

Urban Policies and the Right to the City at WUFIII

At the third session of the World Urban Forum (Vancouver, 19-23 June 2006), UN-HABITAT and UNESCO are organising a networking event on the theme "Urban Policies and Right to the City: Towards Good Governance and Local Democracy". The aim of the session is to discuss the notion of the Right to the City and share the views of city stakeholders – local government (e.g. the Mayor of Montréal or the Deputy Mayor of Lyon), civil society (e.g. UNESCOCAT), grassroots groups (e.g. Huairou Commission), etc. on what is included in the concept of the "Right to the City". The session will also discuss existing urban policies at regional and municipal level, as well as practices and approaches that promote the Right to the City. There will be brief presentations by panellists followed by a discussion on social cohesion and inclusiveness in urban management and development and how to take this concept to international level.

From WUFIII to WUF-IV: Milestones towards the World Urban Forum IV in Nanjing 2008, China

- June 2006** Questionnaire launched at the WUF III in order to further define the concept of the "Right to the City" through a consultative process. It will allow the Working Group to capture the various initiatives at local, national, regional and international levels on themes relating to "Urban Policies and the Right to the City"
- September 2006** IAEC to present the results of the WUF III discussions on "Urban Policies and the Right to the City" at the 9th International Congress of Educating Cities on "People's Place in the City" in Lyon (14 – 17 September 2006)
- Autumn 2006** High level meeting with the Special Rapporteurs of the OHCHR in order to discuss possible collaboration on "Urban Policies and the Right to the City"
- December 2006** UNESCOCAT conference on multi-religious cities in Barcelona (Spain) with UNESCO's support (18 – 20 December 2006)
- Spring 2007** Formulation of a detailed Plan of Action for the "Right to the City", reflecting the debates and conclusions of the working group meetings. The plan would be taken through a process of dialogue with a broad variety of stakeholders.
- May 2007** Proposal for a UNESCO Chair on "Urban Policies and Social Integration of Migrants" at the University of Venice and organization of an international conference on "Urban Policies Enhancing Social Integration of Migrants" in Venice
- July 2007** First Summer Workshop for Mayors on "Urban Policies and Citizenship" by the UNESCO Chair of Lyon
- Winter 2007 - 2008** Development of an International Toolkit for capacity-building amongst policy makers at municipal and national level as well as city stakeholders, enabling them to independently initiate processes and instruments based on lessons learnt from existing normative initiatives.
- 2008-2009** Project for the creation of an international platform to disseminate knowledge, to open international discussions and to train Mayors and local authorities in adopting a rights-based approach in the elaboration of inclusive urban policies. This platform would aim to explore, generalize and further develop the above-mentioned International Toolkit

Urban Policies and the Right to the City Towards Good Governance and Local Democracy

An international research project of UN-HABITAT and UNESCO
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Cities are engines of growth and provide major opportunities for social advancement and economic development. Today, however, they also represent high levels of inequality and significant concentrations of poverty. The current global trends in urbanization and globalization imply nothing less than the urbanization of poverty and social exclusion.

Both UN-HABITAT and UNESCO actively support the attainment of the goals of the Millennium Declaration. This Declaration states that the international community will spare no effort to strengthen "respect for all international human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to development". The Secretary-General's Road Map for the Implementation of the Millennium Declaration notes that a rights-based approach to development is important for both distributing development gains and ensuring equal participation in the development process.

Today, we are in grave danger of falling further behind in our commitment to arrest poverty. The time has now come for governments to shift from a needs-based approach to a rights-based approach. In a rapidly urbanizing world, such an approach means that all citizens should benefit from what cities have to offer in terms of access to income generating opportunities, land and housing, water and sanitation, education and health care. Recognition of this right in national policies and legislation is critical to bringing about a fundamental change in our approach to sustainable development. A rights-based approach can help generate the political will and create a culture of resource allocation that places the interests of the poor on an equal footing with those better off. There are various encouraging initiatives proposed by different key players.

UN-HABITAT and UNESCO are keen to see local governments active in promoting the holistic notion of the "Right to the City" at the international level and to take a strong role in supporting inclusive urban governance: this is why UN-HABITAT and UNESCO jointly hosted the first debate on "Urban Policies and the Right to the City" in March 2005.

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Download the proceedings of the joint UNESCO/UN-HABITAT international public debates on "Urban Policies and the Right to the City" (March/September 2005) at: www.unesco.org/shs/urban/rttc

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