INCLUSIVE & SHARING CITIES

Right to the city: Housing, Gentrification and Urban Justice

Concept note

Over the last decades, Henri Lefevre's idea, the Right to the City, has been a claim with which to respond to some of the most pressing challenges of our time. The affirmation to "leave no-one behind" in the 2030 Agenda, which balances the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), underpins its raison d'être.

The Right to the City necessarily implies the "rights of the cities", as it highlights "the right to build a local political community that ensures proper life conditions for all and good coexistence among all its inhabitants and its public authorities." Hence, the concept encompasses affordable housing, gentrification; inclusive urban planning, green and quality public spaces for social interaction and inclusion, tactical urbanism and much more. The ultimate goal is certainly to achieve vibrant communities and livable cities.

However, in practice, the concept reminds us that strong local dynamics are required to bring the goals of international agendas to the local level. More than localizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, the question is how the local actors can take ownership of the cause. This requires a strengthening of democracy at national and local level and greater political decentralization.

All in all, the challenge is still to make cities where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, enabling new ways to guarantee human rights and participatory democracy while respecting diversity.
While there is no one-fits-for-all formula to get there, digital technologies can be a great catalyzer to push forward the social dimension of the smart city and enhance livability for all citizens. Yet everything hinges on whether we're able to counter the effects of a culture of disengagement where limited public participation in community decision-making efforts leave governments beholden to private sector interests rather than the needs of the community.

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Explore the relevance of citizen participation in transforming communities.
- Reflect on the evolution of worldwide participatory arrangements.

- Discover innovative solutions to counter gentrification and achieve affordable housing for all citizens.
- Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of co-creation.

Guiding questions

- What is the difference between Citizen Engagement and Participation?
- How can the Right to the City be enhanced by local governments and stakeholders?
- What is the best way to tap into the collective wisdom of citizens?
- Is it really possible to break down hierarchies between local government and other stakeholders?
- What are the most feasible solutions to avoid homelessness, segregation and citizen disengagement?

Keywords

affordable housing; quality of life; gentrification; informal housing; microliving; inclusive urban planning; migrants; homelessness; slums; spacial inclusion; revitalization of neighbourhoods; green spaces; re-greening; re-urbanizing; nature back to the city; walkability; tactical urbanism; better block initiatives; chair bombing; de-fencing; food trucks; guerrilla gardening; open streets; safe streets; pavement to plazas; pop-up parks; pop-up cafes; pop-up retail; local economy; livable cities