Urban Futures
Alternative models for global cities

Eva Garcia-Chueca and Lorenzo Vidal (coords.)
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She is a member of the Berlin’s Chamber of Deputies since 2011. In 2016, she was re-elected as a direct candidate in the Kreuzberg constituency 1 (Gleisdreieck / Bergmannkiez / Südert / Graefekiez). She is particularly committed to housing and rent policies, as well as urban development. Katrin attaches special importance to the implementation of a property and progressive housing-oriented policy to social welfare that counteracts social division, the displacement of tenants, real estate speculation and the lack of housing in the city. In addition, she actively promotes the preservation of urban living environments, as well as the various social and commercial structures in neighborhoods.

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INTRODUCTION: (COUNTER) TRENDS IN GLOBAL CITIES SINCE THE 21ST CENTURY’S FIRST MAJOR CRISIS

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The concept of “global cities” became popular in the 1990s to account for the strategic role of major urban centres in articulating the effervescent neoliberal globalisation of capitalism. In what Joseph Stiglitz (2003) called the “roaring nineties” – a decade of apparent optimism and free market bonanza – certain cities emerged as key spaces for territorialising global processes. As Saskia Sassen discussed in The Global City (1991), these cities acquired capabilities for global operation, coordination and control of the flows of capital and of a transnationalised workforce.

More than two decades on, the transnational space anchored in global cities has changed substantially. The urban populace has since increased by more than 25% and now encompasses the majority of the world’s population; a global crisis has swept away the mirage of continuous finance-led economic expansion and sparked a popular reaction and suspicion towards the promises of globalisation; whilst the prospects of widespread ecological catastrophe have become more real.

This scenario invites a new interrogation of the notion of global cities, particularly from the perspective of its associated modes of governance, city production and urban regulation. The prevailing urban development pattern has forged “city brands” and boosted inter-urban competition, attracting financial and real estate rent-seeking activities as well as the insufficiently problematised “talents” of the global “creative classes”. It has also generated a process of planetary gentrification and further uprooted cities from their surroundings.

Transformations in the “glocal” conditions embodied in global cities pose new challenges for city dwellers and public authorities. The scalar restructurings of the global governance system suggest a repositioning of cities at different levels. The claim to the “right to the city” underscores, in turn, the existing disputes around the appropriation of urban space and its production. In the interstices of these processes, new models of development, both within and beyond the prevailing value systems and digitalisation paradigms, require special consideration.
This volume is the result of a conference on “The new challenges of global cities” held at CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs on September 28th 2018. Experts, professionals and policymakers came together to discuss some of today’s key contemporary urban issues from an international perspective. The objective of the conference was to raise and discuss some of the central elements of the research agenda for the Global Cities Programme, which was recently launched by CIDOB with the support of Barcelona City Council. The discussions between the participants, as well as those with audience-members, addressed each topic’s complex particularities, while drawing connections between them with all their continuities and discontinuities.

The seminar generated a heterogeneous but interconnected exchange of challenges and proposals for addressing the ongoing urbanisation processes in their key political, economic and social dimensions. The growing importance of cities in configuring global agendas was underlined, as was the highly contested nature of urban space itself. The cumulative effect of certain globalising processes was recognised, along with the multiplicity of responses and transformations at the local level. In other words, it touched upon some of the main trends and counter-trends and centripetal and centrifugal dynamics that characterise the growing and changing contemporary urban landscape. This has to a large extent been captured by the content and structure of this monograph.

I. Structure of the monograph

The monograph is structured around the three thematic sessions of the international conference “The new challenges of global cities”: (1) Cities in Global Governance; (2) The Right to the City: Towards a New Urban Paradigm; and (3) New Urban Development Models.

The first section discusses the role of cities in the global governance system, characterised by their growing centrality in economic geographies, but also by their persistent absence from formal political structures that are of an inter-state character. In this context, the different political institutionalities cities have been forging in the international arena are explored.

Sheila R. Foster and Chrystie Flournoy Swiney of Georgetown University (United States) argue that through the networks that represent them cities exercise “soft power”, mainly through lobbying campaigns and collective action. Despite their relative lack of power compared to national governments and international institutions, cities are increasingly managing to influence global agendas on subjects such as climate change and migration. The authors find that while the weight of cities in global governance remains limited, their emergence in recent years is an unprecedented phenomenon that is destabilising the pillars of the Westphalian state system.

According to Enrique Gallicchio of Universidad CLAEH (Uruguay), cities can improve their local governance capacity if their territory is managed through multilevel dialogue, if all the actors in the terri-
tory participate in policy design, and if they have greater impact on global agendas, especially the 2030 Agenda. To do this, it is important to move from “the territorialisation of policies”, in which local governments manage decisions taken at other levels, towards the “construction of territorial policies”, where the territory establishes itself as a subject through multi-actor articulation and building alliances and networks at both territorial and global levels.

The second section explores the right to the city as a demand and practice that has (re)emerged in opposition to neoliberal urbanisation processes and their unequal development in both the Global North and South.

AbdouMaliq Simone, Visiting Professor at the University of Sheffield (United Kingdom), reflects on how the urban is expressed in the Global South, arguing that the Urban South is a normative fiction imposed by a “white sensibility”. In fact, “urban majorities” exist in which different origins, livelihoods, capacities, passions and situations are fluid. These urban areas are inhabited by bodies that struggle to preserve the possibility of continuously changing their livelihoods, and are shaped by high-density proximities and unforeseen interactions. Urban majorities’ constant adaptations and adjustments to volatile urban environments form the city's main engine of production in the so-called Global South.

Betânia Alfonsin, Professor of Law at Fundação Escola Superior do Ministério Público in Rio Grande del Sur (Brazil), gives a historical review of the social and political process in Brazil since the 1980s that made the “right to the city” a principle that inspired new urban policies and new legal and legislative developments. A pioneer in this field, Brazil has also played a decisive role in global governance by working towards ensuring the right to the city is recognised on global agendas. However, the country is currently immersed in a democratic regression that is jeopardising the political achievements made over more than three decades of political struggle in the field of urban reform, as well as in labour reform and social and education policies.

Katrin Schmidberger, Member of the House of Representatives of Berlin, analyses the profound changes in housing conditions that have occurred in the German city since the 2007–2008 crisis and the establishment of an economic dynamic based on the financialisation of the housing market. In a context in which 85% of the city’s inhabitants live in rented housing, the 80% average price rise between 2007 and 2016 has caused significant social problems. In response, the city government has adopted various kinds of measures, such as regulating rents, the commercial use of residential properties (Airbnb) and empty housing, identifying “protected zones” in the city and promoting housing cooperatives, among others.

Anselmo Lee, Adjunct Professor at Kyunghee University (South Korea) completes this thematic bloc with a reflection on the different interpretations and practices existing in his country and in Asia in general to move towards the construction of “human rights cities”. The metropolitan city of Gwangju has been a pioneer in this regard, developing a normative and political framework that has allowed it to
mainstream and institutionalise human rights at local level, as well as to project itself internationally through the organisation of the World Human Rights Cities Forum. Finding ways to align this process with other global agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, is also part of the discussions taking place in the region.

Finally, the third section addresses new trends in the management of resources and economic activities that form the city's material foundations and on which the “glocal” processes that characterise it interact.

Daniel Chavez, Researcher at the Transnational Institute (Netherlands), analyses the global trend of remunicipalising energy supplies that is influencing public policies, socioeconomic initiatives and debates in increasing numbers of cities. This trend is set within ongoing processes of democratisation and deprivatisation, particularly in the context of an essential energy transition that the market is incapable of undertaking. He underscores the limits of the partial and localist approaches to the matter and favours the comprehensive restructuring of the energy system under public control.

Francesca Bria, Chief Technology and Innovation Officer at Barcelona City Council (Spain), questions the paradigm of the smart city being sponsored by large digital companies and describes the initiatives carried out by Barcelona City Council to promote digital sovereignty and build a data commons. For Bria, technological innovations must align with the social agenda and not the other way around. Municipalities, meanwhile, must promote a New Deal on data as an alternative to Silicon Valley's “surveillance capitalism” on the one hand, and the dystopian Chinese social credit system on the other.

Marty Chen, co-founder of the WIEGO Network and Lecturer at Harvard University (USA), describes the growing importance of the informal economy in urban areas around the world, with nearly half of the working population informally employed. To make cities more equitable and to reduce poverty, Chen argues that they should work to be more inclusive towards workers in the informal sector by protecting and enhancing their livelihoods. The chapter puts forward a number of principles and measures in this field in which “politics of control” from above contend with “politics of survival” from below.

Finally, Frances Northrop, Rachel Laurence and Adrian Bua of the New Economics Foundation (UK), question whether London's economic development model as a “global city” can be exported to other cities in the UK and whether this is even desirable. Taking the process of devolving powers to local governments as a starting point for the discussion, they argue that a local development strategy based on competitive specialisation and attracting foreign investment would worsen the United Kingdom's regional inequalities. Instead, they advocate following the principle of subsidiarity and considering the most appropriate scale for each dimension of a development strategy that redistributes resources across regions and empowers each one to pursue social, environmental and welfare goals.
II. Within, against and beyond the global city

Overall, the monograph indicates the continued relevance of the concept of the “global city”, but also problematises it and suggests that it should be transcended in order to discern the main challenges facing the urban world today as well as possible solutions. In other words, it encourages lines of research that link with but go beyond the “global city” as it has been predominantly interpreted in academic and public policy debates.

To this end, first it is proposed that the “global” dimension of the city should also be traced through the political articulations of international municipalism and the (not always successful) efforts to introduce multi-level dialogues to global governance structures. Second, strategies that give shape to the “right to the city” are analysed, whether through institutional political action or the social practices of “urban majorities”. These offer an alternative to the urban model that dominates today’s “global cities”, which has favoured competitiveness, connectivity and an exclusionary notion of cosmopolitanism. Finally, emerging forms of urban development are explored that seek to rebalance socio-territorial inequalities and recompose the public and the common after decades of neoliberalism.

The “global city” concept helps explain the continued economic weight of cities on the world stage. Certain spaces in urban centres continue to play a strategic role in articulating the economic processes that structure globalisation, despite the shock of the latest global crisis and the recent statist revival. These spaces also share realities and problems related to their proximity to the processes of internationalisation of capital and hosting transnational workforces. The financialisation of the real estate sector, gentrification processes and the coexistence of culturally diverse populations of varied origin are particularly strong common denominators of “global cities”.

However, almost three decades since the concept was coined, developments in international relations allow for it to be resignified to account for the growing political role of cities on the world stage. This has been achieved through city diplomacy and the increased political influence on global governance (even in terms of “soft power”) of the rich ecosystem of city networks working to influence global agendas. In other words, cities are currently acquiring a global dimension not only because of their incorporation into transnational financial flows, but also because of their participation in global governance processes and political structures.

But the “global city” concept is problematic for a variety of reasons. First, because of the normative value it has acquired. All cities now aspire one way or another to become “global cities”, which is synonymous with dynamism, attraction and influence. This imaginary depoliticises the neoliberal forms of urban governance associated with an internationalisation strategy that is driven by market forces and whose negative social and environmental effects are significant.
The analytical and explanatory value of the concept also has major limitations. It sketches out a world system composed mainly of a series of interconnected large cities, with almost no mediation with other scales and levels of government. "Glocal" processes seem to be territorialised and deterritorialised in these cities, taking the focus away from what happens outside and in between. In such a way, on the one hand, the importance of the state and the inter-state system is minimised and, on the other, so is what happens in the wider territory in which these cities are embedded. More often than not these are metropolitan territories that comprise a complex urban system with multiple interdependencies that must be administered – those with the metropolitan peripheries, and the peri-urban areas composed of intermediate cities, small cities and even rural centres. Transcending the realm of the "global city" also means thinking in terms of unequal development between urban areas and between rural and urban areas, which underpin the main social and environmental problems of our time.

Hence, focussing analysis on a narrow understanding of the "global city" leaves out some of the spatio-temporal processes and realities that are crucial to a deep understanding of contemporary urbanisation, global political economy and the main challenges and opportunities presented. A renewed urban and international research agenda should transcend this focus to more comprehensively include the multi-scale and multi-level dimensions of the processes studied, as well as other forms of city production, governance and urban regulation. Decentering the "global city", broadening its focus and changing its outlook transforms the object of study and our approach to it: from celebrating "creativity" and "class cosmopolitanism" to worrying about gentrification; from focussing on the competitive advantages of an international projection that ignores negative externalities to exploring the management of common goods and the equitable and sustainable maintenance of urban life; from praising the figure of the entrepreneur to valuing the worker in the informal economy.

Instead of empowering the "global city", an agenda whose concerns are regional rebalancing and social justice is taking shape. This agenda transcends the prevailing understanding of the "global city" and allows us to think of today's urban world through the complexity that characterises it and the need to articulate the systemic changes and transitions it requires.

References


CITIES IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

• CITY POWER AND POWERLESSNESS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE
  
  *Sheila R. Foster and Chrystie F. Swiney*

• TERRITORIAL ALLIANCES AND ARTICULATIONS TO INFLUENCE GLOBAL AGENDAS

  *Enrique Gallicchio*
A "new world order" of global governance is emerging that involves a wider and more decentralised cast of decision-makers focused on an ever-widening array of transnational problems, such as climate change, global migration, health pandemics, and sustainable development, among others (e.g., Slaughter, 2005). In this new global order, national governments and state-based international organisations are viewed as inefficient, unequipped to deal with existing transnational challenges, captive to elites and, in some cases, simply dysfunctional (Barber, 2014). Nation-states (and the international bodies that represent them) are finding that their independence, sovereignty and borders – the traditional virtues of statehood – are barriers to the types of cooperation required to solve the cross-border global problems we face today. State-on-state “gridlock”, as well as the partisan paralysis that prevents many national governments and state-based international organisations from accomplishing their agendas, risk a more profound “sovereignty default”, which can result in a failure to act or to effectively govern at the international level. This has created an opening for subnational actors, such as city governments and civil society organisations, to fill the gaps where the state has failed to act, and thereby become agents of international policymaking and problem-solving (Barber, 2017).

Unlike states, cities1 are arguably sovereignty-free, less subject to partisan gridlock and more occupied with finding pragmatic solutions to everyday problems. Without sovereign obligations, cities can more easily cast ideological constraints aside, concentrate on concrete objectives, and get the job done. Cities are also more directly responsible for the key global challenges of our time, more directly accountable to the populations they serve, and uniquely situated to serve as mediators between the world’s urban centres, where the human population is converging (Frug et al., 2010).

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1. *Cities* is used in this text to refer to local governments and/or local leaders.
I. The rise of city networking

An ever-growing number of international city networks, or associations of cities that come together to work collaboratively and to learn from one another, are finding ways to inject their perspectives and expertise into international forums, agendas, campaigns and agreements (Acuto, 2017). Cities are forming alliances among themselves and with other subnational actors, such as regions and provinces, as well as the private sector and civil society, to collectively press national governments to address global challenges such as climate change and forced migration. As one of the newest forms of “global diplomacy” – the engagement and relationship with other actors on an international stage – city networking holds the potential to transform the traditional state-centric Westphalian system, which has been in place for over three centuries, in profound and lasting ways by creating opportunities for cities to shape and inform international policies.

City networks, particularly transnational ones, have proliferated in the last two decades. In 1985, there were roughly 60 international city networks, by the late 1990s this number had nearly doubled, and today there are over 300 (Harrison and Hoyler, 2018). Nearly 60% of the existing city networks were created between 1990 and 2003 (Labaeye and Sauer, 2013: 14), but a large number, over 50, emerged between 2006 and 2016, with around five new networks appearing each year (Acuto, 2019: 5).

In addition, more and more cities, especially large and mega cities, are creating municipal offices of international affairs (OIA), which have designated staff devoted to cultivating important global connections with significant international actors and institutions, such as the United Nations. These offices also create and maintain relationships with other global cities, welcome incoming foreign delegations, organise international trips, prepare their elected leadership for meetings with foreign leaders, and maintain their city’s involvement in international networks (Fishbone, 2017).

City networks are not new, of course. Some of the oldest existing networks in Europe and Japan were founded more than 100 years ago, and certain networks can be traced as far back as the 1800s (Acuto and Rayner, 2016: 8). The first international political platform for local governments, the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), was founded in 1913; and another, the International City County Management Association (ICMA), which is still active today, emerged in 1914. In the last hundred or so years, spikes in city networking seem to coincide with certain large UN events, such as the two recent Earth Summits in 1992 and 2002, and the last two UN Habitat conferences in 1996 and 2016. These events, along with the rapid development of sophisticated communication and information-sharing technologies, reduce the costs of collaboration between cities and, as a result of this, they have facilitated the proliferation of city networks in recent decades (Labaeye and Sauer, 2013: 14).

City networks can be powerful global agenda setters, elevating and amplifying the voices of city leaders (and by extension their constituents) in international bodies like the UN, where certain large and
well-resourced networks have successfully lobbied for, and in some cases obtained, a seat at the policymaking table. The C40 Climate Leadership Group (C40), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability are just a few of the global city networks that have successfully navigated their way into the halls of international policymaking, and in a few narrow cases, acquired legitimate opportunities for participation and input in what were previously states-only fora. For example, the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments were created at the urging of cities and city networks to amplify the role and voices of cities in international policy debates. Through these new international-level coordination bodies, city networks endeavour to speak with a common urban voice and to ensure that their urban perspective and expertise is included in critical discussions on how to solve the world’s most challenging problems, most of which are, in reality, urban problems.

Yet, questions and concerns linger regarding how much genuine power cities can and should have to shape the global governance agenda. While the participation of global city networks in international politics is clearly on the rise, the question of whether they can exercise actual influence remains debatable. Despite nation-states being increasingly mired in partisan gridlock and more and more incapable of agreeing on shared global policies, they continue to dominate the international policymaking process. However, cities are beginning to assert themselves and to make their voices heard: in certain cases – involving city-specific agendas, such as the New Urban Agenda – they actually participate in policy formation at the international level. In other words, cities are gaining more “soft power” on the international stage, even as they remain structurally powerless in the international system of governance and according to “black letter” international law. City diplomacy, which is led by the largest and most successful city networks, is the currency of cities’ rising soft power, and is now cities’ tool of choice to shape, or to attempt to shape, international policy on migration, climate change, and other global challenges.

II. Cities as (structurally) powerless

As a structural matter, most cities around the world are relatively powerless vis-à-vis higher levels of government. This is true whether mayors and other city leaders are elected or appointed. Even with trends in some parts of the world toward devolution, subsidiarity, and decentralisation of power to cities and metro regions, states remain reluctant to cede power over fiscal matters and certain policy decisions, such as immigration, to subnational authorities.

Cities are agents of their states or national governments; whatever powers they embody are residual, revocable, and always bestowed, whether by law or fiat, by higher levels of government. The US is a representative example. Despite the fact that most states give their cities what is called “home rule” – a broad policy and regulatory sphere in which to autonomously operate – we have witnessed a virtual about-face by many states in recent years, whereby power has been revoked from cities when their
policies openly conflict with the state's or powerful private actors have lobbied and co-opted the state. We see this on display in what some are calling the “new preemption” in which states are reacting to exertions of city power in the area of immigration (for example, by creating “sanctuary cities”), health (by banning trans fats), violence and security (by passing gun control measures), and civil rights (by granting LGBT rights) by taking power away from those cities, and in some cases punishing them by withdrawing financial support (Briffault, 2018).

It is no surprise that cities are not given a formal place within the myopically state-focused system of international relations. International law and policy are largely shaped by and for nation-states. Most international organizations, such as the UN, allow only states to become full members; and the entire international political framework is built around the idea that national governments are the dominant political actor and solitary representative of their states at the global level. Cities are nearly irrelevant to this framework, which views them as subordinate appendages of the state. Their exclusion is reflected in the core vocabulary associated with international politics – international relations, the United Nations, international law – signalling the reality that cities and other subnational forms of government are, at best, relegated to the sidelines. There are no structural mechanisms to ensure that cities have a formal and ongoing role in international decision-making and, with few exceptions, they are excluded from formal deliberation, negotiation, and the development of policy frameworks and tools. As one former Mayor aptly stated, “cities are often on the menu but never at the table”.

For instance, consider the issue of migration, where cities should have a strong voice given that more than 60% of refugees and 80% of all internally displaced persons settle in urban centres. In some places, such as the US, more than 90% of all immigrants live in cities. Despite city leaders being the global experts in dealing with the challenges and potential migration flows bring, they are routinely excluded from international negotiations on migration policy. For example, cities were largely left out of the process of drafting a new Global Compact for Migration (GCM), which was formally endorsed by the UN General Assembly in December 2018. City leaders participated only at the invitation of their national governments, and in states that refused to participate (such as the US), this possibility was eliminated entirely (Brandt, 2018). Because they were largely excluded from this process, cities, which shoulder the lion’s share of responsibility associated with global migration, are largely written out of international migration policy. The words “city”, (or “cities”) and “mayor” are entirely absent from the 36-page GCM, while the word “urban”, astonishingly, appears only once.

This failure to recognise cities’ key role in core global issues like migration can also be seen in other international policy documents. For example, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ strategic plan on refugees similarly mentions “urban” refugees just once, while the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), like its counterpart on migration, contains a solitary mention of “cities” (Muggah, 2018). Neither agenda envisages a significant role for cities or gives them meaningful autonomy in the shaping of international responses to the refugee crisis.
The structural exclusion of cities is not for lack of cities trying to assert their voices in the international policymaking process. In 2017, the International Organization for Migration, together with the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), assembled 150 cities to sign the Mechelen Declaration, demanding a seat at the migration policy table. Likewise, in late 2017, a small delegation of cities, led by New York and including 100 Resilient Cities, sent recommendations to improve the overall wording and content of the Global Compacts previously discussed. And in December 2018 over 150 mayors and city leaders adopted the Marrakech Mayoral Declaration, which calls for formal recognition of the role of local authorities in the implementation, follow-up and review of both Global Compacts.

This collective push by cities for some influence over global migration policy may have opened enough of a door to enable cities’ voices to be heard. The GCR, despite containing only one mention of cities, does reference the need for “networks of cities and municipalities” that host refugees to “share good practices and innovative approaches” (UNHCR, 2018: paragraph 38). And the UN’s New Urban Agenda, which emerged out of the Habitat III process, explicitly calls for greater cooperation between national and local authorities to address the challenges of forced migration. Yet, even these overtures to cities and their networks are carefully couched in nationalistic language. In the case of the former document, cities are invited to participate but only “[i]n consultation with national authorities and in respect of relevant legal frameworks” (GCR: paragraph 37).

Moreover, each and every one of the newly emerging international documents that mention cities and/or city networks, including the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration and the New Urban Agenda, are, without exception, not legally-binding, meaning they are voluntary only. International law scholars refer to this as “soft law”, or unenforceable law, which is honoured only out of a sense of voluntary commitment by the party accepting the obligation. Even for agreements that are legally binding, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, enforcement often depends on the collective will and commitment of the participating nation-states, and to some extent, the pressure exerted by their constituents and civil society groups. The non-binding or “soft law” nature of migration and climate agreements can be compared to international trade agreements, such as the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. Under these trade agreements and rules, which could be characterised as “hard law”, participating parties are subject to financial, retaliatory and other punitive measures if they violate the terms of their agreements. Moreover, complex and formal institutional bureaucracies underpin these agreements, providing ongoing monitoring and enforcement of them.

Ironically, the relatively “soft” nature of certain international legal agreements, such as those on climate and migration, might actually provide cities and city networks with the opening and the opportunity to exercise their power where nation-states are reneging on their obligations.

2. The Mechelen Declaration was the outcome of the Global Conference on Cities and Migration, which took place in November 2017, and during which over 50 cities from Europe, North, Central and South America, Asia and Africa met in order to offer their perspectives and opinions on the topic of migration. The Mechelen Declaration is available at: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/Mechelen-Declaration-final.pdf.

3. The letter was submitted by mayors from 17 cities to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It can be read here: https://issuu.com/brookings/docs/mayors__letter_to_unhcr_w_signatorii2

4. The declaration can be found here: http://www.migration4development.org/en/node/47272

5. The commissioner’s speech is referenced in this UNHCR news story: https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2018/12/5c0d06a34/unhcr-welcomes-global-mayors-commitment-refugees.html
Where national governments are unwilling or unable to act or fulfil their international commitments, cities and their networks are stepping up, cooperating and allying to collectively push for certain policy outcomes and, perhaps most importantly, to ensure that the expertise and opinions of cities is taken into account in the international policymaking process.

III. The soft power of city diplomacy

As mentioned in the previous section, despite the fact that, **structurally**, cities (and their leaders) are relatively powerless vis-à-vis national governments and international institutions, they are nevertheless managing to exert considerable influence in pushing forward global agendas on certain cross-border issues like climate change and migration. As we argue elsewhere, cities are using soft law tools – international campaigns and agendas, declarations, statements, resolutions, and the like – to gain soft power in the international sphere, and in so doing, gain an increasingly vocal and influential platform on the world stage (Swiney and Foster, 2019). Soft law is directly connected to soft power, and vice versa: hard law is connected to hard power. The more soft law tools a political entity has, the greater its soft power; similarly, the greater the access to hard law tools, the more hard power an entity wields. While cities have begun to appear in an increasing number of international soft law instruments, including those mentioned above, perhaps more importantly they have been asserting their influence on the global stage through city networks.

Hedley Bull, one of the 20th century’s leading international relations experts, divided diplomacy into five core functions, each of which city networks are manifesting in one way or another: facilitating communication, negotiating agreements, gathering information, preventing conflicts, and symbolising the existence of an international society (Bull, 2002). Through these five forms of diplomacy, cities are gaining influence and power not so much through the hard law of international agreements, but through the softer techniques of negotiation, lobbying, collective action and pressure campaigns (Nye, 2005). They are leveraging their enormous economic, cultural and technological influence to make sure the urban perspective is appreciated, and they are forming into powerful networks and allying with well-resourced and/or well-known private actors to amplify this critical perspective at the global level.

Consider the realm of climate change, where states have long struggled to reach an agreement with binding commitments to address one of the most dire threats to humankind. When the 114 heads of state failed to come to an agreement at the Conference of Parties meeting in Copenhagen (COP15), over 200 mayors attended a parallel climate summit where they jointly agreed on a set of collaborative goals. They worked together, and continue to work together, through transnational networks such as C40, ICLEI, and UCLG, to meet the goals of the key international climate agreements. Before COP21, which resulted in the Paris Agreement, states had already conducted 20 COPs without any significant achievements. The consistent collective action by cities was a significant factor, some have argued, in pushing nation-states to the historical agreement between nations reached at COP21 in Paris (Klaus, 2018).
Cities continue to act even as states fail to do so. According to the latest Climate Action in Megacities report issued by C40, there is evidence that while climate action by states has stalled, C40 member cities have put in place over 8,000 climate actions, leveraging over $2.8 billion in funding and impacting millions of urban dwellers worldwide (C40, 2015: 10). But city-led activism goes beyond climate-related initiatives. For example, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, a coordination and consultation mechanism launched in 2013, represents the joint voices of local and regional leaders from around the world at UN level on a variety of topics. It successfully lobbied for the inclusion of sustainable development goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable cities and human settlements, convenes the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, and was instrumental in drafting the New Urban Agenda. Some city networks, such as UCLG and Mayors for Peace, are among the over 4,000 NGOs that hold special consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council, a status that provides them with access to many UN bodies, international events, and certain international mechanisms, such as human rights monitoring bodies.

The recent formation of the Urban 20 (U20), a diplomatic initiative of global cities intended to mirror the G20, powerfully illustrates how cities are attempting to harness their newfound tools and power to engage directly with nation-states in tackling the most pressing global challenges. Convened by C40 in collaboration with UCLG, the inaugural U20 Mayoral Summit took place in Buenos Aires in October 2018, one month ahead of the G20 Heads of State Summit hosted by Argentina. At the inaugural gathering, mayors from 34 cities, representing 1.5 billion citizens, called on G20 member states to implement a series of measures on climate change, the future of work, social integration of migrants and refugees, female empowerment and access to finance. These recommendations were delivered to the president of the G20, who committed to sharing the U20 recommendations with world leaders at the upcoming G20 Summit. While it remains to be seen how much G20 leaders are influenced by these recommendations, one thing is clear. The U20 has broken new ground in evolving the global order to “reflect the reality of power in the twenty-first century” by creating itself “in the image of the G20: cities of political and economic power from geo-politically active countries working together on shared goals” (Klaus, 2018).

IV. Conclusion

Paradoxically, cities are both subordinate domestic governments and powerful independent international actors. They are formally and structurally constrained by an international system designed almost exclusively with states in mind, but informally and through a variety of alternative approaches, they are finding ways to exercise their authority and amplify their voices at the international policymaking level. Urbanisation has shifted social and economic power to cities and the officials that run them, and this has created an unprecedented opportunity for cities, especially when working together in networks, to influence the global agenda on questions of migration, climate change, global health, and a variety of other challenges.
City networking is the currency of city diplomacy, and city diplomacy is the source of cities’ rising soft power. This newfound “power”, though soft and inchoate, allows cities to flex their collective social and economic strength, to amplify their collective voices, and to coordinate their collective goals on the international stage. Recent years have seen a proliferation in the number and activities of international city networks, which are gaining in confidence and assertiveness as their activism begins to pay off. Cities, through the Global Taskforce, the New Urban Agenda and the lobbying efforts of certain powerful city networks such as C40 and UCLG, have greater access to international policymaking and more influence on international policymakers than ever before.

There are limits, of course, to how far city diplomacy can go when the most powerful nation-states are reneging on their responsibility to keep humanity safe, healthy, and free of conflict. Structurally, cities and their leaders are still on the periphery of international organisations and take no formal part in voting on key policy matters. Moreover, the proliferation of city networks, while enhancing the ability of cities to flex their soft power on the global stage, may also begin to weaken the power of collective action if their efforts become too fragmented and duplicative. In other words, if new city networks continue to emerge in the numbers we have seen in recent years, there is a concern that a common urban voice could get diluted and eventually lost in the process. Perhaps instead, the focus should be put on consolidation and collaboration among the existing city networks so as to ensure that a unified urban perspective can be clearly and powerfully voiced at the international level. Until then, city networking is at a historic height, perhaps its apex. Mayors may not “rule the world” yet, but they are increasingly involved in the shaping and making of global agendas, an unprecedented event since the rise of the state-based Westphalian system well over three centuries ago.

References


I. Introduction

Dispute over the visions, actors and strategies around development has crystallised on several fronts against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In a setting defined by unstable alliances, nation-states, large cities, municipalities, the private sector, civil society, academia and international development cooperation actors all compete for greater influence. What is at stake is global impact on policy in terms of vision, orientation and funding, among other issues.

The 2030 Agenda is not a new way of measuring development in terms of setting new goals and indicators. On the contrary, it represents a critical vision that questions the sustainability of development and that notoriously demands that changes be made. However, the real chances of changing the development paradigm are hamstrung by certain actors repeating old schemes. This divergence—sometimes explicit, sometimes less so—occurs in a global arena shaped by power relations, differing forms of action and resource inequality. The prevailing institutional framework remains in place, but another is emerging. Local societies and government institutions seek to make a new model of society a reality. But actors with growing symbolic and real power are emerging. Their actions generate changes that clash with the vision of local societies legitimated by democratic mechanisms.

In this context, the debate on the role of territorial actors in the 2030 Agenda, a global agenda that is in dispute, will be discussed in this chapter. Realising the 2030 Agenda requires action be taken at different territorial scales. This chapter seeks to reflect on them with an emphasis on cities, but never losing sight of the global perspective. Its starting point is the situation in Latin America, the region in which the author mainly works.

This analysis contains very strong political content, with “politics” understood as the improvement of the quality of life, proximity, empathy, leadership and strategic vision. A discussion is therefore proposed that is closely related to the exercise of power and political competences, and the availability of resources.
II. Sitting at the global table: challenges for territorial actors

What should be done to ensure that territorial actors have greater chances of taking a seat at the global table? Two factors are particularly important: forging territorial and global articulations, and having the capacity for good governance. The two are intertwined: the most skilled territorial leaders (good governance) will, in general, be better equipped to influence the different areas of global governance. What exactly is good governance? It is acting according to the competencies available with a focus on multilevel articulation, which includes influencing the global agenda. However, acting at multiple levels means facing some basic challenges, such as:

- Articulating the local and global from the territorial level. Local policies are the natural environment for management, innovation, articulation and participation in a context in which the dynamics of proximity prevail, but where global agendas permeate and influence. Global agendas have a range of territorial impacts that are not always positive. This is one of the reasons the role of local governments in guaranteeing inclusion, cohesion and improved quality of life is crucial: they are obliged to interact with global actors and agendas via locally based management tools.

- Multilevel governance. Acting in a multilevel governance framework is not a matter of choice for territories (Serrano, 2011). Problems cannot be solved with more centralism, nor with a more localist or municipalist vision. While this is clear in the discourses of today’s national governments, the territorialisation of policies of a centralist, vertical and sectoral nature predominates. Given this trend, a territorial approach to policies should be developed to ensure that territorial policies are constructed horizontally and in networks, not only with stakeholders from the territory, but also with actors from other levels of government and wider society. This does not mean that the problem lies in the volume of resources being allocated to territorial policies. Rather, these resources must be applied with a perspective that is local and not centralising, as well as with a global vision. Needless to say, this perspective poses major challenges in terms of articulation, and touches upon issues of policy co-creation and participation.

- Action and influence on the global agenda. While advances and achievements have been made, such as influencing the New Urban Agenda and configuring SDG 11, as well as the active participation of the Global Task Force (GTF) in the High-Level Political Forum on the SDGs, global agendas remain the preserve of central governments. The large number of city networks that have emerged around different subjects and issues (United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG] has identified more than 180) may lead to fragmentation of local government voices on the international scene before a shared vision can be built. To avoid this, we need a space for global articulation that produces synergies and greater capacity to influence global decision-making.

All these issues intersect with key questions such as the extent of territorial governments’ competences, financing and capacities. Below, consideration is given to how to move towards this territorial approach to policies.

1. See ECLAC (2018) on linking SDGs with territorial development in Latin America.
III. From the “territorialisation of policies” to the “construction of territorial policies”

From a broad perspective, especially in Latin America, territorial policies and national and global development dynamics coexist with a set of paradoxes that make political action more complex for local governments. Some elements of this context are:

- More state and more decentralisation. Latin America has been through a major cycle since the neoliberal era began, when strong states were rebuilt that took charge of regional activity. A renewed wave of decentralisation has taken place that, a few setbacks and debates aside, has a clear view of the need to incorporate a territorial dimension into national policies. Numerous laws, normative frameworks and revamped systems of transfers of resources and competences have shaped the regional reality. Although the sustainability of this process is debated, certain authors speak of “recentralisation” or “centralised decentralisation” because a notable power imbalance exists in the interfaces, in other words, in relations between government levels.

- Higher income for territories, but territorial inequalities remain. Regions’ resources may be greater, but it has not been possible to overcome the historical inequality between regions (in this sense Latin America is the most unequal place in the world). When measuring the SDGs, for example, the results obtained at state level are generally good, but the differences between territories are enormous. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has noted that the resources transfers between different levels of government in Latin America have been unable to meet their targets of improving regional equality. In some contexts they have even been regressive, while in several countries growing discretionality has been observed in the forms of the transfers to local areas and their sizes, especially in unitary countries. In federal countries, the trend seems to be towards favouring intermediate levels over municipalities, although there are some exceptions.

- Better quantitative indicators in terms of transfers and financial resources but fewer local projects. The discourse behind focusing policy on local issues and the political will to transfer more resources to territories is strong, but it has a centralist mindset. The local is often reduced to a sphere for managing decisions taken at other levels (tendering for funds) and local capacity for negotiation is greatly diminished. Major efforts are still required to empower actors and improve territorial capacities. In short, the challenge is how to combine national and territorial policies in pursuit of a common goal of fighting inequality and territorial fragmentation from local societies that have the capacities, competences and resources to implement their development agenda autonomously.

- From globalised value chains to territorial value chains. As a backdrop, global systemic processes and value chains are in play that operate with an enclave dynamic in which none of the economic surplus they generate is retained. This partly explains why, although monetary poverty indicators have substantially improved, the signs of multidimensional poverty, of fragmentation and of social exclusion still exist at territorial level (and are in some cases even growing). In this regard, authors such as Francisco Alburquerque highlight the need to promote mechanisms that allow greater local control of these value chains in terms of negotiation and connection with the territorial development agenda.
Many of these policies (which cannot be analysed in a polarised way because of their multiple nuances) tend to encourage the “territorialisation of policies” rather than the “construction of territorial policies”. In other words, local governments increasingly take on the role of managing decisions taken by central government. Thus, while the concept of the “territorialisation of policies” refers to a logic of action in which the sectoral and the vertical (the state’s influence in the local sphere) prevail, the idea of the “construction of territorial policies” alludes to a complementary horizontal and reticular logic which makes the territory the object and subject of development policies.

An important part of breaking the centralist mindset involves actors and alliances being articulated at territorial and global levels. Various studies exist on the need to promote these articulations in terms of governance, but the volume of work proposing methodological responses based on empirical evidence is more reduced.

### IV. The actors, their visions and practices. Debate, complementarity and diverse agendas

Building alliances and territorial articulations is key to improving citizens’ quality of life and to achieving greater presence and impact at the global table, where many crucial decisions are taken that impact the daily work of our local governments. This territorial articulation is not unconnected to the tensions and conflicts that occur at regional, national and global levels. It is therefore necessary to ask ourselves who the actors are in territorial development today and what are their interests. Development is carried out with people and people tend to be concentrated in urban areas – mainly cities and metropolitan areas. But the traditional actors characterised by their identification and bond with the territory are not the only ones on the scene (Barreiro, 2007). They now share it with global actors with presence in the territory, who frequently treat it as an enclave in which to obtain and maximise resources.

This plurality of actors makes identifying interests (which are currently diffuse) more complex and therefore hinders the articulation of a shared project and vision of the territory’s development. That is why good local government in terms of governance is one of the factors that must be considered, even though it presents significant challenges. So, to the difficulty of coordinating the public sector with the private sector, civil society and academia, we must add the pending challenge of incorporating gender and generational diversity into all urban development projects.

These actors find themselves in competition and under stress and it is not always possible to advance in terms of a common project. Hence, authors like Barreiro (2007) describe the need for spaces that can enable a shift to be made from participation that is ideological in nature to a more pragmatic participation that aims to solve problems in line with the range of different viewpoints, interests and roles of the actors present in the territory.

In terms of global agendas, a city that creatively resolves these tensions and struggles will clearly be strengthened. To this end, alliances between different types of networks and typologies of cities (including metropoli-
tan areas, central and intermediate cities, and rural territories) are vital for mutual reinforcement and achieving greater influence. The large number of territorial networks in existence today is, in this sense, an opportunity (although some actors see this network density as a problem).

V. Linking with global agendas

Just as it is essential to move towards a rationale of territorial articulations and multilevel governance, it is important to strengthen cities’ role in the global governance of development in order to give them greater regulatory influence in global scenarios. In the development field, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs will serve as global reference points. As suggested above, this agenda criticises the day-to-day running of the prevailing development model and broad consensus exists that change is needed (UCLG, 2016). However, despite the intensive work done, it remains an agenda that emanated from within the United Nations System and was therefore signed by national governments. It may reflect many of the interests and concerns of cities and territories, but their role in the 2030 Agenda remains inadequate. SDG 11 is a major step forward, but the urban and territorial must occupy more and better spaces. In this sense, the participation of urban and territorial actors in global governance remains more symbolic than real, as they do not play a central role in the decision-making around global policies, financing and how to manage the SDGs at territorial level. As all SDGs are local, undeniable opportunities exist for local governments, but it is not clear that these territorial levels have managed to enter the decision-making spaces, either nationally or globally.

While the alliance between national governments and the classic configuration of international cooperation still prevails in the way the world order is organised, local governments—especially regions and large cities—are emerging as new actors with concrete proposals and activities. It is in this context that the “territorialisation of policies” (alliances between national governments and international cooperation) must be combined the “construction of territorial policies”, which involves a horizontal model of networks and articulations in the territory. This still-emerging space will only become a central part of the 2030 Agenda framework if local governments are able to take advantage of their strategic, management and international relations capacities and resist being swallowed up in alliances seen as spaces governed by national and global dynamics. There have been innovative experiences in international cooperation in this regard, including the UNDP ART Program (Gallicchio, 2017).

VI. Conclusion

Territorial actors’ influence and capacity for articulation is closely related to decentralisation (and recentralisation) processes, as well as territorial and global challenges. Cities must position themselves in an innovative and creative way, on both territorial and global agendas. There are at least three parts to this positioning: articulating actors at a territorial level for the participatory construction of territorial policies, proper inclusion into the multilevel governance system and influence on global agendas, especially the 2030 Agenda.

The participation of urban and territorial actors in global governance remains more symbolic than real.

4. An important contribution on the relationship between local governments and cooperation is made by Fernández de Losada (2016).
Each of these aspects can contribute to strengthening certain capacities and synergies in urban development processes. The opportunities related to the 2030 Agenda are enormous, but there is a risk that local governments may be subsumed in a strategy whose course is dominated by national governments and international development cooperation. The efforts being made by the networks of cities are managing to balance this to a certain degree. But there is still a great deal of work to be done.

Taking a seat at the global table means meeting a double challenge: being excellent in the local management of development and generating multi-actor alliances for greater global impact. As Barcelona’s mayor, Ada Colau, has pointed out, though the “states rule” mentality still prevails, it is cities that have to grapple with everyday issues. For Colau, problems are resolved in cities or they are not resolved at all. Hence, reviewing competences and the allocation of more resources is key; but, as has been pointed out, this must be accompanied by the implementation of a management model based on good government and governance.

References


THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: 
TOWARDS A NEW URBAN PARADIGM

• THE ALTERNATIVES HERE AND GONE, AS IS THE GLOBAL SOUTH. THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF URBAN MAJORITIES
  AbdouMaliq Simone

• ADVANCING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN BRAZIL: LESSONS LEARNED AND CURRENT CHALLENGES
  Betânia Alfonsin

• CURBING RENTS AND GENTRIFICATION IN A GLOBAL CITY: THE CASE OF BERLIN
  Katrin Schmidberger

• THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY” AND THE “HUMAN RIGHTS CITY” IN ASIA
  Anselmo Lee
I. When we consider the Global South, to what do we refer?

None of the formerly normative conceptions seems sufficient. Those urban areas to which we usually attribute this designation have largely gone their own way, or the ways their particular articulations to the larger world – their dependencies and opportunities – have steered them. Different degrees of colonial imposition, different functions of global engagement, and different geographies of valuation have pushed certain processes of urbanisation to the fore in some regions and not others.

Mobilisations of popular sentiment and political commitment have both opened and foreclosed the elaboration of connectivities through which urban life takes shape. Varying state commitments to the economic and social transformations urbanisation sets in motion also speed things up and slow things down. Certainly, the viral capacity of a limited set of formats of inhabitation to replicate themselves at great speed, regardless of singular local textures and histories, demonstrates a totalising force sweeping long-honed practices of city-making off their feet. One can witness in the most impoverished countries significant swathes of upscale real estate investment. The creative energies, synergies and intersections of city life, collectively made, become increasingly abstracted: as formulae, locational advantage, buzz, and land rent. The urban now is converted into a value of financial speculation, something to be consumed at escalating prices.

While it may be impossible to retain the Global South as something that points to any sense of commonality, that in any respect exists as somehow apart, it may still be important as a necessary fiction or metaphor.

At the same time, to ask an urban Global South to posit a range of alternative urban futures is to once again ask that which has been systematically set up as something removed from the normative values of develop-
ment, and thereby meant to demonstrate the universal salience of those values, to now save the world from the dire outcomes such values have wrought. In this way, both the logic and spirit of coloniality persist. When massive demographic shifts result in dense landscapes that are difficult to read and govern, when megaprojects replace quaint villages in a matter of a few years, and when radically disparate conditions of life are situated in close proximity to each other, urban crises are declared, and everyone scurries for programmes of sustainability. Regardless of how cities got to be this way, the purported remarkableness of human resilience or the immanence of disaster often clouds assessments of what takes place, of how all of the disparities, uneven developments, precarious and privileged populations are somehow “held” together within urban systems whose systematicity is difficult to pin down.

II. Urban South and Western city

Much of what is then seen of as urban South is subjected to and becomes a subject through the projection of a white sensibility that too easily concludes deficiency, ineptitude, insalubrity, on the one hand, and reformation and profitable opportunity, on the other. While some consider the use of the racialised notion of white sensibility to be too harsh or unfair, it is important to remember just how many urban spaces across the world were once considered to be “black”.

Blackness designated populations, practices and spaces that were deemed to have little value, that required constant and extraordinary management, that exuded a fundamental opacity in how they functioned, and that were to be kept at a safe distance from where the real economy was generated, but at the same time to provide the cut-rate labour to keep that economy going.

Historically, the Western city existed as the locus through which certain of its inhabitants could reflect on their being as a singular prerogative untranslatable across other modalities of existence. The city was the place where human life was consolidated as the epitome of life in general. The city was for the human, and to be human was to maximise one’s position, continuously demonstrating the capacity to go beyond the requirements of sheer survival. This required a notion of free will, of the ability to act freely amongst otherwise constraining interdependencies.

At the same time, this freedom necessitated relegating certain bodies to the status of property or dependents, capable of circulating only through the transactional circuits of economic exchange and valuation. The city was the place that formed a “we” unrelated to anything but itself. Yet this “we” was inscribed as the node whose interests and aspirations were to be concretised through the expropriation and enclosure of critical metabolic relations – relations to earth and atmosphere. The “we” as a commons thus becomes partial, both in the senses of incomplete and judgmental.

White sensibility implicitly understood and feared such partiality, as urbanisation fundamentally entails the intersection of forces whose dispositions can never be fully read or anticipated in advance. As a result of this partiality, passions and scenarios are generated, which fall outside predictability. These were often then attributed as characteristics to those
populating the bazaars, the popular neighbourhoods, barrios, and bidonvilles. They became embodiments of an ambivalent mixture of fear and desire, full of a dangerous liveliness that had to be kept far away, but yet indicative of a missing vitality that also had to be kept close – kept close in order to be kept at a safe distance.

III. Urban majorities

These are the urban majorities. I use the notion of majority not so much as a statistical matter but to emphasise the ways in which residents of many Southern cities were largely a composite of backgrounds, livelihoods, capacities and incomes. The black city was far from a homogenous mass but an intricately, largely self-composed arena of diverse ways of doing and making things. People pushed and pulled things and each other in all kinds of directions; alternations were key: between calm and conflict, between the authorised and freewheeling, between generosity and manipulation, between collective and individual effort. The rhythms of everyday life, of how things were passed along, of how things ebbed and flowed, were key to elaborations of some workable balance between all the divergent interests. Equity and fairness were eventualities worked out over time and not the criteria of efficacy in the present. The pretentions of civility never could substitute for the hard-fought determinations of residents to make their circumstances work for them as well as others, and this entailed tough bargains, accommodations and compromise. It required intimate connections with materials and natural elements, as well as toxicity.

But any definitive determination of what was taking place was often difficult to make when plots were being continuously agglomerated and divided, when commercial and residential uses of space were being interchanged and mixed, where rights of access and use were renegotiated outside of the strict formulas of property ownership. The messiness of the built environment persists in part because of the plurality of different efforts and the arrangements attempted to make these efforts fit. At the same time, the messiness is a limited and provisional guarantee for the plurality itself. It is a means of trying to ensure that different kinds of residents – not always or even usually equal in terms of their access to resources and opportunities – nevertheless have a way of substantialising claims, of making their presence felt, and of keeping open the possibility of continuously revising their livelihoods.

The cities of the majority are not just the outgrowths of striving bodies but collisions of materials and processes that generate impacts far from their initial sites and “steady states”. They ramify across diverging tendencies. The operations of things in tandem, in high-density proximities, whereby they attract and repel, as well as leaving each other alone, are not tools grounded in the intentions of human inhabitants, aiding and abetting their survival and other aspirations. They do not simply exist as forms of technical supplementation to maximise the energies and capacities of these inhabitants. For if the technical were simply the supplementation of pre-existing proclivities, agendas, and capacities, how then could human inhabitants make use of things whose potentials, histories and actions are beyond human perspectives? So the ability to live with materials of all kinds and their unanticipated interactions was key to sustaining urban life, even as many governments woefully underfunded basic infrastructures.
Whatever endless calibrations, compensations and conflicts may ensue from the intersection of bodies without clear prospects or visions, it is the persistent generosity of those bodies to provide the rudiments of a solid world – still easily swept away – that is the city. People will die needlessly in childbirth, crossing roads without light, in flooding from clogged drains, and in arbitrary violence, but at the same time, it is rare that anyone will be without a place, without a way to survive for another day. That place and day are guaranteed by no one, but effectuated simply by someone’s openness to someone else, establishing an economy of trans-action and rest.

The urban majority was, for the most part, an in-between (in-between the superblock and the slum), and would encompass salaried workers in public and service sectors, traders, artisans, sojourners, petty bourgeois entrepreneurs, industrial labour, racketeers, service workers of various skills, and low-level technicians. Thus, various professions, work, back-grounds, economic capacities, and livelihoods are entailed. At various his-torical junctures, this in-between will gravitate and become discernible through various social and political formations, such as class, race, or territorial identity. Specific shared interests and vernaculars of recognition will come to the fore that enable the articulation of particular demands and form an anchorage point or target for the application of particu-lar policies, mobilisation and ideological engagement. But across most Southern cities, the relationship between a political subjectivity and the stabilisation of constituencies over time ebbs and flows, it is never entirely formed or dissipated, but porous and tentative.

Whether the efforts and endurance of such an urban majority are consid-ered defining features of an urban South or not, or whether they are the features of particular urbanisation processes that have come to dominate everywhere, is less important than what we make of such histories now.

Many districts of poor, working and middle-class districts have been erased, built over with the now conventional fabric of high-end commer-cial and residential vertical towers. Those districts that remain do so with-in vastly different trajectories. Some are subject to too many demands, entrepreneurial networks that hold too many one-room operations, too many workers looking out for each other; others are sites for an incessant busy-ness, everyone attempting some scheme or another, usually short-lived, with high turnovers of populations and increasingly unaffordable locational advantages. Some slowly fade away into obscurity through in-stitutional neglect.

As many have pointed out, much of the urban majority has been shifted to the periphery. Here, massive outlays of affordable vertical housing for the lower middle classes are interspersed with quickly assembled catch-ment zones for the urban poor, all of which intersect with an assortment of industrial land, relocated factories, ruined leisure zones, waste dumps, warehouses, and the vestiges of upscale gated communities. Most of the built environment is not built to last. Large estates of small pavilions that promised home ownership and fungible assets to the wage-earn-ers are rapidly decaying and abandoned not even a decade after their completion. Populations are inserting themselves into the fuzzy interstices of no-man’s lands produced by the exigency to further separate out the deserving from the non-deserving classes, alongside and underneath var-
ious transport infrastructures, land banks, and vast arrays of industrial and commercial spaces that are neither fully operational nor depleted. Here it is often difficult to know where things are heading, the proximities are too jarring, the average length of existence of any project becomes shorter and shorter, and large swaths of the built environment await eventual use and occupation that might never come.

IV. What futures face urban majorities?

Where once it might have been possible to make some kind of systematic use of the experiential histories of the majorities engaged in varying, tenuous and usually provisional forms of urbanism, it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain what kinds of futures these histories have in store. The capacities for making and doing are increasingly constrained, hemmed in by prolific rules and regulations that render much of what was done in the past illegal, as well as the extensive commodity chains that have diminished local production systems. In a somewhat ironic fashion, the South derived its value from being without rules, the breaker of rules; subject to voluminous quantities of rules that were largely unenforceable, simply for show, or only to be selectively applied.

Its purported chaotic conditions may have been the basis through which rules in the Northern hemispheres were elaborated and legitimated. But the South was largely to stand outside of the rules, was often rewarded for its lack of compliance, where extractions of nearly anything could take place under the radar. Now it is subject to solutions that largely depend upon the creation and enforcement of rules and regulations. While enforcement may still be selective and rules applied as a means of shake-downs and extortion, municipalities everywhere seek to demonstrate their modernity and authority by extending the rules as the very rights of citizens.

Residents of Karachi, São Paolo, Mexico City, Manila, Jakarta, Baghdad, Cairo, Lagos and Johannesburg desire lives that are as stress free and prosperous as possible. They know that such aspirations are not possible unless they have recourse to viable ways to manage what can be expected from their efforts, to some rudimentary ability to foresee what is likely to happen to them if certain courses of action are pursued. So they do indeed know and respect the value of law, of the need to govern things. But the extent to which the particular rules and regulations that tend to be issued really grasp the ways livelihoods are made is another story. They tend to overlegislate and overstandardise, and thus overpenalise the range of practices residents feel are required to make continuous adaptations and recalibrations in volatile urban environments.

If the objective of rule-based systems was to ensure a level playing field, to give a workable sense of predictability as to the disposition of particular actions and a sense of stability to the fundamentally uncertain outcomes of urban transactions, it seems critical to understand how these tenuous

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outcomes were produced in the past and what kinds of sensibilities, orientations, negotiations, and understandings were at work. This means understanding how fractious intentions, plans and manoeuvres, messy political dealings, compensations for things gone wrong and continuous adjustments could produce affordable and intensely heterogeneous spaces of residence and commerce.

At the same time, we have to better understand how these practices for creating heterogeneous spaces can become a double-edged sword. Owners of printing shops, technicians, domestic workers, informal hawkers, local youth gangs, associations of imams at mosques, street sweepers and local power brokers do not simply have their own rules, sectors, domains and spaces, they also come to take on the realities of everyone else. This is part and parcel of their ability to do their job, stay in place, and then do something else when the time inevitably comes. This is what their capacity for adaptation brings about. On the one hand, bringing the others into one’s own fold can help better synchronise the different things that take place in a given district. At the same time, however, different actors, feeling like they now have what they need from others, can be more inclined to go their own way, not really taking into consideration what others in the district are actually doing and being more prepared to “cut their own deals” with external actors. This is one area, then, where the maintenance or creation of local governance institutions has a critical role to play, not by enforcing a common set of procedures but in ensuring an ongoing sense of mutual responsibility that scrutinises every deal in terms of its potential implications for a given territory.

We also have to seriously ask to what extent can the predominant tropes of democracy, justice and citizenship continue to do the “work” of substantiating and sustaining human inhabitation across contemporary urban contexts?

For the human – as a generalisation from the specific genealogies, practices, and lifetimes of specific bodies, their thoughts and aspirations – requires a mode of enactment and regard that generates a concrete experience, not simply a conceptualisation, of the common.

What would urban humans be without the capacity to be enjoined on a level that exceeds the specificities of discrete and divergent lives, but yet incorporates these specificities as critical evidence of the fact of human existence? What do residents of contemporary urban regions have in common? Instead of institutions, such as shrines, associations and guilds, for example, acting as shelters from the tensions and uncertainties of the larger world, in many instances they still function as a way for individuals to enter that larger world, as a platform from which to engage with it, learn from it and shape it.

V. The right to the city: enhancing particular modes of belonging?

The common is not a reduction of complexity, it is not the equalisation of identities in some overarching trope such as citizenship, but the maintenance of many different pathways, enclosures and openings onto spaces and experiences that need not have either a common denominator or a
particular mode of belonging. What is important in urban life are less the characteristics of where people reside but rather how they pass through each other; the possibility of multiple encounters where nothing is deliberated or instrumental. This is how the right to the city is experienced in everyday life. The coordination of urban heterogeneity – the sorting out of bodies, activities and opportunities – relied upon local social institutions honed over the long run. These included religious institutions, unions and ethnic and guild associations. Increasingly, while many of these associations remain, they are shells of their former selves, unable to coordinate and cohere diverse residents who find themselves facing a much more direct, unmediated exposure to the complexities of urban systems. These systems themselves are opened up to uncertain connections with a larger world of financial flows, commodity chains, socio-technical apparatuses and political manipulations.

In cities where an increasingly youthful population deems the past irrelevant to the requirements of the future, where some no longer seek recognition and inclusion and others move from one project to another, doing the right thing largely means doing nothing at all. While aspirations for a successful life may prevail, significant numbers of young people who are indifferent to their own survival see the city simply as something to be grabbed now, regardless of the consequences. The intricate fabrics of social care and support that sustained volatile ways of life in the past, which enabled a workable sense of collaboration even in contexts that were heavily conflictual, have become strained and often ineffective. Devices such as local economic development and local democracy become untenable for those who have no desire to stay in place, who are always on the move, even if the circuits of movement are themselves quite limited.

Given this, certain practices employed by residents to work with this heterogeneity in the current context of greater uncertainty might be viewed as a kind of “politics”, but are actually largely speculative and thoroughly entangled with large measures of risk and affect dispositions which are often unclear in terms of the interests served and the futures produced. They rely upon what I call a practice of “anticipation” which, although imbuing various instantiations of local collective life with flexibility and innovation, can also dissipate the energies and commitments of residents into a multiplicity of uncoordinated initiatives and “experiments”. Planning therefore remains important as a means of trying to sort through and interweave these anticipations into viable representations and projects.

Increasingly, “urban future” sounds like a cruel oxymoron. The urban world has produced a situation where the future looms as an endgame, particularly for those who live in cities whose originally siting was undertaken for quick evacuations of precious cargo. Salvation through infrastructure may be technically feasible but always confronts an untenable bottom line.

For the time being, it is critical to reconsider all of the measures undertaken in the names of health and safety, development and modernity, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and conduciveness to investment in order to assess their medium-term implications for residents who in most cities of the world have seen only marginal gains in their living conditions. This is not to say that regulatory policies are either detrimental or unnecessary but rather they should be assessed in terms of what they facilitate and
preclude. For example, with the exception of the most polluting industries, there is little reason for the separation of residence and commerce. The inflation of nuisance to become a determinant factor in whether or where certain activities should take place often constitutes a costly spacing out of functions as well as contributing to informationally impoverished environments.

With all of the purported concern for public space, the realisation of active publics can still largely be found in the seemingly haphazard, incomplete and strewn-out arrangements of buildings, infrastructure and activity that continue to persist in many cities. This environment provides a visible rendering of what things are and what people have to deal with in sustaining a viable residency. It shows how water and power appear and disappear, what bodies and objects manage to get through in order to encapsulate themselves in a sense of individual agendas and aspirations; it shows the terrain, conditions and conjunctions in which the changing projects of people and things try to get along – not always very successfully.

It shows how residents criss-cross and sidestep the markings and sediments of many different movements, constituting a place always signalling its availability to deals, small initiatives and grand designs. Instead of focusing on “straightening out the city” or putting things in their “proper place”, it is important for spatial organization to show how residents, materials, infrastructures and built environments shape each other, step through and around each other day in and day out. Here what is important is the ability of residents to see how their aspirations and daily activities impact upon their environments, and these environments in turn shape what they sense, feel and deem to be possible.
I. Introduction

This chapter presents the process of political and legal construction of the right to the city in Brazil. It shows that its recognition and conversion into public policies and legal instruments took place only after intense mobilisation of social movements committed to its implementation. Several moments in recent Brazilian history are analysed in order to highlight key milestones in this mobilisation process. Using the historical method, the chapter works from the hypothesis that, although Brazil was the first country in the world to recognise this right, the growing political polarisation and conservative shift in the country places it at serious risk.

II. The traces of slavery in Brazilian urbanisation

Brazilian urbanisation, which predated the abolition of slavery, was nevertheless accelerated by it: the first favelas emerged in the period around abolition, especially in Rio de Janeiro (Zaluar and Alvito, 1998). Just as no mention was made of a need for redress after 350 years of abduction, enslavement, commodification, abuse and torture of the black population, Brazil abolished slavery without saying a word on where the descendants of slaves would be housed. This explains why the first Brazilian favelas coincided with the abolition of slavery. Collecting scrap material from the streets, former slaves and their descendants built precarious housing in urban areas that lacked services and infrastructure. They had possession of the land, but no legal title.

In the years that followed, the situation continued to worsen and, with the rapid process of industrialisation that took place in the country throughout the 20th century, some of the urban fabric began to concentrate along the coast and, to a larger extent, in south-eastern Brazil.

In the 21st century, Brazil is one of the world’s most hierarchical and unequal countries, and a place where hatred directed at the poor is the legacy of the disdain with which slaves were treated during slavery.
Brazilian social movements became highly organised collective subjects, demanding urban reform and claiming the right to the city throughout the country’s recent history.

Article 182 of the Federal Constitution of 1988 mentions, for the first time in history, that the aim of urban policy is to guarantee the “social functions” of the city.

This is the sad common thread that perpetuates the social inequalities throughout Brazilian history. It is a country where Afro-descendants are the group that is most affected by the lack of housing policies. And yet housing issues affect other sections of the population too. Some studies place the housing deficit at 6,355,000 homes, despite the 7,906,000 vacant properties in the country (Fundação João Pinheiro, 2018).

III. The fight for urban reform

In response to these inequalities, Brazilian social movements became highly organised collective subjects, demanding urban reform and claiming the right to the city throughout the country’s recent history. In a dialectical movement, civil society contested the political and legislative omissions with powerful social mobilisation, and significant advances were made.

Retracing the background to this, the federal constitution’s chapter on urban development policy (1988) seems a good place to start: in just two articles, a striking historical attitude is presented. The configuration of the urban planning law was a turning point in the history of Brazil’s planning and brought an era of technocratic planning to a close. The democratic process that led to this chapter being formulated (and which laid the foundations of the urban planning law) is one of the most notable in Brazil’s formative history.

The National Forum on Urban Reform, which was set up in that period, included representatives from unions, NGOs, professional, community and academic associations, and activists from various movements for decent housing, quality transport, universal sanitation and public participation in urban management. The great merit of this collective subject was to go much further than merely making bleak diagnoses of Brazilian cities and their problems: it had the capacity to promote an urban reform programme for the country when history demanded it. Thus, a popular amendment for urban reform was presented to the Constituent Congress which, in 22 articles, proposed the introduction of various innovative instruments and guidelines relating to Brazilian urban policy.

This history is in the public domain. The balance of power in the Constituent Congress prevented the approval of many of the proposals made by the social movements that were presented via popular amendments. This is exactly what happened with the popular amendment on urban reform. As a result of the so-called centrão, it was reduced to the content of articles 182 and 183 of the federal constitution, the chapter on urban policy. This appeared to be a defeat, but in fact these two articles have been extremely important, due to the type of policies whose implementation they enabled in Brazilian municipalities, and because they ushered in a new phase of Brazilian urban planning (Alfonsin, 2012).

Article 182 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, which delegates the execution of urban development policy to municipal authorities, also mentions, for the first time in history, that the aim of urban policy is to guarantee the “social functions” of the city. It should be pointed out that the principle of the social function of property had already...
been recognised in the Federal Constitution of 1934 (Fernandes and Alfonsin, 2010). Nevertheless, as well as requiring doctrinal effort to be made on the definition of the meaning and scope of this new principle, the inclusion of the expression “social functions of the city” in the 1988 constitution involved a significant leap in scale: it meant an urban policy carried out “plot by plot” would be replaced by a policy that took urban planning to be a public function, in which the city itself is considered a common good. Finally, it is also important to note that the urban policy chapter in the new Federal Constitution established the bases for the subsequent legal recognition of the right to the sustainable city.

Following the 1986–1988 Constituent Assembly, many municipalities went on to create notable urban development policies. A striking experience in this sense is Porto Alegre’s participatory budget. It might be presumed that this public policy was created by the Workers’ Party, but in fact the establishment of Porto Alegre’s participatory budget was actually the result of agreement between the urban social movements and the municipal administration. One of the most important elements of the participatory budget in relation to the right to the city is that it establishes public participation as a compulsory precondition for the city council approving the municipal budget.

At its height (1998–2002), the participatory budget gathered 45,000 people at 16 regional plenaries and six thematic plenaries (carried out in two rounds), and at intermediate meetings for presenting demands and analysing them. The experience featured significant citizen awareness and a permanent mobilisation of low-income people over a period of 16 years around issues concerning the right to the city. This justifies its inclusion within the framework of constructing this right in the country.

In legislative terms, Brazil ended up becoming the first country in the world to recognise the right to the city. Thanks to the large-scale mobilisation of the National Forum on Urban Reform, the City Statute of 2001 became the first public law in the country to develop an urban policy and the first to describe the city’s production processes from an urban reform perspective. The right to the sustainable city was incorporated into national legislation with a wording that included multiple rights for the inhabitants of cities. Specifically, the City Statute (Law 10.257/01) establishes the following:

Article 2. The purpose of urban policy is to give order to the full development of the social functions of the city and of urban property, based on the following general guidelines:

1 – to guarantee the right to sustainable cities, understood as the right to urban land, housing, environmental sanitation, urban infrastructure, transportation and public services, employment and leisure, for current and future generations.

(Santos Carvalho and Rossbach, 2010: 92).

Following the City Statute’s approval, the National Forum on Urban Reform proposed that social movements from around the world should discuss the “World Charter for the Right to the City” within the framework of the 2002 World Social Forum.
work of the 2002 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, with the intention of disseminating the right to the city as a collective human right. This charter had a highly mobilising effect on civil society around the world, allowing a platform to be built to exert political pressure on the United Nations to recognise the right to the city as a human right. It was an important moment in internationalising the vision and the political demands for it to acquire legal force.

Domestically, Brazil was at the same time inaugurating a cycle of popular governments led by the Worker’s Party (PT) with Lula and Dilma at the fore. The 2003 elections helped consolidate the right to the city, as major public policies were drawn up that aligned with different component parts of this right. The Ministry of Cities was created in 2003 and aimed to fight social inequalities, to transform cities into more humanised spaces and to extend access to housing, sanitation and transport. The institutional advances involved programmes of land regularisation, as well as creating mass housing programmes, such as Minha Casa, Minha Vida (My home, My life). Though there were criticisms of the programme, what is undeniable is that almost four million new houses were built across the country in a context of serious housing shortages. Another significant advance during the Lula and Dilma governments was the democratisation of the process of discussing urban policy. In particular, a cycle of Cities Conferences took place at the different territorial levels (including municipal, state and national conferences) in a notably decentralised process of public participation to debate the country’s urban policy. However, although urban and housing policies were progressing, Brazil began to experience the political process of gradual erosion of the Dilma government, which was, to a large extent, the result of dissatisfaction among national elites with the social policies implemented by the PT governments, as well of manipulation by the national media.

IV. Setbacks and responses

From 2013 onwards the course of the right to the city in Brazil came to be characterised by a series of political disputes and ambiguities marked by political and legal advances and setbacks. From 2013 onwards the course of the right to the city in Brazil came to be characterised by a series of political disputes and ambiguities marked by political and legal advances and setbacks. In June 2013, following a rise in public transport fees, a series of political demonstrations broke out in various Brazilian cities. The first took place in Porto Alegre after a 20 centavo increase in fare prices. The increase may not appear great but the mass mobilisation against the rise was immediate. The first demonstrations were called by the Bloco de Luta pelo Transporte Público in front of the Rio Grande del Sur court of law, which recognised that the increase was unfair and upheld the decision taken by Judge Hilbert Maximiliano Obara of the 5th public treasury court. Looking back, the repercussions of this judicial decision were highly important for the sequence of events in 2013 as, seeing the success of the popular resistance strategy in Porto Alegre, major protests were organised in other cities against unfair rises in public transport fares. A domino effect occurred that meant demonstrations broke out across the whole country that were characterised by mass participation, extensive press coverage and various undeniable victories, such as the reduction of fares in over 100 cities.
It should be noted that though the demonstrations began by focusing on reducing fare prices, they diversified later on to take in other issues related to the exercise of citizenship. In addition to the right to urban public transport, other demands were made in relation to social rights, such as health, education and the right to political participation. A powerful movement for the right to the city was emerging at this point and included millions of people. Amid this boom, an intense process of media manipulation began that led to demonstrations against public transport fare rises becoming spaces for criticising corruption (Souza, 2016). The agenda was co-opted by right-wing movements that exerted their influence in June 2013, aided by the key role of the television network Rede Globo.

From that point on, Brazil began suffering major setbacks in terms of democracy and human rights. In 2016, part applauding, part horrified, the country witnessed the removal of the president, Dilma Rousseff, after an impeachment process in which no real crime of responsibility had taken place. This was a parliamentary, judicial and media coup that soon had highly perverse effects on the Brazilian population as a whole. Taking advantage of the political situation, Michel Temer’s government sent congress a series of ultra-liberal structural reforms, including:

• Limiting public spending for 20 years (fiscal austerity policy);
• Labour reform;
• Secondary education reform;
• Social security reform;
• Reform of the legal framework on land.

The last reform, enacted in Law 13.465/17, was the most significant for the right to the city. It modified the legal regulation of four land systems: the lands of the Amazon, the public federal lands, the regularisation of rural land, and the regularisation of urban land, which meant reforming the City Statute.

This legislation represents a worrying regression in the right to the city in Brazil. It prioritises processes of mass awarding of title deeds that could facilitate malign gentrification processes, as Raquel Rolnik (2015), former United Nations Special Rapporteur for the human right to adequate housing, has made clear in her work on the financialisation of land and housing in several countries around the world.

V. The right to the city in global agendas

Though it may seem paradoxical, the new laws contrast greatly with the commitments Brazil has made to the United Nations. In fact, whilst these structural reforms were being promoted, Brazil took part in the Habitat III conference in Quito as a highly important actor (especially in the preparatory process), playing a key diplomatic role in ensuring the right to the city was included in the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Both Brazilian civil society, through the Global Platform for the Right to the City, and the government itself (before President Dilma Rousseff was removed), were important in helping formulate paragraph 11 of the NUA:

Brazil took part in the Habitat III conference in Quito as a highly important actor, playing a key diplomatic role in ensuring the right to the city was included in the New Urban Agenda.
11. Our shared vision

We share a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all. We note the efforts of some national and local governments to enshrine this vision, referred to as “right to the city”, in their legislation, political declarations and charters. (UN, 2016).

The level of political commitment the United Nations made to the right to the city is notable, above all because the NUA also incorporates different elements of it throughout the text. In the Brazilian case, the NUA reinforces a great deal of the legality of the right to the city, because as well as having a constitutional basis and provision in ordinary law, it is also provided for in international law (although merely a declaration or soft law, it contains the political agreement and commitment of the signatory countries). Notwithstanding the generic nature of most international law documents (which enables agreement between countries with highly different realities) and the contradictions they often contain, it is worth noting that the central elements of the right to the city, as historically established, are present in the NUA:

- The principle of the social function of land;
- The principle of urban environmental sustainability;
- The right to housing;
- The right to participation;
- The right to public space.

In fact, Brazilian social movements are clear about the strategic role of the right to the city in the fight for urban reform, especially in the current harsh political climate.

Though a number of clear examples of this exist, only two will be cited. The first is the *Povo Sem Medo* (People without Fear) occupation in São Bernardo do Campo (Metropolitan Region of São Paulo), where 8,000 families occupy land that was abandoned over 40 years ago. The occupation strongly condemns the abandonment of housing policies for low-income people in Brazil, and the total absence of monitoring of the fulfilment of property’s social function in urban real estate in Brazil’s major cities.
The second example of the recent mobilisations is the huge march organised by various social movements in Brasilia to demand Lula be allowed to stand for president of the republic. The march demanded that debate about the quality of democracy in the country be a central theme for Brazilian politics in the pre-electoral context.

These demonstrations show that in periods characterised by serious regressions, social movements are organising processes of resistance based around the right to the city.

VI. Final considerations

The case of Brazil clearly shows the emergence and strengthening of the right to the city as a new urban paradigm. The country’s experience demonstrates the importance of social movement organisations and civil society entities in strengthening this new paradigm from legal and institutional perspectives. Nevertheless, it is also a clear example of how the social and political demands for the fulfilment of the right to the city (and all the rights that make it up) must be permanent, because incorporating it into current law is not sufficient to guarantee its effectiveness. Brazilian activists are aware that a strong mobilisation is necessary to guarantee the right to the city for all the Marielles in Brazil. In homage to Marielle, a councillor and activist for the right to the city, the resistance will continue throughout her political term. Marielle Franco: PRÉSENTE!
References


Curbing rents and gentrification in a global city: the case of Berlin

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In the last decade remarkable changes have taken place in the Berlin real estate market. Global developments and the 2007/2008 financial crisis led to huge demand and investment flows in the housing market. The previously low real estate prices promised huge gains. As 85% of Berlin residents live in rented properties, this globalisation and financialisation of local real estate and the housing market have resulted in a chain of problems, of which gentrification and displacement are the most worrying. The new left-leaning (red–red–green) local government is detecting and implementing regulations that tackle these developments.

As a policymaker and resident of the inner-city district of Kreuzberg, awareness of this kind of problem is fundamental. In cooperation with the Green-led district administration (Bezirk Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg), we share the goal of implementing effective political measures to counteract gentrification and displacements. The importance of this effort also arises from the commitment to the right to the city for all citizens. The affected group in this case are locals from whom the right to the city and in this case the right to housing is taken away: tenants. Having links to the fairly active local rent associations, housing initiatives and major grassroots movements, awareness of their distress, needs and concerns gets personal. Being a member of the Berlin parliament and a political representative confers an obligation to assure their rights and implement an effective policy in this area.

I. Berlin, a city of tenants

Over 4.5 million people live in Berlin and its metropolitan area (which includes parts of Land Brandenburg). Average population growth is currently about 50,000 inhabitants per year, the fastest rate since reunification. In the city of Berlin (Land Berlin in the German federal system) there are over 1.9 million housing units. About a quarter are owned by public housing companies and cooperatives. The other three-quarters belong to private owners, of which around 10% are owned by large private housing companies. Berlin is almost unique,
not only in Germany, but also across Europe and beyond, as 85% of its inhabitants live in rented apartments (German average: 54%). Very few other cities have such a high percentage, though some exist in high-income Switzerland, where almost 62% of the population live in rented apartments: Basel 85%, Geneva 81% and Zurich 71% (Martel, 2017). In Austria, meanwhile, 57% of the population live in rented accommodation overall, while the figure is 81% in traditionally tenant-based Vienna. Over 60% of its housing units are owned by public companies and cooperatives (BDB, 2017).

In Berlin this is not because of socialism or the former East Berlin. Due to a special subsidy policy (Förderpolitik), it was also common – and cheaper – to live in rented apartments in former west Berlin. On the one hand, the destruction left by the Second World War made housing supply an existential issue. On the other, in the Cold War era, the two systems were competing over who would solve the problem and construct more flats and houses. This might be seen as “a housing Cold War” whose consequences were great, with both sides massively supporting the construction of residential space.

The change after reunification was crucial. Some large-scale housing projects in the mid-90s apart, there was a shift in housing policy and the public construction of housing – especially social housing – became insignificant or even non-existent. Until eight or nine years ago the Social Democrat-run Senate for Urban Development and Housing insistently proclaimed that there were problems with housing in Berlin. Unquestionably, in the early stages there was oversupply, particularly in the prefabricated housing complexes in Lichtenberg, Marzahn and Hellersdorf, although many of them were demolished or reorganised. But it had also become obvious that re-urbanisation processes had begun to change the situation in the central districts.

Nevertheless, the 2000s can be seen as a period of moratorium in the construction of public and social housing. Due to a real estate scandal and a huge public debt of €60 billion, the Social Democrat and Socialist-led city government began selling public companies, many of them to equity funds and private investors. Among them were housing companies like GSW (Gemeinnützige Siedlungs- und Wohnungbaugesellschaft) and GEHAG (Gemeinnützige Heimstätten-, Spar- und Bau-Aktiengesellschaft), both of which were founded in the 1920s as non-profit housing companies.

The consequences of less construction and more privatisation of public housing are easy to predict. In terms of the basic market logic of supply and demand, the impact on the housing market and rents is clear. Some of this 85% of rental apartments had quite low rents or were affordable for Berlin residents. Local wages and the median income in Berlin are low compared to other German cities. When rents began increasing, steadily at first and then at great speed, the consequences for low-income residents were easy to imagine, particularly given how incomes had stagnated and unemployment had been high since the 1990s. Between 2007 and 2016 the median rent increased by 80%, while in the same period the median net income per household grew by less than 28% (IBB, 2018: 29).
II. The financialisation of housing

But this was only one part of the problem. Emerging from the 2007/2008 financial crisis we had to deal with new kinds of practices, which ended up causing major problems. Urban space and real estate increasingly became the new objects of capital growth and accumulation, or to be more provocative, objects of speculation. In Germany we call it Betongold (gold from concrete). There was a massive shift toward capital investment in real estate and housing stocks. The European Central Bank’s low interest rates boosted this process by making borrowing cheap. Due to the increased attractiveness of Berlin and its comparatively low real estate prices, this business model, whereby the reason for buying assets and property is not necessarily to use or rent them, began to play a central role. The best example in this sense is London, where high profits are also obtained through buy, keep and resell strategies. In just five years the prices can increase twofold, or even more. The same strategy also occurs in Berlin, albeit to a lesser extent.

The figures show that average property prices rose last year in Berlin by 20.7%, the fastest rate of all global cities (Collinson, 2018; based on a study by the real estate consultants Knight Frank). Even now, investment funds and so-called developers see these property prices as low and promising for greater returns. As real estate professionals perceive further potential all over the city, prospects are that a lot of properties or even entire housing companies are about to change hands.

In all these cases the business strategies remain similar. The habitual practice is the conversion of rented apartments into condos. Purchasing buildings and getting rid of the tenants, whether by buying them out, or by just announcing modernisation measures and consequentially higher rents, is the main method of displacement. This mechanism for higher profits is even certified by German federal law. Another application of existing laws makes it possible to conduct a luxury modernisation and raise rents, in some cases even doubling them. All these methods increase pressure on tenants and trigger displacement, particularly of low-income residents. This began to happen at the end of the 1990s in the attractive old districts of Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg, then spread to Kreuzberg and Schöneberg, and nowadays affects not only inner districts, but wide swathes of districts such as Lichtenberg and Steglitz, among others. This broad gentrification has in some neighbourhoods been the main reason two-thirds of residents have changed in the last 10–15 years (around Kollwitzplatz in Prenzlauer Berg, the figure is as high as 90%).

The result of all this is a housing market that makes apartments inaccessible even to households with middle incomes. Some simple figures confirm this. The current average rent is almost 10.80 €/m². In the centre and the inner districts, however, it ranges between 12.00 €/m² and 13.00 €/m² and above (IBB, 2018: 62). The rent for a 50 m² space is nearly €540 and for 100 m² nearly €1,080. Setting this against the €1,950 median net household income in Berlin shows the dimension of the problem (IBB, 2018: 9). Households spend 28% to 56% of their income on rent. In the city centre, however, this figure can be much more. In general it is becoming more and more difficult for tenants to keep their apartments or to find a new one in the surrounding area.
These developments have raised public awareness anew but – and more importantly! – they have led to the formation of the first truly strong grassroots movements and activists, who fight for affordable housing, against displacement and in general for the right to the city. In 2015 they promoted a petition, collected over 100,000 signatures in a very short period of time and enforced a bill for a reformed affordable housing supply (Gesetz über die Neuausrichtung der sozialen Wohnraumversorgung in Berlin). The Green Party have actively supported their aims principally because of the common agenda in protecting and constructing affordable housing, but also because we encourage local participatory democracy. Another important grassroots movement is “Kotti & Co”, a well-organised tenants’ initiative in Kreuzberg. Since May 2012 they have organised protests against the threat of evictions and displacements of residents due to drastic rent increases by the stock exchange housing company Deutsche Wohnen (Deutsche Wohnenenteignen). They have also developed indispensable expertise on these issues. The newest movement and possibly the next petition are coming this April 2019. It concerns the expropriation of Deutsche Wohnen and the recommunalisation/socialisation of the stock of private housing companies like Deutsche Wohnen, Vonovia, Akelius and others. In terms of rental policy and facility maintenance, Deutsche Wohnen is one of the worst companies. Their financial model is based on overrating their own housing stock just to boost the company’s value on the stock exchange.

III. Measures of regulation

In the September 2016 elections the Green programme suggested a radical shift in housing and rental policy. After tough negotiations, a left-leaning local government was formed from a coalition of Social Democrats, Socialists and Greens. The need to implement measures to stop the privatisation of housing and move towards affordable and social housing was crucial and part of the Greens’ agenda. Such objectives require the implementation of both large and small measures.

One important target is to increase the housing stock of the six public housing companies through acquisitions and new constructions, from around 300,000 to 355,000 units by the end of the legislative period in autumn 2021, and then up to 400,000 units by 2025. In the mid-term the housing stock has increased by over 20,000 and is expected to almost reach the goal by 2021 (350,000 units). The higher the percentage of public-owned housing, the greater the stabilisation and adjustment of the rental market. For the same reason it is key to support housing cooperatives, especially those run as common goods. Berlin has a long tradition of housing cooperatives over the past 100 years. Their nearly 190,000 apartments guarantee affordable housing, which is often cheaper than public housing. Through the reformed model, with new priorities when it comes to invitations to tender, only plans (Konzeptvergabe) for affordable, intergenerational, participatory and ecological housing will be awarded contracts. Similar successful examples exist in cities like Vienna and Zurich.

The new building bill and the cooperative construction land development model (Kooperative Baulandentwicklung) require private owners to build 30% of residential space as low-priced social housing.
to build 30% of residential space as low-priced social housing. In the previous three years this was practised only by public housing companies and produced 1,000 new social housing units per year. At the same time, another important target is to secure the existing privately owned social housing units on new contracts and terms. A new bill will extend the binding period beyond the current 30 years, though in this case the negotiations in the coalition are tough.

New construction alone, however, is not enough to curb rising rents. A set of regulations and bills to protect existing rents and expand tenant rights has been passed. The first step towards applicable solutions was to limit rent increases in public housing companies. Although owned by the City of Berlin, they are used to acting like private competitors. A “cooperation deal” managed to insert more social targets within their business strategies, among them were: significantly curbing rent increases in social housing units (maximum 4% in the space of two years); letting 60% of apartments to people with low incomes; reducing costs after a modernisation; and providing a “hardship” regulation, which means households with low incomes should not spend more than 30% of their monthly income on rent.

Another problematic issue is the misuse of residential space, especially by platforms like Airbnb. Berlin’s position as one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Europe has an impact on affordable housing and residential neighbourhoods. There has been a considerable expansion of tourist apartments in the city (with 12,000 to 15,000 estimated units, most of them illegal) and their number has caused disturbances. The commercial use of apartments and any use other than residence require permission from the city authorities. The Misappropriation Prohibition Bill (Zweckentfremdungsverbot-Gesetz) passed in 2013 gave the possibility of denying permission in some cases. It became possible this way to reconvert around 9,000 units to stable residential purposes. We recently passed even stricter regulations, raising the maximum fine for violations to €500,000, making registration numbers compulsory, deleting listings upon suspicion of illegality, and limiting short-term letting of secondary homes to 90 days, among other measures. Unfortunately, there is no way to obtain Airbnb’s user data in cases where illegalities are being committed, as the platform always claims that this is prohibited by Irish data protection laws. No data yet exists on how the bill has affected the situation, but the districts now have a strong instrument for stopping further misuse.

With this bill we also introduced stricter rules on speculative vacancies and the demolition of residential buildings. We implemented a trustee model for acute cases, in which the authorities are enabled to instruct a person to put their properties under trust. When fines have no effect, the trust manages and re-lets the unoccupied living space, even without the owner’s cooperation. The housing control bill coming next year will implement more regulations for cases of misuse and open up the possibility of expropriating or putting assets under trust.

Some smaller but nevertheless important measures are higher rent subsidies for people dependent on social benefits and free legal advice for tenants throughout the city, which began this year.
IV. Protection zones

One instrument from the Federal Building Code (Baugesetzbuch) that cities in Germany have at their disposal and we increasingly use in Berlin is the definition of “protected zones” (Milieuschutzgebiete). Currently, this is one of the very few instruments that enable districts and municipalities to challenge gentrification and displacement of low-income households in order to preserve the existing social structure of neighbourhoods.

In these zones, unreasonably expensive modernisations resulting in extreme rent increases and the conversion of rented apartments into condos can be forbidden. In the last ten years more than 140,000 apartments have been renovated in Berlin. However, like many laws at the federal level, this instrument has loopholes that need to be filled. The IBB Housing Market Reports confirm that such protected zones work well. In comparison to other areas the increase in rents slowed down and the average rent is around €1 lower per square metre. There is also more diversity, from students to families with children, senior citizens and people with low incomes. About 50 such protection zones exist, containing over 800,000 inhabitants.

Another important aspect of “protected zones” is that cities and Berlin’s districts have the “right of first refusal” when private dwellings are sold. Green politicians in particular make use of the pre-emptive right to protect houses from speculation. The districts are not allowed to buy them themselves, but hand them over to public housing companies and cooperatives. The instrument has been used for almost 40 buildings containing more than 800 apartments in the last three years. However, when buyers accept an avoidance agreement, the municipalities cannot apply the right of first refusal anymore. The massive speculative real estate prices also make it more and more difficult to afford these purchases, which impose limitations on this instrument.

Protection zones in Berlin

Source: FIS Broker
V. The land issue

In the last months, when debating how speculation in property prices can be prevented, it is obvious that the land question has to be reconsidered. The right to the city is enormously linked to this. Anyone who owns land has the authority and the power to decide what to build. This process is made more complex by the extreme increase in speculative land prices over the past years. In districts like Kreuzberg one square metre of construction land cost €380 in 2008; today it is over €3,500: an increase of almost 1000% in ten years. These land prices result in no laws other than those of speculation. Undoubtedly, this has an impact on rents, especially in new buildings and it means the city and the state cannot afford to acquire space for building, housing, social or other infrastructure.

One instrument to curb speculation on construction land in Berlin was to reduce the duration of the validity of construction permits for new buildings. From this year onwards a construction permit in Berlin has a validity of only two years, which can be extended to a maximum of five years. Previously, the construction permit in Berlin had a much longer validity period. Considering that land with construction permits is always more expensive, this invites speculation over it. Instead of being built on, many hectares of land were resold at higher values after permits were granted. Recent figures show that nearly 46% – 48,000 apartments – have been proposed and permitted but not constructed yet.

In this context, land policy, especially that relating to urban land, plays an important role. After many years of the Social Democrats, Conservatives and even the former Socialists selling off public land, the current government has begun to retain its land and start its own development whereby, for example, plots of land are offered to cooperatives or developers leasing only. This way the city keeps the control over the use of land and ensures that it remains a common good. Once again, good examples exist in Austria and Switzerland, who have been practicing this for over 100 years now.

VI. A challenge for cities

The red–red–green coalition in Berlin – especially the Greens’ agenda – supports and struggles for a more radical shift in rental policy. There is still a lot of work to be done. The city of Berlin plays a unique role on this issue, not only because it is the biggest city in Germany, but above all because an extension of global developments is taking place.

If we want lively, diversified and open cities that are not dominated by multinational companies, then we must once again focus radically on a land, rent and urban development policy towards establishing common goods and services for the public interest. When nobody gets upset over price ceilings for mobile phone tariffs in the EU or everyone thinks they are great, why not also limit rents? Why are policies like these put down with talk of a planned economy? It makes no sense. Only stricter and better composed regulation ensures social cohesion in our cities. We need clear rules so global trends and financial interests do not dictate the well-being of our cities and our citizens. Living space and land...
are limited and irreproducible goods. In addition to the regulation of the real estate sector, the promotion of a housing sector that is oriented towards the needs of the citizens is also necessary. We must start looking at urban development from the bottom-up, together with civil society. That is the only way we can stop the unjust distribution of space and resources.

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THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY” AND THE “HUMAN RIGHTS CITY” IN ASIA

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Member of the Planning Committee, Gwangju World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF)

The chapter attempts to explain how the “right to the city” and the “human rights city” have been interpreted and practised in South Korea and Asia. The role of the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) – held annually in Gwangju, South Korea since 2011 – will be explained as a case study, as the history of the discourse and practice of the human rights city and the right to the city in the region are closely linked to the WHRCF’s agenda-setting process. I will identify key factors and challenges in terms of lessons learned for the future of the human rights city movement in Korea and beyond based on my personal experiences and observations.

I. Introduction

Like human rights, the “right to the city” is a newer concept in Asia than in Europe and Latin America. Along with the “human rights city”, the right to the city was introduced to Asia in the early 2000s and has been used by civil society and the human rights community ever since.

At the first World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) in Gwangju, South Korea in May 2011, both terms were discussed by participants from South Korea and abroad alongside several other concepts such as “human rights in the city”, “the rights of the city”, “cities for human rights”, “localising human rights” and “local government and human rights”. The UN Human Rights Council uses the term “local government and human rights” in its official reports in order to be inclusive of all social and geographical (urban or rural) conditions.

First, it is important to briefly clarify four terms or concepts that, according to German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), may be considered ideal types. Clarification is important as they are closely interconnected and often used interchangeably without clear definition or clarification.

2. https://www.britannica.com/topic/ideal-type
The right to the city is generally understood as the right of inhabitants to collectively appropriate a city and shape its forms and content through their everyday activities. Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) first proposed this idea in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville*, which has been recently reclaimed by social movements, thinkers, and several progressive local authorities as a call to action to reclaim the city as a co-created space – a place for living detached from the growing effects of commodification and capitalism on social interaction and the rise of spatial inequalities in worldwide cities over the last two centuries.

When it was introduced in Asia, some conceptual questions were raised regarding its contents and characteristics. Many social justice advocates working in urban areas, particularly housing rights activists, continued to use it to articulate their demands to address urban problems and, as a result, it has gradually become popular within academic and policymaking communities as well as the human rights movement. At the global level, it was finally recognised in the New Urban Agenda adopted at the UN’s Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016.

The right to the city has become an integral part of the policy framework relating to the city and human rights. Its widespread acceptance is shown by its inclusion in the titles of documents such as the World Charter for the Right to the City (2005) and the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2010). Elsewhere it has been included as a key component of frameworks such as the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (ECHRC) (2000), the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (2011) and the Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City (2014).

The rights of the city

This is a rather an artificially designed concept to describe the power relationship between the state (national, federal or central government) and the city, as a subnational or local political entity. This concept claims for the understanding of local governments as a sphere of government, so it is used to advocate for stronger subsidiarity and decentralisation. It also implies that the city cannot carry out its human rights responsibilities without certain rights or powers guaranteed by the state. In this framework, the city can be considered a right-holder and the state a duty-bearer.
Human rights in the city

The concept of “human rights in the city” has been used in official documents such as the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (ECHRC) (2000) and the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (2011). Both acknowledge the right to the city in article 1 as a sort of umbrella right or “right to have rights” in the city. It is therefore an integral part of human rights in the city. However, it does not tend to appear in other official documents, especially outside Europe. In South Korea and Asia the concept of the “human rights city” has been used more widely, but there is no meaningful difference between the two concepts and they can in fact be used interchangeably. The human rights city can be understood as a simplified term for human rights in the city.

Human rights city

“Human rights city” is the most popular of these concepts in Asia, especially South Korea and Indonesia. Sometimes it is used interchangeably with human rights in the city.

According to the final declaration of the first Gwangju Forum in 2011, a human rights city is “both a local community and a socio-political process in a local context where human rights play a key role as fundamental values and guiding principles”. The declaration went on to explain the human rights city as “human rights governance in a local context”, where local government, local parliament, civil society, private sector organisations and other stakeholders work together to improve the quality of life for all inhabitants in a spirit of partnership based on human rights standards and norms.

In practical terms the human rights city also means that all inhabitants, regardless of race, sex, colour, nationality, ethnic background and social status, and particularly minorities or any other vulnerable groups who are socially vulnerable and marginalised, can participate fully in decision-making and policy-implementation processes that affect their lives in accordance with such human rights principles as non-discrimination, the rule of law, participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability.

This framework stresses how to mainstream human rights in more practical terms, how to apply a human rights-based approach at all stages and levels of the local or municipal administration or government regardless of the issues and sectors.

III. The human rights city movement in South Korea

The history of the human rights city movement in South Korea has been closely associated with the historical evolution of the Metropolitan City of Gwangju’s human rights city project. After the bloody massacre under the military dictatorship in May 1980, Gwangju became well-known for its connection to democratisation. Today, as the annual host of the World Human Rights Cities Forum since 2011, Gwangju is also well-known as a leading human rights city in Korea and worldwide.
Gwangju was the first metropolitan city in South Korea to initiate the human rights city project in 2010 under the strong leadership of the then mayor. The succeeding mayors have also continued and even increased the priority of human rights-based city projects including the WHRCF.

Several initiatives were established for the first time in South Korea by Gwangju, such as the Framework Ordinance on Human Rights (2007), the Human Rights Bureau (2010), the Human Rights Charter (2012), Human Rights Indicators (2012) and the Basic Human Rights Action Plan (2012–2015). In fact, the WHRCF has provided a forum for sharing those policies and practices and introducing new initiatives and ideas to various actors engaged in the human rights city movement within South Korea and abroad.

Inspired by Gwangju, the Korean capital, Seoul, has also carried out similar initiatives and the two cities now lead the human rights city movement in South Korea. The National Association of Human Rights Cities was formally established in 2017 as a result. As of December 2018, all 17 metropolitan cities in South Korea have adopted the Human Rights Framework Ordinance adopted by the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea.

As seen above in the cases of Gwangju and Seoul, the initial focus of the evolution of the human rights city movement was on the adoption of human rights ordinances and the establishment of mechanisms like human rights offices and human rights committees. Gradually more emphasis was given to policy development and concrete programmes and projects to realise the vision of the human rights city as listed in Table 2.
Table 2. Key components of the human rights city in South Korea

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Components</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Norm</strong></td>
<td>- Local (Municipal) Human Rights Charter (Declaration)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Ordinance – Sectoral or Thematic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Framework Ordinance – General</td>
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<td>- Guiding Principles for Human Rights Cities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Implementation Guidelines for Human Rights City</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Code of Conduct for Civil Servants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Manual for Civil Servants</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Institution</strong></td>
<td>- Local or Municipal Human Rights Committee or Commission</td>
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<td>- Human Rights Committee in the Local Council (Parliament)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Local Ombudsman or Human Rights Protection Office</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Office or Department</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Practice</strong></td>
<td>- Human Rights Baseline Study</td>
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<td>- Human Rights Local Action Plan</td>
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<td>- Human Rights Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>- Human Rights Indicators</td>
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<td>- Human Rights-based Participatory Budgeting</td>
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<td>- Human Rights Audit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Human Rights Education or Training</td>
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<td>- Human Rights Map</td>
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IV. Gwangju World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF)

When the Gwangju Forum was first held in 2011, the concept of a human rights city was new and unfamiliar to many – including human rights organisations in South Korea and other countries in Asia. Some human rights experts were even sceptical about it as it sounded too idealistic or unrealistic. The first task was therefore to define the concept of human rights city through sharing diverse experiences and different understandings about what had taken place around the world in the name of the human rights city. As a result, the definition of a “human rights city” was adopted in the Gwangju Declaration on Human Rights Cities⁴ which was the outcome document of the WHRCF in 2011. But as the Gwangju Forum continued, many participants felt the need to define substantive components of the human rights city to guide policymakers and practitioners. Consequently, after two years of consultation meetings, the Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City were adopted in 2014 at the 4th Gwangju Forum.

The ten guiding principles are shown in the box below, with the right to the city at the top, acting as an overarching general principle. It shows how the two terms are closely interlinked in norm and practice.

Principle 1: The Right to the City
Principle 2: Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action
Principle 3: Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity
Principle 4: Participatory Democracy and Accountable Governance
Principle 5: Social Justice, Solidarity and Sustainability
Principle 6: Political Leadership and Institutionalization
Principle 7: Human Rights Mainstreaming
Principle 8: Effective Institutions and Policy Coordination
Principle 9: Human Rights Education and Training
Principle 10: Right to Remedy

In 2015 and 2016, two important global agendas related to cities or local governments were adopted by the UN: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015; and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) on the occasion of UN-Habitat III in October 2016. Both documents gave the human rights city a new platform for engagement in order to link and integrate human rights into the sustainable development and habitat agenda.

At the same time, participants increasingly felt a need to link global agendas to the human rights city narrative. In this regard, the Gwangju 2030 Agenda for a Human Rights City was presented as a response to the challenge of institutionalisation. At the same time, it was a way to overcome siloing or fragmentation of the many competing agendas related to the city.

The draft framework of the Gwangju 2030 Agenda is composed of seven major characteristics of the human rights city (as seen in Table 3) and it was presented for discussion and adopted at the 8th Gwangju Forum in 2018. It was the result of a research and mapping exercise made of various international initiatives conducted by the cities that related to one or more of the international standards and mechanisms on human rights and the SDGs.

### Table 3. Structure of the framework of the Gwangju 2030 Agenda for a Human Rights City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peaceful, safe, resilient city</th>
<th>Just, transparent, accountable city</th>
<th>Inclusive, equitable, sharing city</th>
<th>Smart, digital, innovative city</th>
<th>Green, sustainable, ecological city</th>
<th>Cultural diversity learning city</th>
<th>Global, responsible solidarity city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The right to the city. Human rights mainstreaming and the human rights-based approach

As explained above, the Gwangju Forum has set the agenda of the international development of the human rights city, from the concept to norms and practices.

### Table 4. Agenda and Outcome of the WHRCF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Working definition of the human rights city in the Gwangju Declaration on Human Rights City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Draft Framework of the Gwangju 2030 Agenda for Human Rights City</td>
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The WHRCF has become an integral part of the global human rights city movement and a platform for networking and disseminating ideas and information. It has also contributed to the collective articulation of human rights city experiences and practices in terms of discourse and norm-setting.
V. Key factors in the human rights city movement

As explained above, along with the WHRCF, the human rights city discourse and movement in Korea have made a great deal of progress in recent years. Why has the human rights city movement grown rapidly in South Korea and Indonesia but not in other Asian countries? I would like to make a few observations about factors Korea and Indonesia share.

The first factor is the sustained democratic practices since the political democratisation in the 1990s. The old non-democratic regimes of both countries collapsed around the Asian 1997–1998 financial crisis. Since then, the democratic transition and consolidation process has gradually taken place. Regular local elections, in particular, have provided the political basis for the human rights city movement in terms of accountability and the rule of law.

The second factor is the accumulation of human rights expertise and the availability of human rights experts over the decades at national and international levels, due to the proliferation of UN human rights mechanisms and the establishment of national institutions and programmes directly and indirectly related to human rights. When the human rights city project started, a considerable number of people were available and ready to engage in the various human rights city projects. The process was eased by the already established human relations and collaboration between cities and local governments and between human rights cities and national institutions related to human rights. This might be called the “trickle-down” effect in the field of human rights.

National human rights institutions (NHRI) have played a key role in promoting the human rights city in both countries. For South Korea, the policy recommendation adopted by the NHRCK in April 2012 requesting all local governments to adopt the Human Rights Framework Ordinance with a standardised model ordinance triggered the rapid expansion of the human rights city movement. This measure was taken a year after the first WHRCF in 2011. Since December 2018, all 17 metropolitan cities and provincial governments and about a half of the local governments have adopted the human rights ordinances as the normative foundation for full-fledged human rights city programmes.

In Indonesia, the Human Rights Festival has been held annually since 2013 as a joint initiative of the National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia, central government, NGOs and host human rights cities. It is another example of collaboration between many actors at the local level.

The third factor is the strategic choice of human rights defenders who want to build a human rights movement from the bottom up with a long-term vision in the face of shrinking civic space at the national level. The human rights agenda is very much influenced by the type of the government in power. Generally speaking, liberal or progressive governments tend to give more priority to the human rights agenda, while the human rights agenda is less favoured by conservative national governments. In the case of South Korea, the human rights city movement began to grow rapidly under the conservative regime partly because some directly elected mayors in cities like Gwangju and Seoul pursued human rights city projects in opposition to the policy direction of the central government. This is very

National human rights institutions (NHRI) have played a key role in promoting the human rights city in both countries

5. The National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia (Komnas HAM) was established in 1993, while the National Human Rights Commission of Korea was established in 2001.

similar to the emerging trends in other countries of local governments and cities taking their own policy directions on global issues like climate change, energy and migration, among others.

The fourth and last factor is the value of the human rights framework as a global norm which can be internationally recognised relatively easily by other cities abroad. Many cities want to play a role at the global level, especially in an age of globalisation. The human rights framework was also considered very useful in addressing practical issues on the ground via policy tools that are already available, such as human rights action plans, indicators and impact assessments. In both South Korea and Indonesia, UN recognition was crucial to spreading the human rights city framework by conferring legitimacy on the human rights city initiative. Particularly important were the UN Human Rights Council’s resolution on local government and human rights in 2013, and the stocktaking report entitled “Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights” produced by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee in August 2015.

VI. Challenges and prospects

Despite the significant progress made in the development of the discourse and practice of human rights cities, some challenges still need to be addressed that concern the sustainability of the human rights city movement in South Korea and beyond.

The first challenge is to ensure the quality of citizens’ participation and civil society engagement. Political leaders like mayors and civil society organisations (CSOs) have played a key role at the initial stage of norm-setting and institution-building. However, human rights cities cannot be sustained without active and meaningful participation from ordinary citizens. CSOs are also challenged to engage proactively in municipal governance as a partner with a role other than the traditional “watchdog”, providing monitoring and advocacy outside the decision-making structure. In this sense, the human rights city is a learning and co-creation process for all actors as it is a new experimental path no one has taken before.

Several innovative and successful practices already exist, such as participatory budgeting, participatory policy development, citizen juries in judicial affairs, and community social enterprises, among others. As good practices among human rights cities, they are worthy of sharing. Citizen participation is also closely related to the promotion of local democracy, which means direct election of political leaders, both mayors and local parliamentarians. Without such elections, accountability cannot be ensured institutionally and human rights cities go hand in hand with quality local democracy.

The second challenge is how to enhance multi-level governance among central, regional and local governments. Each government has its own legal obligations and/or political responsibilities although all share the common mandate to promote and protect the human rights of all citizens. However, their differing priorities at policy level can create clashes or conflicts among different groups who want to claim their own rights.

### Table 5. Chronology: Historical evolution of the human rights city movement (international)

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<td>2001. The first World Urban Forum (WUF) by UN HABITAT</td>
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In order to avoid such clashes, it is important to apply human rights-based and conflict-sensitive approaches to the policies and programmes related to human rights cities. At the same time, an effective mechanism for cooperation at the policy and institutional level is highly necessary in order to safeguard all human rights.

**The third challenge** is how to ensure policy and institutional coherence and effective coordination within the municipal administrative system. Siloing and fragmentation must be avoided. According to the principles of indivisibility and interdependence, all human rights – civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental – are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, a holistic or integrated approach is crucial in order to mainstream human rights principles when addressing specific human rights issues. The 3–5-year mid-term human rights action plans with human rights indicators for monitoring and evaluation designed through participatory process can be an effective way of preventing fragmentation. At the same time, legislative measures at the national and local parliaments are also needed to provide legal foundations to human rights mainstreaming.

**The fourth challenge** is how to promote inter-municipal cooperation between neighbouring cities, especially between urban and rural areas in addressing issues related to economic and environmental interdependence. Cities can no longer be treated as distinct spaces unconnected to the regions surrounding them. The functioning of urban settlements depends on land in the surrounding rural areas for food and water supply, waste disposal, recreational value and the growth of settlements. In this sense, human rights city agendas need to be more inclusive to address the rights and needs of those who are living outside the city but who play an important role in sustaining urban livelihoods.
The fifth and last challenge is the integration of human rights and the SDGs in the human rights city framework. As the chronology of global events below shows, there is a tendency towards the convergence of global agendas such as human rights and the UN-Habitat within the overarching framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As stressed by several UN human rights bodies and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, a human rights-based approach is key to the transformative implementation of the SDGs.

References


NEW URBAN DEVELOPMENT MODELS

• CITIES, DEMOCRACY AND ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY: GLOBAL CHALLENGES, LOCAL RESPONSES
  Daniel Chavez

• BUILDING DIGITAL CITIES FROM THE GROUND UP BASED AROUND DATA SOVEREIGNTY AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF BARCELONA
  Francesca Bria

• INCLUSIVE CITIES FOR THE URBAN WORKING POOR: RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT INFORMAL WORKERS
  Marty Chen

• NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOR CITIES IN THE UK
  Frances Northrop, Rachel Laurence and Adrian Bua
Climate change poses a threat that is increasingly evident and dramatic. At the opening of the last Conference of the Parties (COP24) in Katowice, Poland, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres expressed the urgency clearly: “We are in deep trouble”, he said “we are collectively still moving too slowly – and even in the wrong direction” (UN, 2018).

The good news is that, particularly at municipal level, some governments recognise the global challenge, are moving in the right direction and have accepted that responses to climate change must also aim to extend social justice, deepen sovereignty and radicalise democracy. In July 2018, Barcelona Energia – the Catalan capital’s new metropolitan electricity distributor – began operating. By creating the largest public renewable energy company in Spain, Barcelona City Council has enabled the city to unplug itself from the electrical oligopoly. This new municipal operator intends to contribute to changing the “energy model” as part of “a far-reaching strategy that involves recovering energy sovereignty by promoting public and citizen energy production, democratising access to it and managing it as a public service”. As well as supplying the municipality’s official buildings, facilities, street lighting and traffic lights, from January 2019 the new public company can have thousands of the city’s residents as customers.

Barcelona Energia is not an isolated example. After more than three decades of privatisation and commodification of essential services under the banner of “energy democracy”, social movements, left-wing parties and progressive governments in highly diverse countries are demanding a transition towards genuinely renewable forms of generation and public ownership, challenging large corporate interests (Burke and Stephens, 2017).

The following pages analyse the exhaustion of the prevailing ownership and management model in the electricity sector and the emergence of counter-hegemonic alternatives, emphasising the significance and potential of local and urban-based territorial initiatives in the European context.

I. Green capitalism fallacies and regaining public ownership

After three decades of vacuous speeches, futile world summits and highly publicised international agreements that lack legal force, the focus on the “green economy” (Lander, 2011) and “green growth” (Stern, 2016) has yielded little meaningful progress. Renewable energy production has increased and continues to grow, but total energy consumption has grown more quickly, leading to accelerated burning of fossil fuels and the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions. None of the countries that presently contribute most to climate change are close to meeting the commitments they made at the COP21 Paris summit in 2015 (Sweeney and Treat, 2017).

According to the most recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), making the Paris Agreement viable and limiting warming to a maximum of 1.5°C “would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”, including radical transformations in energy systems (IPCC, 2018).

The transformations the IPCC calls for will not be driven by private capital. The investment deficit has been estimated at $600 billion per year, meaning that “the cumulative gap between finance needed and finance delivered is growing, putting globally agreed temperature goals at risk, and increasing the likelihood of costly climate impacts” (Buchner et al., 2014: iv). Not only has the private sector not contributed to solving the problem, it has aggravated it by shaping the energy transition towards maximising its own profits. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has reported that, globally, “energy investment is not yet consistent with the transition to a low-carbon energy system envisaged” (IEA, 2016: 17).

In a more recent report, the IEA estimated the magnitude of the alterations to the energy sector necessary to keep global temperature increases below 2°C. Among other changes, the complete transformation of the production and consumption of energy would mean generating almost 95% of electricity from renewable and low carbon sources by 2050 (while less than a third is currently), and an average of $3.5 trillion being invested per year in the energy transition, approximately double current levels of investment (IEA and IRENA, 2017: 6).

In this context, the only viable way to respond to climate change and meet social needs is to deepen energy sovereignty and democracy through the recovery and/or extension of public ownership and social control.

II. Energy democracy, deprivatisation and remunicipalisation

A recent investigation found 835 cases of “deprivatisation” of public goods and services in 45 countries in the Global North and South. One of the main manifestations of this global trend is what is called
“remunicipalisation” (Kishimoto and Petitjean, 2017). These local-level processes reclaim ownership and public management in order to tackle the inefficiency of privatised companies and insufficient private investment in extending services or improving their quality.

Recent academic literature (Pigeon et al., 2013; Becker et al., 2015; Angel, 2016; Cumbers, 2016) allows us to identify diverse forms of remunicipalisation, including: (i) bringing previously privatised companies or services back into public ownership; and (ii) creating new local public companies to replace or compete with private operators. Remunicipalisation is not necessarily synonymous with nationalisation, which concerns the state at municipal or subregional level, since in many cases this process has meant experimenting with innovative or hybrid forms, using a range of modalities and levels of participation by local government and non-state organisations in the ownership and/or management of the services. In many cases, remunicipalisation occurs via the purchase or total or partial expropriation of private companies, while in others it is achieved by increasing public participation in public–private partnerships or by promoting new forms of cooperation between local government, cooperatives, neighbourhood bodies and other social organisations for the provision of services.

Remunicipalisation is a highly visible trend in western Europe. In Germany, 72 new non-profit and publicly owned local energy supply companies were created between 2007 and 2012, including over 190 distribution network concessions coming back into municipal hands. A number of German municipalities have resorted to repurchasing privatised public services, while in other parts of the country social and environmental activists have mobilised to remunicipalise the energy supply by promoting referendums and other citizens’ initiatives (Becker et al., 2015; Angel, 2016).

In the United Kingdom, reversing privatisation would help improve services and lower electricity rates by dismantling the false market that has allowed the oligopoly of private energy companies known as “The Big Six” to make excessive profits. The Labour Party's election manifesto expressed an explicit commitment to “bring key utilities back into public ownership to deliver lower prices, more accountability and a more sustainable economy” (The Labour Party, 2017: 19). The party has also committed to the United Kingdom meeting 60% of its energy needs through renewable sources by 2030, for which it proposes to promote “publicly owned, locally accountable energy companies and co-operatives to rival existing private energy suppliers” (The Labour Party, 2017: 20).

Among those advocating the need to reverse the privatisation of the electricity sector, highly interesting discussions are underway about the specific characteristics of returning ownership to public hands and the role of state entities and community organisations. In Catalonia, social activists and ecologists have welcomed the objectives set out on the Barcelona Energia website of helping to reduce energy consumption, improve the rational use of energy, guarantee supply, and increase renewable generation and the consequent reduction of greenhouse gases.² However, Remunicipalisation is not necessarily synonymous with nationalisation, which concerns the state at municipal or subregional level, since in many cases this process has meant experimenting with innovative or hybrid forms.

2. https://www.barcelonaenergia.cat/es/la-comercializadora-de-energia-publica/
several neighbourhood and environmental associations have protested against the prospect of the new public company using energy generated by an incineration plant and demanded genuine citizen participation in managing the municipal operator. In response to the popular mobilisation, in November 2018 municipal authorities agreed that Barcelona Energia would not buy energy from the burning of urban waste.

The debate in Barcelona about the sources of generation has deeper roots, as Councillor for Energy Eloi Badia recognised when saying that to connect generation to consumption you always have to go through the market (Blanchar, 2018). This intrinsic limitation of liberalised and segmented markets has also been observed in other European countries where progressive governments and/or political and social activists have proposed restructuring the electricity system.

Two not necessarily contradictory positions can be distinguished in contemporary debates about energy as a public or common good. On one side are the defenders of cooperative or community ownership and those proposing partial reforms of the electricity system. They often promote the renationalisation or remunicipalisation of transmission, distribution or commercialisation without debating the hegemonic ownership structure in the field of generation (see: Holstenkamp and Radtke, 2018; Friends of the Earth Europe, 2018). Based on perhaps overly optimistic interpretations of the Energiewende (the German energy transition) and the rapid expansion of renewable energies in Europe over the previous decade, some activists and researchers propose prioritising the cooperative and community sector when restructuring energy systems, minimising the importance of public or state ownership. In the United Kingdom one report in circulation calls for a transition “from a Big-Six dominated market to one where customers have a genuine choice between community, municipal and co-operative suppliers, or can club together to collectively purchase their energy directly from a newly transparent wholesale market” (Birley and Fortune, 2018: 20). It is also argued that “Policies which support and enable a greater number and larger scale of community, co-operative and municipal energy projects to start-up and succeed [are] a more appropriate solution to public ownership in this sector” (Birley and Fortune, 2018: 22).

On the other hand, the urgency of decarbonisation, the magnitude of climate change and the collapse of the package of measures that enabled renewable energies to expand rapidly in Europe over previous decades, such as subsidies and policies like the feed-in tariff (FIT), lead some (including the author of this work) to be critical of ultra-communitarian positions and partial reforms (see: Chavez, 2018; Sweeney and Treat, 2017). This perspective concludes that the transition must be towards a complete restructuring of the electricity system. Public ownership is taken to be the best (and in some territories the only) option for guaranteeing both the security of supply and decarbonisation of the electricity system. By regaining public ownership in all segments – generation, transmission, distribution and retail – and transitioning to a horizontally integrated system that combines various forms and levels of ownership and public management at national and local levels, a transition would be possible that is fair for both consumers and workers, that fights energy poverty and preserves and/or creates jobs.

3. See the website of the Xarxa per la sobirania energètica (www.xse.cat) for more details.
III. The renewed importance of cities on the new global and European scene

In the past two decades, the social sciences have shown neoliberalism’s importance as a political and economic project with major, highly damaging impacts on living conditions and forms of governance in cities of the Global South and North (Harvey, 2005 and 2012). In this context, local governments must engage with new challenges and innovate in the design and execution of public policies.

Remunicipalisation is one of the most convincing current responses to neoliberalism in the urban space. This global trend exhibits great institutional and geographical diversity, having spread to metropolitan settings as diverse as Paris, Barcelona and Berlin in Europe, Houston in the United States, Buenos Aires and La Paz in South America, Dar es Salaam in Africa and Jakarta in Asia, as well as smaller towns and villages in peri-urban and rural areas of the Americas and Europe (Kishimoto and Petitjean, 2017).

In the energy field, many municipal governments and social organisations operating in the local sphere are already highly active in the electricity sector, as well as in promoting energy efficiency programmes, emissions reduction and combating energy poverty. The empirical evidence collected by various studies (Energy Cities, 2017; Cumbers, 2016) indicates that local public operators can:

- Contribute to increasing and diversifying the renewable energy matrix and the eventual decarbonisation of the energy supply at municipal or subregional level;
- Enable long-term financing alternatives for solar, wind and other renewable generation projects;
- Execute energy efficiency programmes at local level;
- Divest public funds (for example, pension funds for municipal employees) from the fossil fuel industry and reinvest in local renewable generation projects;
- Democratise decision-making on energy supply through consultation and participation of people and communities affected by the production and consumption cycle at local level;
- Increase the strategic value of the energy produced and/or distributed locally, with the opportunity to manage demand and improve the capacity of energy efficiency programmes based on the development of smart grids and other technological innovations.

At European level, mPOWER, a research project launched in May 2018, plans to develop an ambitious, large-scale, systematic production and knowledge transfer programme over four years, with the involvement of at least 100 local public authorities that are interested in replicating innovative best practices in the provision of “municipal energy”. The concept of municipal energy alludes to the role taken on by municipal or subregional governments and the political, economic and technical decisions taken to exert local control over the provision of energy services. It also refers to the different forms of city participation in the development of new types of partnerships and cooperation between public institutions and civil society organisations to make the energy transition possible, including various ways of mobilising resources, infrastructure and municipal assets.

4. The mPOWER project has been funded by the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 programme. The research team is made up of experts from: the Energy Cities network of local governments committed to the energy transition; the University of Glasgow and the University of the Basque Country; and four non-governmental centres of research into public services and energy innovation, namely, Carbon Coop and Platform in the United Kingdom, the Institute for Political Ecology (IPE) in Croatia, and the Transnational Institute (TNI) in The Netherlands. The author of this chapter is a member of the mPOWER team, representing TNI. For further information see: https://municipalpower.org/
The mPOWER project is based on the assumption that municipal and subregional governments are destined to be key players in the energy transition. Cities and regions are rapidly acquiring very significant responsibilities for reducing emissions and in the more efficient, democratic and sustainable provision of services. Several public energy companies, especially those that have emerged in the framework of the recent wave of remunicipalisation, are at the forefront of the renewable energy supply, while at European level, many national governments continue to apply energy policies that depend on fossil fuels. Across Europe, over 7,300 cities have already joined the Covenant of Mayors, a voluntary commitment to go faster and further on the European climate and energy objectives.5

At EU level, the importance of local governments has been identified in the set of measures “Clean Energy for All Europeans” launched by the European Commission in November 2016 (popularly known as the “Winter Package”).6 The European Commission coined the concept of the “local energy community”, recognising the role and potential of municipalities in energy generation, distribution and commercialisation services at local and subregional scales.

Recovering ownership and public management is an essential condition for responding to the major challenge of our age: climate change. The IPCC (2018) has concluded that it would be technically possible to limit warming to 1.5°C, but that this would involve immediately reversing privatisation and commodification policies and extending the democratic control of energy. Ownership and public management are essential conditions for decarbonising the electricity supply and other components of the energy sector.

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Faced with the crisis of a system that has become unsustainable, with growing global challenges that range from widening inequalities, climate change, migration, geopolitical and financial instability to job stagnation and wage depression: what is the role of cities today? When looking at some of these trends and inequalities, we may talk about a crisis of the Western liberal world order that is essentially a crisis of the neoliberal imagination, and in particular of political representation. Political elites seem increasingly unable to represent a disenfranchised population, giving rise to right-wing nationalists gaining power across the world. Right-wing political extremism is one possible response to the systemic breakdown brought about by the failing politics and economics of the last decade, but not the only one.

Can cities reverse these trends and become a political laboratory for experimenting with democratic and sustainable alternatives? Can cities become places designed for those who live in them, for those who resist and try to provide collective and local answers to global challenges through solidarity and self-organisation? In this chapter I will argue that cities’ proximity to citizens and their scale, which is well-suited to experimenting with radical policies based on people’s real social needs and environmental concerns, has led them to form effective networks and coalitions for proposing alternative political programmes and solutions.

I will draw on the example of Barcelona city council’s experiment with redefining the “smart city” to make sure that it serves its citizens as an example of a promising transformative project that can be scaled to other levels and locations. Barcelona can be seen as a laboratory for the implementation of a transformative, democratic innovation project, starting from real citizens’ needs, and leveraging digital technology to devolve more power to citizens and residents. In 2015 Ada Colau, a right to housing activist with no previous experience in public institutions or government, became mayor of Barcelona. She called for a democratic revolution, and for the last four years I have been working in Barcelona City Council with civic-minded coders and cryptographers to design the technological tools to make this happen, and to align the technology agenda with our policy objectives.
We started to rethink the smart city model. This means, on the one hand, critiquing the solutionist, technocratic smart city agenda previously promoted, which was top-down and technology first. That is, it thought first about connectivity, sensors and data and only afterwards about why technology is actually needed, what kind of urban problems we should solve, who manages them, who owns what, and, most importantly, how we govern technology to implement policies. It means critiquing the fact that digitalisation is used as a driving force to support neoliberal policies such as austerity and cuts and the outsourcing of public services. Barcelona’s previous smart city model was essentially promoted by the big technology vendors, which sold an idea of a smart city where technology could be an easy solution to any kind of problem, from poverty to climate change, especially at a time of austerity and restrictive policies, when states found themselves with fewer resources. Behind the mantra of the smart city they were actually privatising the city’s critical infrastructures.

The key issue is that in order to change the existing smart city model, technology must be aligned with the city’s politics, and not the other way around. In the case of Barcelona our priorities are the right to housing, the energy and ecological transition, the creation of new public spaces for citizens, and participatory democracy. The key question is therefore how to align this public policy with technological policy, how to ensure that technology and the new industrial revolution can serve the collective interest of citizens and create public value, which also means that data is managed as a common good. The cities of the future, if they want to remain vibrant and democratic, will have to put their own citizens first. In the City of Barcelona we have tried to do just that in the past four years.

I. A new market power: How do we tame the tech giants and avoid privatised smart cities?

In the current unstable geopolitical and economic context, technological supremacy is one of the key issues redefining power struggles. The rise of digital capitalism concentrated in the hands of a few tech giants presents many challenges – from monopoly power to the need for a new tax on digital platforms, trade regulations, unemployment due to automation, and issues around civil liberties. The structural shift to the digital economy and the fourth industrial revolution should also trigger deep thinking and courageous policy measures. Artificial intelligence, massive computation, robotisation and automation are quickly transforming our industry and society with disruptive applications in key sectors of the economy: from precision agriculture to driverless cars, to the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare.

Large US tech firms, including Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google, with a combined market value of $3 trillion, have offshored around $1 trillion in the last decade, while at the same time issuing debt on the US public market at very low interest rates, and using it for share buybacks to boost their dividend payments (Wilhelm, 2017). This means that 80% of corporate wealth resides in 10% of firms, leading to an increase in corporate profit and wealth inequality.
As we know, this wealth does not trickle down and this concentration of social and economic power does not make the majority of people better off. The public sector is also increasingly dependent on the tech industry. Yet, we rarely ask where this power and dependence comes from. Why is it that the immense economic value this digital revolution represents accrues exclusively to technology firms – and not to ordinary citizens or public institutions? And what can we do to ensure that we return some of that value back to citizens, while empowering them to use technology to participate in politics (a process from which they justly feel excluded) as well as offering better and more affordable public services?

It is obvious that we need to re-politicise the question of technology and that the discussion should be about the redistribution of assets and power, in particular relating to the management of future welfare services and critical infrastructures. There is one way to do this: starting from cities. Cities cannot, of course, solve all our digital problems: many of them need urgent attention at the national and global levels, but cities can become laboratories for democracy and sustainability. They can run smart, data-intensive, algorithmic public transportation, housing, health and education – all based on a logic of solidarity, social cooperation, and collective rights. Cities can deliver on the promise to take back the city for the people, which also means democratising the ownership of and access to digital technologies. As I argue in *Rethinking the Smart City* (Morozov & Bria, 2018), cities can initiate a radical democratic process that puts people’s digital sovereignty first.

To contest the new predatory high-tech capitalism, we need to build a broad alliance of all the movements mobilising to preserve the common good. We need to understand the question of technology within a broader framework of struggles that are opposing austerity and the corporatisation of everything. Efforts to establish or regain sovereignty in the domain of technology will inform similar ongoing efforts to reclaim sovereignty with regards to domains such as food, energy, housing and finance – all of which are increasingly dominated by digital technology and data platforms, especially as corporations like Monsanto are themselves rapidly moving into the field of big data, while firms like Google and Apple have become sizeable players in the energy field. Furthermore, so-called “sharing economy” companies like Airbnb are challenging affordable public housing policies, driving up rent prices and promoting the increasing financialisation of urban life; while companies like Uber are pushing to the extreme the frontier of precarisation of work, reducing social protections and collective bargaining for workers, whilst striving for super profits for their shareholders.

Barcelona is actively forging alternative municipal alliances of rebel cities, becoming a key site of struggles to fight climate change, build more liveable and just cities, and regain technological sovereignty. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to think at higher levels of scale and to explore common strategies and interventions on the national, European and international levels.
II. Barcelona as a laboratory for democratic innovation

Barcelona’s digital city efforts have centred on opening up governance through participatory processes and greater transparency. At the core of Barcelona’s model is a large scale participatory experiment powered by a digital participatory platform, Decidim (“We Decide”, in Catalan),¹ which enables citizens to shape government policies by suggesting ideas, debating them, and voting on them. Decidim taps into the collective intelligence of citizens to create policies that better respond to their needs. It is built with free software and guarantees personal privacy and public transparency in a way commercial platforms do not. We are experimenting with a hybrid of online and offline participatory democracy. We used Decidim to create the government agenda — over 70% of the proposals came directly from citizens. Over 400,000 citizens proposed these policies, and were engaged in offline collective assemblies and consultations. These proposals highlighted what Barcelona’s citizens care about and thus became the priorities for the government’s roadmap. Now we are building the tools and the programmes to make these plans a reality.

This bottom-up democracy is a clear inversion of how the city used to be run: top-down and technology first, rather than people first. The Barcelona approach means redefining the smart city to ensure that it serves its citizens, rather than the other way around. Barcelona aspires to evolve the smart city agenda towards becoming a digital sovereign city — a city which empowers citizens to discuss and articulate their own priorities, and set directions as well as deciding upon ethical uses of technological innovations with clear social impact and public return. Instead of starting from the technology (sensors, big data, connectivity) and only later asking why we need a smart city at all, we focused on aligning the technology with the city’s core policy objectives selected through a large-scale participatory democracy process. In the case of Barcelona, affordable housing, healthcare for all, sustainable mobility, energy transition, increased public space and the fight against climate change are the top priorities.

Two interesting projects that demonstrate the new democratic and mission-oriented smart city approach experimented with by Barcelona are in the areas of energy sovereignty and sustainable mobility. In the field of energy sovereignty, Barcelona Energia is a municipal renewable energy company based on solar energy, created to lead the energy transition of Barcelona, providing clean energy for all municipal offices and launching a pilot with 20,000 private homes.² Now the renewable energy operator is experimenting with distributed energy grid technology and with applications that allow citizens to own their energy consumption data. Via the Decidim platform, the question of whether to open up its governance structure to citizens, unions, cooperatives and other stakeholders is also being debated. In the field of sustainable mobility, Barcelona has developed an ambitious plan to reduce traffic by 21%. Traffic management, changing road signs, the creation of new orthogonal bus networks and the introduction of 300km of new cycling lanes in order to increase mobility by foot, bikes and public transport are all underway. The use of an open sensors city infrastructure called Sentilo and big data analytics makes it possible to define and predict better mobility policies, and measure the urban impact of evidence-based policymaking.³

¹. https://www.decidim.barcelona/
². http://energia.barcelona/
³. https://connecta.bcn.cat/
III. The right to the (digital) city

These new policies are based on a critical approach to the neoliberal smart city model run top-down by big tech corporations, in favour of generating a new vision in which the city begins to think and experiment with what technology that serves the people and is owned by the people could look like. The Bustia Etica project exemplifies this new culture of democratic accountability and transparency. This encrypted whistleblowing infrastructure, developed with the digital rights advocacy group Xnet, allows citizens to denounce cases of corruption anonymously to help put an end to corruption in public institutions. With projects like these, cities can also raise awareness of citizens’ rights in the digital era, such as their right to privacy, encryption and information self-determination.

Moving in the direction of accountability and transparency, Barcelona has developed a digital transformation roadmap with clear guidelines and ethical digital standards that are now shared with hundreds of cities globally using a free software platform. The ethical digital standards include a technological code of conduct, guidelines for the migration to free software, a technological sovereignty policy that mandates for free software, open architectures, open standards and democratic control of digital infrastructure and data, as well as the adoption of agile methodologies to develop user centric digital services. Eighty percent of Barcelona’s current IT budget is invested in free and open source technology, so we can open up procurement and the city budget to the growing ecosystem of local SMEs and startups, not just to an oligarchy of big tech providers.

The low-hanging fruit and key component is procurement: it now introduces these norms and principles into its contracts with tech companies. We are introducing clauses into contracts on data sovereignty and the public ownership of data. The city has also published a technology procurement handbook that specifies contractual clauses in procurement contracts mandating public ownership of data (data sovereignty) together with new data directives focussed on ethics, privacy and security by design. Now, for instance, the municipality has a large contract with Vodafone by which every month the company is obliged to give back machine-readable data to the city hall, while also making sure they encrypt the data to preserve citizens’ privacy. That did not happen before. They just took all the data and used it for their own benefit.

A key battleground for our digital future is control over data: will it be controlled by big businesses and the state or by citizens? A crucial issue for the next decade is how to shift the underlying structures of power in the digital economy. We need a New Deal on data, where data should be seen as a public infrastructure, like electricity, water, roads and clean air. Data in the new vision of Barcelona should be considered a meta-utility that is critical to run future smart, AI-driven and data-intensive public services in transportation, healthcare and education. We also believe that data produced by the citizen belongs to the citizen. However, the old deals between the city hall and its private sector partners were breaching citizens’ rights: when centralised governments and tech companies hoard data it is both a security risk and a great waste of the potential value of these datasets.

to generate public value. The immense economic value such data represents should be returned back to citizens. We want to move from a model of surveillance capitalism in which data is opaque and not transparent, to a model of data commons, where citizens themselves can own the data.

To be able to manage this new data strategy, a Mayor’s Office for Data Analytics was set up, supervised by a CDO (Chief Data Officer), with over 30 people with skills in advanced statistics, data science and machine learning helping the city to use data to solve the city’s real problems and implement ethical standards around data and algorithmic accountability.

IV. A new ownership model for data: city data commons

Other initiatives are going even further, creating technological tools that enable citizens themselves to control the data they produce in the city and choose whom they want to share it with. Barcelona is the coordinator of the DECODE project, the biggest EU effort to establish a framework for data sovereignty, aiming to develop open source, decentralised, privacy-enhancing and rights-preserving technologies for citizens to decide what kind of data they want to keep private, what data they want to share, with whom, and on what terms. This proposes a new social pact — a New Deal on data that we hope will soon become a reality in many cities across the world.

DECODE seeks to invert the current situation in which people know little about the operators of the services they are registered with, while the services know everything about them. The tools are being tested through two pilots in Barcelona. The first focuses on the internet of things. In collaboration with the citizen science initiative started in the Barcelona FabLab called smart citizen, we are giving residents sensors to place in their neighbourhoods. These sensors are directly integrated into the city’s sensor network, Sentilo, and gather data on air quality and noise pollution to influence city-level decisions. This pilot addresses the technical challenge of storing a stream of citizen-sourced data, while giving those citizens complete control over what information is shared. The idea is that citizens are able to go out of their way to collect useful data to improve public services — a modern form of volunteering. The second pilot relates to Decidim. When people use it, they see a dashboard of their data, aggregated and blended from a range of sources, from sensor noise levels to healthcare data and administrative open data. From the Barcelona Now dashboard, they can control the use of that information for specific purposes — such as informing policy proposals.

Ultimately, the vision is for citizens to manage their data flows through the Decode wallet, which manages people’s decryption keys, with an interface that lets users choose to give their transport data to the city, because they know that they can improve public transport with it, while choosing not to give that kind of private data to an insurance company or to advertisers.

6. https://smartcitizen.me/
It is clear that the city is the right level of government for this experimentation with data as a public infrastructure and common good. There is a crisis of trust, and governments need to reshape their relationships with citizens. Cities are closer to the citizens, and run data-intensive services in fields such as transport, public housing, healthcare and education. So cities have the capacity to experiment with alternative democratic smart city strategies. All of the city’s data, for example, could accrue to a municipal data fund that is co-owned by all citizens (and ideally be incorporated into a pan-European fund, co-owned by Europeans). Anyone building new services using that data would need to do so in a competitive, heavily regulated environment while paying a corresponding share of their profits for using it.

Ultimately, this data can be opened up to the city innovation ecosystem of local entrepreneurs, cooperatives and citizens themselves to build new solutions to tackle the city’s challenges. This transition process entails revitalising our economy and rethinking the future of work in an age of automation and robotisation, and democratising production in the 4th industrial revolution with the goal of supporting more circular, inclusive and collaborative economic models. This is what we are doing by creating an urban innovation lab, and supporting makers’ communities, the Fab City movement, and a real sharing economy.

This includes making public procurement more transparent and sustainable through an open digital marketplace that facilitates the participation of local startups and SMEs. For this reason, a new Urban Innovation Lab (Barcelona i.lab) has been built to foster new methods of innovation with social and public return, such as open innovation challenges and prizes, and to encourage the city hall to create symbiotic ecosystems and partnerships with citizens’ associations, research centres, startups, and corporates to make it happen. We also want to grow a real sharing economy that generates good, well-paid jobs, benefits local industry and not only predatory, hard-to-regulate digital on-demand platforms. Introducing fair regulation and algorithmic transparency to tame the on-demand economy, as many cities are currently doing, is necessary but insufficient.

Alternative models of service provision are being fostered via the creation of special funds for platform cooperatives and digital social innovation, supported by an EU initiative that has channelled €60m in the last few years towards experimenting with next-generation digital platforms that work for the public interest (European Commission, 2018). To support this kind of grassroots innovation we are developing different public policy instruments, such as new ways of funding digital social innovation, including innovative procurement schemes, and a regulatory review that also includes open standards, free software and distributed architecture requirements in public contracts. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education is also being promoted with projects such as Ateneus de fabricació and FabLabs, which empower young people with 21st century skills by developing integrated education programmes to transfer knowledge about digital fabrication, design and robotics to schools adopting novel pedagogical techniques, and specific programmes to strengthen the links between science, technology and the arts (STARTS).
V. Towards a New Deal on data

Of course, cities cannot carry out this kind of transformation to a democratic digital society alone. We need alliances beyond the city level, with progressive states, movements and parties to change Europe from the bottom up and implement these new democratic policies. Barcelona leads a network of rebel cities, “Fearless Cities”, that is adopting tools and experiments in open democracy and data protection. The first conference was hosted in the city last year, bringing together more than 180 cities from 40 countries and five continents. Together with New York City and Amsterdam, the City Coalition for Digital Rights (2018) was also launched to make sure we integrate the rule of law, human rights and democracy into the development of future technology and artificial intelligence.

I think it is very important that Europe puts forward an alternative model for the digital society that is different to the surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) from Silicon Valley, and the dystopian Chinese model, with its social credit system that uses unlimited data collection from citizens to rank them according to their behaviour, granting or blocking access to public services. A New Deal, imagined for the digital society, which is based on a rights-based, people-centric framework, and does not exploit personal data to pay for critical infrastructure, is long overdue. The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union, which is based on worthwhile principles such as “privacy by design”, “data portability” and “the right to be forgotten”, coupled with new regulatory instruments in the areas of taxation, digital trade and antitrust, are bold interventions that can create alternatives where citizens have greater power over their data and the artificial intelligence-powered future built with it.

As we ask how we can create a financial sector that serves the real economy, we should be asking how we can create a digital sector that serves the people. We need to make the most of new technologies, access to data and artificial intelligence, while guaranteeing citizens’ fundamental rights, workers’ rights, gender equality and environmental standards, pushing forward the needed energy transition to fight climate change. This is a new social pact that will require rethinking the economic model for the digital and zero carbon society, making sure it can create public value and not only private profits. This entails reconquering critical digital infrastructures – long surrendered to the likes of Facebook, Alphabet and Microsoft – and protecting citizens’ digital sovereignty.

This is a matter of democracy, and cities like Barcelona can show the way and open up a path for a network of digital sovereign cities to reclaim democratic governance of 21st century infrastructure, including data sovereignty and ethical AI for citizens. In this way we will shape a digital future for the many, not the few.

References


I. Introduction

Nearly half of all urban workers worldwide – and well over half of all urban workers in the Global South – are informally employed. All indications suggest that informal employment is on the rise. It is associated variously with the gig economy, the informalisation of once-formal jobs, the displacement of workers by automation and robotics, and the persistent challenges of unemployment and underemployment. Most urban informal workers, especially the self-employed majority, remain poor. To a large degree, this is because the exclusionary policies and practices of cities make it hard for them to work their way out of poverty. For cities to be more equitable and to reduce poverty, they must be more inclusionary of informal workers by protecting and enhancing their livelihoods. This requires: reducing the negative policies and practices of cities towards urban informal workers (based on stigmatisation and resulting in penalisation and even criminalisation) and increasing the positive policies and practices towards urban informal workers (based on legal recognition and resulting in access to public services, public space and public procurement and representation in participatory city-level policymaking and rule-setting processes). Fortunately, a growing number of cities around the world are introducing promising policies and programmes in support of urban informal workers. These are largely the result of joint advocacy by organisations of informal workers and their allies in civil society, academia, the legal profession, development agencies and government.

This paper begins with an overview of the magnitude and composition of the urban informal workforce, featuring the first-ever global estimates of informal employment. The second – and main – section of the paper describes the perspective, policies and practices of cities that are either exclusionary or inclusionary towards the urban informal workforce. To illustrate the impact of the negative approach of exclusionary cities and the promising approach of more inclusionary cities, this section features three groups of urban informal workers who are largely self-employed – home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers – and their organisations. The paper ends with reflections on a vision and the enabling conditions for inclusive cities going forward.

A growing number of cities around the world are introducing promising policies and programmes in support of urban informal workers.
II. Urban informal workforce

According to the official international definition of informal employment, informal workers are those who do not get social protection through their work, including both the informal self-employed who do not have an employer to contribute to their pension or health insurance, and informal wage workers whose employers do not contribute to their pension or health insurance (ILO, 2003).

How many informal workers are there?

In May 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) published the first-ever global estimates of informal employment based on official labour force data from 118 countries using harmonised cross-country criteria (ILO, 2018). These estimates show that 61% of all workers worldwide – 2 billion workers – are informally employed; and that 44% of all urban workers worldwide are informally employed (see Table 1). The percentages are far higher in developing countries, where 90% of all workers and 79% of urban workers are informally employed. The percentages are also somewhat higher in emerging countries where 67% of all workers and just over half of urban workers are employed informally. Even in developed countries, where the percentages are far lower, nearly one in five urban workers is informally employed.

Table 1 First-ever global estimates of informal employment (as a percentage of total, rural and urban employment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries by income level*</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>90**</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*2018 World Bank definitions based on country levels of gross income per capita.

**The rural and urban estimates are calculated based on a smaller set of countries than the total employment estimates.

Who are informal workers?

The urban informal workforce is not only large but also heterogeneous. In cities around the world, but especially in the Global South, the informal workforce includes those who work on the streets or in open spaces, those who work in their own homes or the homes of others and those who are hired informally in so-called “standard” workplaces such as offices and factories, hotels and restaurants, hospitals and schools (see Box 1).
Box 1. Urban informal workers by place of work

On streets or in open spaces
- street vendors
- waste pickers
- roadside barbers & beauticians
- shoe shiners
- construction workers
- transport workers

At own home
- garment makers
- textile weavers
- shoemakers
- artisans or craft producers
- mechanics/repairmen

In the homes of others
- domestic workers
- gardeners/landscapers
- guards/watchmen
- drivers

In hotels & restaurants
- cleaners/janitors
- dishwashers

In hospitals & schools
- orderlies
- nurses’ aides
- cleaners/janitors
- kitchen staff

In workshops & factories
- scrap metal recyclers
- shoemakers
- weavers
- garment makers
- and many more products

Source: Author’s own compilation.

Considered another way, urban informal workers can be found in most branches of industry. For example, in India, where they represent 80% of the urban workforce, urban informal workers are engaged in construction, manufacturing, trade and a range of non-trade services including transport, domestic services and waste picking (see Box 2).

Box 2 The urban informal workforce in India by branch of industry (2011/12)

Construction (12%)
Manufacturing (27%) of which half is Home-based production (14%)
Trade (27%) of which nearly one-fifth is Street vending (5%)
Non-trade services (33%) of which nearly one-third is Transport (9%)
Domestic work (6%)
Waste recycling (1%)
Other services (17%)

Notes: The percentages represent the share of these groups in urban informal employment in India in 2011/12 (Chen and Raveendran, 2014: Table 6). The groups in italics are featured in this paper as they represent large groups of predominantly self-employed urban informal workers whose livelihoods are directly impacted by the policies and practices of cities.

Why focus on informal workers?

Not all informal workers are from poor households and not all formal workers are from non-poor households. However, there is significant overlap between being informally employed and being poor. Higher percentages of
informal workers than formal workers are from poor households in developing, emerging and developed countries (ILO, 2018). Within the informal workforce, only employers have average incomes above the national minimum wage or poverty line; the rest earn below these thresholds, on average (Chen et al., 2005). What is more, a higher percentage of workers from poor households than from non-poor households are informally employed in all country income groups. In developing and emerging economies, anywhere from just over half to nearly 100% of workers from poor households are informally employed, while fewer than half the workers from non-poor households are informally employed (ILO, 2018).

III. Cities and informal workers: exclusionary or inclusive?

In 2015, the global community renewed its commitment to “a more peaceful, prosperous and just world” by adopting the Sustainable Development Agenda (known as the 2030 Agenda) which includes two new stand-alone goals which are of critical importance to the working poor in the informal economy: Goal 8 on inclusive sustainable economic growth and decent and productive employment; and Goal 11 on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. Also in 2015, the tripartite International Labour Organization adopted ILO Recommendation 204 on the formalisation of the informal economy which, among other provisions, recognises that most informal workers are from poor households and are trying to earn a living against great odds and, therefore, need protection and promotion in return for regulation and taxation; and that regulated use of public space is essential to the livelihoods of informal workers, especially in cities. Reaffirming these global commitments, the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the 2016 Habitat III Summit in Quito, Ecuador, included the following provision:

We commit to recognize the contribution of the working poor in the informal economy, particularly women, including the unpaid, domestic, and migrant workers to the urban economies, taking into account national circumstances. Their livelihoods, working conditions and income security, legal and social protection, access to skills, assets and other support services, and voice and representation should be enhanced. A progressive transition of workers and economic units to the formal economy will be developed by adopting a balanced approach, combining incentives and compliance measures, while promoting preservation and improvement of existing livelihoods (Habitat III, NUA, 2016: paragraph 59).

Exclusionary cities discriminate against informal workers

If city governments plan to honour and implement these global commitments, they need to recognise and include informal workers, especially the working poor, in their urban plans and local economic development. But at present most cities around the world either turn a blind eye or are outright hostile towards urban informal workers and their livelihood activities. These city governments tend to subscribe to the dominant negative narratives regarding the informal workforce: namely, that they seek to evade registration and taxation; that they have low productivity and represent a drag on the economy; and, in cities, that they are associated with congestion, crime...
and/or unsanitary or unsightly conditions. Given these stereotypes, most cities do not allow informal workers to use public space for their livelihood activities, do not extend public services (basic infrastructure and transport) to informal workers at their homes (often in informal settlements) or their workplaces, and do not allow informal workers or their organisations to bid for public procurement contracts. Also, most city governments do not integrate informal workers and their livelihood activities into their plans for housing, markets or local economic development.

Consider how the technological choices made by cities in the design of energy, transport and waste management systems impact on home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers when their livelihood activities are not taken into account in the design of the systems.

In 2015–16, with local researchers, the WIEGO Network studied the use by, and impact of, technology on home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers in three cities: Ahmedabad, India; Durban, South Africa; and Lima, Peru (Alfers et al., 2016). The study found that the technological choices made by cities in the design of energy, transport and waste management systems have direct and often negative impacts on the three groups of informal workers and their livelihood activities, as summarised in Box 3.

### Box 3. Impact of the design of city systems on three groups of urban informal workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Energy</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Waste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home-Based Workers</strong></td>
<td>Greatest impact: most HBWs work in informal settlements with limited access, irregular supply &amp; high electricity costs</td>
<td>Significant impact: transport costs are significant, especially for HBWs relocated to the periphery of cities</td>
<td>Modest impact: many HBWs work in informal settlements with poor (if any) waste collection &amp; sanitation systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street Vendors</strong></td>
<td>Significant impact: few SVs have access to electricity</td>
<td>Greatest impact: SVs prohibited from transporting goods on public transport</td>
<td>Significant impact: SVs have to clean and remove waste from their natural markets &amp; built markets when cities do not provide waste collection/sanitation services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Waste Pickers</strong></td>
<td>Significant impact: WPs prohibited from transporting waste on public transport</td>
<td>Greatest impact: cities do not allow WPs to bid for waste collection contracts and deny access to or compete for waste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alfers et al., 2016.

**Inclusive cities: recognise & protect informal workers**

What do urban informal workers want from cities that would make them more inclusive? They want freedom from harassment by local authorities. They want regulated access to public space to pursue their livelihoods, they want public services (basic infrastructure and transport) at their workplaces, and they want the right to bid for public procurement contracts. More specifically, street vendors want regulated access to public space to pursue their livelihoods, they want public services (basic infrastructure and transport) at their workplaces, and they want the right to bid for public procurement contracts.

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2. The study also found that the technologies currently used (and those aspired to) by these groups of workers were very basic: in part because of the cost of acquiring and maintaining improved technologies but also because of the fear of theft or confiscation by local authorities of improved technologies. The study found that most workers do not own smartphones but use WhatsApp on simple phones, and that few have access to the internet.
a secure vending site in a centrally located public space and the freedom from being harassed, having their goods confiscated and being evicted; home-based workers want basic infrastructure services at their homes-cum-workplaces; and waste pickers want regulated access to waste, to collection routes and to warehouses for sorting and storing waste as well as the right to bid for solid waste management contracts. All three groups want accessible and affordable public transport between their homes, their workplaces and their markets. What they want most fundamentally is legal recognition of their work and of their contributions to the economy, society and environment (see Box 4). And they want to be integrated into local economic and urban plans, and planning processes.

**Box 4. Contributions of the urban informal workforce**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction workers</td>
<td>build roads and buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based workers</td>
<td>produce goods for domestic markets and global supply chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street vendors</td>
<td>sell goods at low prices in convenient locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport workers</td>
<td>provide transport services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste pickers</td>
<td>clean streets &amp; reclaim recyclable goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author.

There is a growing global movement of home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers, as well as domestic workers, supported by the WIEGO Network, the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of India and other organisations. Affiliates exist in 90 countries and total membership is around 5 million people. There are four regional networks of home-based workers in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America with 82 national and local affiliates (mostly called HomeNets) in 29 countries, and there are plans to form an African regional network and an international network of home-based workers. StreetNet International is an international federation of 54 street vendor organisations in 49 countries. There is a global alliance, a regional network (in Latin America) and several national networks of waste pickers with affiliates in 32 countries. All of these networks and their national or local affiliates are engaged in policy advocacy and collective bargaining with government, employers and other dominant players, depending on the sector and the context. What follows is a brief summary of what each sector of workers is advocating or bargaining for with one or two examples, for each sector, of a successful outcome.

The regional and national HomeNets and their local affiliates are engaged in ongoing policy advocacy and collective bargaining with city governments for secure tenure of their homes (de jure or de facto), which are also their workplaces; for basic infrastructure services for their homes (“homes=workplaces”); for transport services between their homes and their suppliers or buyers; and for mixed-use zoning to allow their members to produce goods and services from their own homes. For example, HomeNet Thailand has successfully negotiated with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration for bus services for home-based workers relocated to the periphery of Bangkok, and for a pedestrian bridge over a major highway that separates some of the relocated home-based workers from the city.
The national and local affiliates of StreetNet International are engaged in ongoing policy advocacy and collective bargaining with city governments against harassment, bribes, confiscations and evictions by local authorities and for secure vending sites; protection of the “natural markets” where street vendors have congregated for years, if not generations; basic infrastructure services at their vending sites; and public transport services between their homes, wholesale markets and vending sites. In India, the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) and other organisations successfully advocated for a national policy and then a national law in support of street vendors. The 2014 Street Vendors Act recognises the contribution of street vendors and mandates that Town Vending Committees, with representatives from local government, street vendor organisations and the general public, be established in sub-districts of all cities across India. In Durban, South Africa, a local non-governmental organisation, Asiye eTafeleni (which means “a seat at the table” in Zulu), founded by two ex-city employees, provides design, legal and other support to 8,000 street and market vendors in a precinct, Warwick Junction, between the central business district and the transport node of the city. At the request of Asiye eTafeleni and local organisations of street vendors, the local Legal Resources Centre filed three successful cases against the city: two against the city’s plans to build a mall in the middle of the Warwick Junction market (one on procedural grounds, the other on historic preservation grounds); and one which challenged the confiscation of street vendor goods by local authorities.

The regional and national networks of waste pickers and their local affiliates are engaged in ongoing policy advocacy and collective bargaining against harassment, competition for and confiscation of waste by local authorities and for access to waste, to space or warehouses to store, sort, bundle and process reclaimed waste; and for municipal contracts to collect, sort and transport waste. In Colombia, for nearly three decades, the Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB) has waged a city-level and national campaign for recognition of and support for waste pickers for their waste collection and recycling services. The Constitutional Court of Colombia has ruled several times in their favour: most recently, in December 2011, the court ruled that waste picker organisations have the right to bid for solid waste management contracts. The then mayor of Bogotá honoured the ruling and created a public authority to manage waste. Based on technical analysis of appropriate costs for waste services and research on conditions and trends in the waste picking sector and ongoing policy dialogues with the mayor and city officials, ARB submitted a successful bid for a solid waste management contract in 2012. The waste pickers of Bogotá began to be paid for their services in early 2013. In 2014, the national government ruled that the Waste Picker Integration Model launched in Bogotá in 2013 should be replicated across the country. Since that ruling, 16 cities across Colombia have begun paying waste pickers for their services.

A recent example of an inclusionary city comes from the Global North: specifically, the US city of Los Angeles. Street vending is big business in Los Angeles: an estimated 500,000 vendors generate over $500 million in revenue each year (Economic Roundtable Los Angeles, cited in Molina, 2018). Three-quarters of the vendors sell merchandise (e.g. clothing

3 For more details on these success stories, the campaigns and struggles of these networks, and appropriate city-level policy responses, see the following recent publications by WIEGO commissioned by the World Resources Institute and Cities Alliance: Chen and Beard, 2018; Chen et al., 2018; and Skinner et al., 2018.
and cell phone accessories) while one-quarter sell street foods of various kinds (ibid.). But until early 2017 street vendors were routinely charged and often convicted with misdemeanours. In February 2017, after a decade of struggles by and debates with the street vendors, the Los Angeles City Council decided to decriminalise street vending, largely in response to the Trump administration’s stance on illegal immigration, which put many immigrant street vendors at risk of deportation. Since that decision, vendors who are apprehended have been fined with tickets, ranging from $50 to $1,000, without facing any criminal charges. Eighteen months later, on November 28th 2018, Los Angeles City Council voted unanimously to approve an ordinance which legalises sidewalk vending. As José Huizar, an activist councilman who helped lead the legalisation process, told the LA Weekly on two separate occasions:

We have to acknowledge that street vending is already a part of Los Angeles’ culture and, for thousands of mostly immigrant families, their only source of income.

Today, given the background of a Trump presidency and assuming he’s going to go after immigrants, there is a renewed energy to move forward and decriminalize vending for one, and adopt a legal framework second. (Portnoy, 2017:1).

Meanwhile, in September 2018, the Governor of California, Jerry Brown, introduced a state-wide law, the Safe Sidewalk Vending Act, which bans criminal penalties for sidewalk vending and encourages cities to establish permit programmes for vendors (Molina, 2018). It remains to be seen whether other cities in California will follow the example of Los Angeles and the mandate of the state law; and whether other cities and states in the US (or elsewhere) will follow the examples of Los Angeles and California.

IV. Inclusive cities going forward

To encourage more cities to include, rather than exclude, the urban informal workforce, requires a vision of a truly inclusive city and an understanding of the enabling conditions for realising such a vision. The networks whose campaigns and successes are summarised in this paper have been inspired by the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), a trade union of 1.6 million women informal workers in India which not only mobilises its members to advocate and bargain for their rights but also provides them with an integrated package of services. Here is a vision of an inclusive city in the words of Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA and the founding chair of the WIEGO Network.

The challenge is to convince the policy makers to promote and encourage hybrid economies in which micro-businesses can co-exist alongside small, medium, and large businesses: in which the street vendors can co-exist alongside the kiosks, retail shops, and large malls. Just as the policy makers encourage bio diversity, they should encourage economic diversity. Also, they should try to promote a level playing field in which all sizes of businesses and all categories of workers can compete on equal and fair terms.⁴

⁴. Personal communication.
All of the promising examples of more inclusive city-level policies and practice summarised above were negotiated between informal worker leaders, city officials and other key stakeholders. And each case of a successful negotiation required the following enabling inputs or conditions:

- **knowledge generation, policy analysis and good practice documentation** – to provide supportive evidence for policy advocacy;
- **capacity building of informal worker leaders** – to enhance their advocacy and collective bargaining skills;
- **inclusive policymaking processes** – for informal worker leaders to engage with city governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Of these enabling conditions, the last is the most fundamental. For urban reforms to be appropriate and fair, the working poor in the urban informal economy need a seat at the table in urban planning, policymaking and rule-setting processes. Reflecting this future vision and this fundamental enabling condition, the twin mottos of the global movement of informal workers are: “World Class Cities for All” and “Nothing for Us without Us”.

In conclusion, the politics of change should not be underestimated. There are very real competing interests, both economic and political, for control of public space, public services and public procurement. These are the interests of politicians and bureaucrats, corporations, real estate developers, elite communities, the urban poor and others. There are “politics of control” from above: politicians, city governments and local authorities often favour elite interest groups over informal workers, and elite groups, not organisations of informal workers, tend to be represented in the formal processes of governance. There has been significant backlash in some cities to the gains made by organisations of informal workers.

But there are also “politics of survival” from below. Informal workers and their organisations may resort to informal channels of influence, seeking support from whichever power-brokers will listen to their needs and demands, or seek redress through the courts and the legal system. The best way forward is not to blame the working poor in the urban informal economy for their “politics of survival” but to include organisations of informal workers in the formal processes and institutions of urban governance and management. So long as the urban working poor are excluded from the benefits of urbanisation by being denied access to public space and services it will be difficult, if not impossible, to reduce urban poverty and inequality.

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These plans sought to rebalance the UK’s economy by replicating the economic “success” of London in northern English cities.
Regenerating their high street, which was dominated by boarded-up shopfronts and a handful of fast food takeaways, was top of the agenda. No one in the area has much disposable income; many of the shops have been closed for a long time; and the new luxury and student flats being completed in Salford, which might have brought regeneration to the area, will connect directly with Manchester city centre via a new shopping mall, meaning the new residents are unlikely to stay where they live for shops and other amenities.

Despite a degree of cynicism from those involved in past regeneration efforts, whether in the council, the local housing association, or local community development organisations, there was a clear, dogged hope that somewhere in this talk of a Northern Powerhouse a future could be carved out for the people of this Salford neighbourhood, where most people live in public housing. But as the group talked through the current development plans in the city it looked increasingly unlikely that any of these would “trickle down” to Salford. New jobs emerging in the city centre were felt to be out of reach of local people’s skills, experience and public transport connections, and footfall of people who live elsewhere is restricted largely to those stopping at the car wash on the main road that slices through the estate and provides one of the main arteries out of Manchester.

Similar conversations have been taking place in localities throughout the UK since the 2015 spending review confirmed the direction of travel of recent plans for regional devolution, a deliberate policy to move power and investment from London to other city regions across England (Allen et al., 2015). This is by no means the first time a contemporary UK government has committed to a “rebalancing” of the UK economy. It was a strong theme in preceding New Labour and Conservative–Liberal Democrat governments. However, devolution deals have more radical ambitions than their precedents. Although the extent of devolution differs by deal, a more strategic economic role is on offer to local areas than in previous decentralisation initiatives, with greater influence over spending on skills and learning, housing, transport and health, and social care. There is also a commitment to devolve revenue-raising capacity by localising the retention of business rates, and freedom to vary council tax rates.

These developments are presented by the current government as the progenitor of a more local Britain that also promises to deliver significantly reduced inequalities in economic performance at regional level and as a shift away from the current model of economic development that is so reliant on growth in the south east.

The New Economics Foundation has long supported the principle of “subsidiarity”. Rather than “local by default”, this invites a critical consideration of the appropriate scale at which functions should be carried out, as well as the relationship between tiers of governance.
and to build more resilience, equality and subsidiarity into it. However, devolution – both in and of itself as a concept, and more specifically in the current form emerging with the city devolution deals – likewise presents significant risks. One obvious example is the substantial disadvantages faced by deprived areas in making the most of new powers to raise council tax and retain business rates. Cheap homes and considerable difficulties attracting new business mean they have little to gain from these measures, as our Salford group identified swiftly. When compounded by the fact that local government has been the biggest loser in the austerity-led public spending cuts, the Northern Powerhouse seems more of a recipe for exacerbating, rather than overcoming, regional and local inequalities. For this reason, critics of the policy have referred to the initiative as the “Northern Poorhouse”.

I. A centralised economic model risks recreating the inequalities of the urban agglomeration of London in other cities

Devolution deals demand that regional government justify its greater access to powers and investment through embedding and reinforcing the prevailing central government-led approach to regional economic development. The outcomes against which regions’ devolution proposals are judged are entirely set by central, not regional or local government, let alone citizens. Thus, the process of awarding devolved powers to areas reinforces the success of those regional economic development strategies that most conform to the current central government approach to growth.

Amidst the devolution debate it is crucial to make the case for an approach to political and economic decentralisation that allows and empowers local regions to devise development strategies that tackle inequalities in wealth and power, respect environmental limits, contribute to carbon reduction and generate opportunities for the development of diverse, balanced and resilient local economies. Of the ongoing approach to devolution we should ask whether it contributes to this agenda or whether it in fact risks doing the opposite. And what should devolution look like in order for it to be a force for a more inclusive, circular economy.

As things stand, the main stated aim of the devolution agenda is to rebalance the UK economy by boosting growth outside London. It is argued that greater local control will lead to more inward investment, coupled with increased investment in transport infrastructure – to be co-ordinated by the Transport for the North partnership. This will deliver stronger regional growth and close the regional output gap, making an increased contribution to the national purse. In the government’s own terms, the deals are also supposed to secure “better use of local authority assets to unlock resources to be invested in growth”; “commitments to pro-growth reforms” and “greater influence over key levers affecting local growth and freedoms and flexibilities” (HM Government, 2013).

The underlying logic is that UK regions outside the south east have been economic laggards that should and can “pull their own weight”, and that “peripheral” economic areas that depend on national forms of wealth distribution can be eliminated by developing localised competitive advantages.
and that “peripheral” economic areas that depend on national forms of wealth distribution can be eliminated by developing localised competitive advantages, building on economic specialisms, and generating agglomeration effects. Growth is thus by some distance the main outcome sought. Underlying this logic is, of course, the assumption that regional growth, once secured in this way, will lead to greater local prosperity.

In their efforts to gain powers through the devolution process, local authorities are driven to put forward economic priorities that align with central government’s approach to growth through gross value added (GVA), which counts the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy as the measure of the economy’s success. If they resist this pressure, they risk being awarded fewer powers and less substantial resources. Hence, in the government’s devolution drive, the focus on GVA growth has so far been definitive, and this ambition is reflected both in the stated aims of devolution as well as the processes through which devolution deals are being negotiated.

But there are a series of reasons to doubt the claim that devolution, as currently pursued, can achieve the aim of boosting regional growth and closing the output gap. Research in other devolved areas (Brill et al., 2015) has argued that, in a low-growth environment, and in a context where cuts to benefits can be expected to reduce consumer demand in peripheral areas that are more reliant on welfare, closing regional output disparities is highly unrealistic, if not outright unachievable. This would at the very least require an industrial policy which acknowledged local conditions, and a shift away from an economic model that continues to focus on London-centric finance, high tech and service industries.

In fact, London is often touted as an exemplar of what devolution and agglomeration effects can achieve – the argument is that similar results can be expected in other regions across the country. However, this is problematic, because the capital’s economic success relative to other areas is arguably a result of national economic policy such as de-industrialisation and the deregulation of finance, rather than of devolution per se. Moreover, in becoming the “powerhouse” of the UK economy, London has benefited disproportionately from infrastructure investments over the past decade. Despite all the rhetoric, this gap is set to widen with plans to spend £2,600 per capita on transport in London, compared to £380 in the north.

The London example is also more fundamentally problematic in that it suggests that a city economy such as London’s is, without mitigation, successful and desirable in the first place. London had a GVA increase of 15.4% between 2007 and 2012, compared with 6.9% in the other 11 UK regions (ONS, 2014), and its current share of UK output now stands at 23.8% (GLA, 2017). But it also has the highest child poverty rates in the country (Butler, 2014), and a housing market that offers tantalising investment opportunities for national and international financial elites but is unaffordable to most of its own population (Van Lohuizen, 2015). Is this really the type of regional or city economy we think is going to deliver greater equality, reduced poverty, better jobs or business sector resilience in other places?
The problems faced by the London economy speak directly to the failure of “trickle down” economics. In economic development a rising tide does not necessarily lift all boats – some can, and do, sink. Increased inequalities within regions can be expected from an approach that seeks aggregate growth at all costs, and does precious little to protect those at the bottom.

Moreover, devolution as currently pursued is also likely to lead to an accentuation of inequalities between regions. Mirroring the logic that prioritises the development of local competitive advantages, devolution deals are rolled out on a case by case basis, with the terms of each deal reflecting different patterns of need, ambition and competency. There is nothing wrong with this in itself, localisation needs to be sensitive to context. However, varying abilities to capitalise upon the opportunities opened up by devolution are compounded by the phasing out of national processes for wealth distribution, leading to a recipe for the entrenchment, rather than attenuation, of these regional differences. We can expect uneven development to be reinforced by the current approach to devolution.

This issue is particularly stark when one considers that the biggest losers in spending reviews since 2010 have been local state bodies. Increased powers to raise revenue locally are miles away from compensating for the cuts being made in central financing, and plans to devolve power over raising revenue are not matched by freedom over spending. For example, 2% council tax increases must be spent on adult social care, and spending on business rates is subject to veto and approval from business elites. It seems that devolution is delivering a policy straitjacket that turns public authorities into agents for the implementation of spending cuts, rather than institutions that are sufficiently empowered to develop and implement economic strategies of sufficient scale to close the gap between centre and periphery.

II. Towards a change in approach that establishes priorities for our economies beyond growth

We have long argued that economic growth should not be the primary goal sought by economic development, but rather understood as one of a number of potential means to an end in pursuit of a broader range of social and environmental outcomes. The Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2010) commission on economic performance and social progress recommended that measures of wellbeing and quality of life should take centre stage, and recent work by NEF has called for five headline success measures, covering: employment quality, wellbeing, environment, fairness and health (Jeffrey & Michaelson, 2015).

Strategies to decentralise power ought to facilitate a shift in the drivers for regional and local economic development. But this can only happen if devolved economic strategies are designed explicitly around the outcomes specifically needed by an area, as determined by those who live, work, or run businesses within that area’s economy. Devolved units should be given the power and support to be able to craft context-sensitive economic and social development strategies that can meet the needs of their citizens and improve their lives.
Crucially, this may or may not involve growth. It is certainly likely to involve different types and speeds of growth in different regions, and in different sectors within those different regions, and may equally involve very different accompanying priorities for investment in infrastructure, skills, training or business support in different regions accordingly.

A focus on attracting economically active and highly skilled new residents into a declining area is all too often at the core of the regional and local economic plans, with no sense of how to avoid the creation either of a parallel economy which excludes and displaces existing residents (the “gentrification” effect) or of “dormitory” towns or suburbs in which those earning higher wages do not in fact participate in any local economy at all.

The community-led economic development project in Salford is struggling with the fall-out from precisely this, in the sense that the area sits between a part of town being rebuilt as a “dormitory” suburb, from which residents are expected to connect with the city centre for jobs and shopping, entirely bypassing the estate in between. The group is puzzling out how to attract some of those wealthier new residents into their patch to shop and stimulate a revival of their high street and, as we’ve seen already, are contending not only with the lack of existing footfall to or through the area, but with the plans for a large-scale shopping mall close by, as well as the vibrant inner city offer of Manchester round the corner.

But city and regional economic plans do not have to go this way, which is to say, at best simply ignoring or displacing economically disadvantaged people and areas as we focus simply on attracting new kinds of people and businesses in, and at worst locking them even more definitively out of economic development opportunities available. Instead, we could be using the devolution process to embed measures and processes to proactively balance our local and regional economies: to connect new high growth economic sectors and wealthier demographic groups much more effectively with low growth sectors and low-wage, low-skilled demographic groups within and around some of the core cities currently rolling out devolution deals.

In response to this, channelling public and private sector procurement more effectively through small and medium-scale local enterprise is becoming more popular in certain parts of England. Many local areas are already trying to do this, with Preston¹ and Sandwell² being just two examples. This might be done by basing economic development priorities firmly on existing local and regional assets, rather than focussing on attracting new high-growth sectors to an area. Again, a strong argument is being made in many areas to do just this, with just one example being Sheffield.³ And inasmuch as it is useful to attract new sectors into an area, this might be done within a wider objective of maximising local assets and opportunities to decarbonise – for example as areas around Hull are doing currently with the emerging off-shore wind sector. There are, in fact, a great number of tried and tested approaches to a much more sustainable, better distributed approach to local growth, even within the relatively mainstream world of regeneration and regional development.

Many of these new approaches are being led and promoted by people in their local areas through vehicles such as community land trusts (CLTs) for the provision of housing, leisure and workspace; community and publicly owned renewable energy through co-operatives; and the delivery of not-for-profit health and social care through community enterprises. London Community Land Trust provides an example of this. It is working on five developments, one of which, St. Clements, is being built in partnership with a mainstream developer. The site for this development is an ex-psychiatric hospital on land belonging to the Greater London Authority (GLA), allowing a partnership between them, the developer and Peabody Housing Association. The project will provide 252 new homes, 35% of which will be genuinely affordable homes including 58 for “social rent” and 23 community land trust homes. This work has led to the establishment of a community-led housing advice hub in London which is working to support the proliferation of trusts to meet the desperate need in the capital for housing that people can afford, both to rent and buy.

Repowering London (RL) is another example of community-led infrastructure support, this one around community-led and owned renewable energy. Born out of the successful Brixton Energy project which has installed 134 kW of solar panels on the roofs of ten public housing blocks in Brixton, RL is now working in 11 areas of London to roll out this approach by using co-operative structures to raise money for the schemes through community shares.

These approaches signal a new relationship between state and citizens and are locally rooted, ensuring that the economic benefits are felt in the places where they manifest and respond to local needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all model of regeneration and service provision.

A devolution process which took a well-rounded view of subsidiarity and could be equipped to stimulate, facilitate and build on this kind of innovation in new, social and environmentally driven and, crucially, community-led economic development, could really facilitate the kind of dynamic, decentralised, democratised economy necessary for sustainable and equitable social, environmental and wellbeing outcomes.

III. What we need now

Our interest in engaging with the current devolution process is two-fold: how can we build on the exciting opportunity it seems to offer to test, trial and consolidate much more progressive and equitable regional approaches to economic development policy? And how can we best avoid this process doing the opposite – exacerbating regional inequalities, or embedding the kinds of priorities within regional economic strategic that make it even more difficult to pursue social, environmental and wellbeing outcomes? Amongst other things, the “devolution debate” is arguably one of the principal current political lenses in the UK through which we are examining questions of how the economy functions for people and planet. For those interested in pursuing progressive, systemic alternatives to our current economic paradigm, it will be crucial to find answers to these two questions as the devolution agenda unfolds.
References


The concept of “global cities” became popular in the 1990s to account for the strategic role of major urban centres in articulating the effervescent neoliberal globalisation of capitalism. Almost three decades on, the transnational space anchored in global cities has changed substantially. This scenario invites a new interrogation of the notion of global cities, particularly from the perspective of its associated modes of governance, city production and urban regulation.

The prevailing urban development pattern has forged “city brands” and boosted inter-urban competition, attracting financial and real estate rent-seeking activities as well as the insufficiently problematised “talents” of the global “creative classes”. It has also generated a process of planetary gentrification and further uprooted cities from their surroundings.

Transformations in the “glocal” conditions embodied in global cities pose new challenges for city dwellers and public authorities. The scalar restructurings of the global governance system suggest a repositioning of cities at different levels. The claim to the “right to the city” underscores, in turn, the existing disputes around the appropriation of urban space and its production. In the interstices of these processes, new models of development, both within and beyond the prevailing value systems and digitalisation paradigms, require special consideration.