



Global Platform for the Right to the City
Plataforma Global por el Derecho a la Ciudad
Plateforme Globale pour le Droit à la Ville



CGLU
Commission

Inclusion Sociale,
Démocratie Participative
et Droits Humains

Right to the City and the International Agendas: African realities and perspectives

Open Session, November 22nd 2018

Concept Note

Spreading the "Right to the City" around the world

On the occasion of the most important summit of African local authorities, Africities 2018, this session aims to reflect on the issue of the Right to the City from the African perspectives and realities.

Celebrating in 2018 the 50 years of the Right to the City, the purpose of the session will be to explore again this concept developed in 1968 by the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre in his eponymous book and work on its concrete implementation at the local level.

The book has inspired political movements around the world struggling for democracy and social justice. The human right to adequate housing, resistance to evictions and displacements, promoting models for self-management of human settlements and wider "urban rights" have been part of these struggles.

The Right to the City has been an alternative and fruitful framework with which to respond to some of the most pressing challenges of our time: social injustice, inequality, exclusion, dispossession, spatial segregation, discrimination of all kinds, destruction and privatization of the commons and environmental degradation. By offering concrete solutions, with strong potential for the transformation of our societies, it has also been a way to reaffirm, update and defend human rights and the corresponding state obligations.

Civil society and local governments coming together

The Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C) and the Committee of Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG (CISDPH) have been working together to engage a conversation on how civil society and local governments could create new alliances to achieve their shared goals regarding social well-being, economic inclusion, and the respect for individual and collective rights.



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This partnership has been developed in the framework of the defense and promotion of Human Rights and the Right to the City, to explore new ways for local action but also to gain recognition of local governments as a key stakeholder to build more human, democratic and equal cities for all. `

The role of local governments in providing services as well as opportunities for civil society to govern and co-produce the urban setting has been echoed by international agendas such as the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, these goals cannot be achieved without strong local commitments and cooperation to improve living conditions for urban dwellers while aiming for participatory democracy, justice, inclusivity, safety and sustainability in cities as well as for more recognition and support from national authorities.

The GPR2C and the CISDPH are supporting the initiatives of the organized civil society and local governments to disseminate the debate about the Right to the City around the world.

The Right to the City in the African context

The Right to the City is the right of all inhabitants, present and future, permanent and temporary, to inhabit, use, occupy, produce, govern and enjoy just, inclusive, safe and sustainable cities, villages and human settlements, defined as commons essential to a full and decent life.

This session entitled "Right to the City and the International Agendas: African realities and perspectives" will examine the above description in the African context, while building on the knowledge and experience of two previous gatherings in Africa: Johannesburg, South Africa on November 2015, and Nairobi, Kenya on October 2017.

These meetings placed the Right to the City as the framework to talk about different phenomena currently affecting African cities and human settlements. Some of these phenomena include:

- Forced evictions, as a result of so-called urban development projects that take the land and resources away from those who need them most and gives it to the wealthy.
- Criminalization of informal workers and dwellers.



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- Violence against women, children and the LGBTQI community.
- Social and environmental struggles in rural and peri-urban areas, usually as a result of new infrastructure built to serve the interests of mostly international extractivist businesses.

However, the Right to the City also offers solutions that are already being implemented, both in Africa and abroad, such as:

- Social production of habitat as a bottom-up strategy to guarantee the right to adequate housing.
- Tenants and community organizing.
- Inclusive citizenship that does not criminalize people based on their social background, gender, or identity.
- Inclusive economies that integrate rather than persecute the non-formal economy.
- Enhanced political participation in the decision-making process, especially at the local level.
- Sustainable urban development that ensures rural-urban linkages.

The speakers will talk about their own experience in relation to these topics, focusing on how to achieve cities that are free of discrimination and fulfill the right to housing. They will be asked to connect the struggles they are witnessing in their communities with those in other parts of Africa, and to propose solutions that can be implemented under the Right to the City, particularly at the local level.