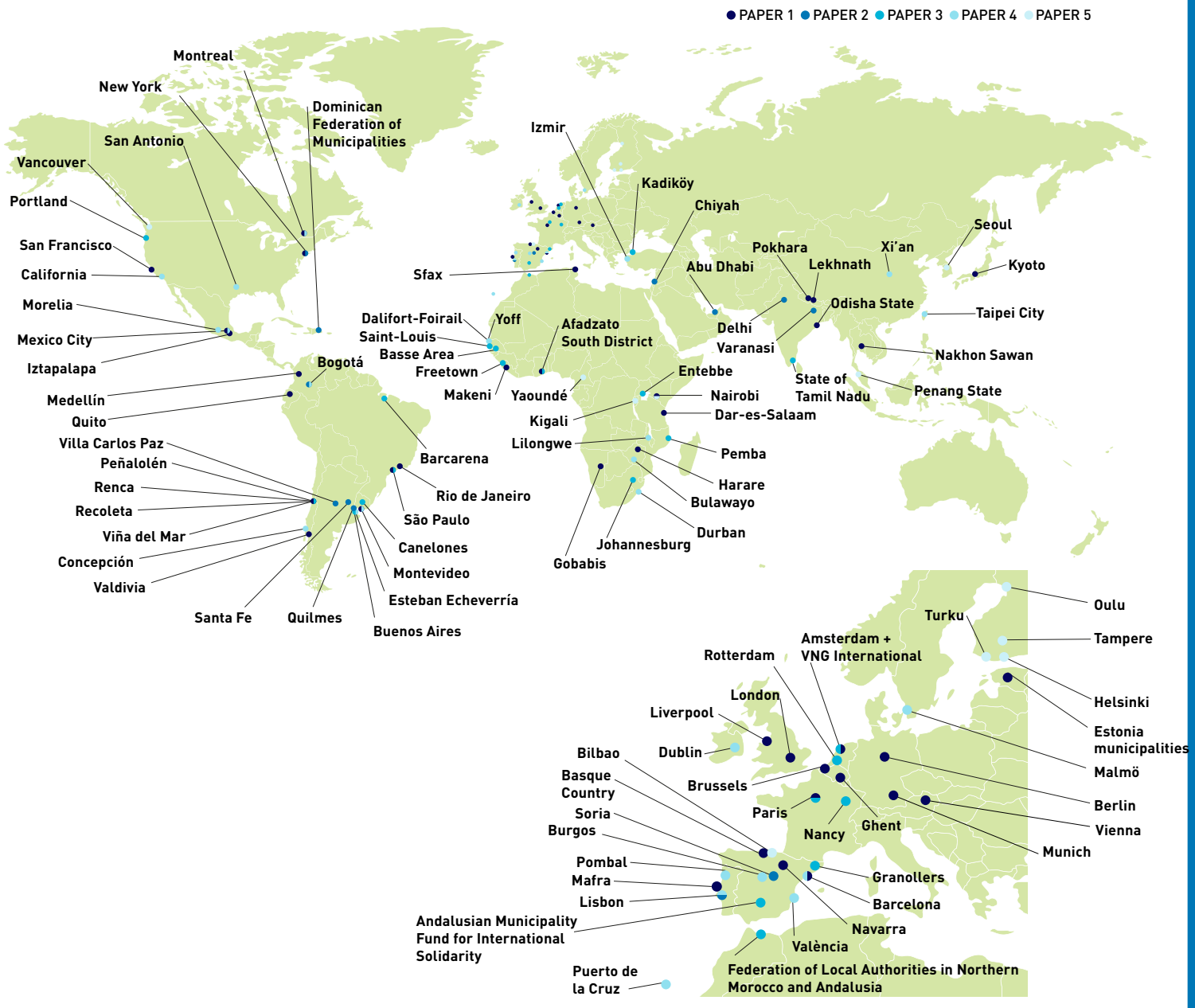


Since 2018, LRGs and their associations have produced over 240 VLRs and 37 VSRs

representing

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

PAPER 1
Housing and basic services from below: How local and regional governments are advancing the right to adequate housing

SDG 11 — 11.1

PAPER 2
Integrated and participatory urban planning: How local and regional governments enable equality through feminism, accessibility and proximity

SDG 11 — 11.2, 11.3, 11.7

PAPER 3
Forefronting transformative action: How local and regional governments are crafting social and environmental justice and sustainability

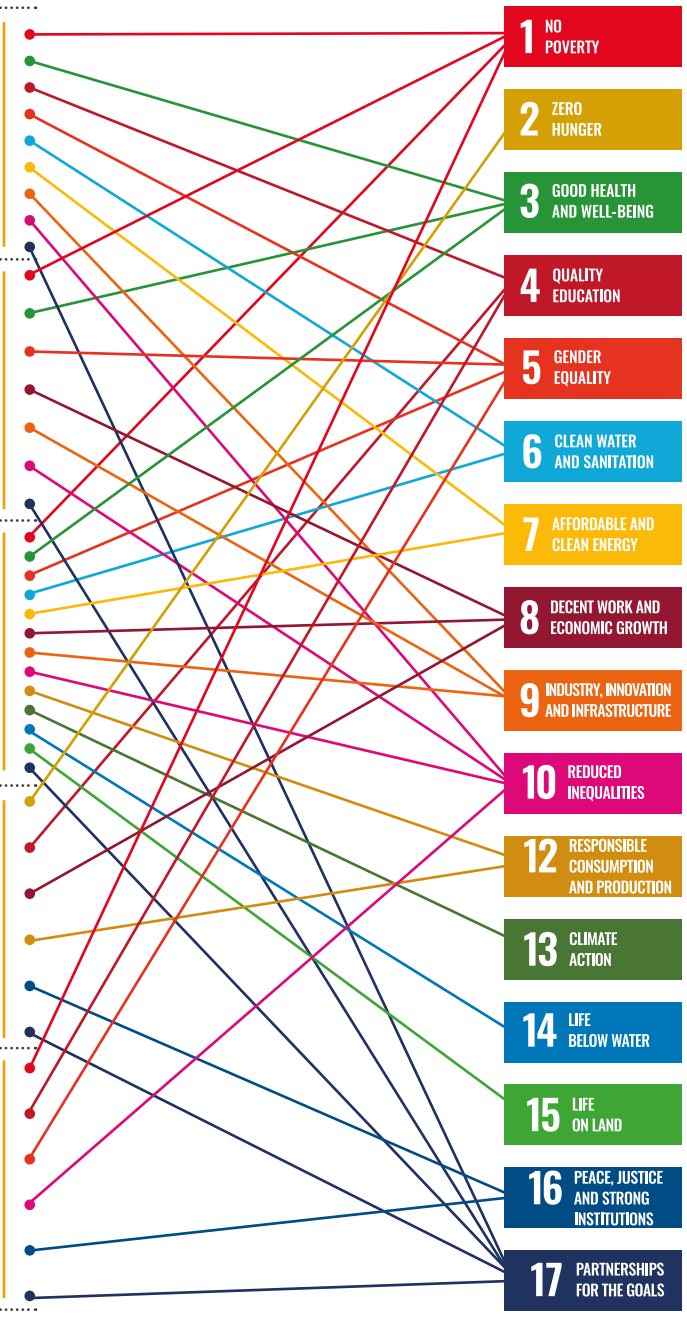
SDG 11 — 11.5, 11.6, 11.7, 11.b

PAPER 4
A cultural boost in the achievement of the SDGs: How local and regional governments are promoting cultural heritage and sustainable cities and territories

SDG 11 — 11.4

PAPER 5
Multilevel governance and finance: How local and regional governments advocate for balanced urban systems

SDG 11 — 11.a



Ways forward for SDG localization

Enhancing awareness and incentivizing action among local stakeholders and populations regarding the climate emergency and worsening inequalities

Strengthening decentralization and multilevel governance for greater LRG involvement in national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation

Systematizing LRGs' involvement in national reporting processes and supporting LRGs' reporting efforts, particularly through VLRs and VSRs

Mainstreaming localization in all efforts towards the global agendas with a renewed multilateral system that is more inclusive and accountable

Promoting feminism as an overarching vision for urban planning and sustainable development that places human rights and care at the centre

2. Introduction

Within Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, target 11.a reflects a global commitment to "Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning." In this vein, this paper focuses on promoting a positive reinforcing relationship between **balanced urban systems and national, regional and local policy and planning**. It does so by recognizing the need for national urban policies (NUPs) that support such balanced systems through **multilevel governance** that fosters policy coherence across different levels and policy integration to localize global development agendas.

Based on this, the paper identifies three interrelated dimensions of balanced urban systems:

- Decentralized multilevel governance that clearly defines institutional and financial roles and responsibilities with the principle of subsidiarity at the centre (SDG targets 11.a, 1.a, 4.7, 5.1, 10.3 and 16.3)
- National, regional and urban policy and planning that promotes balanced and equal urban and territorial systems (SDG targets 11.a, 1.b, 10.3 and 10.4)
- The right to democratic, inclusive, and active engagement in multilevel governance processes (SDG targets 11.3, 5.5, 10.6 and 16.8)

Local and regional governments (LRGs) are on the front line of global efforts to leave no one and no place behind. Making this commitment a reality requires more equitable, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development. **Specifically, SDG target 11.a calls for a focus on multilevel governance in which NUPs and regional development plans (RDPs) are central instruments working alongside and positively reinforcing local urban and territorial policy and planning.** In 2020, to monitor SDG target 11.a, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators adopted indicator 11.a.1: "Number of countries that have national urban policies or regional development plans that (a) respond to population dynamics; (b) ensure balanced territorial development; and (c) increase local fiscal space."[1]

This focus on urban development and multilevel governance is reflected in other SDG 11 targets and the New Urban Agenda (NUA), which was adopted by the international community at the United Nations (UN) Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in October 2016. At Habitat III, national governments committed to implementing NUPs as a key instrument to achieve sustainable and balanced urban and territorial development.[2] LRGs have also reaffirmed their role through different commitments such as the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Pact for the Future of Humanity, adopted at the 2022 World Congress in Daejeon. In this pact, LRG leaders pledge "to pursue an open, constructive and sustained structural dialogue with national governments to ensure joined-up delivery for all citizens, and communities." Furthermore, they recognize the importance of "the development of an interurban system of small, intermediary and large cities and metropolises, strengthening the urban-rural continuum."[3] At the core, the Pact is a call to redefine "governing in partnership." It aims "to place all citizens and communities at the core of the decision-making" in a multilevel governance system which seeks to advance urban equality.[4]

Through urban and regional planning countries are expected "to support positive economic, social and environmental links." Such planning should foster sustainable and inclusive urbanization and reduce the gaps between urban and rural areas to achieve the SDGs (see Papers 2 and 3). Urban and regional planning are critical levers for national governments to reinforce multilevel governance by fostering cooperation and mutual support across different levels of governments and by incentivizing and facilitating collaboration among regions, metropolitan areas, intermediary cities, small towns and their respective hinterlands.[5] This entails a **decentralized sharing of power and responsibilities across different spheres of government, robust and formalized institutional arrangements and adequate "local fiscal space" to decrease inequalities across territories, within urban centres and between urban and rural areas**.[6]

In this paper, Section 2 gives a brief overview of three global and regional trends related to inequalities in urban and territorial systems and current multilevel governance structures. Addressing these trends, Section 3 proposes three overlapping and reinforcing pathways that aim to strengthen decentralized and responsive multilevel governance. Section 4 highlights the challenges that LRGs face in realizing these pathways as well as the capacities they are building. In conclusion, Section 5 highlights key messages to advance LRGs' role in accelerating progress towards SDG target 11.a. and related SDGs to positively reinforce the *relationship between balanced urban and territorial systems* and *national, regional and local policy and planning*.

3. Trends

In assessing progress towards SDG target 11.a, this section gives an overview of three current trends related to inequalities in urban and territorial systems and national, regional and local planning within multilevel governance structures.

Growing economic, social and environmental inequalities across urban, peri-urban and rural areas

Despite some progress on reducing extreme poverty in many countries, megatrends indicate that inequalities are increasing. **The current economic and climate crisis, combined with persistent and longstanding income and spatial inequalities, is eroding social and territorial cohesion.** Cities and territories within countries are increasingly heterogeneous, with deepening social and spatial fragmentation. The growth of small and intermediate cities, along with metropolitan areas, reflects that neither the benefits nor the costs of urbanization have been spread equitably within cities and regions. The unprecedented and unmanaged growth of large cities and megacities not only results in intra-urban inequalities but also exacerbates inequalities between urban and rural hinterland. This "asymmetrical development compounds the urban spatial divide, especially with regard to secondary cities."[7]

In the last two decades, an increasing number of countries and urban areas have begun to experience growing internal territorial divergence, widening traditional gaps.[8] In developed countries, poor regions and neighbourhoods are characterized by economic marginalization and social problems. Peripheral regions suffer from rural desertification and shrinkage of cities. Within the countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), labour productivity in the most productive regions nearly doubles that of the least productive regions within the same country.[9] In the USA, large cities with at least one million inhabitants were those that recovered the fastest from the 2008 crisis. The most unequal cities in the USA have become even more unequal, with urban poverty tied to strong class and racial inequalities.[10] Between 2000 and 2016, in Europe, growth was better distributed. Nevertheless, several countries experienced spatially concentrated growth in a small number of cities and regions,[11] with mounting evidence of growing inequalities. In 2021, 95.4 million European Union (EU) inhabitants – 21.7% of the total population – were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.[12] For those in low and lower middle income groups, their ability to meet basic needs has been negatively affected by exorbitant increases in utility bills (e.g. electricity, water) and inflation.

Developing countries experience the highest levels of inequality. The urbanization of poverty has deepened existing inequalities in cities, especially those in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.[13] Globally, there is a growing divide across regions in access to basic services. About 70% of the urban population in developing countries is currently underserved by municipal services. In 2020, for example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, as much as 70% of the population lacked safely managed drinking water, compared to 38% in Central and South Asia and 25% in Latin America and the Caribbean. About 79% of the Sub-Saharan African population lacks access to safe sanitation services, compared to 66% in Latin America and the Caribbean and 53% in Central and South Asia (see Paper 1).[14] Slums and informal settlements are prevalent in South-East, Central and South Asia and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 56% of the urban population live in slums. The incidence of malnutrition is much higher in Africa (affecting 282 million people, or 21% of the population) despite the larger absolute numbers in Asia (418 million, or 9% of the population). 61.2% of global employment is in the informal sector, with the highest rates of informality corresponding to Africa (85.8%) and Asia-Pacific and the Arab states (68%). In the Global North, about 86% of people use the internet, compared to 47% in the Global South, with women "disproportionately excluded from access to digital tools and platforms."[15]

Inequalities are correlated with the rapid rate of urbanization, which is particularly challenging for Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia due to structural deficits.[16] These two regions concentrate the majority of people living in multidimensional poverty.[17] The urban population in these regions will expand by nearly a billion or more between 2020 and 2050. The pace and scale of this growth is creating new demands for infrastructure and services, as well as associated political and environmental pressures (see Paper 3).

Growing income inequalities, demographic trends, ongoing urbanization and climate change, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and regional armed conflicts, contribute to maintaining stark and persistent regional socio-economic disparities over the last decade.[18] Such disparities have an intersectional character, highlighting not only growing class-based inequalities but also those related to gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability and sexuality,[19] depending on the context. Not only do these inequalities contravene the right to the city of large numbers of urban residents, but they are also impacting established national and institutional governance relations (e.g. Brexit in the United Kingdom – UK –, fuelling populism and conflicts in several regions).[20]

Continued top-down national policies with a limited focus on inequalities in national urban and regional planning

To what extent has national urban and territorial planning, promoted by SDG target 11.a, succeeded in acting as a lever to address the inequalities outlined in the previous section and their expressions across the SDGs? To monitor SDG target 11.a, UN-Habitat, the OECD, and Cities Alliance published the 2021 edition of the *Global State of National Urban Policy* (GSNUP) report. This report highlights **the progress made in 162 countries that are developing and using NUPs**.[21] **Regular monitoring of SDG implementation through Voluntary National Reviews**

(VNRs) as well as Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) complements these monitoring efforts.[22]

An NUP is defined as "a coherent set of decisions through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors towards a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term."[23] The GSNUP report concludes that a majority of countries have NUPs, "although in different forms, at different development stages and with varying thematic foci."[24] Progress varies across countries and regions: 38% of countries have an NUP in the development stages and 62% have advanced an NUP to the implementation stage.[25] Among the 162 countries analyzed, only 91 countries explicitly used NUPs as a coherent strategy (an increase from 76 countries in 2018), while in the 71 other countries, urban policies are embedded in national development strategies or sectoral plans (e.g. housing, transport, land use).[26]

In fact, **among the 91 countries with explicit NUPs, only 23 countries have NUPs and 17 have RDPs that fulfil all three "qualifiers" of SDG indicator 11.a.1**. From a group of more than 58 countries with NUPs and 43 countries with RDPs that responded more in detail to the survey, 54 NUPs and 41 RDPs fulfilled the first qualifier on population dynamics, 55 NUPs and 37 RDPs tackled balanced territorial development, and 26 NUPs and 19 of RDPs aimed attention at increasing local fiscal space.[27]

These findings highlight a number of key problems that need to be addressed to accelerate progress towards SDG target 11.a. First, **the planning traditions of many countries have different understandings of what an NUP is and lack a comprehensive vision of regional planning founded on the concept of balanced territorial development and territorial cohesion**. Indeed, top-down strategies and policies with weak place-based approaches persist. Such strategies assume that the benefits of promoting socio-economic dynamism in key urban areas and regions will eventually spill over, or trickle down, into surrounding rural territories and less dynamic areas. Yet, this does not necessarily hold true in all cases. Instead, such policies have often led, *de facto*, to treating these "lagging" localities and regions as obstacles to national development.[28]

Second, **in addition to space and place, many of these policies also ignore social identity, which often results in wider inequality gaps between diverse urban and territorial populations**. Intersecting inequalities based on social identity are a defining feature of urbanization and urban development, and they need to be recognized and addressed in policy and planning. For example, in Bangladesh, where 50% of urban growth is due to rural-urban migration, this migration is "gendered, with women making up a large proportion of rural-urban migration, drawn into the garment industry."[29]

Third, **while NUPs are an important first step, the 2022 quadrennial report of the UN Secretary-General on the implementation of the NUA observed that an uptake in adoption of NUPs has not yet translated into impact in local urban planning**. For example, "in much of Africa, urban plans are being used to attract the private sector, both locally and internationally, to invest in sustainability projects that unfortunately do not substantially improve public infrastructure. This mismatch indicates that policy coherence through a[n] NUP is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective multilevel governance."[30]

Fourth, local fiscal space, as outlined in SDG indicator 11.a.1, is a critical condition for LRGs to have room for manoeuvre to build more equal and collaborative territories. However, because of the demands of the pandemic, government expenditure has been negatively impacted, with increases in expenditure to the detriment of capital expenditure and direct investment.[31]

A global analysis of 122 countries, published by the OECD and UCLG, demonstrates the importance of local fiscal space – and the difficulties LRGs are facing in many countries. Table 1 indicates the role that LRGs, by region, already play in contributing to public expenditure, revenue and public investment. Globally, in 2020, LRGs accounted for 21.5% of total public spending and 8.3% of the gross domestic product or GDP (general government revenues and expenditures account for an average of 31% of GDP). In 48% of countries, primarily from Africa, the Middle East and West Asia but also several Latin American countries, LRGs have more limited spending responsibilities. The proportion is even lower in least developed countries (LDCs), where total LRG expenditures and revenues accounted for less than 2% to 3% of GDP in 22 countries.[32]

Table 1 LRGs' average percentage of public expenditure, revenue and public investment in 2020, by region

Region	LRGs' average % public expenditure	LRGs' average % revenue	LRGs' average % public investment
Africa	11.6%	14.9%	23.9%
Asia-Pacific	33.7%	39.1%	47.2%
Europe and North America	26.6%	29.9%	42.3%
Eurasia	26.5%	29.8%	38.7%
Latin America	17.8%	23.0%	45.1%
Middle East and West Asia	8.8%	10.9%	29.6%
World	**21.5%**	**25.9%**	**39.5%**

Source: Based on data from the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Spending (SNG-WOFI)

With regard to public investments, essential for local infrastructure, LRGs play a key role globally: they manage 39.5% of total public investment (1.5% of GDP). The share of LRG investment as a percentage of GDP is the highest in Asia-Pacific, where it is nearly twice as high as in Africa.[33] In the context of LDCs, SNG-WOFI (2022) states that these figures are embedded in continued unclear divisions of responsibilities, unfunded or under-funded mandates and a lack of LRG participation in programme budget processes.[34]

Each of these four issues points to problematic trends in multilevel governance structures and, in particular, to a lack of progress towards effective decentralization that constrains the effective implementation of NUPs to build more equal and balanced territories.

Limited participation of LRGs and citizens in processes of multilevel governance

This trend concerns to what extent LRGs and citizens participate in "the deliberations, imagination and decisions about current and future urban and territorial trajectories."[35] The development of NUPs – and other instruments to advance the SDGs – is an opportunity to develop more place-based policies that redefine and strengthen national and subnational roles and responsibilities, not only for increased coherence and efficiency but also for partnership and legitimacy.[36] **Coordination between national and subnational governments, as well as with local civil society and private sector stakeholders, is critical in any NUP and SDG process.** While some progress can be observed – for example, in Chile's multistakeholder National Council for Urban Development, the Spanish Urban Agenda and South Africa's Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF)[37] – the participation of LRGs and non-LRG stakeholders continues to be limited. Out of 86 countries, "51 (59%) use legislation and regulatory mechanisms and 44 (51%) have a platform of dialogue between national and sub-national governments in different NUP stages."[38] The number of countries that engage with non-governmental stakeholders – civil society and the private sector – is even lower.[39]

There are different perceptions about the involvement of national governments and LRGs through the different NUP stages. According to the GSNUP report in 48 out of 59 countries that responded to the survey, the highest engagement with subnational governments occurred in the feasibility stage (23 countries said it was extensive, 27 reported moderate and 18 reported low). Engagement dropped off in subsequent stages with the lowest being the monitoring and evaluation stage (18 countries said it was extensive, 17 reported moderate and 11 reported low).[40] This information can be contrasted with a survey carried out in parallel by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and UCLG that collected information on LRGs' involvement in NUPs in 53 countries. In 33 countries with explicit or implicit NUPs, LRG were involved in 22 countries, a lower or more moderate level of involvement than in the GSNUP report.[41]

Citizen participation in multilevel governance structures varies widely across different contexts. There are worrying trends that 75% of the global population lives in 73 countries where political rights and civil liberties are declining.[42] Political representation also exhibits strong patterns based on gender, age, ethnicity, race and disability, depending on the context. For example, although women's representation is generally higher in local governments than at the national level, in 2020, "**Only 20 countries [...] have reached over 40 per cent women in local decision-making bodies and an additional 28 countries have women's representation between 30 and 40 per cent** [...]. Seventy countries fall between 10 and 30 per cent women's representation, and 15 countries have less than 10 per cent women's representation."[43] Trends indicate that equal identity-based representation in multilevel governance structures declines from local to national levels.

4. Pathways to multilevel governance: Towards people-, rights- and care-centred approaches to leave no place and no one behind

At the heart of achieving SDG target 11.a, there is an urgent need to strengthen multilevel governance as an enabling framework for national, regional and urban planning that reinforces pathways to equality throughout national urban systems. **An effective multilevel governance system "allows the allocation of competences and responsibilities of government both vertically and horizontally in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity," recognizing that the form this takes, including the interdependence between levels, is context-specific.** Multilevel governance requires that all levels share information and collaborate fully, "so every level can manage horizontal relations with its respective stakeholders in public and accountable ways."[44]

Maintaining the focus on developing inclusive, coherent and accountable NUPs, this section outlines and shares experiences related to three intersecting pathways or trajectories for change in a multilevel governance framework that will accelerate more balanced and equitable urban and territorial systems. The first pathway is creating the governance framework for NUPs, which, in effect, dovetails with the project of decentralization and the principle of subsidiarity. The second is developing NUPs, exploring ways to make them more inclusive, coherent and accountable. Finally, the third pathway deepens the notion of accountability, linking the development of NUPs not only to the participation of LRGs but also to that of other actors, in particular civil society, based on the quest to put people at the centre of development.

Creating a coherently decentralized multilevel governance framework with the principle of subsidiarity at the centre

The first pathway is to create the institutional conditions for effective national and urban planning through a decentralized system based on the principle of subsidiarity.[45] Almost all regions of the world "have expanded local self-government authorities, particularly from the 1990s, through processes that have involved different degrees of deconcentration, delegation and devolution [...] processes [that] combine *administrative, fiscal,* and *political* elements."[46] In 2022, there were over 637,900 LRGs in the world, based on the definition of an LRG as a "decentralised entity elected through universal suffrage and having general responsibilities and some autonomy with respect to budget, staff and assets."[47] Globally, LRGs encompass 624,166 municipal entities, 11,965 intermediate governments and 1,769 state and regional governments. Looking at different regions, Asia-Pacific has the largest number of LRGs with 426,611, followed by Europe, Eurasia, North America, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East and West Asia.[48]

When LRGs are adequately resourced and empowered, they can play a critical role in the development of policies, programmes and projects aimed at addressing a range of socio-economic, environmental and spatial challenges in their territories. For example, mobilizing LRGs to provide local infrastructure investment and to improve public services is crucial for more equal urban and territorial development. Table 3.5.1 showed the role that LRGs already play in contributing to public expenditure, revenue and public investment. To ensure decentralization and the capacity to act, a balance needs to be established between the allocation of responsibilities and resources to LRGs in multilevel governance structures.

Empowered LRGs are also important in the context of disaster risk reduction. Learning from the pandemic "has revealed that having a diversified funding system based on a basket of revenues made of grants (for delegated functions or priority objectives), tax revenues, tariffs and fees and property income also diversifies risks and contributes to coping better with external shocks. It also makes the continuity of public service delivery more likely during a period of crisis."[49]

Putting subsidiarity into practice implies a particular kind of "governing in partnership," as highlighted in the UCLG Pact for the Future of Humanity.[50] In fact, such governing in partnership is **undermined by a global mismatch, in almost all regions, between the increasing responsibilities transferred to LRGs and the revenue they receive**. In most regions, **incomplete fiscal decentralization and limited access to borrowing undermine the coherence of national and local policies and the upgrading of territorial and urban initiatives**. Box 1 shows an alternative vision for multilevel governance partnerships in the context of EU regional development.

BOX 1

EU Cohesion Policy: Supranational policy frameworks with urban competences were particularly evident Europe[51]

The EU Cohesion Policy, the EU's integrated and multinational regional and urban policy, is one of the largest local and regional economic development programmes in the world operating under one broad legal and institutional architecture. The overwhelming focus of the policy is on fostering economic development in weaker regions (the least prosperous ones and those facing industrial decline), improving connectivity, enhancing environmental quality and promoting more socially equitable local societies.

Several principles are at the core of the EU Cohesion Policy: (a) **partnership**, meaning that countries and LRGs are required to co-finance every project (with different co-financing ratios – the poorest regions are eligible for the largest shares of funding, with progressively more prosperous regions eligible for progressively less funding); (b) **shared management** in implementation; and (c) **subsidiarity**, which states that the management of the policy should be devolved downwards to the lowest level that is meaningful. As such, in many countries, LRGs should be managing and delivering the policy in a manner which is close enough to the local context.

Two main instruments, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), are used to implement EU Cohesion Policy funding in an integrated and place-based manner. These tools help guarantee that local governments and local stakeholders will be closely involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the EU funds they receive. Feedback from local government associations in 2021 was quite positive. ITI and CLLD empower local authorities and, in doing so, build their capacities to manage EU funds.[52]

These shared management practices across the EU Cohesion Policy landscape are a key part of building multilevel governance arrangements among the different governance levels (local, national, regional) across Europe to deliver territorial development and integration. These processes also reinforce trust among the different governance levels.

These are critical dimensions for implementing NUPs. Reforms require fiscal systems that foster an incremental approach to promote buoyant local tax systems, ensure a fairer share of national fiscal revenues through regular and transparent intergovernmental transfers and facilitate access to responsible borrowing. Likewise, improving redistribution of resources across territories for equalization purposes requires large-scale schemes to balance the tensions between territories.[53]

By strengthening the fiscal architecture to ensure secure revenue streams for improved planning and investment at different scales, NUPs can enhance cities' access to finance and improve their capacity to raise and manage own-source revenue. As underlined by the GSNUP report, resources can be mobilized through different sources to enhance local fiscal space. The report indicates that the most important source of financing for NUP implementation is national government investment (67% of countries, particularly in Africa), followed by co-financing between national and subnational governments (42%, more usual in Europe and North America) and subnational government investment (35%, more prominent in Asia).[54]

National regulatory frameworks determine how LRGs can access particular funding sources and deploy specific financing mechanisms. At the same time, **flexible and efficient horizontal or vertical equalization mechanisms are needed to mitigate the structural differences between territories or the unequal impact of crises**. Co-financing between national and subnational governments is a common practice, for example, through "City Deals" (Australia) or city or territorial contracts (France and Colombia). National fiscal incentives can encourage joint municipal plans in major city regions. For example, Finland has used "MAL contracts" to integrate land use, infrastructure for new housing areas and sustainable transport in urban regions of **Helsinki**, **Tampere**, **Turku** and **Oulu** for 2020 to 2031. Ireland is providing a 2 billion EUR Urban Regeneration and Development Fund for a wide range of projects, such as low carbon and climate resilient projects in an urban context.[55]

At the same time, working with international institutions and national development banks can enhance financial instruments for channelling funding to improve the financing capacity of LRGs. LRGs and several partners are supporting alternative ways to facilitate access to the financing of a sustainable urban transition.[56] **LRGs can also provide critical support to enable scaling up local action through community funds. This can set in motion a blended finance model that promotes greater political, social and financial inclusion** (e.g. as implemented in Thailand and Zimbabwe).[57]

Developing a reinforcing set of national, regional and local policies and plans to create a balanced and equal interurban system of small, intermediary and large cities and metropolises

Recent reforms in local governance aim to respond to urbanization trends as well as unequal territorial development processes. Differences among regions, metropolitan areas, peripheral cities, intermediary cities,[58] and rural territories require particular attention. For example, **NUPs could enable the development of intermediary cities to play a key role to promote spatially balanced development, with these cities acting as regional economic hubs and providing essential services to both urban and rural populations**. Improving their functions and efficiencies, intermediary cities could lift the performance of national economies, alleviate pressures on metropolitan regions and help reduce rising interregional inequalities. **Attention should also be paid to the of-**

ten-extractive relations between urban and rural territories to promote a more balanced form of territorial development. In Africa, for example, small towns and intermediary cities are growing, absorbing a large share of the exponentially rising urban population. However, they are not always able to retain their inhabitants, who move towards metropolitan cities.[59] Governments need to put their intermediary cities at the core of their regional and national development strategies to support more balanced urban systems.

In parallel, the increasing role of large cities (metropolises, megacities) and urban corridors and regions, are a clear example of territorial polarization. National policies often promote metropolitan champions to be more competitive. To face the rising complexity of metropolitan governance (fragmented power-sharing among municipalities and other actors), the number of metropolitan governance reforms has increased.[60] However, **to address inefficiencies and inequalities in metropolitan governance and linked peripheral cities, there is a need for a new approach to shape polycentric metropolitan areas that facilitate more inclusive access to infrastructure and services, promoting intermunicipal cooperation, supported by financial incentives and equalization mechanisms that reduce the fragmentation between core and peripheral areas and neighbourhoods**.

As stressed by UN-Habitat and the NUA, more localized policies can help:

> *"to realize sustainable urban futures, an integrated and territorial approach to urban development [...]. Various levels of government can develop and implement national urban policies and strategies that ensure integrated spatial growth and development to harness the potential of inclusive and balanced urban systems and territorial cohesion."* [61]

Yet, this approach is still very limited. Even if most countries recognize the potential of NUPs to advance equality and the SDGs, important efforts are needed to increase countries' commitment and reporting to align national urban and territorial policies.

NUPs are particularly important for Sub-Saharan Africa, where urbanization is rapid and local governments are typically weak. Around 18 African countries have policies that resemble an NUP (explicit or implicit), often with international support.[62] However, many explicit NUPs lack resources to deploy comprehensive NUPs and very few countries have the financial and technical capacity to implement their NUPs. Challenges range from structural socio-economic constraints, aggravated by the impact of globalization, to incomplete fiscal decentralization and lack of coherence between local policy guidelines and the different global agendas. The case of South Africa highlights the complexity of using an NUP to address historical inequalities inherited from apartheid, within a carefully constructed decentralized institutional architecture (see Box 2).[63]

BOX 2

Urban policies in South Africa to fight against apartheid[64]

Over a long period, territorial policy has been used in South Africa to drive racial inequality. As a result, there are strongly marked racial inequalities in the distribution of infrastructure, service levels, environmental protection and quality of life across the country – and also within brutally segmented urban settlements.

The national government is currently working to improve the coordination and coherence of its global, regional, national, provincial and local development plans, particularly with respect to the 2030 Agenda, the African Agenda 2063 and the Southern African Development Community's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan. In 2016, the national government adopted the Integrated Urban Development Framework, South Africa's NUP, an initiative coordinated by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in collaboration with other national departments, local government associations and international partners. Together with the National Development Plan 2030, the IUDF represents South Africa's vehicle for localizing the NUA. The IUDF has been promoted not as a policy or plan but as an "all of society" approach to implementing the NUA and its four strategic goals of spatial integration, inclusion and access, inclusive growth and effective governance.

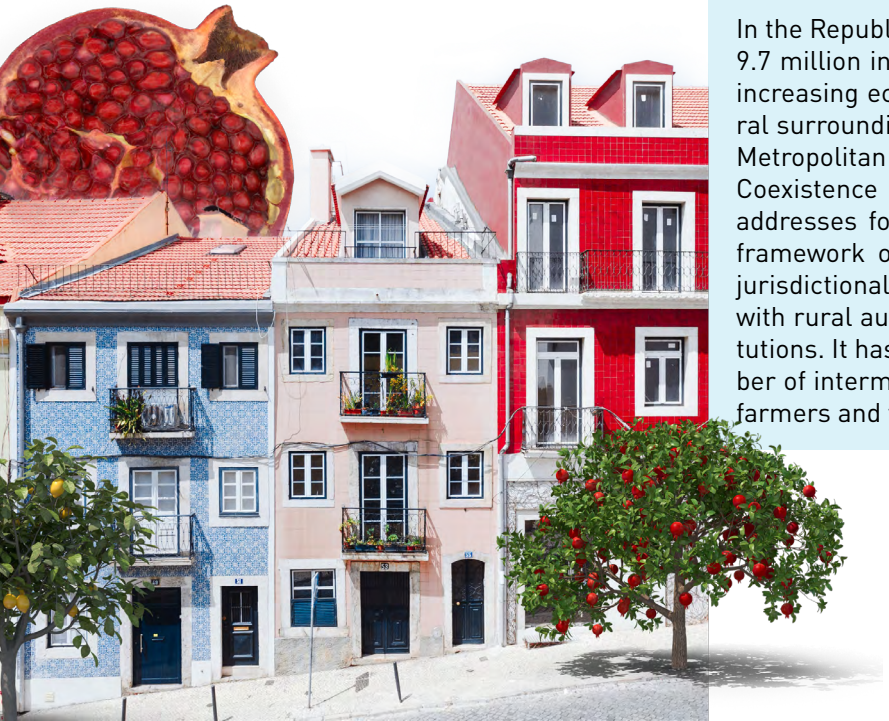
Provincial and municipal governments are responsible for IUDF roll-out through their provincial and municipal spatial development frameworks and strategies. However, clear guidelines and support for the implementation of the IUDF at the local level and for how the IUDF can contribute to other development agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, are weak. This is because the responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of these agendas lies with other government departments such as the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. More attention needs to be given to all of the supporting policies – ensuring policy coherence – on which inequality rests and has become spatially embedded or locked in.

In the context of multilevel governance frameworks, NUPs need to ensure alignment and coordination across sectoral ministries and across different levels of government. Centralization, policy silos, lack of place-based content, "persistent data and information gaps, and weak capacity continue to challenge both national and subnational governments in making the most of NUPs' potential."[65] In the 86 countries that facilitated information for the GSNUP report, 64 countries (74%) have already deployed formal multiministerial platforms between the leading NUP ministry (a ministry or agency specialized in urban issues, designated in 54 countries) and relevant sectoral ministries to facilitate coordination. Still, fifteen

countries indicated that the NUP leading institution is not clearly defined.[66] While progress is observed, insufficient coordination is one of the key challenges). Cross-sectoral and intergovernmental coordination ultimately involves developing planning that seeks to equalize access to income, decent work, health, housing, basic and social services, connectivity, safety and security. This not only requires a re-thinking of "integrated" planning but also raises the questions of how NUPs address performance criteria to promote equal access and how such criteria acknowledge contextual factors when localized.[67]

In the same vein, coordination between the SDGs and national, regional and local policy and planning is also evident. Most countries are making efforts to align their national development plans or strategies with the SDGs,[68] but references in these plans to local development plans or localization strategies are still limited. Highly centralized, top-down and space-unaware policies limit local development opportunities.[69] Box 3 highlights efforts made in Rwanda to coordinate SDGs with national and local urban planning.

At the subnational level, intermunicipal cooperation is an approach adopted by LRGs that can contribute to more horizontal coordination. Such cooperation may have a single, specific purpose or several different ones. Examples include improved service quality through economies of scale, attraction of investment funds and enhanced economic performance through coordinated planning while, at the same time, providing better environmental protection (e.g. for waste management, health or school services). Intermunicipal cooperation is well-developed in countries such as France, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the USA as well as in many countries in Asia and Latin America.[70] Box 4 demonstrates examples of rural-urban local government consortiums that were formed in Ecuador and the Republic of Korea to address food security.



BOX 3

Localizing the SDGs in Rwanda: Using national and regional territorial policies and plans[71]

The Rwandan government has made strong commitments to translating global commitments into national visions and programmes, as well as into local plans, illustrating an emblematic case of SDG localization. For example, it allocated the role for overseeing SDG localization to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and built a special task force for intersectoral and interagency coordination. Starting at the top and cutting across all levels of government institutions, responsible entities were identified to cover strategic aspects as well as day-to-day implementation.

Urbanization is one of the key challenges for the country. Early master plans such as the 2013 **Kigali** City Master Plan have been critiqued for providing an inadequate and rigid economic blueprint, "largely a production of an international cadre of planners and architects, with a staff composition of 75% foreign and only 25% local."[72] However, this master plan's revision as well as the 2015 National Urbanization Policy, the Urbanization and Rural Settlement Sector Strategic Plan 2018–2024, and the national roadmap for green secondary cities have been widely commended for their inclusive visions. Specifically, they aim to integrate rural and urban areas while reducing resource depletion particularly associated with urban sprawl.

BOX 4

Regional economic development in Ecuador and the Republic of Korea[73]

In Ecuador, the population of **Pichincha** Province is unevenly distributed, with almost 90% of inhabitants living in the capital city of Quito. A consortium of local governments was formed in 2014 to address high rates of poverty through linking local and national policy implementation. This manifested, for example, in the comprehensive Quito Food Strategy, formally adopted in 2018, which built on participatory urban agriculture experiences to produce, promote and distribute food products from the territory, combatting economic inequalities and improving health.

In the Republic of Korea, the rapidly growing city of **Seoul** with 9.7 million inhabitants is facing a dual challenge: addressing increasing economic inequalities between the city and its rural surroundings and securing food for its population. Seoul's Metropolitan Government therefore created the Urban-Rural Coexistence Public Meal Service in 2017. This programme addresses food safety and security and provides a renewed framework of urban-rural coexistence. It also builds interjurisdictional governance capacities by pairing urban districts with rural authorities in order to supply meals to public institutions. It has resulted in reduced distribution costs and number of intermediaries and has promoted direct trade between farmers and the population.

Metropolitan areas could also play a key role in fostering new forms of governance that link core urban areas to a wider range of smaller urban areas and rural areas. The case of city-region combined authorities in the UK illustrates this, as does the initiative in **Metro Vancouver** (Canada). In the latter, 21 municipalities, one electoral area and one First Nation have worked together since 2007 to provide a collaborative framework for promoting regional growth, supporting liveability and agreeing on a vision and actions related to regional priorities.[74] Positive urban-rural partnerships are central to search for complementary assets and capabilities for infrastructure provision, service delivery and preservation of key resources (e.g. water, land, agriculture and forests). Cooperation and coordination built on relationships of trust are critical for rural-urban governance partnerships. A key means for building this trust is providing groups of local authorities with the flexibility to identify which modes of cooperation are most appropriate for addressing the challenges territories are facing, keeping in mind differences in power and priorities.

Nested in decentralized structures based on principles of subsidiarity, partnership and inclusion, this pathway fosters policy cohesion and the urban-rural continuum, integrated action across sectoral silos, and area- or place-based approaches that acknowledge and value the diverse needs and aspirations of the population, including marginal and peripheral areas and groups. The latter links policy and planning to participatory processes that engage with LRGs as well as citizens, which is the focus of the third pathway to urban equality.

Promoting inclusive, participatory and accountable multilevel democratic governance processes

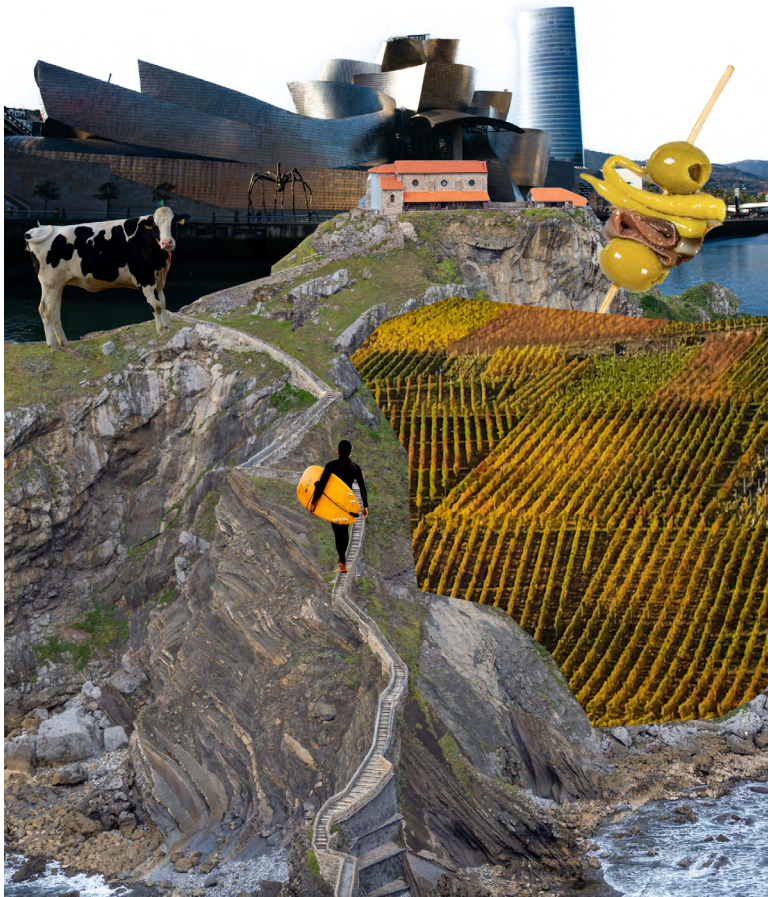
Urban and territorial policies and planning are unlikely to address inequalities unless they are supported by multilevel governance arrangements that involve all spheres of government, including LRGs, as well as local civil society and private sector actors in all their diversity. **Not only are participatory and accountable governance practices a right, but they are also more likely to promote locally tailored strategies, make more effective use of resources and, in the longer term, create local ownership and a more robust democratic system.**

To operate on the principle of subsidiarity and respect local autonomy and adequate financing, it is necessary for national, regional and local planning to determine the appropriate spatial scale on which to operate (reflecting citizens' and territorial priorities). Such planning requires targeting, through area- or place-based approaches, highly disadvantaged territories and neighbourhoods. In addition, it requires building on and reinforcing conditions that ensure substantial, sustained, coordinated and concrete responses to governance challenges are mobilized across appropriate scales.[75] As polarization of urban systems and interregional inequalities become more evident, a gradual shift is observed in different regions in the way regional and urban policies are being re-designed. Significant examples are the territorial cohesion policies and the new EU urban policy – the Pact of Amsterdam (2016) and the New Leipzig Charter (2020) – that can be found in the EU, which also include the principles to promote a more integrated and inclusive involvement of LRGs.

There are several noteworthy examples of national and supranational participatory management of natural resources such as forests, water bodies and renewable resources (see Paper 3). This type of operation has been implemented in many parts of the world, including in Brazil, France, Malaysia and the Niger River Basin, with local governments' and stakeholders' involvement.

With regard to collaborative access to data, in **Nairobi** (Kenya), grassroots movements and civil society organizations have successfully built upon years of data collection and advocacy to develop a holistic, participatory upgrading process at scale. This process has received strong support from local governments' official agencies, academics and other partners (see Paper 1).

When adequately empowered and resourced, LRGs may enjoy a privileged position to coordinate and foster equality-driven actions, including to support multilevel governance, more inclusive metropolitan areas, intermunicipal cooperation and the management of rural-urban interlinkages. Cooperation can take different forms, from localized collaboration between municipalities to regional and supraregional collaboration. Box 5 highlights the example of the Basque Country (Spain).



BOX 5

Subnational government cooperation: Regional Government of the Basque Country (Spain)[76]

Since 2017, the regional government of the **Basque Country** (Spain) has developed a multilevel and multi-stakeholder strategy to better align regional, provincial and municipal planning and actions for SDG localization. The Basque Country is home to a population of 2.1 million, 80% of whom live in cities. This framework structures actions to localize the SDGs, promoting "vertical" and "horizontal" development.

Vertical development integrates multilevel governance, with specific responsibilities by level of government:

- At the **regional** level, framed within the SDG "Decade of Action" strategy, the regional government aligned four-year legislative planning with the SDG targets and indicators under an umbrella strategy: the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda. Four additional initiatives were put into place: sustainable bonds, the Education for Sustainability Strategy, best practices from government bodies and agencies, and the Basque Foundation for Food Safety.

- At the **provincial** level, various provinces led specific efforts: budget alignment (Gipuzkoa), cross-sector alliances (Araba), and an SDG-oriented tax system (Biscay).

- At the **municipal** level, municipalities promoted a collective transition from Agenda 21 to the 2030 Agenda and produced the Local 2030 Agenda, a practical guide for aligning municipal strategies with the SDGs. NGOs are also active development partners.

Four components cut across this multilevel structure:

- **Accountability** through yearly reports to the Basque Parliament and the Open Government Platform

- **Data management** by the Basque Statistical Office, including alignment and adaptation of SDG indicators

- **Training on the "SDG Vision"** in yearly modules for public administration (technical and political) and the private sector (small and medium-sized enterprises and clusters)

- **Support from academia** through the University 2030 Agenda

In 2019, the Basque Country also adopted the Basque Urban Agenda (Bultzatu 2050) and neighbourhood-based urban regeneration initiatives. This agenda defines the Basque Region as a "polycentric urban region" and, together with the initiatives, they constitute as a strategy "bridging" regional government, provincial government and municipal action.[77] The Basque regional government has a long tradition of inclusive and integrated endogenous development, the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, smart specialization focused on research and technology, and the creation of regional clusters by taking advantage of their mutual proximity.

The active participation of citizens and their representative organizations is central to constructing an accountable multilevel governance system. **Data on political representation indicates that national, regional and local governments have to do more to ensure more equal and meaningful engagement in decision-making at different levels.** Specifically, they need to address inequalities based on class, gender, age, ethnicity, race, disability and sexuality, depending on the context. With political commitment, transparent procedures and clear communication, collaborative governance among the full diversity of local stakeholders and local officers can create greater levels of trust as well as co-produced knowledge and skills. With such an approach, planning can promote more balanced territorial development, a necessary condition for greater urban and territorial equality. The practice of participatory budgeting brings together the elements of decentralization with people at the centre: citizen decision-making and fiscal responsibility supported by legal and administrative frameworks with subsidiarity at the core. Box 6 demonstrates the experiences and conditions for successful participatory budgeting across a range of different contexts.

BOX 6

Participatory budgeting: The examples of Yaoundé (Cameroon) and Penang (Malaysia)[78]

Since the late 1980s, participatory budgeting has democratized decision-making and provided a transparent and accountable space for collaboration between local governments and civil society. More than 10,000 experiences have been identified in 71 countries.[79] The participatory budgeting process includes several steps: proposing projects, determining their prioritization and putting proposed projects to a citizen vote.

Documentation of the experiences indicates that participatory budgeting initiatives are mostly organized by territorial unit (mostly neighbourhood- or district-level) or by theme. An example of the former are participatory budgeting processes in **Yaoundé** (Cameroon), where the ASSOAL association facilitates decision-making on investments for basic needs such as water, sanitation and energy in highly disadvantaged communities. The thematic approach is practiced in **Penang State** (Malaysia), where two local councils evaluate public expenditure according to its contribution to gender equality and social justice.

Participatory practices also ensure that LRGs and local communities are regularly involved in **monitoring and evaluation** of local, regional and national policies and plans for the implementation of the SDGs and the NUA, including through digital governance. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and contemporary technological changes have opened up new opportunities for LRGs to communicate with and involve citizens (e.g. e-democracy and ICT-based participation).[80]

Promoting inclusive, participatory and accountable multilevel democratic governance processes as an intrinsic part of national, regional and local planning builds people-, rights- and care-centred democracies. These processes empower citizens and inhabitants and enable constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation and solidarity among all spheres of government.

5. Towards local recommendations within multilevel governance: LRG challenges and needs

Enabling institutional environment

Creating an enabling institutional environment in the context of decentralization, with subsidiarity at its heart, is a political, administrative and fiscal challenge for both LRGs and national governments. **NUPs have a strategic role to play in recognizing the importance of LRGs in addressing inequalities in urban and territorial systems and in reinforcing the necessary enabling institutional conditions to do so.**

Institutional arrangements vary widely, depending on whether a state is unitary or federal, on the culture of governance and on changing political and policy priorities. With this complexity in mind, there are three interdependent conditions for decentralized multilevel governance:[81]

- **Political** decentralization: it establishes the legal basis for the devolution of power
- **Administrative** decentralization: it reorganizes the assignment of tasks across levels of government, and usually assigns LRGs the competences to adopt decisions around planning, financial and management
- **Fiscal** decentralization: it delegates taxing and spending responsibilities to LRGs; the degree of decentralization depends on the amount of resources that are delegated and the autonomy of the LRGs to manage them

With these three conditions in place, the paper demonstrates how LRGs, independently or jointly, are in the best position to address inequalities and contribute substantially to balanced urban systems.

Resources

While LRGs can orchestrate a range of resources, they are reliant on national governments for key material resources and often the procedures that regulate them. As noted above, **finance is key in the effective practice of decentralized governance, and local fiscal space is an important indicator for SDG 11.a. However, insufficient financial and human resources continue to be a major challenge for LRGs in implementing NUPs.** This was reported by 54% of the 48 national governments surveyed for the GSNUP report.[82] Despite this, many LRGs are carrying out innovative financial projects, strengthening revenue raising options and entering into partnerships with the private sector and civil society.

Even in this constrained financial context, human resources are a central issue to enable LRGs to deliver their mandates. LRGs are already important public sector employers, with expenditure on staff accounting for 35.3% of subnational government spending globally in 2020.[83] However, LRGs have critical human resources weaknesses, particularly in developing countries. Recruitment, retention and capacity building are key levers for strengthening the quality and diversity of LRG capacities for improved service delivery and urban/territorial development.

Data is also a critical resource for LRG policy-making and planning and a key challenge in the formulation of NUPs. As noted by UN-Habitat, "**Deficits in the quality and quantity of high-value data exist throughout cities globally and are accentuated within cities in low- and middle-income countries, which can obscure certain populations even as decision-makers push forward with crisis response and investment decisions.** However, as the *World Data Report 2021* states, simply gathering more data is not the answer, if data is not effectively linked to improve development outcomes."[84] This presents an ongoing challenge for LRGs as well as for national statistical offices, which have been under increasing financial pressure through the pandemic.[85] LRG partnerships with civil society organizations are an important source of knowledge co-production in this context (see Paper 1).[86]

Capacities

To be effectively used, resources need to be complemented by a range of capacities. Capacities for practicing subsidiarity in multilevel governance structures go beyond traditional policy and planning competences. **Central are capacities that enable more effective and diverse forms of communication and cooperation throughout all stages of policy-making and planning to achieve balanced and equitable urban systems. This includes new technological capacities to use ICT in an ethical manner**,[87] mindful of the ongoing digital divide in most countries. UN-Habitat indicates that "Undoubtedly, the impact of digital technology will be uneven across cities in low-income countries, but the availability of geospatial technologies and the resultant data will influence governance even in the most remote urban areas."[88]

For the successful operation of a decentralized system, efforts should go beyond strengthening only LRGs' capacities, given the different demands of new ways of de-

centralized working. "Unlearning" centralizing governance practices at all levels is an ongoing challenge for regional and national governments as well. There is also an urgent need to continue capacity building for mainstreaming an intersectional approach to policy and planning, despite the ongoing work in this regard at different levels. Continued work may build on the existing efforts, for example, by different LRGs and their networks on gender and urban planning, as well as by international agencies such as UN-Habitat (see Paper 2).[89]

It is also important to recognize both formal and informal systems of learning within and across levels of governance. C40 Cities, UCLG, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Metropolis – World Association of the Major Metropolises, Global Resilient Cities Network, the Mayors Migration Council and other **formal networks have become important spaces not only to champion cities and their LRGs in different strategic spaces but also to promote learning among multiple actors at different governance levels**. Myriad informal networks have also grown and play an important role in responding to new challenges and adapting capacities accordingly.

Citizen engagement

Creating the conditions that enable democratic and meaningful citizen engagement in SDG localization is more urgent than ever. While NUPs can address this at a meta level, LRGs have crucial roles to play in promoting local democratic practices in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policy and planning. As argued in this paper, a central component of addressing this challenge is including the full diversity of voices. In particular, **it is key to engage groups who have experienced structural discrimination based on their class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, disability and/or sexuality**.[90] For example, UN Women, UN-Habitat, the Huairou Commission and UCLG have taken joint action for gender parity through their global partnership on strengthening a feminist leadership.

In this political space, LRGs also have a role in the rise of "city diplomacy" undertaken by local government networks, often in collaboration with civil society and international organizations.[91] For example, the formal networks mentioned in the previous section advocate at different levels on behalf of cities.

6. Conclusion: Realizing the power of localization

Achieving balanced and equitable urban systems with positive reinforcing relationships between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, which is the aim of SDG target 11.a, is essential scaffolding to support the realization of human rights and harmony with nature in these areas. This systemic approach to human settlements is more likely to effectively address the structural causes of inequality, which manifest in living conditions in urban and territorial areas. In this sense, achieving SDG target 11.a can catalyze progress on many other SDGs. This makes the implementation of NUPs, the indicator in place to monitor SDG target 11.a, a pivotal lever to guide collective political, socio-economic and environmental action to make this systemic urban initiative a reality. It also puts multilevel governance, the framework in which NUPs are created and implemented, centre stage.

Yet, as analyzed in this paper, trends indicate that inequalities persist, as do the obstacles that impede an urban and territorial equality agenda. **While acknowledging the progress made, the paper demonstrates that NUPs, the underlying conditions supporting as well as created by them, and indeed, in many cases, the monitoring process itself, are limited by governance approaches that have not been able to generate substantial, sustained, coordinated and concrete responses to growing urban and territorial inequalities.** To contribute to the debate, the paper proposes a set of pathways for robust decentralization to localize the SDGs. These actions need to be tailored according to each country's context and complexities, which will shape the limits and possibilities of change.

The first pathway argues for **promoting the principle of subsidiarity in decentralization**, co-creating an effective distribution of powers, responsibilities and resources within government and among government, civil society and the private sector. The foundation for this pathway is the imperative to **root governance in a more inclusive approach, strengthening the multilevel collaboration framework and bringing people to the centre**. As noted in the UCLG Pact for the Future of Humanity, "In co-creating and implementing bold and transformative actions, it is essential that the immediate and ongoing needs of local communities are balanced with achieving the Global Goals."[92] LRGs are in a unique position with respect to the localization of the SDGs. They are at the forefront of the territorial manifestation of inequalities and, as a part of government, are closest to urban residents and their daily experiences of these inequalities. LRGs are also most likely to be more effective in responding to this ambitious agenda by working in a range of different "governing partnerships" within systems of multilevel governance.

Within this decentralized institutional framework, the second pathway is to **strengthen national, regional and local policy and planning** to accelerate progress towards more balanced and equitable urban and territorial systems. As noted, NUPs are pivotal levers to achieve this if they are integrated in national and sectoral development strategies to ensure policy cohesion, if they are place-based, if they recognize the intersecting social identities of the populations they encompass and if they address the ecological challenges of these territories.

The third pathway focuses on the need to deepen and fortify the procedures and practices that **enhance democratic participation, transparency and accountability** for the multiple actors within multilevel governance structures. LRGs and their communities need to be regularly involved in the decision-making that feeds into the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies and planning. Only through genuine participation, multistakeholder dialogue and peer learning within and among all levels of governance can national, regional and urban policy and planning address the urgent challenge of creating balanced and equitable urban systems – and the global quest to leave no one and no place behind.

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 United Nations, 'Global Indicator Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', 2017, https://bit.ly/3IpZzei.

2 United Nations General Assembly, 'Resolution 71/256. New Urban Agenda' (2016), https://bit.ly/3mkLHXu paragraphs 86 and 89 (page 25).

3 UCLG, 'Pact for the Future of Humanity. The Daejeon Political Declaration', 2022, 6 and 9, https://bit.ly/3WiLPHZ.

4 UCLG, 17.

5 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 71/256. New Urban Agenda, 93–95.

6 United Nations General Assembly, 136.

7 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities' (Nairobi, 2022), 47, https://bit.ly/3o8Me3o.

8 Jose Manuel Roche, 'State of Inequalities', in *GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality* (Barcelona: UCLG, 2022), 62–64, https://bit.ly/3OjDuC9.

9 Between 2019 and 2020, the median region in the OECD saw a 5% decline in GDP per capita, but one-fifth of regions experienced declines of 10% or more.

10 Trevor Bach, 'The 10 U.S. Cities With the Largest Income Inequality Gaps', *US News*, 2020, https://bit.ly/3Mg6HLG.

11 OECD, *ECD Regional Outlook 2019: Leveraging Megatrends for Cities and Rural Areas* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019), 29. Countries where economic growth has been concentrated in large cities include Estonia, Italy, Finland, France, Greece, Lithuania and the USA.

12 Eurostat, 'Over 1 in 5 at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion', News, 2022, https://bit.ly/3IqArnP.

13 Roche, 'State of Inequalities', 52–54.

14 WHO, UNICEF, and JMP, 'Estimates for Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services by Countries (2000-2020)', Wash Data, 2023, https://bit.ly/3MjGbkh.

15 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 81, 83 and 83. See also: Roche, 'State of Inequalities', 70–88; Martha Chen and Victoria A. Beard, 'Including the Excluded: Supporting Informal Workers for More Equal and Productive Cities in the Global South', World Resources Institute Working Paper (Washington, DC, 2018).

16 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 9, 43 and 44. From 587 million people in 2020 to 1.49 billion in 2050 in Africa and from 2.36 billion people in 2015 to 3.48 billion in 2050 in Asia.

17 556 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 532 million in South Asia. Of these people living in multidimensional poverty, 92.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 89 million in Asia-Pacific live in urban areas.Source: UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2020, quoted by UN-Habitat, 77–78.

18 OECD, *OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2022* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022), 17–18, https://bit.ly/2CigOgw.

19 For example, in 2019, persons with disabilities and older persons made up 25% of the global population. Over half of them lived in cities. Global Campaign on Inclusive and Accessible Cities, 'Inclusive and Accessible Cities. #CitiesAreListening Town Hall Track' (Durban, 2019), https://bit.ly/3WeAsRv.

20 For example, the voting patterns during Brexit in the UK appear to reflect a "geography of discontent," with voters expressing their perception of being "left behind" while London and the Southeast of England have flourished. See discussion in: Philip McCann and Raquel Ortega-Argilés, 'The UK "Geography of Discontent": Narratives, Brexit and Inter-Regional "Levelling Up"', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 14, no. 3 (2021): 545–64.

21 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021), https://bit.ly/3BHVcHN. The concept of NUPs include, for example, national development strategies with some dedicated focus on urban areas or national-level sectoral policies and plans (e.g. housing, energy, transport, land use) with elements addressing the urban level (e.g. a national-level transport plan incentivizing the use of electric vehicles) (p. 26). See the report for details on the methodology used to analyze the 162 countries.

22 As of May 2023, 183 VNRs, more than 200 VLRs, and 26 VSRs have been presented. For VLRs and VSRs see: UCLG, 'Localizing the SDGs: A Boost to Monitoring & Reporting', GOLD, 2021, https://bit.ly/3hip3fy.

23 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021), https://bit.ly/3BHVcHN.

24 UN-Habitat and OECD (2018), quoted in OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*.

25 OECD et al., 13–14. Calculated based on 157 countries with available information on NUPs.

26 OECD et al., 13–14 and 51–56. The Latin America and Caribbean region had the highest share of explicit NUPs

(68%) followed by Africa (58%), Asia and the Pacific (57%), Arab States (53%) and Europe and North America (50%). Given the global population distribution, absolute numbers differed. For example, Asia and the Pacific had the highest number of "explicit NUPs" (26 out of 46 countries), followed by Africa (23 out of 40 countries).

27 OECD et al., 116–17. 31 NUPs and 20 RDPs reported meeting two qualifiers, and 4 NUPs and 6 RDPs met one qualifier required by SDG indicator 11.a.1. Overall, 30 countries have reported that either their NUPs or RDPs meet all three qualifiers, thus fulfilling SDG 11.a.1.

28 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies' (Barcelona, 2022), https://bit.ly/436ETAg, Chap 8, section 5.1; Philip McCann, 'Investing at Scale: EU Regional and Urban Policy' (Barcelona, 2022).

29 ADB (2011), quoted in UN-Habitat, 'National Urban Policy: Asia and Pacific Report' (Nairobi, 2015), 94.

30 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 263.

31 OECD and UCLG, '2022 Synthesis Report World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment', 2022, 7, https://bit.ly/3Wpxz0s.

32 OECD and UCLG, 18, 50–51 and 77.

33 OECD and UCLG, 65–66. Information available for 93 countries.

34 OECD and UCLG.

35 Christopher Yap, Camila Cociña, and Caren Levy, 'The Urban Dimensions of Inequality and Equality', GOLD VI Working Paper Series (Barcelona, 2021).

36 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 71/256. New Urban Agenda, paragraphs 92 and 163;; OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*, 21.

37 OECD et al., 83 and 125.

38 OECD et al., 80–81.

39 OECD et al., 85. Out of 86 responding countries, 43 responding countries engaged with civil society, 42 with academia and 37 with the private sector during the diagnosis stage. The engagement decreased in the formulation stage. Forty-three countries introduced special measures to ensure that their NUP is sensitive to vulnerable urban populations.

40 OECD et al., 82.

41 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*. LRGs (and particularly their associations) were more engaged at the preparatory stage (diagnosis and feasibility) of NUPs, while the level of engagement of LRGs decreases at the implementation stage.

42 Freedom House's 2021 assessment of political rights and civil liberties documented the biggest democratic deterioration since 2006. Cited in: UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities'.

43 Ionica Berevoescu and Julie Ballington, 'Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis' (New York, 2021), 7, https://bit.ly/3BHTFkX.

44 UCLG, 'GOLD V: The Localization of the Global Agendas. How Local Action Is Transforming Territories and Communities' (Barcelona, 2019), https://bit.ly/3xrkxo3; UN-Habitat, 'Urban Governance, Capacity and Institutional Development' (Nairobi, 2017), https://bit.ly/38iM-7dj, as cited in the UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies'.

45 For an approach to the concept of decentralization, see OECD and UCLG, '2022 Synthesis Report World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment'. According to the principle of subsidiarity, "public responsibilities should be exercised by those elected authorities closest to citizens. The central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those responsibilities or tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. Subsidiarity requires that local governments have adequate financial, managerial, and technical and professional resources to enable them to assume their responsibilities to meet local needs, carrying out a significant share of public expenditure. Local governments should be granted the authority and power to raise local resources in line with the principle that authority be commensurate with responsibility as well as the availability of resources." UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies'.

46 UCLG.

47 OECD and UCLG, '2022 Synthesis Report World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment'.

48 OECD and UCLG, 28.

49 OECD and UCLG, 8.

50 UCLG, 'Pact for the Future of Humanity. The Daejeon Political Declaration', 17.

51 This paper is extracted from a contribution of Philip McCann, *The Regional and Urban Policy of the European Union: Cohesion, Results-Orientation and Smart Specialisation* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2015); and from a study of the CEMR-CCRE, 'Cohesion Policy: The Implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) by Members States' (Brussels, 2015), https://bit.ly/3oc2Bw8. See also European Commission, 'New Cohesion Policy', Regional Policy, 2023, https://bit.ly/42bE5sZ.

52 CEMR-CCRE, 'Cities and Municipalities in the Driving Seat for EU Cohesion Policy Funds?', Cohesion policy, 2023, https://bit.ly/3Wm5nLI.

53 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies', chap. 3.

54 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*, 94. Based on a survey carried out in 48 countries.

55 OECD et al., 81.

56 For example, the C40 Cities Finance Facility; the ICLEI-Transformative Actions Programme; the Cities and Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa of the French development agency, AFD; and the GCoM City Climate Finance Gap Fund, the Global Coalition for Municipal Finance, created in 2018 by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV) and UCLG. See UCLG and GTF, 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs. 6th Report to the HLPF' (Barcelona, 2022), sec. 5, https://bit.ly/3pTIMtH.

57 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies', 410–11.

58 See UCLG, 'Intermediary Cities. The Vital Nexus between the Local and the Global', Our Territorial Agenda, 2023, https://bit.ly/3q1Ye7m.

59 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 53–54. Population growth is observed in small and intermediary cities.

60 Two-thirds of OECD countries have metropolitan-level governance bodies. Over the past decade, metropolitan reforms have also increased in Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and Africa.

61 UN-Habitat, 47.

62 Anton Cartwright et al., 'Developing Prosperous and Inclusive Cities in Africa - National Urban Policies to the Rescue?', Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2018, https://bit.ly/3IuqAgX.

63 Sylvia Croese, Lise Rose Cirolla, and Susan Parnell, 'African Region', in *GOLD V: The Localization of the Global Agendas* (Barcelona, 2019), 57; see also Cartwright et al., 'Developing Prosperous and Inclusive Cities in Africa - National Urban Policies to the Rescue?'

64 Susan Parnell and Aromar Rev, 'Expanding Transformative Change at Scale', 2020.

65 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*, 13.

66 OECD et al., 59.

67 Reference is made to performance criteria rather than standards, given that '[C]ontext-specific conditions make it difficult to recommend prescriptive standards and design measure.' In UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 199.

68 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*. Out of 86 countries, 58 (67%) reported that they mainstreamed the SDGs into their NUPs, while 52 countries (60%) had mainstreamed the NUA as well as regional agendas such as the European Urban Agenda and Africa Agenda 2063.

69 UCLG and GTF, 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs. 6th Report to the HLPF'.

70 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies', 363.

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

72 Josephine Mwongeli Malonza and Arnisson Andre Ortega, 'Fissures in Localizing Urban Sustainability: The Case of Rwanda', *GeoJournal* 87 (2022): 156.

73 UCLG Regions, 'Regional Economic Development to Promote Endogenous Dynamics and Territorial Solidarity', GOLD VI Pathways to Equality Cases Repository: Prospering (Barcelona, 2022).

74 Brian Roberts and John Abbott, 'Collaborative Governance: Improving Sustainability of Development in Metropolises', in *Steering the Metropolis: Metropolitan Governance for Sustainable Urban Development*, ed. David Gómez-Álvarez et al. (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2017), 123–39 (quoted in GOLD VI report, page 412).

75 UCLG, 'GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies', chap. 3.

76 Andoni Hidalgo Simón, 'SDG Localisation and Multi-Level Governance: Lessons from the Basque Country', ed. Alice Siragusa and Paola Proietti (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), https://bit.ly/45mAZFi. See also Basque Government Voluntary Local Reviews 2017, 2018, 2020 and 2021.

77 Hidalgo Simón. See also Basque Government Voluntary Local Reviews 2017, 2018, 2020 and 2021.

78 Adrià Duarte, Amanda Fléty, and Jaume Puigpinós, 'Local Institutions for Civic Participation, Participatory Budgeting and Planning', GOLD VI Pathways to Equality Cases Repository: Democratizing (Barcelona, 2022).

79 See Participatory Budgeting World Atlas, 'Data Index', 2022, https://bit.ly/3IxnXJM.

80 OECD, 'Regional Governance in OECD Countries. Trends, Typology and Tools' (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022), https://bit.ly/3oiAco5.

81 UCLG, 'GOLD V: The Localization of the Global Agendas. How Local Action Is Transforming Territories and Communities'; UN-Habitat, 'Urban Governance, Capacity and Institutional Development' (Nairobi, 2017), https://bit.ly/38iM7dj.

82 OECD et al., *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action*, 91–92. Lack of technical expertise (19 countries, 40%) tends to be more important at the subnational level.

83 OECD and UCLG, '2022 Synthesis Report World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment', 10.

84 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 246–47.

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

86 See, for example, Vanesa Castán Broto et al., 'Co-Production Outcomes for Urban Equality: Learning from Different Trajectories of Citizens' Involvement in Urban Change', *Current Research in Environmental Sustainability* 4, no. July (2022).

87 See the Digital Rights Governance Project, devel-

oped by Cities Coalition for Digital Rights, together with UN-Habitat, UCLG and Eurocities, in partnership with Open Society Foundation: Cities Coalition for Digital Rights, 'Digital Rights Governance Project', 2023, https://bit.ly/3OCFs0i.

88 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 248.

89 See, for example, UN-Habitat, 'Gender and Urban Planning' (Nairobi, 2012), https://bit.ly/3IxEVch.

90 Attention to different social identities is the focus of a range of UN agency policy commitments, some of which are reflected in SDG targets and indicators (e.g. SDG target 5.5 on women's representation).

91 UN-Habitat, 'World Cities Report 2022. Envisaging the Future of Cities', 254.

92 See page 8 of UCLG, 'Pact for the Future of Humanity. The Daejeon Political Declaration'.

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