

# PATHWAYS TO URBAN AND TERRITORIAL EQUALITY

Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies

2022



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Executive Summary

# PATHWAYS TO URBAN AND TERRITORIAL EQUALITY

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local transformation strategies

The GOLD VI Executive Summary includes the full version of Chapters 1, 3 and 10; as well as the abstract, infographics and key messages of Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The full GOLD VI report is available [here](#).

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# Foreword

**For decades, many public policies around the world have aimed at reducing inequalities and guaranteeing inclusion. In spite of this, great gaps still persist and can even be described as systemic. Addressing them will be critical not only to handle the many overlapping crises facing our world today, but also to define a sustainable and more equal path forward.**

As we approach the mid-term review of 2030 Agenda implementation and follow-up, we will need to be more ambitious in bridging these systemic gaps by reforming our governance systems and our production and consumption models, not only to satisfy the current needs of our communities but also to safeguard the aspirations of generations to come. Inequalities are embedded in the places where people live and which are governed by local and regional governments. Inequalities manifest themselves in the urban and territorial fabric: growing between neighbourhoods, urban systems and territories – between globalized metropolises and regions, intermediary cities and marginalized rural regions and towns.

The international municipal movement led by United Cities and Local Governments is convinced that the provision of strong local public services, accessible to all, in cities that facilitate social inclusion, proximity and the ecological transition, are critical to generate caring societies that have equality and justice at their core. A local, feminist way of governing, leading through empathy, which addresses the needs of populations that have been historically marginalized; an ecological transformation that makes our relationship with nature sustainable; and a renewed governance culture and fiscal architecture are the pillars of the sustainable future we imagine being built from the bottom up.

**This sixth GOLD Report builds on these premises, as well as on the grounded experiences of UCLG's membership around the world and the transformative vision that drives their actions.** Building on localization efforts to achieve the universal development agendas and considering them as a framework, the Report has been coproduced through broad multistakeholder dialogue involving civil society coalitions, academia, UCLG committees and partners, as well as local and regional governments.

Aware of the complex nature of the responses needed, **the Report innovates by introducing the notion of “pathways to urban and territorial equality”**, which can be understood as trajectories of change, capable of supporting decision-making processes, policies, actions and planning systems that actively seek to improve urban and territorial equality. The Report proposes six such pathways that local and regional governments, in addition to all other stakeholders, need to advance to achieve equality: **Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering and Democratizing**. Combined, they form the vision that the Report is advancing: a radical revision of urban and territorial development strategies and policies to safeguard the future of people and the planet through better governance.

Acknowledging that no single level of government nor any single actor can tackle these challenges alone, the Report calls for adopting a rights-based approach, effective subnational governance and a reviewed financial architecture. It also encourages alternative ways of conceiving and managing space and time in cities and territories to support incremental practices for localizing sustainable development and addressing inequalities. This calls for enhancing local and regional governments' capacities to lead and support transformative initiatives that stem from alliances at the local level. By going beyond their usual powers and responsibilities, they ensure a new governance that is multilevel and collaborative, promoting ecosystems and partnerships for mutual support in ways that boost cocreation with our communities.

**Most importantly, shaping a more equal, just and sustainable future requires transformative action from local and regional governments.** The pathways described above and the content of this Report are essential contributions to UCLG policy initiatives and to its Pact for the Future, which will be presented during UCLG's 7th World Congress in Daejeon in October 2022. Built in accordance with its three pillars – people, planet and government – GOLD VI identifies equality as an essential building block of a transformed relationship between people and nature, which requires responsive and accountable governments.

As we head towards the Summit of the Future, it is our hope that our work will be a source of inspiration to our membership around the world. We hope that it will foster renewed leadership practices and governance systems that will continue to shape partnerships and trigger actions contributing to sustainable peace and developing a universal shared agenda for years to come.

**Emilia Saiz Carracedo**  
UCLG Secretary General

# Acronyms

<b>ACHR</b>	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
<b>CBC</b>	Case-based contribution
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease, originated by SARS-CoV-2 virus
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>E.G.</b>	Exempli gratia
<b>ETC.</b>	Et cetera
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GPR2C</b>	Global Platform for the Right to the City
<b>GOLD VI</b>	6th Rreport of the Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization
<b>HIC</b>	Habitat International Coalition
<b>HLPF</b>	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
<b>IBC</b>	Issue-based contribution
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technologies
<b>I.E.</b>	Id est
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>KNOW</b>	Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality
<b>LED</b>	Local economic development
<b>LGA</b>	Local and regional government association
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual+
<b>LRG</b>	Local and regional government
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NUA</b>	New Urban Agenda
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SDI</b>	Slum/Shack Dwellers International
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprise

<b>SNG</b>	Subnational government
<b>SNG-WOFI</b>	World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Spending
<b>THN</b>	Thailand Homeless Network
<b>UCLG</b>	United Cities and Local Governments
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDESA</b>	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USD</b>	United States dollar
<b>VLR</b>	Voluntary Local Review
<b>VSR</b>	Voluntary Subnational Review
<b>WIEGO</b>	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

## Symbols

<b>m (unpreceded by space)</b>	Million
<b>bn</b>	Billion
<b>m (preceded by space)</b>	Metre
<b>km</b>	Kilometre
<b>m<sup>2</sup></b>	Square metre
<b>m<sup>3</sup></b>	Cubic metre
<b>µg</b>	Microgram
<b>kWh</b>	Kilowatt-hour
<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	Carbon dioxide
<b>NO<sub>2</sub></b>	Nitrogen dioxide
<b>°C</b>	Celsius degree
<b>%</b>	Percent
<b>+</b>	Over



# 01 ↓

# Introduction

Pathways to urban and territorial equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies





# 1 Urban and territorial inequalities: An urgent challenge for humanity and the critical role of local and regional governments

The last three years have been a challenging time for cities and territories across the globe. While local and regional governments (LRGs), national governments, organized civil society and international agencies have mobilized their capacities to the limit to respond to the unprecedented demands of the COVID-19 crisis, old and new territorial challenges have become more acute and have continued to undermine the human rights of large parts of the population. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that global human development declined in 2020; that was the first time

that this had occurred since the concept was developed in 1990.<sup>1</sup> According to projections by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the total number of global hours worked in 2021 was 4.3% below pre-pandemic levels; this was equivalent to 125 million full-time jobs and there was a disproportionate impact on self-employed and informal workers.<sup>2</sup> The World Bank estimates

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1 UNDP, "Coronavirus vs. Inequality," 2020, <https://bit.ly/3qahXP8>.

2 ILO, "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Eighth Edition." (Geneva, 2021), <https://bit.ly/364fYFp>.

that COVID-19 could have subjected as many as 150 million people to extreme poverty in 2021.<sup>3</sup> We know that the impact of this global historical juncture has been unevenly distributed and that it has been experienced differently across populations, regions and cities. It has, in turn, exacerbated the plight of those who were already suffering from multiple, intersectional social disadvantages. At the centre of this lies an undeniable challenge: inequalities. Three-quarters of cities were more unequal in 2016 than in 1996.<sup>4</sup> Inequalities are perpetuated by structures inherited from longstanding trajectories of injustice, but also exacerbated by other adverse phenomena such as wars, the climate emergency, forced migration, and – of course – COVID-19.

**This Report is a collective effort to put inequalities at the centre of urban and territorial questions and to actively look for ways to address them through local transformation strategies.**

Although inequalities have been increasingly acknowledged as a global challenge, shaped by structural conditions at multiple scales, coordinated actions at the local level are indispensable to tackle their territorial manifestations, as well as many of their underlying causes. The Durban Declaration of 2017 reconfirmed United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) as an equality-driven movement, recognizing local action as being at the front line in the fight to address inequalities. Local knowledge and practices are crucial for articulating meaningful and effective responses to inequalities that are locally experienced. Addressing inequalities therefore requires collaboration at multiple scales, and the actions of LRGs are a key place to start.

The role of LRGs in reframing and responding to inequalities is fundamental for at least three main reasons. Firstly, local authorities are at the forefront of the territorial manifestations of global phenomena and therefore tend to have better knowledge about how people experience inequalities on a day-to-day basis. Secondly, LRGs have the capacity to act and mobilize efforts and collaboration between the public, private and civil society actors with a presence in their territories, working at different scales. Thirdly, they also have the potential to sustain action overtime and to ensure more direct accountability in the long term. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the critical role played by LRGs in promoting and guaranteeing local well-being, food security, and the continuity of public services, and also

3 World Bank, "COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021," 2020, <https://bit.ly/3qbpoWu>.

4 UN-Habitat, "World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development - Emerging Futures," 2016, <https://bit.ly/3qaczeY>.

in protecting people from exacerbated vulnerability and eviction.<sup>5</sup> These local actions have been combined with efforts to coordinate common global agendas and international solidarity, understanding the importance of coordinated action to respond to structural constraints.

**It is through these efforts that GOLD VI seeks to add a collective "urban and territorial equality" perspective. It acknowledges that, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development objective of "leaving no-one and no place behind", it is crucial to promote equality when localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>6</sup>**

## GOLD VI has three strategic objectives:

- **Firstly**, GOLD VI seeks to reframe the ways that inequalities are understood in order to capture the complexity and drivers of current disparities, moving beyond narrowly monetarized definitions of equality to include principles related to distribution, recognition, participation and solidarity.
- **Secondly**, as an action-oriented report, GOLD VI seeks to highlight the challenges and alternatives facing urban and territorial governance in the democratic pursuit of urban and territorial equality. Governance-related questions are central and will be approached by identifying current policy and planning actions and through joint interventions that recognize the agency of LRGs in consolidating pathways to equality at different scales.
- **Thirdly**, GOLD VI seeks to highlight inequalities within debates about the role of LRGs in the accomplishment of global development agendas, including equality and justice in agendas such as the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing Sustainable Development, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

5 For a compilation of LRG responses to the pandemic, see Metropolis, UCLG, and AL-LAs' "Cities for Global Health" platform, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3wclm2E>; and the "Beyond the Outbreak" knowledge hub co-led by UCLG, Metropolis, and UN-Habitat, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3MP1f1A>.

6 Stephanie Butcher et al., "Localising the Sustainable Development Goals: An Urban Equality Perspective," *International Engagement Brief #2* (London, 2021), <https://bit.ly/3u47cz3>.



GOLD VI seeks to advance these strategic objectives by promoting a participatory and collaborative methodology that has been essential for the coproduction of this Report. In this process, there has been space for the voices, experiences and knowledges of a diverse range of actors – including local and regional government representatives, civil society networks, international agencies and academics.

This introductory chapter sets the scene for the journey through GOLD VI. In Section 2, the chapter discusses the meaning of “urban and territorial equality”, inviting

readers to embrace a multidimensional understanding of inequalities, and to reflect upon the intertwined relationship between inequality and other development challenges. Section 3 then briefly introduces the concept of “pathway”, which is the key structuring notion for GOLD VI. Section 4 describes the process behind the production of GOLD VI, which was shaped by a collective process of coproduction that relied on the experiences and knowledges of multiple actors. Finally, Section 5 of this chapter explains to the reader how to navigate through this Report and its different pathways and chapters.



Source: Sam Okechukwu, Nigeria Slum / Informal Settlement Media Team, Know your City TV. A peaceful protest is held by persons living with disabilities at The Lagos State House of Assembly following the sudden blanket ban on keke and okada (tricycles and motorbikes).



# 2 Defining “urban and territorial equality”

Urban and territorial inequalities are widening. This is depriving vast sectors of the population of their basic rights and a decent standard of living, while creating collective risks and also social, economic and environmental obstacles to development. Inequalities are growing almost everywhere. As Oxfam highlighted in 2020 in its examination of the profound injustice in the global distribution of wealth: “inequality is not inevitable – it is a political choice”.<sup>7</sup> The world’s richest 1% have more than twice the wealth of 6.9 billion people, or 90% of the world population; this situation is also mirrored in urban and territorial contexts.

Inequality is not only an urgent problem and an ethical and political challenge in itself; it is also a driver of several other global challenges. Addressing inequalities is an urgent task if we are to tackle most of the challenges that humanity is currently facing in a sustainable way. For example, in dealing with the climate emergency, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has argued that the “combination of climate change and inequality increasingly drives risk”.<sup>8</sup> In the case of migration-related challenges, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has acknowledged that “migration is a highly visible reflection of global inequalities whether in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, or lifestyles”.<sup>9</sup>

7 Oxfam International, “A Deadly Virus: 5 Shocking Facts about Global Extreme Inequality,” 2020, <https://bit.ly/3ifdciY>.

8 UNFCCC, “Combination of Climate Change and Inequality Increasingly Drives Risk,” News, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3CLCij9>.

9 Heaven Crawley, “Why Understanding the Relationship between Migration and Inequality May Be the Key to Africa’s Development,” OECD Development Matters, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3JkypE9>.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the long-term crisis of care more visible than ever, exposing the weaknesses of “widening and persistent inequality” in almost every society.<sup>10</sup> In terms of democracy, researchers have shown that “the higher the inequality, the more likely we are to move away from democracy”.<sup>11</sup> Understanding this intertwined relationship between inequality and other development-related challenges, GOLD VI specifically examines inequalities that are urban and territorial in nature.



Source: Jason Leung, Unsplash, San Francisco, CA, USA.

10 UNDP, “Coronavirus vs. Inequality.”

11 Branko Milanovic, “The Higher the Inequality, the More Likely We Are to Move Away from Democracy,” *The Guardian*, 2017, <https://bit.ly/36IAWIQ>.

**Box 1.1****Equality and equity**

It is important to clarify the much-discussed differences between the concepts of "equality" and "equity". In the urban field, "inequality" is generally used as a descriptive term to refer to differences in people's capabilities for achieving well-being; these differences stem from unevenness in their access to the opportunities required to fulfil their needs and aspirations. On the other hand, "inequity" refers to a lack of fairness and therefore to questions of social justice.<sup>12</sup> GOLD VI uses the term "equality" as a way to embrace both descriptive and justice-related orientations and to reinforce the pursuit of equality as a common aspiration. Equality is understood as a vision that should always be on the horizon of actions undertaken by LRGs and which should serve to advance the collective efforts of "equality-driven movements", such as UCLG. In GOLD VI, the notion of equality also enables us to discuss reforms and distributive responses that can help address actual disparities experienced by people. GOLD VI understands that it is only by tackling the discursive, relational and material inequalities associated with both processes and outcomes that the cause of social justice can be advanced.

## What do we mean by urban and territorial equality?

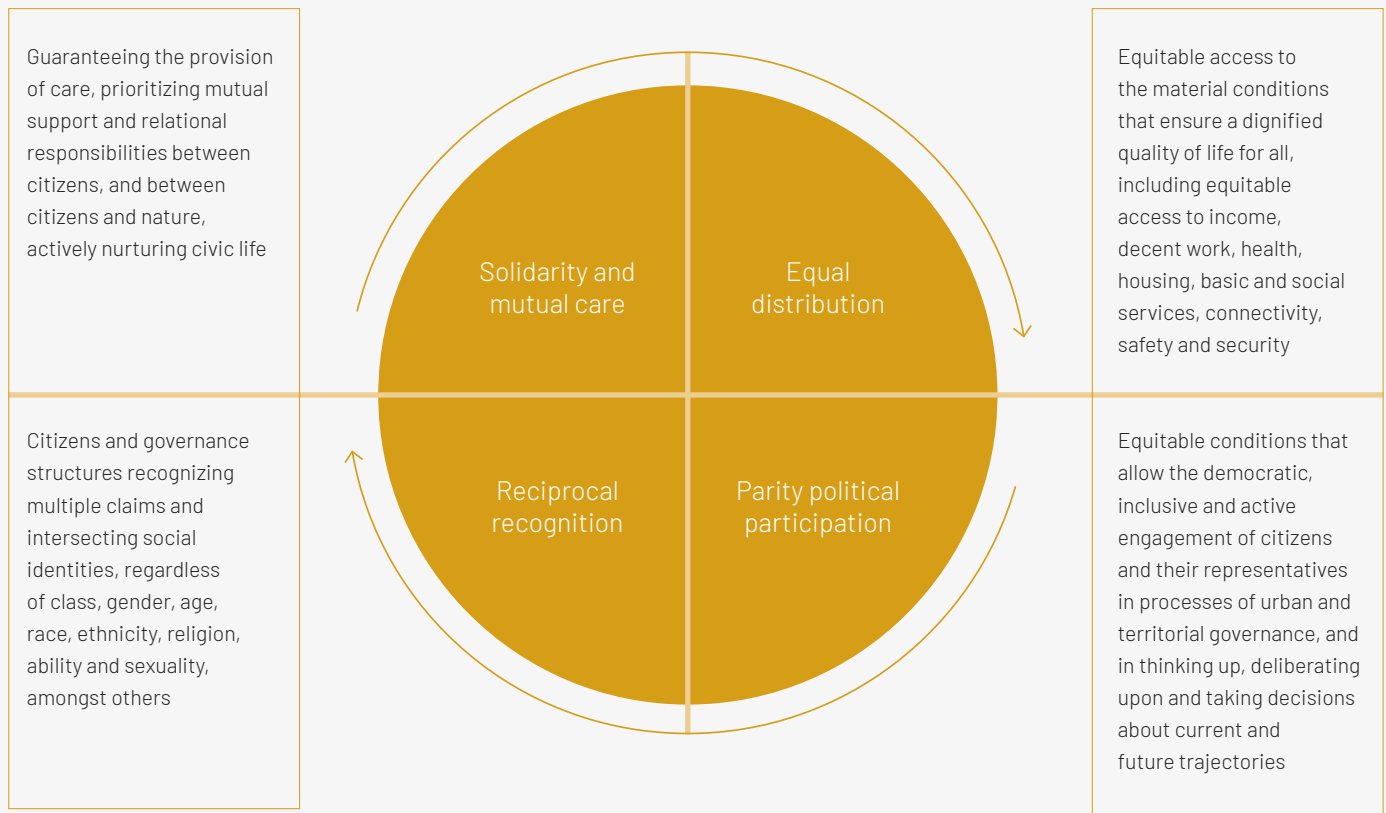
Although most definitions of equality tend to focus on the distribution of wealth and income, over the last few decades, several voices have called for a more multidimensional understanding of equality, based on the principle of justice. Drawing on these debates, GOLD VI proposes a shift in the understanding of equality that could help build pathways for action for LRGs: from a singular focus on *measuring* (in)equality to one based on capturing the *drivers* that perpetuate it; from a *universal* definition of inequality to one that also recognizes the *context-specificity* of how equality and inequality are locally experienced; and from *sectorial* delivery approaches to *cross-sectorial* performance principles. GOLD VI works with a definition of urban and territorial equality that has four key, inter-related, performance principles: equitable distribution; reciprocal recognition; parity political participation; and solidarity and mutual care (Figure 1.1).

The first principle concerns the **distribution** dimension of equality; it refers to equitable access to the material conditions that ensure a dignified quality of life for all, including equitable access to income, decent work, health, housing, basic and social services, connectivity, safety and security for all citizens in a sustainable manner. Equitable distribution is not, however, sufficient to achieve urban equality unless it is accompanied by the **reciprocal recognition** of multiple intersecting social identities across class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, and sexuality, among others. As, historically speaking, populations with certain identities have been misrecognized, oppressed or rendered invisible, promoting reciprocal recognition means that citizens and governance structures must recognize this diversity when collectively organizing, coproducing knowledge, and planning and managing urban and territorial activities. This recognition is of particular importance when populations are affected by socio-economic and ecological processes, political conflict or environmental disasters that may result in migration, displacement and/or other forms of marginalization. The third principle of urban and territorial equality is **parity political participation**. This refers to creating equitable conditions that: allow the demo-

<sup>12</sup> Carolyn Stephens, "Urban Inequities; Urban Rights: A Conceptual Analysis and Review of Impacts on Children, and Policies to Address Them," *Journal of Urban Health* 89, no. 3 (2012): 464-85; Alexandre Apsan Frediani, *Cities for Human Development: A Capability Approach to City-Making* (Rugby: Practical Action Publishing, 2021).

Figure 1.1

## Principles of urban and territorial equality



Source: authors, based on the KNOW proposal

cratic, inclusive and active engagement of citizens and their representatives in processes of urban and territorial governance; help to address conflict; and fully encompass and promote the collective imagination, deliberations and decisions about current and future urban and territorial trajectories. Finally, the fourth principle refers to fostering **solidarity and mutual care**. This entails moving towards cities and territories that guarantee the provision of care and that prioritize promoting mutual support and relational responsibilities between citizens, and between citizens and the natural environment, by actively nurturing the civic life of cities and territories.<sup>13</sup>

Rights-based approaches lie at the heart of these four principles of urban and territorial equality; these are approaches that challenge and seek to transform power relations in order to guarantee human rights for all. Likewise, applying these principles relies on recognizing a diverse knowledge base of personal and collective experiences of inequalities and acknowledging different voices and sources of knowledge relating to the promotion of equality.

<sup>13</sup> For further reflections on these four principles, see Christopher Yap, Camila Cociña, and Caren Levy, "The Urban Dimensions of Inequality and Equality," GOLD VI Working Paper Series (Barcelona, 2021).

# 3 Pathways as trajectories of change

Understanding equality in this multidimensional perspective invites LRGs to find different ways to tackle inequalities. LRGs act through different institutional mechanisms, through which they galvanize policies, programmes, planning, finance, organizational tools and local alliances. These instruments allow them to find ways to advance in one or more dimensions to make cities and territories more equitable for everyone. GOLD VI understands these different routes as *pathways* to urban and territorial equality. These pathways are trajectories for change. Creating pathways that promote more equitable futures involves taking strategic decisions that include both material and discursive practices. Pathways help define the collective criteria required for decision making and working towards a common vision.

The focus on pathways in GOLD VI acknowledges that addressing structural inequalities and current unsustainable development trends requires the collective construction of alternative channels of action. Faced by the housing crisis and the financialization of housing, land and services, **Commoning** has emerged as a pathway for enhancing collective practices and guaranteeing everyone access to decent housing and basic services. As we have witnessed a generalized crisis in social protection, **Caring** has become a response through which to prioritize the provision of care for different groups and also for those who care for others. By bridging evident gaps in mobility and access to infrastructure, as well as a growing digital

divide, **Connecting** has become a pathway to help ensure adequate physical and digital connectivity for everyone. In the face of an undeniable climate emergency, **Renaturing** has emerged as an approach for creating a renewed and sustainable relationship with the ecosystem and natural resources. As urban and territorial economies have become more precarious and inequalities between territories have increased, **Prospering** can help to create decent and sustainable livelihoods that are appropriate for diverse conditions and different social identities. As we encounter global and local threats to democracy, and growing calls to improve existing mechanisms of representation, **Democratizing** is a vehicle that will ensure more inclusive governance that recognizes all voices, and especially those that have been historically marginalized. Finally, the incremental and cumulative effect of joint action coordinated between these different agendas will produce pathways to equality. Together, they can reach tipping points for radical positive transformations. This will be only possible through appropriate policies capable of upscaling and expanding these transformative changes.

These trends are framed and further discussed in Chapter 2 of this Report. Thereafter, these pathways have been used as a structuring element in GOLD VI. The current Report provides concrete examples, highlights ongoing debates and examines the experiences of LRGs working closely with other stakeholders, such as organized civil society. The pathways seek to



provide concrete tools to help LRGs when they are looking to define their own routes to change. The pathways discussed in GOLD VI do not seek to provide all the answers, but rather to present alternative ways of jointly constructing the *conditions* necessary to make cities and territories more equal. In this way, the pathways can become collective vehicles for promoting transformative action. By creating capabilities and mechanisms that work at multiple scales, LRGs can

use these pathways to promote the different principles of equality. Above all, the pathways and their coconstruction lead us to think more about the question of governance. With this in mind, the discussion about pathways will be expanded in Chapter 3 of this Report, where urban and territorial equality as a question of governance will also be considered.



Source: Alan Veas, Unsplash.  
Santiago, Chile.



# 4 GOLD VI coproduction: An engaged international process

A multidimensional understanding of equality involves questioning how knowledge is produced, whose voices are considered, and the ways in which global agendas can be collectively coproduced, considering the experiences of different actors through just and accountable processes. **Acknowledging the production of knowledge as an equality challenge in itself, the methodology behind GOLD VI has sought not only to produce rigorous and relevant output, but also to facilitate a rich process of exchange and collective agenda setting.** Through a series of workshops, meetings, and coproduction mechanisms, GOLD VI has sought to support and strengthen multistakeholder dialogues and to ensure the fullest possible participation and involvement of the UCLG network and its members, civil society coalitions, and researchers and academics. From the beginning of this process, this approach has been regarded as being as relevant as the output itself. GOLD VI has sought to bring a perspective of equality to a process aimed at strengthening local learning and alliances for action, facilitating translocal learning, and collaborating within international networks.

In order to enable this process, GOLD VI has established a specific governance structure that facilitates this cross-learning and coproduction experience (Figure

1.2). The structure has been created by the GOLD VI Steering Committee, which is composed of members of UCLG and the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) team.<sup>14</sup> From the beginning, the Steering Committee envisaged a Report that could offer more than just a snapshot of current inequalities. Instead, building on an understanding of the structural drivers of inequality and their manifestations in urban and territorial areas, the Report seeks to propose routes for transformative action. In order to discuss these different routes, or pathways, each chapter of GOLD VI has been produced by specific chapter curators, with recognized experience in their respective fields, from different countries, disciplines and institutions. We have called these colleagues “chapter curators”, rather than just “authors”, because each of them has brought their own approach and experience to the Report. In

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14 Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) is a four-year programme funded by ESRC under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) of the United Kingdom. Led by Professor Caren Levy, of the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) of University College London, KNOW is a global consortium of researchers and partners which includes 13 institutions from nine different countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The GOLD VI Steering Committee includes three members of the KNOW team: Prof Caren Levy, Dr Alexandre Apsan Frediani and Dr Camila Cociña. More information at <https://www.urban-know.com>.

writing up the chapters, they have collaborated with, and coordinated the work of, a constellation of actors who have contributed to building the central arguments of the chapters.

These contributions constitute a key element of the Report, as they not only provide information about grounded experiences, but also key insights that help shape future pathways towards equality. Each chapter includes contributions from four different kinds of sources:

- the **UCLG Network**, with contributions from 17 teams, committees, fora, communities of practice and partner networks and the direct participation of its members. These draw on grounded experiences from local and regional governments that ensure a good balance of different geographies and territories;
- **civil society networks**, which draw on the experiences of the members of mainly six global coalitions: Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), CoHabitat Network, Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C), Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO);
- **KNOW partners**, from 12 research institutions, which draw on the collective experiences and lessons learned from their activities in cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America; and
- other **academics and researchers** working on issues relevant to the Report, from several different universities and research institutions.

Over the last two years, GOLD VI organized several collective workshops, which were held online due to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and various feedback and exchange sessions. They allowed the collective crafting of key messages, topics and cases, in which each set of participants contributed to the final product that you are now reading. The virtual workshops were spaces for discussing and exchanging views, validating key messages, and agreeing the content and focus of the 66 case-based contributions (CBCs) and 22 thematic or issue-based contributions (IBCs) which were produced for inclusion in GOLD VI. The chapters of this Report draw directly on the wealth of knowledge and experience included in these contributions. Being aware that some of these contributions could be of interest to the general public, UCLG and KNOW launched a *GOLD VI Working Paper Series* that enables access to these IBCs in their full versions, and



Source: Jack Prommel, Unsplash.  
La Paz, Bolivia.

a *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository* where the CBCs are also available.<sup>15</sup> Through this process, we hope that the legacy of GOLD VI will transcend the content of this Report. This legacy will also lie in strengthening relationships between organizations that act locally and which have generated knowledge and responses to urban and territorial equality in different territories.

<sup>15</sup> To review the full content of the *GOLD VI Working Papers Series* and the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*, visit <https://gold.uclg.org/reports/gold-vi>.

**Figure 1.2**  
**Organization of the GOLD VI process**

### GOLD VI Steering Committee



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 Caren Levy [KNOW-DPU]  
 Anna Calvete Moreno [UCLG GOLD]  
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**STATE OF INEQUALITIES**

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### UCLG NETWORK, ITS MEMBERSHIP AND PARTNERS

Commission on Local Economic Development	Metropolis
Committee on Culture	UCLG Accessibility
Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights	UCLG Digital Cities
Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV)	UCLG Ecological Transition
Global Social Economy Forum	UCLG Learning
Intermediary Cities	UCLG Migration
International Association of Educating Cities	UCLG Peripheral Cities
International Observatory on Participatory Democracy	UCLG Regions
	UCLG Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD)
	UCLG Women

### CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	UrbaMonde, Co-Habitat network
CoHabitat Network	Cultural Occupation's Bloc - Culture Movement of the Peripheries
Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	World Enabled
Habitat International Coalition (HIC)	CISCSA Ciudades Feministas
Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI)	Asiye eTafuleni
Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)	

### KNOW PARTNERS

ACHR, Thailand	Makerere University, Uganda
Ardhi University, Tanzania	PUCP, Peru
Centre for Community Initiatives, Tanzania	Sierra Leone Urban Research Center (SLURC)
CUJAE, Cuba	The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU), UCL
Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), India	The University of Melbourne
Institute of Global Prosperity (IGP), UCL	The University of Sheffield

### OTHER ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)
PEAK Urban	Da Nang Architecture University
Universidad Central de Venezuela	
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	
University of Greenwich	
Raoul Wallenberg Institute	



# 5 How to read this Report

The GOLD VI Report provides action-oriented reflections. It explores the conditions and instruments that can be used for the cocreation of pathways to equality. Seeking to avoid the reproduction of sectoral and siloed approaches to equality, the chapters are structured to capture different sets of strategies that LRGs and local partners are adopting to tackle inequalities. **The titles of the chapters refer to verbs or actions that LRGs are taking in this direction: pathways to address different, but interconnected, agendas.** Table 1.1 shows the diversity of themes that can be found in each chapter.

*Chapter 2* gives an overview of the current **State of inequalities**, including a discussion about trends regarding inequality and the challenges they pose to LRGs.

*Chapter 3* focuses on **Governance and pathways to urban and territorial equality** and explains why equality should be framed as a question of governance. It also focuses on the importance of understanding local government institutional frameworks, decentralization, and multilevel governance structures, and proposes a rights-based approach as the basis for governance to promote equality. This chapter also explains the notion of pathways and institutional capabilities and their value as practical approaches that enable LRGs to tackle inequalities.

The subsequent chapters are organized around six pathways:

- *Chapter 4* focuses on the **Commoning pathway**. This relates to the governance, planning and provision of access to housing, land and basic services, and to ways in which LRGs can promote approaches that focus on collective action and promote greater urban equality.
- *Chapter 5* centres on the **Caring pathway**. This refers to the multiple actions that can be used to promote the provision of care to different groups within society. This can be achieved through providing safety nets and building solidarity bonds. It also examines the ways in which LRGs can promote caring practices through social policies, in fields such as education and health, which provide support both to those in need of it and to those who have historically “taken care” of others.
- *Chapter 6* discusses the **Connecting pathway**. These pathways include multiple interventions and programmes that increase linkages both between and within cities and among their citizens. The chapter also examines the role of LRGs in the governance and planning of more equitable transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity.
- *Chapter 7* presents the **Renaturing pathway**. This refers to the governance and planning of a renewed

and more sustainable relationship between natural and urban systems. It places specific emphasis on decoupling economic development from resource use and promoting more just ecological transitions to net zero carbon systems, risk reduction and urban resilience.

- *Chapter 8* discusses the **Prospering pathway**. This chapter focuses on such issues as: livelihoods, decent work and worker skills, enterprise development and resilience, and the spatial concentration of productive activities. It looks at the role of LRGs in the governance and expansion of productive, income-generating activities carried out in the urban space and recognizes the formal and informal systems that contribute to urban and territorial equality.
- Finally, *Chapter 9* discusses the **Democratizing pathway**. It focuses on the challenges and opportunities facing LRGs as they seek to implement meaningful participatory processes, to democratize decision-making and to unpack the asymmetries of power. In doing so, it also looks at the underpinning trends that affect processes of democratization.

Finally, *Chapter 10* presents the **Conclusions and final recommendations** of GOLD VI and its quest to promote urban and territorial equality. It discusses the cross-cutting challenges related to upscaling the different pathways, and the importance of establishing partnerships and financial mechanisms that draw on collaboration between different levels of government, including the national, regional and local levels. The conclusions propose that LRGs should consider five key principles in their quest for equality:

- a rights-based approach, undertaken from an intersectional perspective;
- the recognition of the spatial dimension of inequalities;
- a new culture of subnational governance for deepening democracy;
- adequate fiscal and investment architecture; and
- practical and transformational engagement with the past, present and future.

These principles, and their interactions within the different pathways discussed in GOLD VI, provide the framework for the political recommendations that close the Report.

Each of the chapters of GOLD VI presents a combination of debates, reflections and concrete experiences that examine how different spheres of governance can help promote greater equality. Central to these efforts are



Source: Programa de Mejoramiento Integral de Barrios, Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Rural, Alcaldía de Bello, Colombia.

the conjunction of LRGs with other actors, including civil society, which have worked together to plan pathways that can advance equality. The boxes in each chapter provide concrete examples, definitions of concepts, and key information about financial mechanisms related to these pathways. These boxes, alongside the [GOLD VI Working Papers Series](#) and [Pathways to Equality Cases Repository](#), provide further information which is complementary to the Report content.

GOLD VI is a collective attempt to define the role of LRGs within the global challenge of addressing inequalities and recognizes the commitment of UCLG to the cause of promoting greater equality. It also highlights the potential offered by interconnected local transformation strategies, and the opportunities that they bring for building pathways to change at different scales. Global sustainability agendas need the full commitment of LRGs if they are to be delivered. As the different chapters of this Report outline, a focus on equality calls for a rethinking of urban and territorial governance, both in terms of its vision and its procedures. At a time at which the challenges associated with ongoing global and local crises are likely to grow and intensify in their complexity, the principles of equality and human rights offer guiding values for the action of institutions and actors at different scales. LRGs, working in tandem with other levels of government and with civil society, have both the opportunity and ethical responsibility to become active and leading voices in this endeavour.



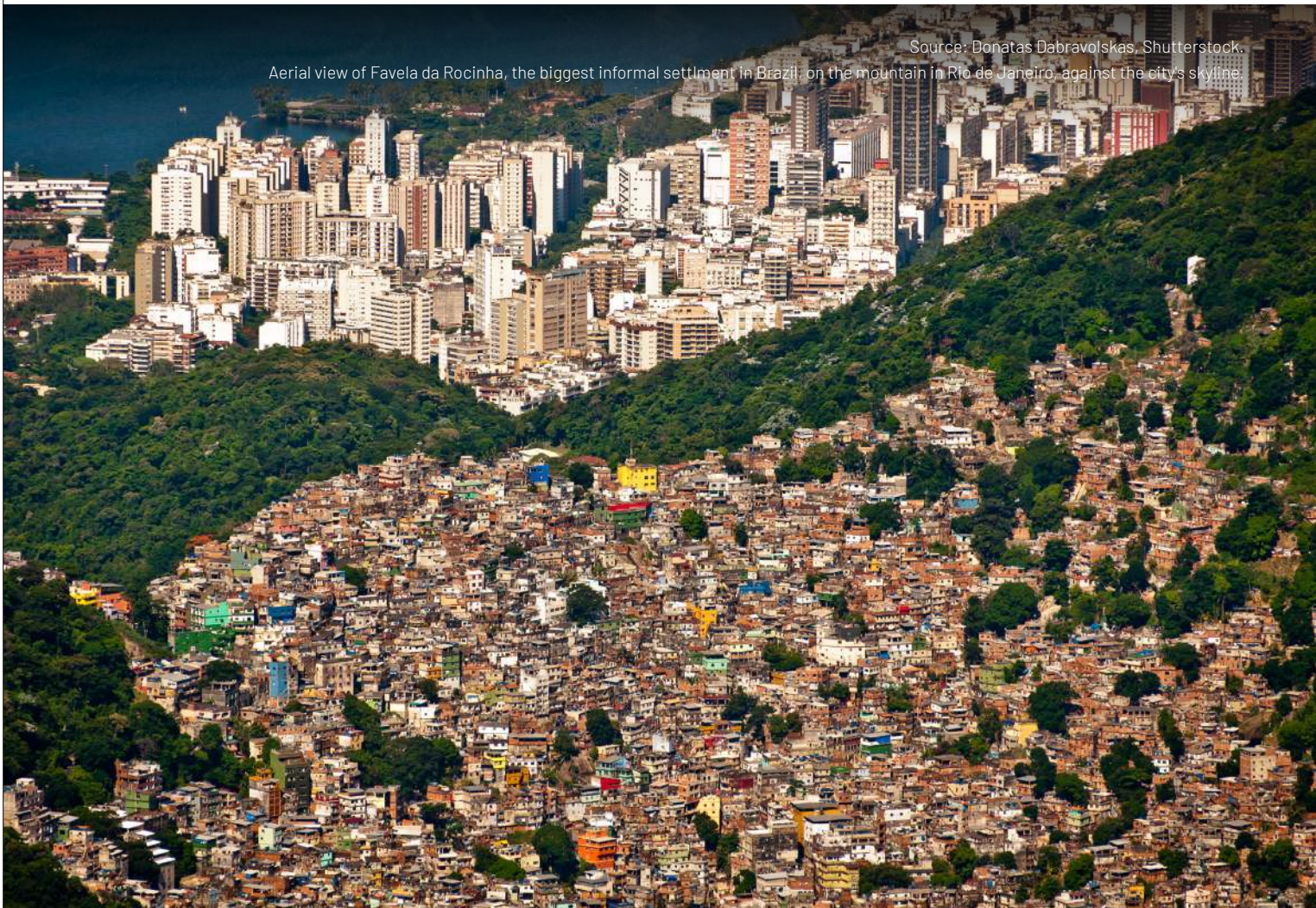
**Table 1.1****How to read this Report: The sectorial agendas discussed in the different chapters**

<b>Sectors/themes</b>	<b>Pathway chapters</b>
Housing and land	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Caring</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>   <b>Prospering</b>
Infrastructure	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Connecting</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>
Health	<b>Caring</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>
Education	<b>Caring</b>   <b>Prospering</b>
Service delivery	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Caring</b>   <b>Connecting</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Transport and mobility	<b>Connecting</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>
Discrimination and inclusion	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Caring</b>   <b>Connecting</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>   <b>Prospering</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Culture	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Migration	<b>Caring</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Food security	<b>Caring</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>   <b>Prospering</b>
Urban economy	<b>Connecting</b>   <b>Prospering</b>
Income generation, decent work and livelihoods	<b>Renaturing</b>   <b>Prospering</b>
Participation and democracy	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Data collection and management	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Connecting</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Public spaces	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Caring</b>   <b>Connecting</b>
Urban and territorial finance	<b>Commoning</b>   <b>Caring</b>   <b>Connecting</b>   <b>Renaturing</b>   <b>Prospering</b>   <b>Democratizing</b>
Source: authors	

# 02 ↓ State of inequalities

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 2. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).

Source: Donatas Dabravolskas, Shutterstock.  
Aerial view of Favela da Rocinha, the biggest informal settlement in Brazil, on the mountain in Rio de Janeiro, against the city's skyline.



# Abstract

The world has experienced incredible transformations in the decades straddling the new millennium. Although these include the reduction of extreme poverty, concerns remain that progress has not been evenly distributed and that inequalities are increasing. Recent shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have made this problem worse. This chapter provides an overview of the state of inequalities in cities and regions, contextualizing other chapters in the GOLD VI Report.

Growing concern over the state of global inequalities led the UN Member States to specifically agree to reducing inequalities as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One explicit goal, to “reduce inequality within and among countries”, was incorporated as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10. The 2030 Agenda also makes a pledge to “leave no one behind” which, in practice, implies reducing inequalities between different social groups. These agreements have been ratified by the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Through its emphasis on *localization*, the 2030 Agenda advocates an inclusive and localized approach to development.

The relationships between urbanization and inequalities are not straightforward. While generalizing is difficult, the overall pattern is that cities tend to be more prosperous and unequal, while at the same time concentrate a large share of national poverty. Urban inequalities manifest themselves differently in each city and world region. Income inequalities are (re)produced through interactions between global and local processes, shaped by local socio-cultural identities, institutional differences at the national level, and local social and economic histories.

The picture is far from homogenous, as countries, territories and cities across the world have notably different levels of inequalities. While income inequality between countries has been closing, inequalities within countries have been on the rise since the 1980s. Some metropolitan cities and territories have also disproportionately benefited from globalization, which has led to

an increase in territorial inequalities in some countries. The financialization of urban infrastructure and ghettoization of parts of some cities are good examples of how circulatory flows of capital are boosting certain urban inequalities.

Today, there is wide consensus that well-being, poverty and inequalities are multidimensional in nature. The dynamics behind inequalities in those non-monetary dimensions have their own specificities which, in turn, call for different policy responses at the national and local levels. This chapter provides an overview of inequalities within a set of SDG dimensions that are most relevant to the local context. These include: (a) basic infrastructure and services; (b) spatial planning, land management and housing; (c) education, health and social services; (d) transport, mobility and public space; and (e) employment and decent work.

Inequalities compound and exacerbate one another, especially for those belonging to more than one marginalized group; this often intensifies the severity of their impacts and how they are experienced. Intersecting inequalities are relational, and it is essential to understand the power structures that reproduce them. The pledge to leave no one behind, made in the 2030 Agenda, calls for societies to reduce inequalities in outcomes across different dichotomies and social groups.





Source: AsiaTravel, Shutterstock  
Inequalities in exposure to flooding risks between Jakarta's poorer and richer households, Indonesia



**The richest 10% of the global population** earns **52%** of global income<sup>a</sup>

**The poorest 50% of the global population** earns **8%** of global income<sup>a</sup>

Whereas

**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- 100m people** have fallen into extreme poverty. This number is projected to remain well above pre-pandemic levels, especially in Africa and Latin America.<sup>b</sup>
- 150m people** have insufficient food consumption.<sup>c</sup>
- in 2019** 690m people
- in early 2022** 840m people

**Gender inequalities** remain considerable at the global level, and progress within countries is too slow. **The share of total labour income by gender is:**<sup>d</sup>

31% ♀	69% ♂	1990
35% ♀	65% ♂	2015-2020

Globalization has come at the expense of increased territorial inequalities. The absolute gap between the mean per capita income of high- and low-income countries increased from:<sup>e</sup>

**27,600 USD** in 1990

**42,800 USD** in 2018

While the top 1%'s share of income was close to 10% in Western Europe and the USA in 1980, it has since risen to 12% and 20%, respectively, in 2016. Globally, income inequalities are on the rise, with inequalities within countries now even greater than inequalities between countries.<sup>f</sup>

**Income inequalities range<sup>g</sup>**

100 (more unequal)

0 (less unequal)

**Gini coefficient**

South Africa   63	Brazil   53.4
Namibia   59.1	Colombia   51.3
Zambia   57.1	Chile   44.4
In high-income countries, such as the USA   41.4	
Denmark   28.2	
Norway   27.6	
Finland   27.3	
Czech Republic & Slovakia   25	
Slovenia   24.6	
Japan   32.9	
Pakistan & Bangladesh   31.6	
Republic of Korea   31.4	

**The % of total income share held by the richest 1%:**

1980	10%
2016	12%
2016	20%

**Global inequalities have significantly increased during the past years**

**Countries experience inequalities differently**



# State of inequalities

**Cities and the urban population are growing fast, creating complex inequality challenges**

**55%** (4.2bn people) of the world's population lived in cities in 2018.<sup>h</sup>

**68%** (6.7bn people) of the world's population is expected to live in cities by 2050.<sup>h</sup>

**90%** of this new urban population is expected to live in Asia and Africa.<sup>h</sup>

**Gini indexes at the city level**

- 50** Cities with Gini indexes of 50 and above have been identified in cities in **Southern Africa, Latin America** and **North America**.<sup>i</sup>
- 40** **Asian cities** appear to be less unequal, with Gini indexes below 40, as do **European cities**, with values normally below 40 (except London, which is above 50).<sup>i</sup>
- Typically, the **greatest inequalities** are found in the **largest cities**.<sup>i</sup>

**Growing inequalities**

Inequalities do not manifest themselves in the same way everywhere. Oftentimes, they result from political choices, in which LRGs have a strategic role. Although there is a correlation between growing urbanization and growing inequalities within cities, causation between the two has not yet been determined.<sup>j</sup>

**Brazil, from 55.6 to 51.9:**

Between 2006 and 2016, urban inequalities in Brazil (Gini index) fell but increased again after a change in national policies. In 2021:<sup>j</sup>

**The poorest 50%** of the population earned **27 TIMES LESS** than the richest 10% of the population.

## Chapter Curator

José Manuel Roche

(Independent consultant)

### Contributors

This chapter has been produced based on the following valuable contributions, which are available as part of the *GOLD VI Working Paper Series* and the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*:

#### **The Urban Dimensions of Inequality and Equality**

Christopher Yap  
Camila Cociña  
Caren Levy  
(The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London)

#### **The State of Inequalities in Sub-Saharan African and Asian Cities**

Wilbard J. Kombe  
Neethi P.  
Keerthana Jagadeesh  
Athira Raj  
(Ardhi University and IIHS Bangalore)

#### **The Differential Economic Geography of Regional and Urban Growth and Prosperity in Industrialised Countries**

Philip McCann  
(Sheffield University Management School)





03 ↓

# Governance and pathways to urban and territorial equality



# 1 Introduction: Urban and territorial equality as a question of governance

Local and regional governments (LRGs) are responsible for the management of their cities and regions and must adopt a collective vision to ensure the well-being of the communities to which they are accountable. When they are adequately resourced and empowered, LRGs can play a critical role in the development of policies, planning, programmes and projects aimed at addressing a range of socio-economic, environmental and spatial problems in their territories. **If their vision is based on the notion of “urban and territorial equality”, this will have important implications for their lines of action. This implies considering how the methods and tools available to them can be mobilized in order to promote change within their respective systems of governance, and also to transform the very structures that initially give rise to inequalities.** This entails supporting and galvanizing the efforts of multiple stakeholders towards collective goals, as part of medium- and longer-term strategies.

As underlined in the introduction of this Report, the purpose of GOLD VI is to explore different pathways that LRGs can follow in order to shape and advance an agenda that promotes equality. To do so, it understands these pathways as trajectories for change that will enable LRGs to tackle existing challenges at the multiple scales of governance. In this chapter, the

ideas of governance and pathways will be discussed and framed with the understanding that, for LRGs, addressing multiple inequalities and their urban and territorial manifestations requires at its heart dealing with governance issues.

LRGs are at the forefront of urban and territorial affairs: they lead innovation and must manage the multiple interlinkages between access to public services, social inclusion, economic development and environmental protection that can promote social change. According to the latest available global data, on average, LRGs are responsible for 24.1% of general government public spending, 25.7% of general government public revenue, and 36.6% of general government public investment.<sup>1</sup> At the international scale, LRGs are coming together and joining forces to promote social change in such diverse fields as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), environmental action, the adoption of a human rights-based approach, housing,

<sup>1</sup> More precisely, in federal countries, subnational governments (SNGs) account for 46.9% of public spending or 16.8% of gross domestic product (GDP). In unitary countries, SNG expenditure corresponds to 6.9% of GDP and 19.4% of public expenditure. OECD and UCLG, “2019 Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment – Key Findings,” SNG-WOFI (Paris, 2019), <https://bit.ly/3prmV8X>.

**Box 3.1****Multilevel governance**

Multilevel governance is a decision-making system based on coordination mechanisms that allow the allocation of governmental competences and responsibilities both vertically and horizontally, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, and that respect local autonomy. These coordination mechanisms include those that help to build trust and structured dialogue. These, together with coherent legal frameworks and regulations, are key to preventing overlaps, gaps and the inefficient use of resources. Establishing clearly defined and reliable financing mechanisms is also critical to creating an effective multilevel system of governance. Multilevel governance should recognize that there is no optimal level of decentralization and that implementation and competences are strongly context-specific. It is important to understand that it is not possible to achieve a complete separation between responsibilities and outcomes in policymaking and that the different levels of government are interdependent. Multilevel governance requires all levels of government to share information and closely collaborate. This is essential so every level can manage horizontal relations with its respective stakeholders in public and accountable ways.

Sources: UCLG, "The Localization of the Global Agendas: How Local Action is Transforming Territories and Communities"; UN-Habitat, "Urban Governance, Capacity and Institutional Development".<sup>5</sup>

transport and migration. The annual report of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments to the United Nations (UN) High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), *Towards the localization of the SDGs*, shows the progress that has been made by LRGs in the localization of the SDGs on every continent.<sup>2</sup> As of 2022, the Global Covenant of Mayors has brought together over 11,700 cities from 142 countries, on all the continents, and has committed to reducing CO2 emissions by 24 billion tons by 2030. More than 65 regions and 1,040 cities have signed the UN's *Race to Zero* campaign. Over 40 LRGs presented the *Municipalist Declaration of Cities for Adequate Housing* to the 2018 HLPF, in which they committed to promoting new housing strategies in order to overcome the obstacles to delivering the right to adequate housing. Over 150 mayors and city leaders have already signed the 2018 *Marrakech Mayors Declaration "Cities Working Together for Migrants and Refugees"*, which states that cities on every continent are at the forefront of managing the

impact of migration and of promoting more inclusive, safe and sustainable societies.<sup>3</sup>

This position on the frontline of facing up to territorial challenges implies that LRGs have a unique responsibility in promoting equality. We know, however, that this position is also loaded with difficulties. Inequalities that are often produced elsewhere, or beyond the LRG scale, are often manifested, made visible and experienced in cities and their surrounding territories. **While local action may ameliorate these problems, the scale of effective intervention to deal with inequalities sometimes goes beyond the sphere of action of LRGs.<sup>4</sup> In other words, if inequalities are to be reduced, action by subnational levels of government needs to take place within a significantly broader policy context.** It is, therefore, only through appropriate multilevel governance structures, which recognize the driving forces that generate inequalities at multiple scales, that LRGs can advance their agenda for equality (see Box 3.1 for the definition of multilevel governance).

2 GTF and UCLG, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs. Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Driven by Cities and Territories" (Barcelona, 2021), <https://bit.ly/3lWaTfE>.

3 Global Forum on Migration and Development, "Mayors Mechanism" (Geneva, 2021), <https://bit.ly/3jzrahP>.

4 Fran Tonkiss, "City Government and Urban Inequalities," *City 24*, no. 1-2 (2020): 286-301.

20 UCLG, "The Localization of the Global Agendas: How Local Action Is Transforming Territories and Communities" (Barcelona, 2019), <https://bit.ly/36aFdGj>; UN-Habitat, "Urban Governance, Capacity and Institutional Development" (Nairobi, 2017), <https://bit.ly/38iM7dj>.



Inadequate governance structures, inappropriate policies and plans, and institutional vicious cycles can reinforce existing unequal dynamics. They have impacts in phenomena such as rapid and unbalanced urban growth, territorial polarization and urban segregation, lacking or inappropriate financing, unequal access to services, the urban-rural divide, exposure to risks, and/or limited civic participation. GOLD VI proposes that these dynamics can be disrupted by mechanisms that challenge these cycles and that alternative pathways for action should be created at the local level. The different pathways discussed in this Report – **Commoning**, **Caring**, **Connecting**, **Renaturing**, **Prospering** and **Democratizing** – examine how LRGs, working in collaboration with civil society and multiple stakeholders, can promote policies, programmes and financial mechanisms that **expand transformative change at scale**.

**This requires a collective vision of governance that puts questions of urban and territorial equality, viewed from a rights-based perspective, at the very centre.** This involves applying principles that promote

equality to both the process and the outcomes of collective action. It implies: (a) promoting more equitable distribution, (b) the reciprocal recognition of identities and demands, (c) solidarity and mutual care, and (d) parity political participation. These dimensions need to be fully considered in future governance systems and operations. It is also important to reinforce virtuous cycles within management processes and to orientate outcomes towards coconstructing pathways that promote urban and territorial equality.

To explore the transformative tools that can be used to promote an agenda for urban and territorial equality, this chapter has been organized into four sections. The next section defines and discusses governance structures and examines decentralization and the challenges that it presents. Section 3 explores the concept of pathways, which are a central notion in the structure of GOLD VI. Section 4 argues that, for LRGs to advance pathways to equality, it is necessary to reframe the existing notions of governance, particularly in relation to promoting human rights.



Source: Christian Lue, Unsplash. Stuttgart, Germany.

# 2 Understanding governance: Structures, decentralization and challenges

## 2.1 Governance and decentralization

Governance can be broadly defined as the ways in which social actors wield power to influence and enact decisions and policies concerning public life, and the leadership and guidance that they provide for economic, social and environmental development. Local and regional governance systems are composed of institutions and their respective interactions, which may be formal or informal. These are governed by political and procedural mechanisms, which may be regulatory or relate to their management, and which serve as the basis for responding to, and steering, local and regional development. *Governance* is therefore a broader notion than *government*; it relates to interactions between social agents and formal and informal organizations, and to making decisions and defining the most appropriate actions required for achieving common goals. **Debates**

**concerning subnational governance have tended to relate to a number of different operating principles.** For example, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) defines effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness as the key principles for effective governance, alongside a series of subprinciples that include: collaboration, transparency, non-discrimination and participation.<sup>6</sup> The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) similarly proposes four key “operating principles” for sound public governance: (a) whole-of-government coordination; (b) evidence-based policy making; (c) public-sector workforce competencies and capacities; and (d) citizen-centred openness, transparency and accountability.<sup>7</sup> The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) community has embraced and applied most of these principles, with previous GOLD Reports having placed particular attention on the principles of subsidiarity, localization and accountability – which are defined in Box 3.2.

<sup>6</sup> UNDESA, “What Makes Effective Governance?,” 2019, <https://bit.ly/3wPDkcM>.

<sup>7</sup> OECD, “Toward a Recommendation of the Council on Principles of Sound Public Governance. 54th Session of the Public Governance Committee” (Paris, 2016), <https://bit.ly/3NwfhWh>.



**Box 3.2****Some of the key principles for governance promoted by GOLD**

**Subsidiarity** is the principle according to which public responsibilities should be exercised by the elected authorities which are closest to citizens. Central authorities should have a more subsidiary function, performing only those tasks and responsibilities which cannot be carried out at a more local level. Subsidiarity requires LRGs to have adequate financial, managerial, technical and professional resources to allow them to assume their responsibility in order to meet local needs. This includes carrying out a significant share of public expenditure. LRGs should be granted the authority and power to raise local resources in line with the principle that authority should be commensurate with responsibility as well as with the availability of resources. The principle of subsidiarity is the rationale that underlies the process of decentralization.

Source: UCLG, "The Localization of the Global Agendas: How Local Action is Transforming Territories and Communities".<sup>8</sup>

**Localization** is described as the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and subnational sustainable development goals and targets. More specifically, it takes into account subnational contexts when working towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. This responsibility ranges from the setting of goals and targets to determining the means of implementation, as well as using indicators to measure and monitor progress. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the LRG movement for the localization of the SDGs has been progressively expanded to all parts of the world, albeit at different paces within and between certain regions. The progress made has been most noticeable in Northern and Western European countries. In North America, an increasing number of pioneering, high-profile cities and states have also demonstrated their commitment to this cause. In Africa and Latin America, significant efforts have been made in different countries towards the development of local plans and strategies aligned with the SDGs. In the Asia-Pacific region, LRGs are advancing in the alignment of their policies and plans with the SDGs. Meanwhile, progress in Eurasian, Middle Eastern and West Asian countries remains incipient (with the notable exception of Turkey, and with a recent acceleration in the Russian Federation). An increasing number of front-running LRGs have elaborated Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to monitor SDG implementation but also to enhance multilevel dialogue. The role of local and regional government associations (LGAs) is also key to promoting localization. It is worth highlighting that, since 2020, LGAs have been promoting Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) in an increasing number of countries around the world. These political processes have led to the increased involvement of LRGs in SDG coordination mechanisms and national reporting units.

Sources: GTF and UCLG, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs"; UN-Habitat, "World Cities Report 2020. The Value of Sustainable Urbanization"; UN-Habitat and UCLG, "Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 1: A Comparative Analysis of Existing VLRs"; UN-Habitat and UCLG, "Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 2: Towards a New Generation of VLRs: Exploring the Local-National Link"; UCLG, "Guidelines for Voluntary Subnational Reviews"; GTF, UNDP and UN-Habitat, "Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level".<sup>9</sup>

**Accountability** is central to the democratic agenda of the municipalist movement, as "promoting transparency and open government with participatory policies is a priority for local and regional governments".<sup>10</sup> This led UCLG to create a *Community of Practices on Transparency and Accountability* in 2018. Accountability is "the means by which individuals

<sup>8</sup> UCLG, "The Localization of the Global Agendas: How Local Action Is Transforming Territories and Communities."

<sup>9</sup> GTF and UCLG, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs. Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Driven by Cities and Territories"; UN-Habitat, "World Cities Report 2020. The Value of Sustainable Urbanization" (Nairobi, 2020); UCLG and UN-Habitat, *Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 1: A Comparative Analysis of Existing VLRs* (Barcelona: UN-Habitat and UCLG, 2020); UCLG and UN-Habitat, *Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 2: Towards a New Generation of VLRs: Exploring the Local-National Link* (Barcelona: UN-Habitat and UCLG, 2021); UCLG, "Guidelines for Voluntary Subnational Reviews" (Barcelona: UCLG, 2021); UN-Habitat, UNDP, and GTF, *Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level*, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> UCLG, "A Joint Agenda for the Community of Practice on Transparency and Accountability for 2018," 2018, <https://bit.ly/3uE9aGM>.

and organizations report to a recognized authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions”.<sup>11</sup> Vertical accountability refers to “the direct relationship between citizens and their representatives holding public office. Besides periodical elections, vertical accountability is also a function of political parties, public opinion, media and civil society engagement. There are horizontal accountability relations – between the executive, the legislature, the courts, and special agencies of restraint – through which different state institutions hold each other to account *on behalf of the people*”.<sup>12</sup>

Source: UNDP Capacity Development Group, *Mutual Accountability Mechanisms: Accountability, Voice and Responsiveness*.<sup>13</sup>

According to the analysis of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Spending (SNG-WOFI), as of 2022, there were over 637,900 LRGs in the world. This number included all the LRGs which complied the definition of being a “decentralised entity elected through universal suffrage and having general responsibilities and some autonomy with respect to budget, staff and assets”.<sup>14</sup> Globally, LRGs encompass 624,166 municipal entities, 11,965 intermediate governments, and 1,769 state and regional governments. Looking at different regions, Asia-Pacific has the largest number of LRGs, with 426,611, followed by Europe, Eurasia, North America, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East and West Asia. **These figures show the tremendous heterogeneity that exists within LRGs. This includes differences in the scales of subnational government and in population size, devolved responsibilities, and the availability of resources, amongst other key factors.** There are also noticeable differences in the roles and functions that LRGs perform in federal and unitary countries.

This diversity in LRGs arises from a trend towards decentralization that has spread across the different regions of the world in the last four decades. Particularly since the 1990s, almost all regions of the world have expanded their local self-government authorities, through processes that have involved different degrees of deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Decentralization processes combine administrative, fiscal, and political elements. As underlined in Box 3.3,

these three dimensions must work together and this cooperation needs to be appropriately balanced. Such coordination and balance pose important challenges, as these elements are primarily controlled and influenced by national governments and by actors operating at different scales. Even if the required legal frameworks and mechanisms are put into place, there may still be a degree of disjunction in practice. There may, for example, be a good fiscal structure, but weak administrative and/or political mechanisms that undermine the accountable use of well-designed fiscal provisions. At the same time, dichotomies between ministries and local governments can result in incomplete, or inconsistent, intergovernmental policies that compromise effective decentralization and lead to fragmented, or incomplete, policy implementation. As Figure 3.1 shows, when examining processes of decentralization, assessing intergovernmental functions in relation to administrative, fiscal, and political elements implies a series of different challenges for each of them and their interconnections, at each scale of governance.

11 Michael Edwards and David Hulme, “Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations,” *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 961–73.

12 Siri Gloppen, Lise Rakner, and Arne Tostensen, “Responsiveness to the Concerns of the Poor and Accountability to the Commitments to Poverty Reduction,” CMI Working Paper (Bergen, 2003), <https://bit.ly/30s2Jj1>.

13 UNDP Capacity Development Group, *Mutual Accountability Mechanisms: Accountability, Voice and Responsiveness* (New York: UNDP, 2006).

14 It therefore excludes deconcentrated districts or agencies of central/federal/state government established for administrative, statistical or electoral purposes; special purpose entities (i.e. school boards, transport districts, water boards, intermunicipal cooperation groupings, etc.); submunicipal localities, and also communities located on first nation lands but not incorporated into their national territorial organizations.



**Box 3.3****Decentralization**

**Decentralization** refers to the existence of self-governing local authorities, which are distinct from the state's administrative authorities, to which the legal framework has allocated powers, resources and the capacity to exercise a degree of self-government with which to meet their allocated responsibilities. The legitimacy of their authority to make decisions is underpinned by representative, elected, local democratic structures that make local authorities accountable to citizens in their respective jurisdictions. The three dimensions of decentralization involve the distribution of powers, responsibilities and resources. Thus, **political** decentralization sets the legal basis for the devolution of power; **administrative** decentralization reorganizes the assignment of tasks between different levels of government; and **fiscal** decentralization delegates responsibilities related to taxation and expenditure, with the degree of decentralization depending on both the quantity of resources delegated and the autonomy required to manage them. These three dimensions of decentralization are interdependent. For a decentralization process to be successful, the linkages between these three dimensions must therefore be carefully considered and guaranteed. There should be no fiscal decentralization without political and administrative decentralization, while reforms that favour political and administrative decentralization are meaningless if not accompanied by fiscal decentralization.

Source: UCLG, "The Localization of the Global Agendas"; OECD and UCLG, "2019 Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment – Key findings".<sup>15</sup>



Source: Marco Oriolesi, Unsplash.  
Metropolitan City of Rome, Italy.

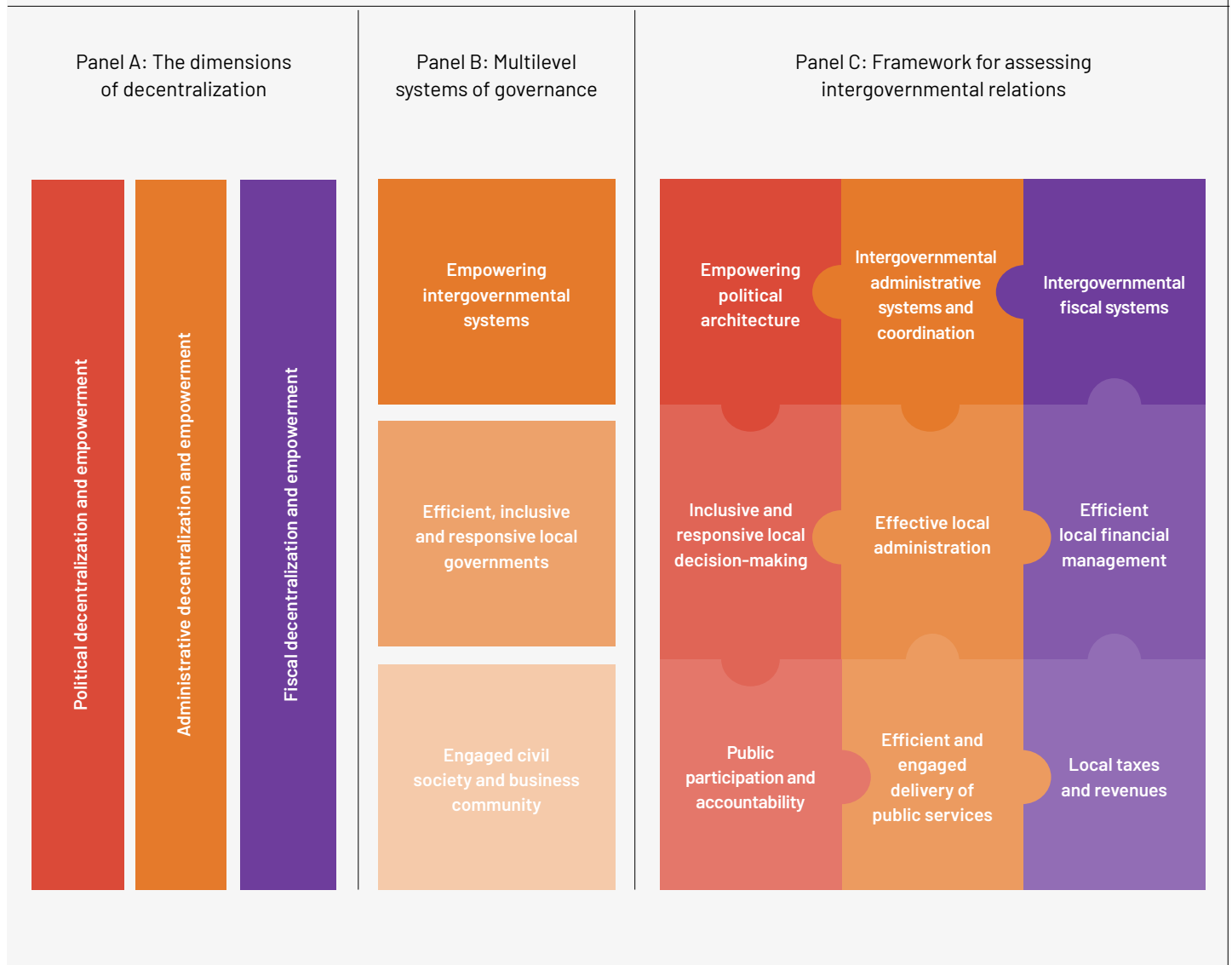
<sup>15</sup> UCLG, "The Localization of the Global Agendas: How Local Action Is Transforming Territories and Communities"; OECD and UCLG, "2019 Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment – Key Findings."

Decentralization processes have occurred at different paces and through different mechanisms, reflecting regional specificities and different historical contexts and experiences. They are often led by internal processes of territorial reorganization, but may sometimes be shaped by external pressures. As a result, the

growth of decentralization in different regions has not been linear and differences in decentralization patterns in different countries have produced diverse outcomes. Across regions, LRGs have different relative weights in terms of the size of their public expenditure, revenue and investment. This has been summarized in Table 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**

**A framework for assessing intergovernmental relations and the local public sector**



Source: Paul Smoke, based on World Bank, "Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007"; Boex and Yilmaz, "An Analytical Framework for Assessing Decentralized Local Governance and the Local Public Sector"; Boex et al., "Urban Service Delivery Assessment Framework".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> World Bank - Independent Evaluation Group, "Decentralization in Client Countries : An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007" (Washington, DC, 2008), <https://bit.ly/37CL5sl>; Jamie Boex and Serdar Yilmaz, "An Analytical Framework for Assessing Decentralized Local Governance and the Local Public Sector," IDG Working Paper, 2010; Jamie Boex et al., "Urban Service Delivery Assessment Framework" (Washington, DC, 2014).

## 2.2 Responsibilities and functions across different government levels

The different shares of responsibilities between different levels of government are largely reflected in their distribution of resources, and therefore also in their expenditure. An analysis of subnational expenditure by government function shows that, globally speaking, education, social protection, general public services and health are the main areas of subnational govern-

ment spending, followed by economic affairs, transport, housing and community amenities. Differences between federal and unitary countries are significant, with subnational expenditure corresponding to 4.2% of gross domestic product (GDP), and 20.8% of overall government expenditure, in federal countries, but only 1.2% and 18.1%, respectively, in unitary states.

Diverse processes of decentralization have also translated into a variety of different territorial organizations and governance structures. According to an analysis by the SNG-WOFI, involving 122 countries, 30% of them have only one subnational level of government (i.e. municipal), 48% have two (municipal and regional), and 22% have an intermediary level of government between the municipal and regional tiers. In federal states, state governments (also called "provinces", "Länder", "regions", etc.) usually have wide-ranging responsibilities and their local government responsibilities are defined by state constitutions and laws. In unitary countries, it is general practice for national laws to define the allocation of responsibilities, sometimes referring to the principle of subsidiarity. Figure 3.2 summarizes the range and scope of responsibilities at different subnational government levels.

**Table 3.1**

### Average percentage of LRGs' public expenditure, revenue and public investment in 2022, broken down by world region

Region	LRGs average % of public expenditure	LRGs average % of revenue	LRGs average % of public investment
Africa	15%	17%	15.5%
Asia-Pacific	33%	34.6%	37%
Europe and North America	25.7%	26.4%	39.3%
Eurasia	27.4%	30.6%	41.9%
Latin America	19.3%	22.7%	39.5%
Middle East and West Asia	9.6%	8.6%	18.2%
World	24.1%	25.7%	36.6%

Source: SNG-WOFI, "SNG-WOFI Database".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> SNG-WOFI, "SNG-WOFI Database," 2022, <https://bit.ly/3vBMk0y>.



However, **beyond these apparently neat distinctions between levels, the reality of territorial organization and governance is often much more complex.** In federal systems, for example, although intermediate levels of government tend to dominate, there are variations in the relationships between state/province

and local governments, which range from subordination to having the same constitutional recognition. In some countries, deconcentrated administrations that represent the national government coexist with elected autonomous self-governing structures (e.g. in Turkey, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and the regional

**Figure 3.2**

### General scheme of the distribution of responsibilities across subnational government levels

<b>MUNICIPAL LEVEL</b>	<b>INTERMEDIARY LEVEL</b>	<b>REGIONAL LEVEL</b>
(e.g. municipalities, districts, parishes, etc.)	(e.g. departments, counties, provinces in non-federal countries)	(e.g. federated states, regions, provinces, counties, etc.)
<p>A WIDE RANGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General clause of competence</li> <li>• Eventually, additional allocations by the law</li> </ul> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education (nursery schools, pre-elementary and primary education)</li> <li>• Urban planning and management</li> <li>• Local utility networks (water, sewerage, waste, hygiene, etc.)</li> <li>• Local roads and urban public transport</li> <li>• Social services (support for families and children, older people, people with disabilities, poverty, social benefits, etc.)</li> <li>• Primary and preventive healthcare</li> <li>• Public order and safety (municipal police, fire brigades)</li> <li>• Local economic development, tourism, trade fairs</li> <li>• Environment (green areas)</li> <li>• Social housing</li> <li>• Administrative services</li> </ul>	<p>SPECIALIZED AND MORE LIMITED RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPRAMUNICIPAL INTEREST</p> <p>AN IMPORTANT ROLE OF ASSISTANCE TOWARDS SMALL MUNICIPALITIES</p> <p>MAY CARRY OUT RESPONSIBILITIES DELEGATED BY REGIONAL AND/OR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT</p> <p>RESPONSIBILITIES DETERMINED BY FUNCTIONAL LEVEL AND GEOGRAPHIC AREA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary or specialized education</li> <li>• Supramunicipal social and youth welfare</li> <li>• Secondary hospitals</li> <li>• Waste collection and treatment</li> <li>• Secondary roads and public transport</li> <li>• Environment</li> </ul>	<p>HETEROGENEOUS AND MORE OR LESS EXTENSIVE RESPONSIBILITIES, DEPENDING ON THE COUNTRY (IN PARTICULAR, FEDERAL VS UNITARY)</p> <p>SERVICES OF REGIONAL INTEREST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary/higher education and professional training</li> <li>• Spatial planning</li> <li>• Regional economic development and innovation</li> <li>• Health (secondary health care and hospitals)</li> <li>• Social affairs, e.g. employment services, training, inclusion, support for special groups, etc.</li> <li>• Regional roads and public transport</li> <li>• Culture, heritage and tourism</li> <li>• Environmental protection</li> <li>• Social housing</li> <li>• Public order and safety (e.g. regional police, civil protection)</li> <li>• Local government supervision (in federal countries)</li> </ul>

Source: OECD and UCLG, "2019 Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment – Key Findings".<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> OECD and UCLG, "2019 Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment – Key Findings."



authorities in Chile since 2021). In some countries, there are “special areas”, also called “ungoverned territories” or “unincorporated areas”, which are inhabited by first nation populations and which have special status. In other countries, decentralization does not cover the full national territory. In addition, certain other types of subnational jurisdictions, such as capital regions, metropolitan governments and larger cities, may be granted more powers than other LRGs. In some cases, however, they remain subject to central or regional governments and are unable to make independent decisions, despite their managerial capacities and resource bases.

In some countries, different tiers of government may be relatively independent, in terms of their devolved functional responsibilities, while in others the relationship is often more hierarchical. In many countries, key decisions need preliminary approval from higher levels of government, particularly concerning issues such as planning, budgeting, procurement and civil service management. **Even in relatively decentralized countries, not all functions can be devolved, and subnational levels of government need to work with higher level actors to coordinate certain deconcentrated functions.** Certain functions, such as transport, school districts and water districts, can also be managed by special, or parastatal, entities. These may, or may not, be related to regular elected subnational jurisdictions, and are even sometimes contracted out to private firms or community groups. The execution of public functions must therefore be understood in terms of the institutional framework of each particular country and the relationships that exist not only among differently empowered levels of government, but also with special entities and even nongovernmental actors.

## 2.3 Reforms of subnational governance

**Subnational governance structures are not static and are often subject to reforms and restructuring, driven by territorial and political transformations.** Such actions may involve the creation of new local

governments, territorial divisions, amalgamations and/or regionalization. The creation of new local governments is widely extended and often occurs with the aim of bringing local administrations closer to their citizens. On other occasions, countries may foster the emergence of new regional governments, the amalgamation of municipalities, or the setup of new horizontal collaboration mechanisms. These might be seen as responses to promote greater intermunicipal cooperation with the aim of improving the delivery of public services, rationalizing the management of territories, or reducing financial constraints. Many of these reforms come in response to trends in urbanization, or in answer to crises and unbalanced territorial development processes of the types highlighted in Chapter 2. Such processes affect territorial inequalities and differences between metropolitan areas, urban regions and corridors, intermediary cities, peripheral cities, and cities that are shrinking. They also have an impact on rural territories in different regions that may be suffering from the effects of problems like desertification.

Changes to governance in large cities are a clear example of these challenges. The governance of large cities is often fragmented by power-sharing schemes, which may include the engagement of different levels of government, and public or private agencies and utilities. These different entities might have also varying levels of legitimacy and transparency, and often involve competing for resources. This growing complexity has been met by an increase in the number of bodies of metropolitan-level governance. In fact, two thirds of OECD countries have metropolitan-level bodies responsible for governance. In the past decade, metropolitan reform has also been on the rise in the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America and Africa, in countries such as China, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil and South Africa. Similar reforms are also underway in Georgia, Togo, Zimbabwe and Morocco.

It is often difficult to establish new arrangements for governance and this requires giving special attention to those who are involved and affected by the process in each context. For instance, governance arrangements involving neighbouring LRGs seem to work best when they are voluntary (i.e. when the jurisdictions involved want to work together). Likewise, they seem to be more effective when they are encouraged and incentivized by national government action, instead of being imposed in a top-down manner. To redress inefficiencies and inequalities through horizontal collaboration and metropolitan governance, governments need to

take sensibly designed action. Centrally, this entails designing systems of governance that operate fairly and accountably, as well as providing financial and/or other incentives to encourage subnational actors to work together, whether vertically or horizontally.

In this regard, there is a critical mismatch, in almost all regions, between the increase in transferred responsibilities and the revenue that LRGs receive and administer and with which they must carry out their responsibilities. Annual city budgets can range from more than 10,000 USD per capita in developed countries to less than 10 USD in less developed ones. While cities are acknowledged as the main engines for economic growth and increasingly concentrate most of the national wealth that is produced, many local government bodies do not have the fiscal powers or capacity to mobilize the potential capital generated within their territories in order to finance their sustainable development. **In other words, while many systems are legally well-defined and based on normatively desirable principles, they do not necessarily operate in a way that is consistent with those legal norms.**

Reforms require fiscal systems that foster an incremental approach to change. This must be done with the

support of fair, dynamic and buoyant local tax systems in order to ensure that a fairer share of national fiscal revenues is received through regular, transparent intergovernmental transfers and also through access to responsible borrowing. Similarly, improving the redistribution of resources for territorial equalization requires large-scale schemes to balance tensions between national mandates and subnational autonomy.

The implementation of governance-related reforms is always a challenge. In recent years, there has been growing interest in how best to implement and sequence decentralization. Often, reforms are implemented either too quickly or too slowly, or in fragmented ways, facing challenges to adjust to existing political and institutional constraints. A negotiated and reflexive approach to implementing reforms is crucial, understanding that, as certain initial governance-related reforms are successfully implemented, more advanced steps can also be taken.

Table 3.2 summarizes the key concepts, elements and considerations of what could be called “the landscape of decentralization and intergovernmental institutions”.



Source: Owen Cannon, Unsplash.  
Shanghai, China.

Table 3.2

## The landscape of decentralization and intergovernmental institutions

FEATURES	ELEMENTS	COMMENTS
<b>Government structure</b>	<p><b>Federal:</b> central government shares sovereignty with an intermediate tier</p> <p><b>Unitary:</b> authority rests fully with central government</p>	Main significance is that <b>in federal systems, states/regions/ provinces tend to have strong authority over lower tiers</b>
<b>Intergovernmental structure</b>	<p><b>Intermediate:</b> states, regions, provinces</p> <p><b>Local:</b> cities, towns, counties, districts, and further subdivisions</p> <p><b>Special:</b> entities with specific functions that may cover multiple general-purpose government functions</p>	<b>These can vary in relative size and empowerment;</b> in many countries, intermediate tiers are very powerful, but in others, lower tiers have more functions. This applies to certain types of government, e.g. cities may have greater authority, particularly when they are capitals or large cities
<b>Forms of decentralization</b>	<p><b>Deconcentration:</b> primarily upward accountability</p> <p><b>Delegation:</b> the delegated entity is accountable to the delegating entity</p> <p><b>Devolution:</b> greater accountability to elected LRGs</p>	<b>It is common to find a mixture of these three formulas;</b> multiple variations may be found, including across levels of government and/or government functions
<b>Dimensions of decentralization</b>	<p><b>Administrative:</b> managerial functions, including financial and human resources</p> <p><b>Fiscal:</b> expenditure and revenue (including borrowing) functions</p> <p><b>Political:</b> mechanisms for electoral and non-electoral accountability</p>	Some dimensions are closely related to specific forms (e.g. political elections in devolved systems), but the <b>strength and mix of these dimensions can vary greatly in any decentralized system</b>
<b>Vertical intergovernmental relations</b>	<p><b>Independent:</b> individual levels have autonomy over specific functions</p> <p><b>Hierarchical:</b> lower tiers must seek approval from higher tiers</p> <p><b>Collaborative:</b> mechanisms for sharing functions and decision making</p>	<b>Degrees of independence and hierarchy can vary considerably</b> in any system and may differ with functions; many different types of collaborative arrangements are used between government levels
<b>Horizontal intergovernmental relations</b>	<p><b>Mandatory:</b> collaborative entities for neighbouring LRGs, with compulsory participation</p> <p><b>Voluntary:</b> participation is decided by eligible LRGs that choose to work together</p>	Collaboration mechanisms, e.g. metropolitan development authorities, may be <b>mandated and supported (incentivized) by the central authorities or optional, and funded by members through voluntary contributions</b>
<b>Partnerships/ non-governmental actors</b>	<p><b>Quasi-governmental:</b> government entities with broader involvement</p> <p><b>Private:</b> the contacting of private actors to perform minor or major public functions</p> <p><b>Other nongovernmental:</b> partnerships with community/civil society actors</p>	<b>Arrangements for many purposes with varied contractual and accountability relationships;</b> these may be at one level of government or intergovernmental; they can involve multiple nongovernmental actors

Source: developed by Paul Smoke and Jamie Boex for GOLD VI.



# 3 Why pathways? A response to governance challenges

Despite this diversity of governance realities, most LRGs face common challenges when pursuing an agenda of urban and territorial equality. Global phenomena, such as the climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic, increased housing insecurity, the crisis of care, or the precarization of working conditions, have deepened existing inequalities and created new ones. This has brought new challenges, which may be experienced in a wide variety of ways at the local scale. While recognizing the centrality of national political, legal, administrative and financial dynamics in addressing these inequalities, local action is crucial for articulating meaningful and effective responses that can enable LRGs to advance in the quest for urban and territorial equality.

In response to the complexities of current challenges, LRGs face the need to renew governance approaches, promoting a relational conception of governance.<sup>19</sup> To address urban and territorial inequalities while **acknowledging these complexities, GOLD VI argues for robust decentralization within a networked approach to governance that goes hand in hand with a number of established conditions:**

- 1. Effective distribution of powers and responsibilities within government and between government, civil society and the private sector, guided by the principle of subsidiarity.** Such subsidiarity implies the mutual construction of equitable partnerships between diverse actors participating in the governance relationship, recognizing their different capacities and responsibilities. It also requires clear legal (contractual and regulatory) and financial instruments, adequate human and technical resources and capacities, and the coordination of support systems at different scales, which are able to take into account the non-static nature of subnational governance structures.
- 2. Procedures and practices that ensure and enhance democratic participation, transparency and accountability in a sustained way.** This calls for the inclusion of diverse, and often previously unrecognized voices in local political process. It also requires a sufficient degree of autonomy for LRGs, without obstacles, and working within a national political framework that is committed to addressing inequalities between and within cities and regions.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Swilling, *The Age of Sustainability. Just Transitions in a Complex World* (London: Routledge, 2020).



**3. Policies that aim to construct balanced and collaborative formulation, implementation and management systems** within urban territories, and between urban and rural territories, providing mechanisms for specific responses, at different levels and by multiple actors.<sup>20</sup>

**These conditions remain the key challenges, or bottlenecks, that have hitherto restricted the unleashing of the transformative potential of local and regional governance to help us advance in the quest for equality.**

In practice, they require multilevel coordination to organize decision-making systems, both vertically and horizontally, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. In this way, it will be possible to respect local autonomy and ensure that substantial, sustained, coordinated, and concrete responses to governance challenges are adequately mobilized. This calls for policy and planning mechanisms that are adequate and responsive to local realities, needs and aspirations.

Such governance processes may fail – particularly because of entrenched antagonism between different interest groups or due to structural imbalances between powerful groups that undermine the direction of public policy. When this happens, there may be a need to introduce some degree of “governance of governance” or meta-governance strategies.<sup>21</sup> One key meta-governance strategy is what has been termed “collibration”. This refers to “an intervention by government to use the social energy created by the tension between two or more social groupings habitually locked in opposition to one another to achieve a policy objective by altering the conditions of engagement”.<sup>22</sup> As explained later, in Chapter 7,<sup>23</sup> the notion of collibration has made a useful contribution to approaches to governance when dealing with complex challenges, such as the current environmental crisis. This is a practice that aims to coordinate different modes of governance and strategies as a way to overcome potential failures of governance. As such, it runs contrary to the neoliberal conceptions of

governance that emerged in the 1970–80s and which promoted the weakening of state mechanisms by giving preference to corporate interests. Collibration encompasses facilitating dialogue and partnering, and creating a set of meta-rules for a mode of governance<sup>24</sup> that goes beyond neoliberal minimalism, while challenging traditional, vertically integrated, top-down bureaucracy. Within the framework of the principle of urban and territorial equality, collibratory urban governance could offer a new generation of capabilities to facilitate mission-oriented policy and planning. These include mobilizing partnering for change that aims to instigate, catalyze and sustain real and incremental change over time.

In this sense, collibration does the “creating, maintaining and disrupting” of institutions that recent literature on “institutional work” has brought to the fore.<sup>25</sup> Approaches to bring about change through strategic processes that go beyond specific sectorial policies have also been embraced by other key international initiatives on equality. The recent publication of the *World Resources Report: Towards a More Equal City*, for example, focuses on “Seven Transformations for more Equitable and Sustainable Cities”, understanding that each of the transformations proposed involves making a series of changes to policies, procedures, finances and management, as a way of creating “a new dynamic for durable, cross-sectoral, city-wide change”.<sup>26</sup>

Acknowledging these trends in the conception of governance and in practices that focus on the merits of a more strategic approach to collective action, GOLD VI proposes different pathways that LRGs, working in collaboration with other actors, can take to promote equality. These can serve as collective vehicles for transformative action and help to navigate the complexities of governance. This focus on pathways also seeks to emphasize the need for a reframed approach to planning as a lever to challenge socio-spatial inequalities. However, the ways in which planning systems

20 These challenges mainly draw on work submitted by Paul Smoke and Jamie Boex for the development of this chapter.

21 Jessop makes the distinction between first-order governance (in his terms, that which promotes exchange command, dialogue and solidarity in governance), second-order governance (in which the underlying conditions of operation change when these modes fail) and third-order governance, or “meta-governance”. Bob Jessop, *The State: Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 169.

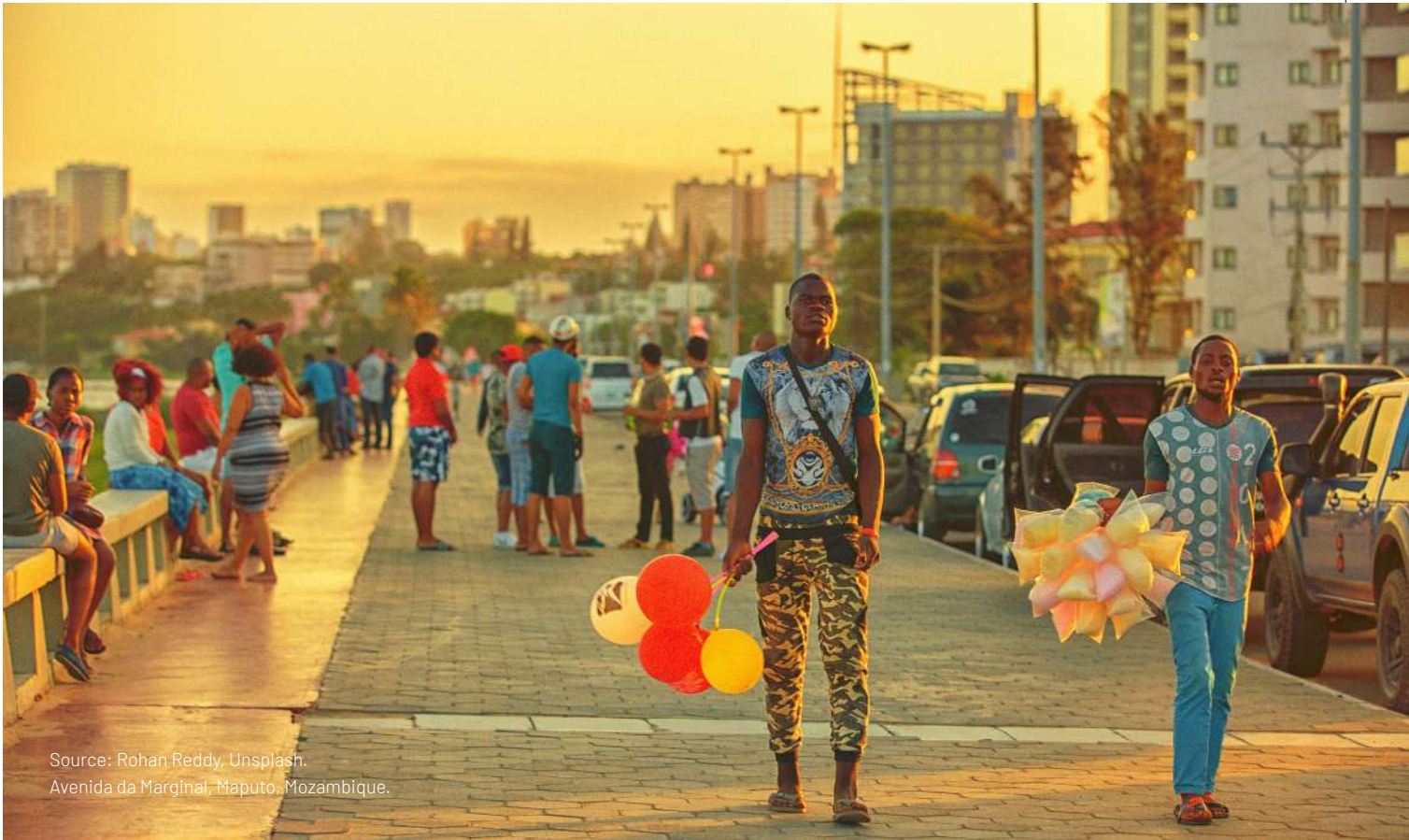
22 Andrew Dunsire, “Manipulating Social Tensions: Collibration as an Alternative Mode of Government Intervention,” *MPIFG Discussion Paper* 93, no. 7 (1993).

23 This discussion draws mainly on the work developed by the curators of Chapter 7 of this Report and, in particular, on the work of Mark Swilling.

24 These strategies reflect what Dunsire respectively refers to as “formalizing”, “biasing” and “canalizing”. Dunsire, “Manipulating Social Tensions: Collibration as an Alternative Mode of Government Intervention.”

25 Thomas Lawrence and Roy Suddaby, “Institutions and Institutional Work,” in *Handbook of Organization Studies*, ed. Stewart R. Clegg et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 215–54, <https://bit.ly/3LqWWbh>.

26 Anjali Mahendra et al., “Seven Transformations for More Equitable and Sustainable Cities” (Washington, DC, 2021), <https://bit.ly/36zLr2F>. The seven transformations highlighted by this report concern: infrastructure design and delivery; service provision models; data collection practices; informal urban employment; financing and subsidies; urban land management; and governance and institutions.



Source: Rohan Reddy, Unsplash.  
Avenida da Marginal, Maputo, Mozambique.

can play this role changes significantly from country to country. While pivotal in ensuring balanced urban development in many cities, rigid, purely technocratic and fragmented approaches to planning and master planning have failed to address many of the challenges posed by dynamic inequalities. Furthermore, in several countries in the Global South, planning systems have been inherited from earlier colonial times without the necessary adaptations to meet local conditions. As a result, on many occasions, they have failed to respond to local needs and experiences and to the changing nature of inequalities. Indeed, they have often failed to address the role of planning and its unintended consequences in the reproduction of urban inequalities. Using pathways as an open, future-oriented notion of governance promotes an approach to planning that questions assumptions and planning instruments inherited from other times and contexts, and focuses on the importance of grounded partnerships, combined with responsive and strategic action.

Pathways are trajectories for change, or “alternative directions of intervention and change”.<sup>27</sup> Pathways are made up of intersecting systems and institutional

structures. They are driven by dynamic social, political, economic, ecological and technological processes that may take different forms at particular places and times. These intersecting systems are embedded in power relations of class, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and ability, which (re)produce systemic processes that underpin inequalities. Shaping pathways towards more equal futures involves strategic engagement with both material issues (e.g. finance, delivery of housing and services) and discursive practices (e.g. reframing narratives) at different scales.<sup>28</sup> Using the notion of pathways is therefore about reframing questions relating to governance in ways that open up alternative trajectories.

The notion of pathways has previously been present in many debates about environmental adaptation and tipping points within the context of the climate emergency. What has been termed a “pathways approach” has emerged as a response to the growing recognition that linear and managerial responses to current complex and dynamic societal challenges are unable to bring about meaningful change. While there are different pathway approaches, there are a number of common,

27 Melissa Leach, Lyla Mehta, and Preetha Prabhakaran, “Gender Equality and Sustainable Development: A Pathways Approach,” UN Women Discussion Papers, 2016, 4, <https://bit.ly/36VB1Kq>.

28 Caren Levy, Christopher Yap, and Y. Padan, “Glossary of Terms,” Development Workshop, Part II: COVID-19 and Post-Pandemic Responses: Laying the Foundations for Pathways to Urban Equality, 2020.

key components that are particularly relevant to policy and planning responses to the issue of urban and territorial inequalities:

- **Systemic:** A pathways perspective approaches the issue of inequality as it being a product of multiple and complex dynamics, generated by inter-coupled systems and their interlinkages, and seeing it as operating at different scales and being embedded in power relationships. A pathways approach therefore has the objective of bringing about systemic change so as to address the root causes of inequality, rather than only tackling its symptoms.
- **Reflexive:** The development of a pathways approach is directly related to how the notion of equality is defined. There are multiple ways of defining and framing equality, and these will determine the types of responses needed to address it. A pathways approach implies revealing existing framings by facilitating collective reflections upon their implications and, where necessary, reframing contextual notions of equality in order to develop more transformative pathways towards equality. In this sense, pathways are nonlinear and may include frequent feed-back loops.
- **Future-oriented:** While recognizing historical trajectories, experiences and understandings of equality, a pathways approach aims to build alliances in order to tackle what is yet to come. Imagining different scenarios and deliberating on potential future realities unlocks the potential for the politics of change to be negotiated and acted upon.
- **Agency-oriented:** The systemic character of the pathways perspective is combined with the recognition that change can come about through the contextual and situated sequencing of the actions of a diverse range of actors involved in governance. A pathways approach therefore highlights the agency and navigational capacities of individuals, collectives and institutions, as well as the conditions that allow change to take place.
- **Governance of possibilities:** Pathways-based thinking recognizes that governance may sometimes imply “locking-in” certain trajectories, which could, in turn, compromise and restrict the possibilities of change. A pathways approach is therefore about recognizing different ways of advancing towards equality and challenging existing constraints, while opening up a range of new possibilities through

which to bring about change, such as through self-balancing processes of collibration.

- **Institutional change:** Pathways-based thinking is particularly concerned with how a sequence of actions can change “ways of doing things”. Making such changes to routines and current practices is challenging, as this affects the existing culture, status quo, and a constellation of interests that are often firmly embedded within institutions. The future-oriented character of pathways should help to galvanize efforts to reconfigure norms, policies and procedures, as well as to challenge asymmetries of power.

**The notion of pathways offers possibilities for defining criteria for decision making in future-oriented sequences of action, managing uncertainties and risks, and envisioning trajectories of change towards equality, while also acknowledging issues of power and scale.** It is important to add that, in practice, these pathways need to be used carefully to deal with the complexities and constraints present in each country, which will ultimately shape the limits to, and possibilities of, implementing reforms. Pathways are cross-sectorial and multiscalar in nature, which is key for addressing the challenges posed when tackling inequalities. As such, they offer LRGs a tool with which to act beyond sectorial silos, making it possible to engage with the multidimensional experiences of inequality experienced by people, whether individually, or as part of larger collectives, on a day-to-day basis. GOLD VI seeks to capture how LRGs are taking action to advance towards achieving greater equality. **The Report groups these initiatives into six different pathways that, even if interconnected and multisectoral, represent different trajectories and means of action.**

In order to introduce these different trajectories, these pathways should be understood as being embedded within the governance structures that shape the systems in which LRGs operate. They should also be seen as offering a reflexive approach that can help to negotiate and reframe those same systems. In what follows, and as a way of advancing the construction of these pathways to equality, this chapter provides a reflection on how governance might be reframed within the context of rights-based commitments.

# 4 Reframing urban and territorial governance to promote equality: Towards the realization of rights

Pathways for change are always conditioned by the way change is framed. **In other words, advancing particular trajectories for change depends on the way change itself is defined. It is therefore important to understand why current ways of framing “good” governance have not been able to generate substantial, sustained, coordinated and concrete responses to growing urban and territorial inequalities.** This is particularly relevant as there is now a common global agenda that calls for the promotion of equality, outlined by frameworks like the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

Notions of “good governance” have tended to be dominated by a purely procedural emphasis, driven by the principle of efficiency and associated with elements such as privatization and changing responsibilities for public service delivery, alongside the principles of transparency, accountability, participation and respon-

siveness. **Important as these principles may be, solely focusing on procedures has proven insufficient to address the complexities and asymmetries of power embedded in diverse and multilayered systems of governance.** These reforms have not been enough to achieve greater equality. To date, progress has been constrained by governance structures that have been responsible for a series of bottlenecks, related to the different, and often conflicting, agendas of powerful actors within cities. Other obstacles have included the lack of balance between different levels of government; the need for coordination in the fiscal, administrative and political aspects of decentralization; and the different challenges and obstacles discussed in the previous section.

Advancing along pathways to urban and territorial equality demands bringing to the forefront the framing



of procedures, but also the reframing of the *ideals* and explicit goals of governance. When we acknowledge that, by changing the ideals that drive governance, the procedures themselves become spaces for dispute, new pathways emerge through the resulting collective discussions and transformative action. One way to promote these ideals for equality is **to root urban and territorial governance in human rights-based approaches**. If this change of ideals is effective, there will be a greater probability that relationships between actors and procedures involved in governance will be reexamined and also changed. This particularly relates to the framework for promoting urban equality, as a rights-based approach specifically would address the problem of existing structural barriers to equality and the inclusion of residents and other collectives.

The connection between governance and human rights is explicitly recognized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>29</sup> It is clearly outlined in its definition of “good governance”:

“Human rights standards and principles provide a set of values to guide the work of governments and other political and social actors. They also provide a set of performance standards against which these actors can be held accountable. Moreover, human rights principles inform the content of good governance efforts: they may inform the development of legislative frameworks, policies, programmes, budgetary allocations and other measures”.<sup>30</sup>

In relation to LRGs, various efforts by multilateral and international civil society, and also by many local government-led initiatives, have emphasized that a framework that guarantees human rights is critical for ensuring that new opportunities presented by local environments are inclusive and accessible to everyone (see Box 3.4). This strategic approach to human rights frameworks is coupled with recognizing the role of LRGs in the integration of a new generation of essential citizens’ rights and entitlements that have been expanded by communities and their practices. These efforts have led to the production of several subject-specific reports by UN human rights bodies on the role of LRGs in the promotion and protection of human rights.<sup>31</sup> These reports and statements summarize various existing initiatives and specifically address the added value of local government action in advancing the implementation of human rights. Additionally, LRGs themselves have produced significant frameworks for understanding and advancing the implementation of human rights at the local level. Relevant collective frameworks in this regard include: the *Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City*, the *European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City*, and the *Gwangju Declaration on Human Rights Cities*. Local declarations include the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*, the *Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities* and the *Barcelona Methodological Guide on Human Rights Cities*.



Source: Perry Grone, Unsplash, Guatemala.

29 United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution Adopted by the Human Rights Council on 22 March 2018. The Role of Good Governance in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights” (2018), <https://bit.ly/3IUASEa>.

30 UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “About Good Governance,” 2022, <https://bit.ly/3tU9GI0>.

31 UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Cities, Local and Regional Governments and Human Rights,” 2022, <https://bit.ly/3xF9Kaj>.

GOLD VI proposes three reasons why rights-based frameworks provide a significant and effective driving force in favour of improved governance and promoting greater urban and territorial equality:

**The first reason relates to the possibility of synchronizing mechanisms of accountability between local and regional policy, planning and programmes, and human rights obligations and commitments.** Framing governance for equality from a rights perspective therefore offers a mechanism through which to ensure accountability and the alignment with national and international obligations and commitments to respect, protect and fulfil rights. Specific institutions and programmes put in place by local governments (ranging from human rights plans to the appointment of local ombudspersons and human rights committees) are practical ways of upholding this idea of accountability and of providing monitoring based on local standards, capacities and priorities.

**The second reason is that human rights provide LRGs with guiding principles for action and with mecha-**

**nisms for addressing inequality.** Indeed, a rights-based approach is mainly built on a significant policy shift from needs-based ideas of inclusion to universal notions of dignity and welfare. Accordingly, rights-based policies consider inequalities and exclusion as specific forms of human rights violations, proposing practical ways to address them at their root: by tackling inequality, its causes and its consequences. Concrete actions have been implemented by LRGs in at least four different ways:

(a) Through their responsibilities laid out in their international commitments and obligations.

(b) By guaranteeing rights through the application of sectorial policies or programmes that fall within LRG competences and/or aim to address the immediate social challenges faced by local residents. Even though they may not explicitly refer to human rights, such policies can be used to promote respect for, and the protection and fulfilment of, specific aspects of a rights-based agenda.

### Box 3.4

#### The human rights and cities landscape

Over more than twenty years, combined efforts by local governments and relevant actors working at the regional and international levels have produced an advance in the understanding and practice of human rights at the local level. This has made it possible to move beyond the concept of “localization” and on to the notion of **“human rights in the city”**. To this end, local government initiatives have opened the way to propose new pathways to the implementation of human rights in the city. This has expanded the focus of their thematic priorities and approaches related to this agenda, with this often going beyond the explicit recognition of international human rights law. This has been due to the specific nature of local human rights practice, which is particularly responsive to emerging needs and the social challenges experienced at the local level. The concept of the **“Human Rights City”** has been enshrined by several local governments across the world as part of an integral vision of the role that human rights should play in their own government and administration, and also their relationships with their own residents and communities. After regional initiatives spearheaded in the late 1990s, the 2010s saw the emergence of a **global human rights cities movement**, which enshrined cooperation in the field of global human rights in spaces such as the World Human Rights Cities Forum and through global organizations such as UCLG. The concept of the **“Right to the City”** is closely intertwined with these notions and has been particularly embraced by social movements. At the core, they seek alternative pathways through which to access rights in the city and to define new rights based on the urban environment and local communities. LRGs have also played an important role in the Right to the City movement and produced numerous relevant documents over recent years.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> UCLG-CSIPDHR, “Right to the City and Participatory Democracy,” 2022, <https://bit.ly/3lOWmSZ>.

(c) By putting into place a series of specific policies or programmes that engage with a human rights framework. These could include establishing human rights departments and action plans, offices for non-discrimination, mechanisms for protecting the social function of property and addressing gender-based violence, and also participatory bodies and social initiatives that engage with human rights-related goals.

(d) Through actions that take a more affirmative role and which mainstream a human rights-based approach in local policymaking, not only through specific portfolios of policies, but also as part of an overarching approach to local government functions and to the whole government agenda.

**Finally, and probably more significant than either of the others, the third reason relates to the overlap between a multidimensional understanding of equality and its articulation through addressing human rights** (see Figure 3.3). This includes the principles of equitable distribution, reciprocal recognition, parity political participation, and solidarity and mutual care defined in GOLD VI. These human rights and principles of equality also overlap with those promoted by existing global frameworks, such as the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. The UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights has, for instance, identified a series of “shared ambitions” that form part of a human rights agenda as constituting “a meaningful framework to ensure that new opportunities brought about by urban environments are inclusive and accessible to all.”<sup>33</sup> A rights-based approach allows LRGs to focus on people’s rights within a territorial perspective, catering for their diverse needs and aspirations and advancing towards the 2030 Agenda’s aim of making sure that no one and nowhere is left behind.

Ahead of emerging crises and disruptive political, social and economic transformations at the whole world level (climate change, political conflict and wars, crises of inequality, financialization, a lack of political legitimacy, exacerbated discrimination and poverty), global actors such as UCLG are also calling for a new generation of human rights as key standards for a renewed social contract that safeguards basic notions of human dignity, caring and solidarity. This new generation of rights is built upon the recognition that everyday and collective practices can play a key role in the production and promotion of rights, and particularly so for structurally

discriminated communities. This people-led expansion of entitlements will, no doubt, overlap with a multidimensional equality agenda, given the central position of everyday and collective practices in the distribution, recognition, participation and solidarity and care aspects of equality.

Local government rules and regulations, policies and programmes can have an immediate impact on particular groups which are at risk of discrimination.<sup>34</sup> Another key area in which human rights and equality principles overlap relates to the recognition of the need for meaningful participation to be regarded as a right and a key aspect of equality. This implies building partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector in order to advance in the pursuit of a democratizing agenda and in recognizing “the right and the opportunity [...] to take part in the conduct of public affairs”, which is expressed in article 25 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.<sup>35</sup>

These overlaps can also be observed in the experiences of certain specific cities. For example, the report *Human Rights Cities in the EU: a framework for reinforcing rights locally* identifies key elements for ensuring compliance with human rights in areas such as the provision of social services, healthcare, public utilities, education, culture and procurement, as well as a commitment to the SDGs.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Barcelona has developed the methodology and guide *City of human rights. The Barcelona model*, which calls for a move from a “needs approach” to a “city of human rights model”. This not only seeks to comply with existing standards for human rights, but also: (a) to engage with the structural causes of the problems encountered; (b) to empower people and engage with diverse participation as a right; (c) to work at different scales and challenge existing power relationships; (d) to focus on both results and processes; and (e) to adopt a comprehensive vision and to work in an intersectoral way.<sup>37</sup>

**These coincidences between the principles of human rights and equality lead us to an understanding of the reproduction of inequalities as a violation of human rights.**

34 United Nations General Assembly, “Local Government and Human Rights. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights” (New York, 2019), <https://bit.ly/3q0tp0C>.

35 United Nations General Assembly, “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” (1966), <https://bit.ly/3q0UwLD>.

36 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “Human Rights Cities in the EU: A Framework for Reinforcing Rights Locally” (Vienna, 2021), <https://bit.ly/3qNN97v>.

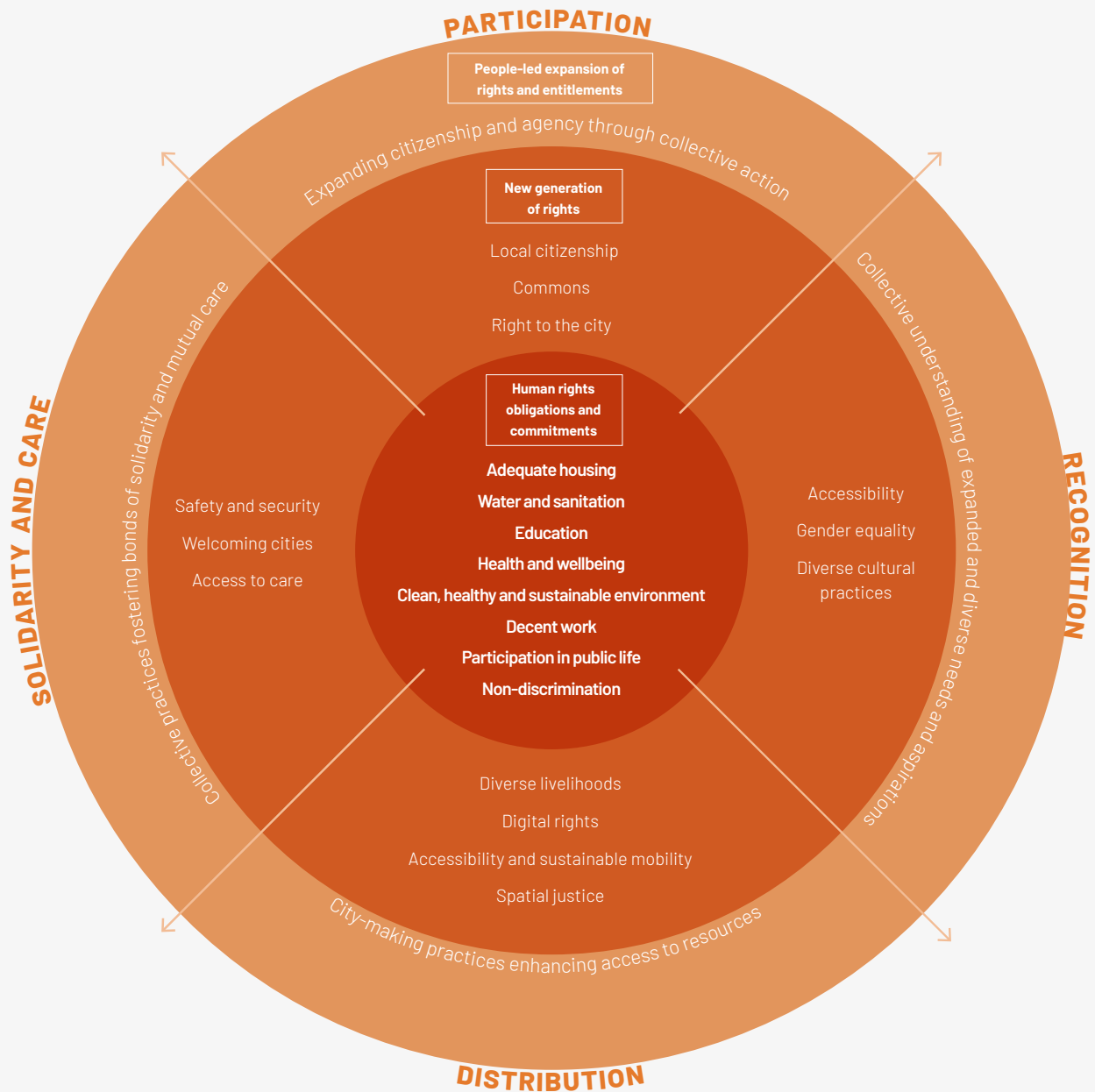
37 Barcelona City Council, “Methodology Guide: City of Human Rights. The Barcelona Model” (Barcelona, 2018), 19.

33 UCLG-CSIPDHR, “Local Governments and Human Rights,” 2022, <https://bit.ly/3rFeBo4>.



Figure 3.3

## Overlaps between the principles of equality and human rights



Source: authors

This reinforces the argument that equality and rights should be the driving objectives of any governance reform promoted through the construction of pathways for action. As noted at the beginning of this section, the reframing of the aims of governance will inevitably have an impact on governance procedures, such as the principles of transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness. These may need to be reconciled with demands for them to be expanded,

which would have implications for the ways in which partnerships are built and how conflicts tend to be addressed.

GOLD VI proposes strengthening four converging spheres of governance through which LRGs can shape pathways to greater urban and territorial equality and their intersection with a rights-based agenda.



- The sphere of **local democracy** does not only lie at the base of the legitimacy of local governments and their mandates, but it also opens up opportunities to improve responsiveness, accountability, representation and parity of participation. This sphere involves coproducing and engaging with initiatives led by civil society groups, thereby recognizing diverse voices and interests that are essential for more equitable cities and territories.
- LRGs can mobilize and transform **policies** that galvanize political commitment to the ideals of equality and human rights. These include policies related to spatial and land planning, economic prosperity and social welfare, amongst others. This should be done in conjunction with modifying key fiscal instruments that can make certain policies more possible in practice. As already noted in this chapter, this brings LRGs face to face with a range of institutional challenges because of the various ways in which policy-making processes are embedded in multilevel governance.
- LRGs can also shape **organizational** and **administrative** environments by introducing institutional changes to responsibilities, transparency, accountability and accessibility in procedures. This includes strengthening capacities and raising awareness in order to promote transformative changes. In these environments LRGs also have the possibility to make

changes in partnerships with other actors involved in governance.

- Ultimately, the capacity of LRGs to meet the principles of equality and human rights will be judged on the actual **delivery** of programmes and projects. It will depend on the effective implementation of the methodologies that they wish to promote and on how research, and innovative tools, can be applied and put into practice.

In the following chapters, these different intersecting spheres of governance are brought to life in the exploration of the six pathways mentioned above: **Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering, and Democratizing**. These have been selected as critical routes towards achieving greater equality and guaranteeing human rights in cities and territories. It is in the active combination and coordination of these different pathways that LRGs, with the support of relevant financing, regulatory and management mechanisms, can expand transformative change at different scales. In this way, they can reframe their role in promoting equality, placing themselves in the vanguard of those tackling local challenges and working to build a more equal and just future.



Source: Pascal Bernardon, Unsplash  
Boulevard René-Lévesque Ouest, Montréal, QC, Canada.

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# 04 ↓

# Commoning

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 4. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).



Source: Gabriel Boieras.  
Housing social movements' demonstration in São Paulo, Brazil.







### 1.8bn people

worldwide lack adequate housing and are living in conditions of uncertainty and instability.<sup>a</sup>

### 1bn people globally lived in informal settlements in 2020.

Since 2015, the world's population living in informal settlements has increased, reversing the downward trend of the 1990s.<sup>b</sup>



306m in Central and South Asia<sup>b</sup>  
359m in East and South-East Asia<sup>b</sup>  
230m in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>b</sup>



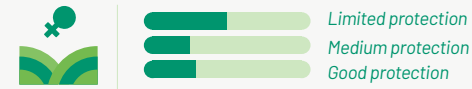
### Sub-Saharan Africa



### OECD region

Rent averages more than 1/3 of incomes in this region; housing prices have grown three times faster than incomes for the past 20 years.<sup>c</sup>

### Women's land rights



Data available from 52 countries for 2019-2021 reveal that about 46% of legal frameworks offer limited protection of women's land rights, nearly 25% offer medium levels of protection and only 29% offer good protection.<sup>e</sup>



21% of African respondents experienced racially discriminated against in access to housing, as polled by the 2018 EU-28.<sup>f</sup>

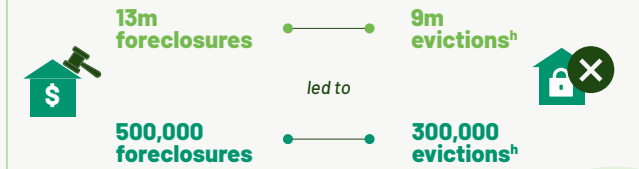
45% of African respondents lived in overcrowded housing compared to 17% of the general population in the EU-28.<sup>f</sup>

### Global real estate

is valued at more than double global GDP. Global real estate represents nearly 60% of the value of all global assets (217tn USD), with residential real estate comprising 75% (163tn USD) of the market.<sup>g</sup>



### Between 2008 and 2013:



In Europe (2021): 6.7m households were in arrears with mortgage or rent payments.<sup>i</sup>



### 2m people

are forcibly evicted each year, as estimated by UN agencies in the 2000s. However, no global data on forced evictions are systematically collected.<sup>j</sup>

30-50% of the population faces tenure insecurity in the Global South.<sup>k</sup>

## Unequal access to adequate housing and land

## Financialization and precarization of tenure security



## Unequal access to basic services and public space

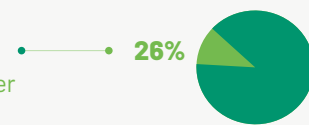


In 2020:

### 2bn people

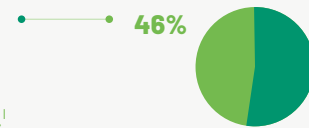
lacked safely managed water services.<sup>l</sup>

Global population



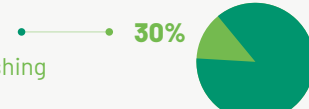
### 3.6bn people

lacked safely managed sanitation (494m people practised open defecation).<sup>l</sup>



### 2.3bn people

still lacked a basic handwashing facility.<sup>l</sup>



### 70% of Sub-Saharan Africa



lacks safely managed drinking water services, compared to 38% in Central and South Asia, and 25% in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>m</sup>

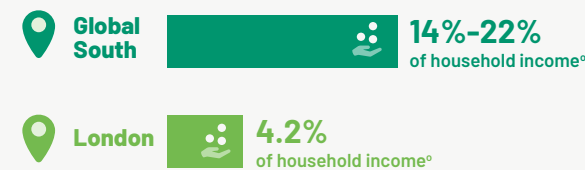


### 733m people

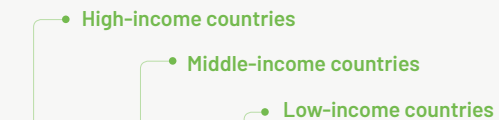
across the globe did not have access to electricity in 2019; this was down from 1.2bn in 2010.<sup>n</sup>



### Average household energy expenditure:



### Waste collection rates

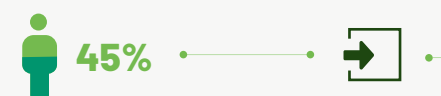


Informal waste collection accounts for 50% to 100% of total waste collection in the urban areas of economically developing countries.<sup>p</sup>

In 2020, only about 38% of urban areas were located within 400 metres of walking distance to an open public space.<sup>q</sup>



This means only about 45% of the global urban population has convenient access to these spaces.<sup>q</sup>



# Commoning pathway

Collective forms of access to housing, land and services

## Towards urban and territorial equality

**Recognizing the role of urban commons and commoners in cities and territories**, as well as their importance in advancing a rights-based approach to deepen partnerships, solidarity and mutual support. This involves recognizing social diversity and the intersecting nature of inequalities across gender, class, race, ability, ethnicity, age, amongst others.

**Facilitating access to and use of land, adequate housing and public services through diverse mechanisms** that advance equality to sustain this access and protect against exclusion over time. This includes a wide range of mechanisms such as alternative tenure systems, community land trusts or support for in-situ upgrading.

**Ensuring public responsibility in the delivery of public services for all** through accountable management models, including remunicipalization when appropriate.

**Strengthening institutional capabilities to support collaborative forms of city-making** that provide feasible alternatives to expand access to public services and adequate housing.

- Expanded and sustained access to and use of land, housing and services, protected from enclosure in the long run
- Strengthened and institutionalized mechanisms enabling and promoting cooperation between LRGs and communities for the cogovernance of public resources
- Clear allocation of rights and responsibilities between public institutions and communities in the management of urban development, resources and space
- Empowered communities and public institutions that approach rights collectively, in addition to understanding them as collective, and that are capable of coproducing a new social pact

**Recognizing, protecting, supporting, coproducing and scaling up** commoning practices that are taking place in cities and territories, in addition to regulating markets and advocating for such practices.

**Strengthening cooperation and partnerships** between local governments, local stakeholders (public-private-people partnerships) and public institutions (public-people partnerships) to deliver public services, ensure access to land and adequate housing and protect the commons.

**Monitoring land and housing markets to limit speculative investments and better regulate urban development.** Monitoring is an essential aspect of cogoverning and sharing responsibilities for managing urban development, resources and space.

How can democratic forms of city-making, spaces for collective action and more equal forms of producing and belonging to the city be enabled and supported?

How can new ways to cogovern and share the responsibility for managing urban development, resources and spaces be found, as part of a renewed social pact?

How can collective practices be employed to find, use, manage, protect and govern resources in ways that resist commodification, exclusion and enclosure? How can they be used to increase access to markets that have become highly speculative and unequal?



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# 05 ↓ Caring

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 5. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).

Source: Jaikishan Patel, Unsplash.  
Chhattisgarh, India.





# Abstract

Care, which contributes to the physical and emotional well-being of the population, is essential work for supporting life and the reproduction of societies. *Caring* “does not only consist of doing things, but also of anticipating and preventing certain negative outcomes, which could have bad consequences for the person in question”. It also constitutes a fundamental contribution to urban and territorial development.

Feminist movements and authors, the incorporation of women into public life and the labour market, an ageing population, and the shrinking size of households have all contributed to a growing consciousness of the need for care as a public issue. Social protection, and educational and health systems have contributed to its public coverage, as also have improvements in urban infrastructure and services, as well as other factors that affect urban and territorial equality. Indeed, these are key issues for local governments.

The global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed the fundamental importance of care, revealing deficiencies and demands that require transversal responses and a long-term vision. Within a context of multiple challenges, the relevance of the functions performed by local and regional governments (LRGs) has been clearly shown. People have turned to their most local government agencies in search of answers and support when faced with threats to their health and ways of life. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and academic centres have also piloted innovative solutions, working hand-in-hand with LRGs, which have contributed commitment and innovation.

This chapter, which recognizes the principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), examines *Caring* in the following sections:

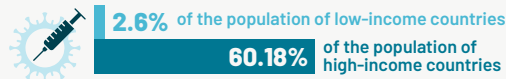
- a. “Theoretical approaches to the debate”. This revises care-related concepts in order to raise awareness of its various functions, identifying the main demands and rights in this area, from an intersectional perspective, and presenting the critical nodes for the sustainability of care, understanding them as a public problem.
- b. “Challenges and opportunities facing urban and territorial governance in the construction of a care response”. This presents the main challenges facing LRGs in care management, underlining their geographic and demographic aspects. It underlines the need to integrate both productive and reproductive contexts in urban and regional planning, and examines the subject of policies and public services, commenting on the challenges and opportunities presented to urban governance. It focuses on the key themes of: education, health, and other social policies and measures for protecting civil basic rights.
- c. “Towards cities and territories that care: Recognizing, redistributing and reducing the burden of care work”. This section starts from a vision that supports the need to *recognize and democratize*, to *redistribute and decommodify*, and to *reduce the burden of and defeminize* care. It contributes the learning experiences of various LRGs and CSOs for which the interaction between care and the local territory is a central issue.

The chapter finishes by emphasizing proposals and recommendations for LRGs to use in conjunction with various public organizations and CSOs.

Health services

Unequal access to COVID-19 vaccines and pace of vaccination:

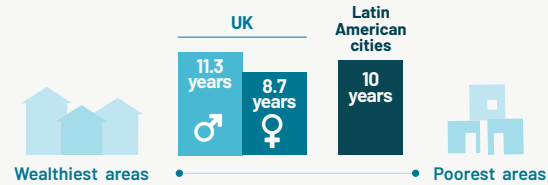
By the end of November 2021:



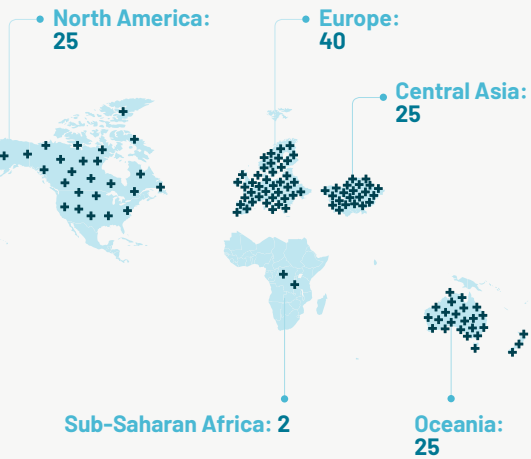
Life expectancy gap at birth continues to climb across regions, although significant differences are still observed across socio-economic levels.<sup>b</sup>

Life expectancy gap at birth

continues to climb across regions, although significant differences are still observed across socio-economic levels.<sup>b</sup>

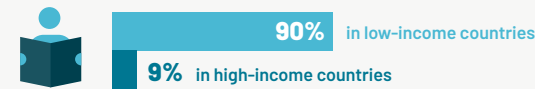


Medical doctors per 10,000 people:<sup>c</sup>



Education

Learning poverty rate\*:<sup>d</sup>

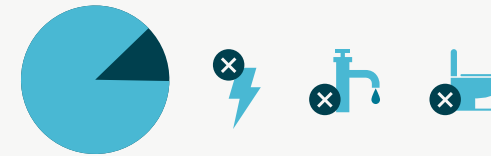


\* Inability to read and understand a simple text by age 10

147m children worldwide



Children in early childhood education or their first years of schooling, especially from low- and middle-income countries, are the most affected by educational disruptions.<sup>f</sup>



25% of primary schools

lacked access to electricity, drinking water and basic sanitation facilities in 2020.<sup>e</sup>

50%

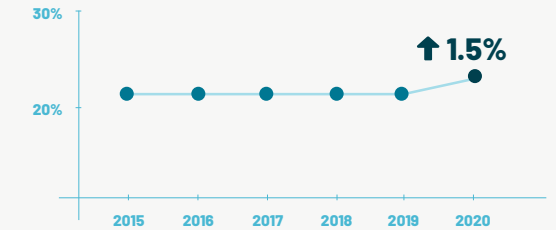
did not have ICT facilities and disability inclusive infrastructure.<sup>g</sup>



Social protection

4.1bn people lack effective social protection. In 2020, only 47% of the global population was effectively covered by at least one social protection cash benefit.<sup>h</sup>

The proportion of the world's youth not in education, employment or training remained unchanged from 2015 to 2019 at 21.8%, but increased to 23.3% in 2020.<sup>h</sup>

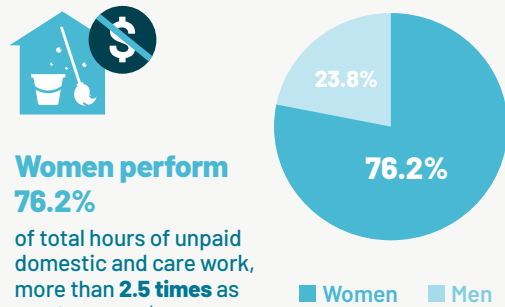


Inequalities in access to social services



Why caring?

Unequal distribution of care work: gender inequalities



Women perform 76.2%

of total hours of unpaid domestic and care work, more than 2.5 times as much as men.<sup>i</sup>

Most remunerated care workers are women, frequently migrant women, who work in the informal economy under poor conditions and with low pay. Asia – particularly South Asia – is the primary source of migrant workers.<sup>j</sup>

Uneven exposure to violence and discrimination

60% of all homicide victims

between 2015–2020 were women and girls.<sup>k</sup>

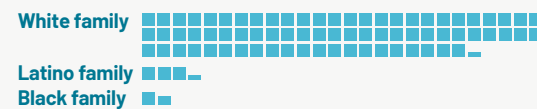


736m women (1 in 3)

have been subject to physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime since the age of 15 (2000–2018).<sup>l</sup>



Median family wealth (USA)<sup>m</sup>



Mortality rates (USA)<sup>m</sup>

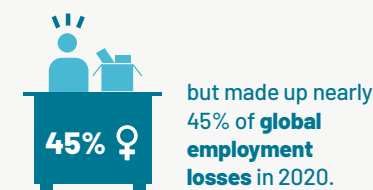
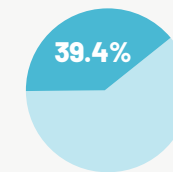
As of March 2021, mortality rates (per 100,000 people living in the USA) during the COVID-19 pandemic were significantly higher for racialized populations:



Need for adequate and rights-based care

Women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic:<sup>n</sup>

They accounted for 39.4% of total employment before the pandemic in 2019



Age discrimination and age-related stigma

are a barrier to health care. Rates of dependency will increase given the expected rise in the proportion of older people:<sup>o</sup>



20% of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability<sup>q</sup>



They tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged.

281m international migrants in 2020<sup>r</sup>





# Caring Pathway

Cities and territories that care

# Towards urban and territorial equality

**Recognizing, redistributing and reducing the burden of unpaid care and social work**, applying a gender and rights-based perspective and following the principles of equality, universality and solidarity. Value and support must be given to social reproduction activities and relations in order to respond to the challenges brought about by today's profound demographic, socio-economic and technological transformations.

**Promoting a new social contract based on more integrated care systems, services and public policies** to support the right to care and be cared for. This involves overcoming the fragmentation of care and of social services and expanding coverage.

**Defining clear roles for LRGs, in relation to those of national governments, the private sector, local communities and families**, establishing shared parameters, means and obligations for providing care.

**Promoting proximity to meet care needs within short distances**. This involves identifying prioritized locations within the territory and programmes which are organized to make time spent at home with family and time spent at work compatible.

**Promoting cities and territories that care for all citizens** through the provision of universal education, health, social services and housing, as well as quality public spaces, to face structural inequalities, mitigate social divides and ensure equal opportunities for all.

**Coproducing care and social policies aimed at specific groups, considering their different experiences, needs and aspirations, as well as intersecting discrimination and inequalities**. Caring for those with a specific and/or urgent need for and right to care is essential: women, children, older people, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people and migrant populations, amongst other marginalized groups.

**Advancing democratic practices that involve both caregivers and people who receive care** in decision-making for local public policies.

- Recognized and valued care work, caregivers and people in need of care
- Defeminized care work through the deconstruction of gender roles and the even redistribution of care work between men and women
- Democratized care with redistributed responsibilities between the state, the market, the community and families
- Local care systems with strengthened public management and capacities for social protection and care for all
- Local care services that reduce the burden of unpaid care work that women assume in the home
- Decommodified care that ensures everyone's access to adequate and quality care and social services

Women, racialized individuals, people living in poverty and migrants are more likely to be caregivers. They are often rendered invisible and poorly paid, with limited representation in decision-making spaces. How can LRGs and public policies support an equitable redistribution and recognition of care work?

How can inclusive and universally accessible local care systems be built and strengthened, and how can they respond to increasing demographic, socio-economic and technological transformations?



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# 06 ↓ Connecting

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 6. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).



Source: Kamil Kalkan. Unsplash.  
Osmanağa, Bahariye Caddesi, Kadıköy/İstanbul, Turkey.



# Abstract

Being connected implies having access to a wide range of facilities, services, infrastructure, and opportunities that contribute to a decent life and the possibilities for social, employment and economic development. In turn, not offering access to physical or digital connectivity is a mechanism for socio-spatial and economic exclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has galvanized this: it has presented a major threat to our ability to interact directly with others. It has shown that comparatively few people can afford not to move in their daily life to access education, health, jobs, family, friends and leisure. The pandemic has also exposed existing inequalities in accessing all of the previously mentioned aspects of daily life virtually. Having access to reliable, safe, and affordable transport and, increasingly, to internet-enabled devices, has become central to bridging inequalities. A Connecting pathway can contribute to overcoming these challenges and facilitating the process of creating social and human capital.

This chapter considers the contribution, within an urban and regional setting, of physical and digital connectivity to shaping a pathway to greater urban and territorial equality; this can be achieved through recognizing social relations and creating new opportunities for personal and collective development. Improved physical connectivity, via transport systems and public spaces that are easily accessible, safe for all and sustainable, is essential for promoting greater urban and territorial equality. The advent and widespread availability of digital technologies means that digital interactions can complement and, under certain conditions, serve as substitutes for physical interactions; indeed, in some contexts, they can also open up new opportunities for everyone and also help to save energy, time, money, and carbon emissions. Where digital connections are available and accessible, they can significantly contribute to making information, education and health services, political representation, and commercial transactions faster and more efficient and more readily available to a much larger proportion of the population than older technologies.

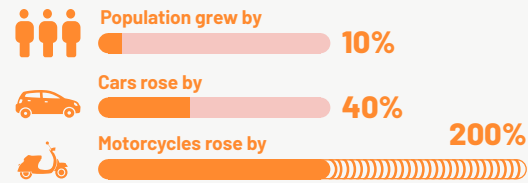
Therefore, this chapter underlines the role that LRGs can play in advancing urban and territorial equality through interventions that improve physical and digital connectivity at different scales. It provides an overview of spatial planning instruments that LRGs can leverage to improve physical connectivity in a way that actively seeks to improve urban and territorial equality. These include, but are not limited to, the integration of formal and informal transport systems and the promotion of transit-oriented development and integrated multimodal transport. Moreover, it provides an exploration of how LRGs can adopt a human rights-based approach to digital connectivity, in order to ensure that no one and no place are left behind as access to opportunities and basic services becomes increasingly digitalized.



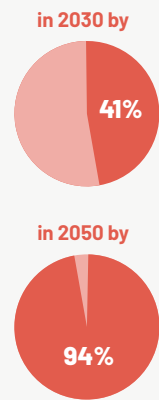
**Increases in average incomes and commuting distances have led to massive growth in private motorized transport.<sup>a</sup>**

In Latin America's five largest cities, between 38% and 44% of residents spend a daily average of 1.5 hours travelling.<sup>a</sup>

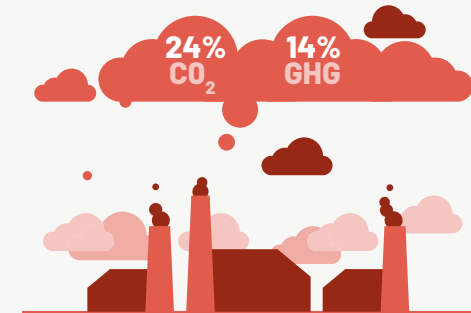
Looking at 29 Latin American cities between 2007 and 2014:<sup>b</sup>



**If current trends continue, private motorized mobility in cities will rise:<sup>b</sup>**



**3m deaths a year from air pollution<sup>c</sup>**



Globally, the transport sector accounts for over 24% of CO<sub>2</sub> and 14% of GHG emissions, with road transport accounting for about 72% of total transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>c</sup>

**1.3m+ deaths a year from road traffic accidents<sup>d</sup>**

Populations traveling on foot, by bicycle or by informal transport are disproportionately exposed to traffic accidents and air pollution.<sup>d</sup>

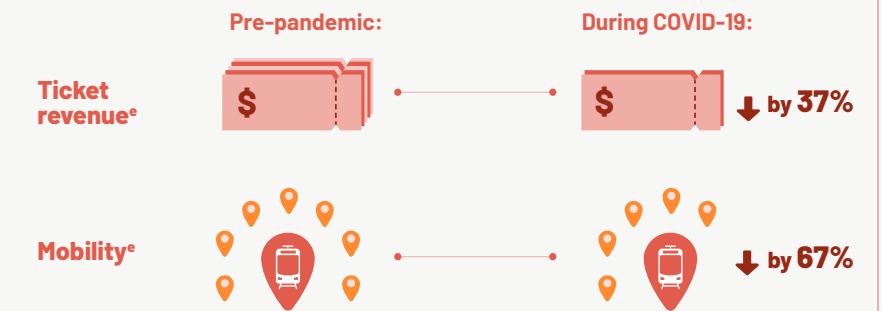


**93%** of the world's road fatalities occur in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>d</sup>

**60%** of the world's vehicles belong to people in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>d</sup>



**During COVID-19, the decrease in public transport demand was huge.<sup>e</sup>**



On average, the level of informal system patronage dropped by 90% worldwide during lockdown. Service levels also decreased by 30-40% with a minimum still being operated: a lifeline for service users and providers.<sup>e</sup>

### Unsustainable and inequitable transport patterns

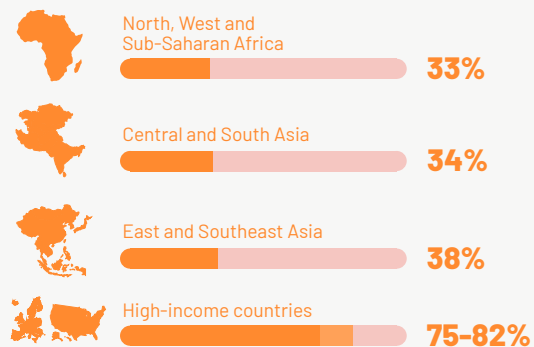
### COVID-19 and future challenges for transport systems



# Why connecting?

### Unequal access to basic services and public space

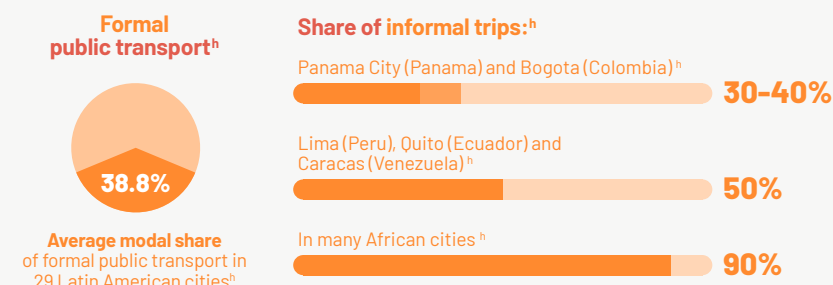
**As of 2020, only 52%** of the world's urban population have convenient\* access to public transport:<sup>f</sup>



\*Convenient access = residing within 500 m walking distance from a bus stop or 1 km away from a railway or ferry terminal.

**20% of the poorest households cannot afford public transport.<sup>g</sup>**

Costs are often beyond the reach of the poor in cities such as Cape Town (South Africa), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Mumbai (India), Mexico City (Mexico), Manila (the Philippines), and Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).<sup>g</sup>



**7.3m people employed through formal public transport<sup>i</sup>**



### Unequal access to digital connectivity

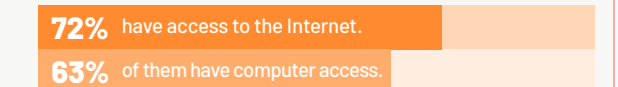
**95% of the world's population** had access to a mobile broadband network in 2021. Yet "coverage" does not mean "usage".<sup>j</sup>

**4.9bn people used the Internet.<sup>j</sup>**

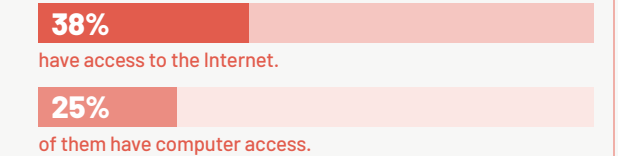
**2.9bn people did not use it.<sup>j</sup>** 96% of those lacking Internet access live in low-income countries, including 4 out of 5 women.<sup>j</sup>



**Urban households in 2019:<sup>l</sup>**



**Rural households in 2019:<sup>l</sup>**



**In only 10% of countries** were 70% of individuals able to perform activities that require basic ICT skills (data from 2017-2020).<sup>k</sup>



# Connecting pathway

Mobility and digital connectivity

**Enabling physical and digital connectivity that allows diverse people to communicate and meet with each other**, leveraging proximity to enable access to opportunities, care, creativity, trust and tolerance in ways that lead to inclusion and increased equality.

How can physical and digital connectivity be enabled in ways that advance equality and address urban fragmentation, recognizing social relations and creating personal and collective development opportunities for people from diverse and intersecting identities?

In the context of increasing environmental and social challenges, how can mobility infrastructure, public space and transport oriented development promote sustainable models of connectivity, capable of dealing with both social fragmentation and the climate emergency?

**Creating an efficient, equitable, safe and sustainable multimodal urban and regional transport system** that recognizes both formal and informal services, adapted to different populations' mobility needs, and that enables access to livelihood opportunities.

**Promoting sustainable and safe transit oriented development to manage urban expansion and to regenerate urban areas**, particularly those with high levels of motorization and decaying central areas, while avoiding their gentrification and the exclusion of lower-income populations.

**Embracing the use of democratic and inclusive smart city technologies, without sidestepping participatory and context-sensitive processes**, in order to improve and extend the provision of information and public services to all citizens.

**Working in partnerships between all levels of government and local actors through planning and other means to reduce barriers to connectivity** and to progressively eliminate discrimination and segregation in public spaces and public transport.

**Leveraging the potential of urban planning to jointly improve access to transport and urban infrastructure and urban regeneration in order to offer populations access to opportunities** and make significant improvements in their environments and daily lives (e.g. expanding public spaces, reducing urban pollution and accidents).

**Promoting clean and active mobility in cities**, supporting non-polluting mass public transport, as well as non-motorized transport such as cycling, walking and micro-mobility, through adequate infrastructure and incentives that recognize diverse mobility practices and needs.

**Guaranteeing a digital rights framework that enables access to the online provision of basic services for all**, avoiding the exclusion of populations who struggle to access or use digital technologies.

- Reliable and affordable physical and digital infrastructure accessible to everyone
- Formal and informal transport systems that are integrated, multimodal and sustainable
- Sustainable and safe infrastructure at the neighbourhood level that fosters proximity
- Enhanced use of soft mobility and non-polluting public transport
- Accessible digital technologies designed and implemented through a rights-based approach

## Towards urban and territorial equality



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### **Inequalities in Everyday Urban Mobility**

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### **Redefining connectivity - implications for LRGs**

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### **Social and territorial connectivity. Towards a paradigm shift in mobility and accessibility for gender equality**

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### **"Smart Cities" for Whom? Addressing Digital Connectivity in India**

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**Digital Villages: Guaranteeing digital connectivity in peripheral areas**

UCLG Digital Cities

**Civic urban media: Creating and sharing bottom-up knowledge on cities to shape urban policies**

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# 07 ↓

# Renaturing

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 7. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).



Source: Vicky Aman, Unsplash.  
Bojong Genteng, Indonesia.



# Abstract

This chapter highlights the need to consider urbanization and nature as an integrated whole. Historically, cities started off as minor insertions within wider robust ecological landscapes. Today, cities are the consumers of the bulk of the resources extracted from nature, and the source of almost all negative environmental impacts. If the relationship between cities and nature does not change, nature's life-support systems will be unable to sustain a global population of over nine billion by 2050. Renaturing is thus about reimagining how this can be done in just and practical ways. Achieving territorial and urban equality will depend on the reembedding of urban systems within natural systems in ways that restore the vitality of both, while supporting the needs and identities of historically marginalized groups.

"Renaturing urbanization" means addressing the spatial manifestation of multiple global societal challenges to generate benefits for all. These include the enhancement of health and well-being for everyone, the protection of ecosystems, sustainable (and more circular) resource use, and just resilience to climate change. This will require a critical examination of unwanted impacts, such as the commodification and undermining of vital ecological systems and services, processes of green gentrification and spatial exclusion, and the externalization of risk to particular social groups and geographies.

A transformation pathway that renatures urbanization will require transcending the economic dependence on natural resource extraction and carbon intensive development that currently exacerbate socio-economic inequalities and cause socio-environmental injustices. As resource scarcities and climate impacts intensify, problems associated with colonial, patriarchal relations and their intersectional expression across class, race, age and mental and physical ability have become more difficult to address. Likewise, the increasing commodification of urban life, the inadequacy of planning systems, and prevailing approaches that neglect "informal" city-making processes become increasingly intractable.

In response to the intersection of urbanization and climate challenges, more and more municipalities in the Global North and Global South are adopting ambitious interventions to "renature the city". Many are designing and offering improved environmental amenities to urban residents while addressing climate goals. They, together with other local and regional governments, do so by strengthening vital systems for food and water security, increasing neighbourhood attractiveness, creating recreational opportunities, revitalizing local economies, and improving the health of their residents. While real world examples of substantial urban transformations are not always easy to identify and cities remain confronted with acute socio-ecological challenges, this chapter examines how transformational pathways are being crafted in practice and why they matter.

In doing so, the aim is neither to provide prescriptive measures for what should be done, nor to glorify the initiatives undertaken in specific contexts. Instead, the experiences examined allow for inspiration and learning from current and ongoing approaches and initiatives, while casting a critical eye on both their potentials and shortcomings. Furthermore, our aim is to acknowledge the diverse factors that might converge in triggering renaturing actions, programmes and policies, as well as the actual conditions that might enable cities to become transformative in different contexts in order to address deeply entrenched and destructive trends.

### 3.3 to 3.6bn people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change.<sup>a</sup>

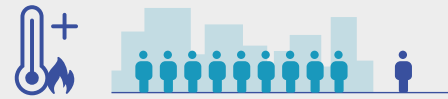
Structurally discriminated people and systems are the most vulnerable.



#### Global impacts of climate change

### At least 896m people

lived in a low-elevation coastal zone in 2020.



### 90% of the 300m people

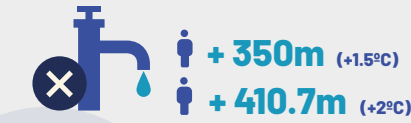
who will be exposed to super- and ultra-extreme heatwaves in the Middle East and North Africa will live in urban centres.<sup>c</sup>



2.9m deaths a year

are attributed to household air pollution, associated with cooking and heating, particularly in poor households.<sup>d</sup>

In 2018 2.3bn people lived in water-stressed countries. By 2050, 350m more people living in urban areas will be exposed to water scarcity from severe droughts at 1.5°C warming and 410.7m at 2°C warming.<sup>e</sup>



+ 350m (+1.5°C)  
+ 410.7m (+2°C)



### 6.5m deaths a year,

equivalent to one every five seconds, can be attributed to exposure to air pollution.<sup>f</sup>

### 95% of the global population

live in areas where ambient PM2.5 exceeds the WHO guideline of annual average exposure of 10µg m<sup>-3</sup>.

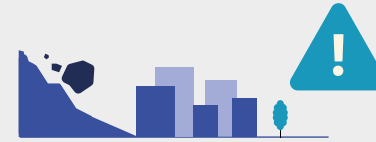
### By 2050, 1 bn people

and their development and coastal ecosystems will face escalating climate-compounded risks.<sup>b</sup>



Urban land exposed to both floods and droughts will increase by

more than 2.5 times<sup>b</sup>



### 48m people

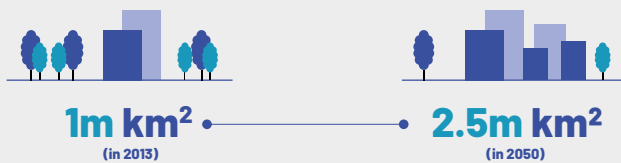
are exposed to landslide risk in Europe alone, with the majority in smaller urban centres.<sup>c</sup>

#### Uneven distribution of climate change risks and impacts

# Why renaturing?

#### Unsustainable urban growth and its pressure on natural resources

If the de-densification of urban settlements continues, urban land use will increase from:<sup>k</sup>



If the global urban population doubles by 2050, the annual resource requirements of the world's urban settlements will increase<sup>k</sup>



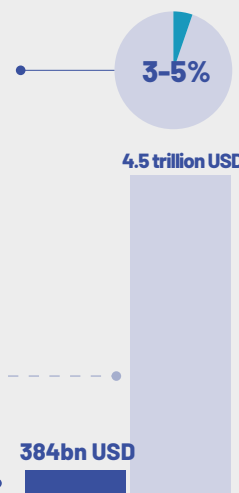
#### Need for climate finance

Investment in urban adaptation is limited. Of the 3.7bn USD investments in adaptation projects in 2017-2018, only 3-5% had an urban component.<sup>l</sup>

Urban climate finance, estimated at 384bn USD annually in 2017/18 is insufficient to meet the 4.5-5.4 trillion USD annual investment needed for urban mitigation across key sectors.<sup>l</sup>

#### Annual investment needed

384bn USD Urban climate finance



#### Unsustainable infrastructure

In 2019, **developing countries** had

**219 watts per capita**

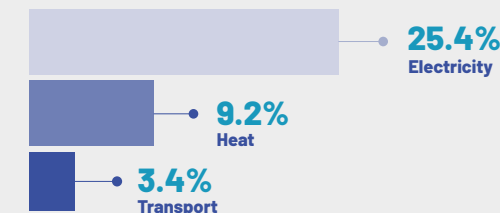
of renewable energy capacity<sup>g</sup>

and **developed countries** had

**880 watts per capita**

(four times higher)<sup>g</sup>

Accelerated action on modern renewable energy is needed, especially in transport and heating sectors. In 2018, modern renewable share of final energy consumption was:<sup>h</sup>



Adapting low-carbon transport infrastructure will be crucial to ensure resilience to climate change impacts, whilst simultaneously delivering mitigation goals.

If proactive interventions are made, the greatest benefits from adaptation of the global road network will be in low- and middle-income countries where reductions in flood risk are typically between<sup>h</sup>

↓ 40-80% ↓

# Renaturing pathway

A just ecological transition

## Towards urban and territorial equality

**Improving urban governance to enable just and sustainable transitions.** This involves setting up progressive political coalitions to create governance modalities that deal with complexity - i.e. "collibration" - to facilitate democratic decision-making and forward-looking planning responsive to social and environmental diversity.

**Addressing mitigation and adaptation through integrated planning and multi-sectoral policies, fostering proximity, improving health and well-being for all** and promoting regulatory interventions that increase affordability and reduce green gentrification and the negative impacts of urban sprawl.

**Decoupling urban development from environmental degradation,** promoting more symbiotic relations between urban and rural territories to reduce resource flows, and decoupling improvements in well-being from rising resource use.

**Shifting from economic dependence on natural resource extraction to less carbon-intensive development** to reduce the human impact on the environment, while alleviating socio-economic inequalities and socio-environmental injustices.

- Just and sustainable forms of urbanism
- Territorial economic development decoupled from natural resource extraction
- Integrated urban and natural systems
- Enhanced health, rights and well-being of current and future generations
- Protected ecosystems
- Buildings and infrastructure resilient to climate change

**Promoting interconnected interventions at intra-, inter-urban and regional scales,** for better management of natural resources, energy and food systems, as well as improved adaptation and resilience. Interventions include, amongst others, equalization mechanisms and the promotion of solidarity and territorial cohesion.

**Adopting and promoting a rights-based approach** with purposeful actions, fostering the social and health benefits of renaturing and the protection of the urban commons.

**Revising local taxes and adopting innovative financing tools to create incentives to support environmental improvements,** protecting disadvantaged groups from negative impacts. Local, regional and national partnerships to fund climate mitigation and adaptation are critical.

How can urban systems be reintegrated into natural systems, sustainably including the "green" in the urban and the urban in the "green"?

How can territorial economic dependence on natural resource extraction be transcended while also tackling the uneven distribution of risks for marginalized groups, such as displacement, gentrification and commodification?

**Explicitly promoting the social production of housing and infrastructure,** protecting the rights of everyday city-makers and their livelihood practices that can renature cities. This involves providing administrative, technical and financial support to civic-driven practices.

**Responding to long-term inequalities through intersectional and inclusive renaturing actions.** Just transitions call for tackling maldistribution and misrecognition. Participatory planning can accelerate transformative adaptation and reduce the uneven distribution of risks for marginalized groups.



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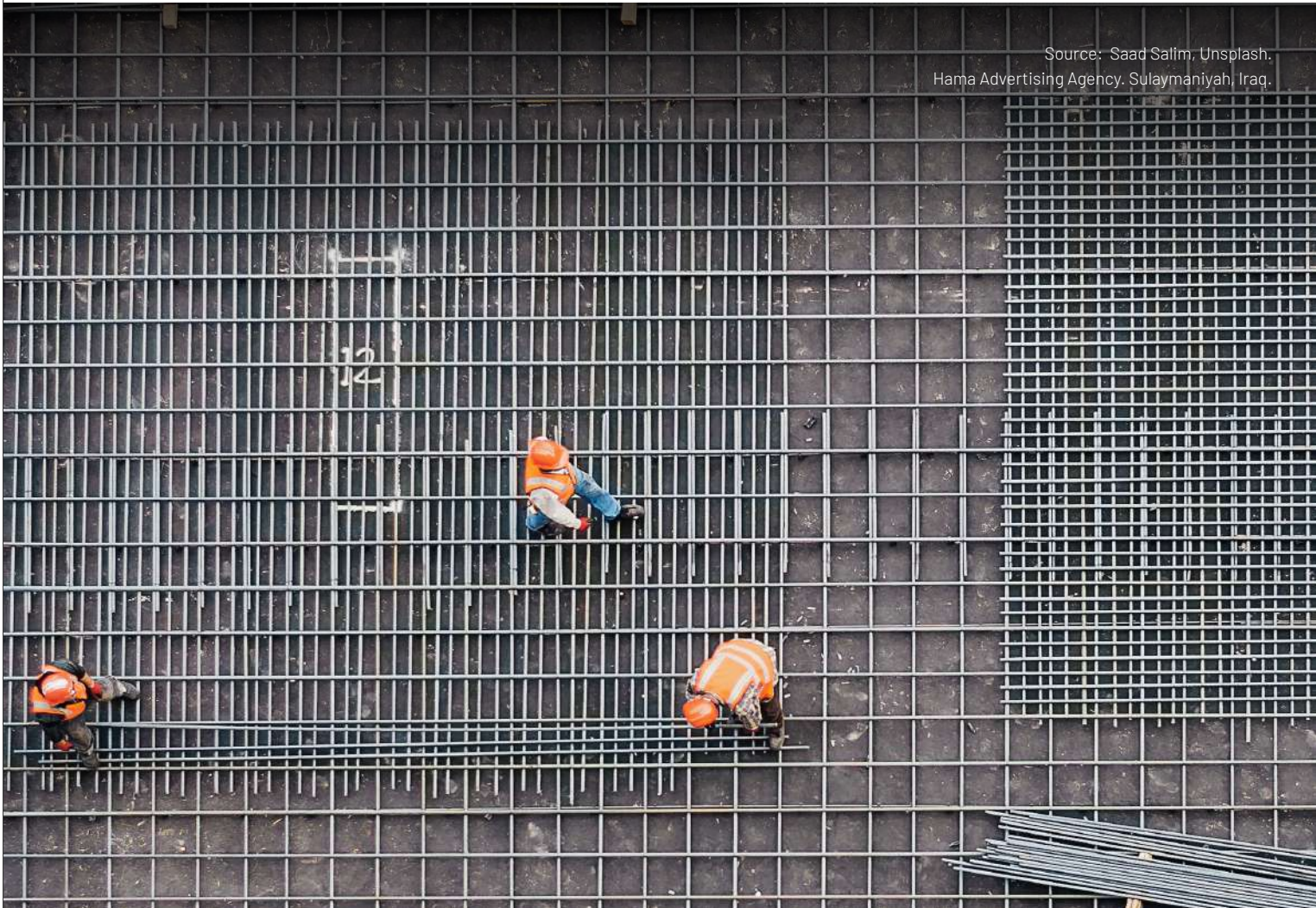
**Building Resilience with Nature:  
Restoring ecosystems and communities  
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# 08 ↓ Prospering

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 8. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).

Source: Saad Salim, Unsplash,  
Hama Advertising Agency, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq.





# Abstract

This chapter focuses on pathways to urban and territorial equality with specific attention to prospering. It looks at different ways in which LRGs can address inequalities through local transformation strategies in this particular domain. Prospering is often understood as meaning something similar to economic growth, but this chapter challenges that idea. There is ample evidence to show that economic growth does not automatically lead to equality, which is an essential feature of prospering as the term is used here.

Promoting a *Prospering* pathway entails adopting a multifaceted and inclusive approach, which goes beyond the restricted definition of material wealth, measured in terms of economic growth and increases in gross domestic product (GDP). A *Prospering* pathway should be more attentive to what people care about and need, focusing on the broader concepts of happiness and well-being. Within this wider understanding of prospering, this chapter provides a specific contribution related to how to advance an equitable *Prospering* pathway with particular attention to the promotion and (re)distribution of stable income and decent work opportunities. The chapter also examines the obstacles that currently prevent achieving these goals. In particular, it discusses the impact of globalization and related drivers of the market economy on growing inequalities both within the labour market and between territories. This includes the growing precariousness, lower incomes, limited or no social rights and other challenges faced by workers. The impacts on different types of workers are analyzed, with special attention being paid to informality as a transversal aspect of the world of labour.

The chapter presents action-oriented strategies to address the previously mentioned problems and challenges. The strategies suggested include both intraterritorial and interterritorial strategies to promote equality. Strategies to improve intraterritorial equality need to pay attention to generating employment and the quality of work, based on an ethos of endogenous growth and local economic development. The principles

of the social and solidarity economy and the circular economy should be promoted, corroborating the argument that different strategies to shape a *Prospering* pathway are not mutually exclusive, and that there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach.

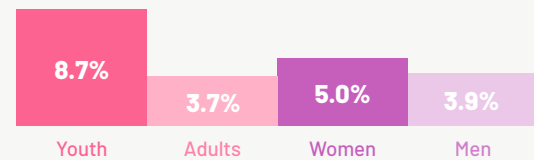
Interterritorial equality may be more challenging. A given LRG may have the capability to promote redistribution within the municipality or region under its administration. However, two or more municipalities or regions are, by definition, under the administration of different LRGs, which makes redistribution more complex. Nevertheless, a *Prospering* pathway can be generated and shaped if stronger horizontal cooperation between regions and municipalities, and also intermunicipal and interregional cooperation, are promoted. This requires moving away from competitiveness-oriented policies and practices and towards promoting greater collaboration and solidarity between territories.

As noted above, given the widely differing contexts in which LRGs operate, there is no specific recipe to create a *Prospering* pathway. Building on the realities of their own contexts, the approaches that LRGs adopt must take into consideration their different histories, national settings, local economic structures and distributions of skills and incomes. At the same time, the concrete experiences shared in the chapter can be a source of inspiration and can be replicated, with the necessary local adaptations.

**630m+ workers** globally live in conditions of extreme or moderate poverty.<sup>a</sup>

**220m people** are unemployed worldwide. The 2021 global unemployment rate is estimated at 6.2%, above the pre-pandemic rate of 5.4%.<sup>b</sup>

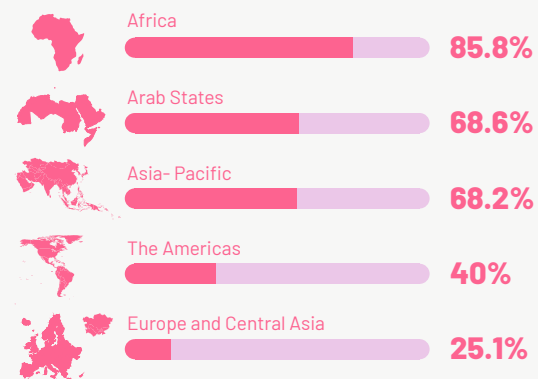
**Proportion of jobs lost** due to the COVID-19 pandemic:<sup>c</sup>



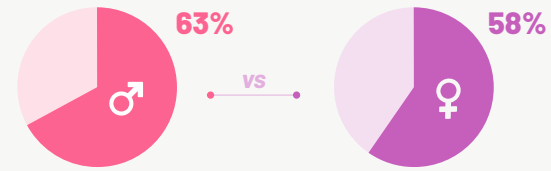
**Increasingly precarious labour markets**

**60.2% of global employment is informal: this is over 2bn people.<sup>d</sup>**

Including agriculture, the share of informal employment per region is:<sup>e</sup>



**Prevalence and importance of the informal economy**

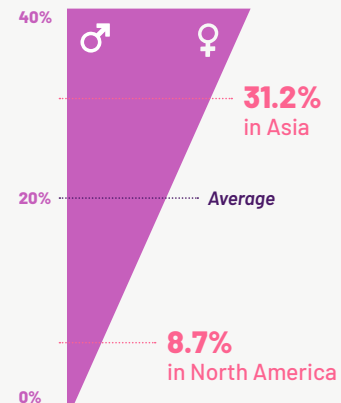


**Percentage of men and women employed in the informal economy globally.<sup>f</sup>**

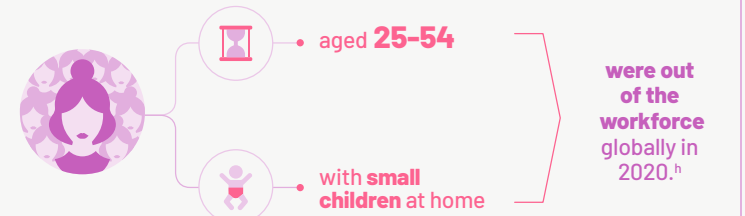
Women are more exposed to informal employment in



**There is a 20% gap** between male and female labour participation rates, globally.<sup>g</sup>

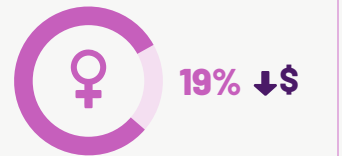


**100m+ women**



This includes **2m+** who left the labour force due to the increased pressures of unpaid care work.<sup>h</sup>

**Globally, women continue to be paid 19% less than men.<sup>i</sup>**



**Gender inequalities in labour markets**

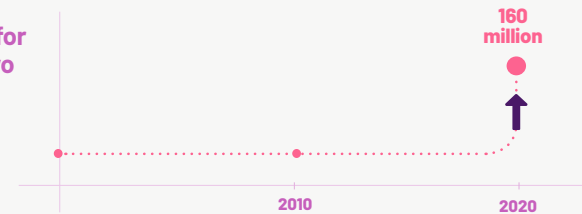


# Why prospering?

**Prevalence of child labour**

**1 in 10 children** are engaged in child labour.<sup>j</sup>

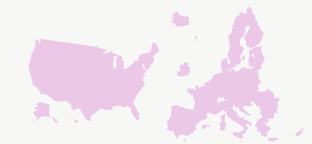
Child labour rose, for the first time in two decades, to **160m in 2020.<sup>j</sup>**



This same year, **23.3% of the world's youth** were not engaged in education, employment or training, a share that has shown no reduction in over a decade.<sup>j</sup>

**An expanding gig economy**

**USA and EU-15**  
There are 162m self-employed workers in the USA and EU.



**15%** are working through online platforms.<sup>k</sup>

**Southeast Asia**



**30%** each year  
Gig work has grown at 30% per annum since 2010.<sup>k</sup>

**China**



**↑40% each year**  
China expects its sharing economy to grow at 40% per annum.<sup>k</sup>

**The potential of promoting the social and solidarity economy**

As of 2017, **9.46% of the world's employed population**



**works in cooperatives!<sup>l</sup>**

**In 2022, 2.8m**

social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises existed in the European Union.<sup>l</sup>

**13.6m jobs**



**8%** of the EU's GDP

# Prospering pathway

Decent work and secure livelihoods

**Promoting local economic development to stimulate endogenous development, cooperation and solidarity**, both within and between territories, involving multiple actors and LRGs to catalyze local potentialities.

**Creating an enabling environment for local economic development through efficient and transparent regulatory frameworks, local financial systems, local procurement, land policies and governance**, strengthening social dialogue with workers from the formal and informal sectors.

**Supporting the creation of decent work and sustainable and inclusive livelihoods** that are adapted to the diverse needs and aspirations of people across genders, races, classes, abilities and territorial realities.

**Establishing institutional collaborative mechanisms to recognize, regulate and integrate informal sector practices.** Decriminalizing informal activities is an essential first step towards facilitating the contribution of people in this sector to the local economy and their access to public services and support.

**Advancing financial mechanisms that promote cooperation and solidarity**, expanding support instruments that generate positive social and environmental impacts. These mechanisms may include social impact bonds, local currencies, tax share donations, crowdfunding and impact investments, among others.

**Enhancing horizontal cooperation between municipalities and regions, moving away from competition-oriented policies and practices and promoting greater collaboration and solidarity between territories**, including metropolitan areas, intermediary cities and urban-rural partnerships to foster more balanced territorial development.

**Extending social dialogue, social security coverage and insurance to provide social protection** for all workers. This includes people whose working conditions are directly or indirectly controlled by LRGs.

How can local resources be leveraged to strengthen the local social fabric and to promote decent work, secure livelihoods, good public services and a healthy environment where diverse people can work and live fulfilling lives?

How can greater urban and interterritorial equality be promoted while acknowledging and addressing different local economic structures and historical legacies, the unequal distribution of resources and different linkages with national and global economies?

- Prosperous territories with policies that ensure decent work and secure livelihoods for all
- An enabling environment for LED whereby local policies, regulations and financial mechanisms respond to the needs of diverse populations
- Strengthened SMEs and social, solidarity and circular economy organizations and initiatives
- An integrated informal sector that is recognized and supported
- Regular social dialogue between local workers, the private sector and public institutions
- Improved territorial equality with increased cooperation between municipalities and regions, as well as between urban and rural areas

## Towards urban and territorial equality



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This chapter has been produced based on the following valuable contributions, which are available as part of the *GOLD VI Working Paper Series* and the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*:

### Space-Blind and Place-Based Policy: Initiatives for Fostering Innovation and Growth

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### The Urban Informal Economy: Achieving Prospering and Territorial Equality

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### Conceptualising and measuring prosperity

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**Social, solidarity, and circular economy  
to build alternative economic paths**

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cooperatives for the transition towards  
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**The development of Vienna's approach  
towards a fair sharing economy**

UCLG Digital Cities

**Regional economic development to promote  
endogenous dynamics and territorial solidarity**

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**Linking tourism, livelihood improvement,  
heritage and conservation through community-  
based tourism in Da Nang, Vietnam**

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**The role of creative and tourism  
economies in tackling/reproducing  
urban and regional inequalities**

UCLG Committee on Culture

# 09 ↓

# Democratizing

This Executive Summary includes the abstract and key information about Chapter 9. A full version of this chapter is available [here](#).



Source: Antenna, Unsplash.  
José Manuel Infante 1428. Santiago de Chile, Chile.



# Abstract

Deepening democracy is a fundamental condition to advance urban and territorial equality. Local democratic institutions that are accountable and open to all citizens and local stakeholders are crucial for the improvements in livelihoods, service delivery and the protection of human rights. Informal norms and formal rules underpin simultaneously the potential for democracy to address inequalities between groups. These dynamics also often apply to who can vote and the nature of local voting systems. In a context of rising income inequalities – and long-standing tensions about resources, identities, and rights – the task of deepening democracy is an uphill battle that requires multiple strategies.

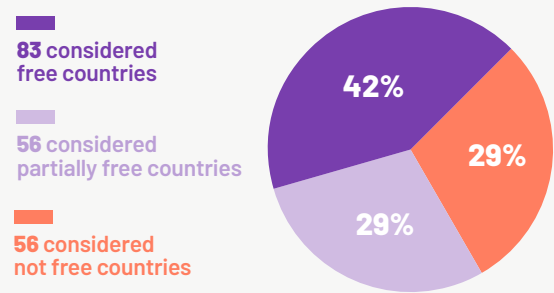
Chapter 9 on *Democratizing* analyzes a range of “democratic innovations” that enable local and regional governments (LRGs) to promote citizen engagement in democratic decision-making; address inequalities in voice and political power; and counter discrimination, wealth inequalities, and spatial segregation in urban areas and territories. These democratic innovations occur in at least three different levels: deliberative spaces, participatory spaces, and spaces for collaborative governance. Looking at these different areas, the chapter examines novel forms and mechanisms for participation, deliberation and collaboration at the local level, as well as how LRGs can democratize their ways of understanding and acting to remedy urban and territorial inequalities. For these mechanisms to achieve transformative change, the chapter discusses how to recognize the diverse needs and aspirations of different groups of residents, as well as to ensure a place-based approach. In other words, it emphasizes that democratization is only a valid process if it leaves no one and no place behind.

The chapter demonstrates that a precondition for these democratic innovations to succeed is the establishment of an enabling environment, which includes a clear devolution of powers, along with the necessary funding, local capacity-building, and supportive legal and institutional frameworks. It synthesizes a range of

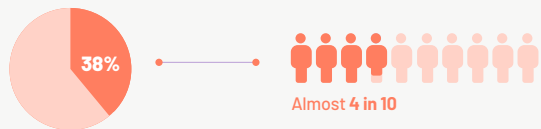
promising experiences, including those led by Human Rights Cities and officials committed to transparency, accountability, open government and the fight against corruption. These experiences demonstrate different ways to counter elite capture, tokenistic forms of participation, and the cooptation of marginalized groups. They range from instituting political quotas and creating partnerships with marginalized communities; to creating departments and coordination mechanisms to tackle inequalities cross-sectorally; recognizing the diverse forms of knowledge and data-collection of civil society; and incorporating democratic values and comprehensive rights-based approaches in all activities, amongst others.

The chapter acknowledges the challenges regarding the implementation of these principles and mechanisms, especially in highly unequal cities and territories. These challenges are even greater when combined with other crises. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has sometimes been taken as an excuse for restricting democratic rights, as many governments have increased restrictions on the media and on personal expression, combined with increasing surveillance and limiting transparency, often under the justification of emergency powers. Acknowledging this and other challenges, and in order to overcome them, the chapter offers a discussion about the elements that democratic practices and strategies need to incorporate, through locally-tailored solutions, so as to renew trust and revitalize citizen engagement in local democracies.

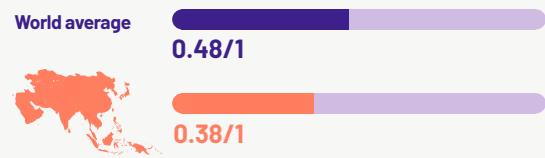
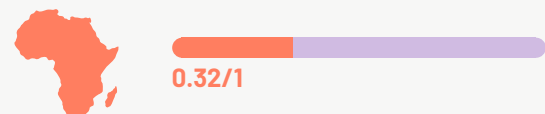
### Countries in 2022:<sup>a</sup>



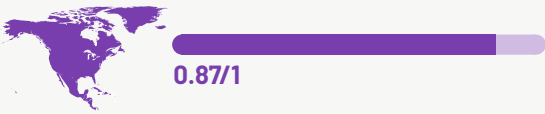
The proportion of the global population living in "not free" countries is the highest since 1997:<sup>a</sup>



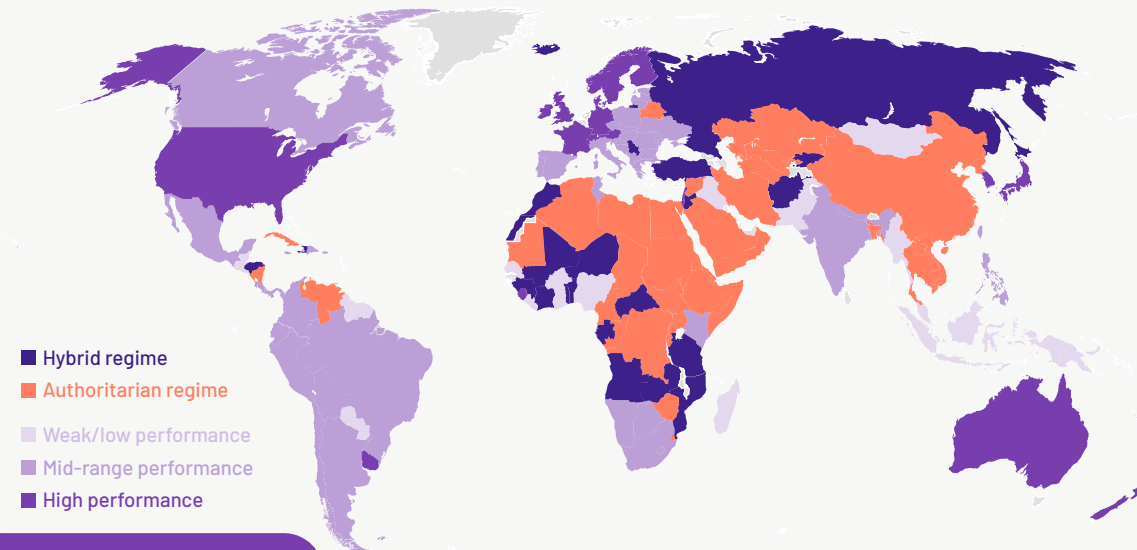
In 2020, Africa and Asia-Pacific remained under the world average regarding the freedom of regional and local elections.<sup>b</sup>



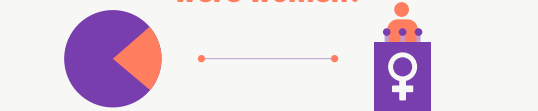
North America had the highest local democracy score:<sup>b</sup>



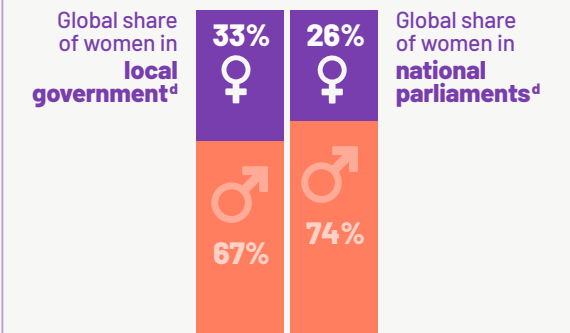
### In 2020, democratic and non-democratic regimes were as follows:<sup>c</sup>



### In 2018, 20% of the world's mayors were women.<sup>d</sup>



Based on an analysis of 135 countries:



### Global democracy trends

### Unequal representation of women and men in local governments



### Institutionalization of local democracy

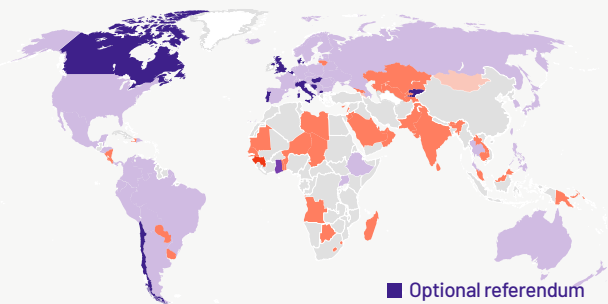
#### Countries with legal provisions for direct democracy<sup>e</sup>

Based on an analysis of 184 countries



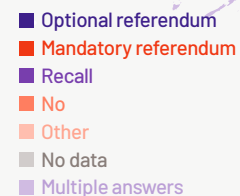
e.g. to institutionalize referendums, citizens' initiatives, agenda initiatives, recalls...

61 countries at the regional level and 53 at the local level do not have any kind of legal provision for direct democracy.<sup>e</sup>



#### Optional referendums

are the most common institutionalized form of direct democracy at the local level (they exist in 31% of the countries).<sup>f</sup>

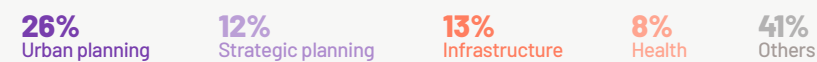


### Deliberative processes

#### 86% of deliberative processes

were promoted by cities and regions (from 566 initiatives collected in OECD countries in 2021, implemented between the 1980s and 2021).<sup>g</sup>

The most frequent policy domains addressed through deliberative processes in OECD countries are:<sup>h</sup>



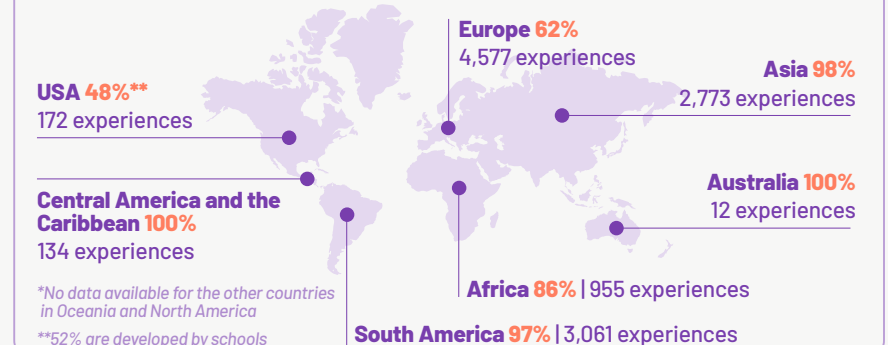
#### Mini-publics have grown exponentially since the 1970s:<sup>i</sup>



### Participatory processes

#### 11,600+ experiences between 1990 and 2020

Participatory budgeting is mostly promoted by LRGs in different regions of the world. The following data represent 11,600+ experiences developed between 1990 and 2020 and the percentage promoted by LRGs by region:<sup>j</sup>



<sup>\*</sup>No data available for the other countries in Oceania and North America  
<sup>\*\*</sup>52% are developed by schools



# Democratizing pathway

Participatory, deliberative and collaborative democracy

## Towards urban and territorial equality

**Fostering an enabling environment for local democracy and decentralization** through supportive governance frameworks that ensure regular local elections and promote diverse forms of citizen participation from a rights-based approach. This entails recognizing power asymmetries and moving away from formal tokenistic forms of participation and cooptation that often lead to elite capture.

**Promoting transparency, accountability, open governance and the fight against corruption** as foundational aspects for building trust and increasing civic engagement.

**Mixing participatory, deliberative and collaborative processes and innovations** according to the different needs and aspirations of local communities. These practices need to be institutionalized and combined with other components of the democratic system in order to sustain a systemic, place-based and long-term democratic approach.

**Promoting participatory processes that encourage the involvement of all residents in decision-making and monitoring of local governance**, such as participatory budgeting and planning, community scorecards and social impact assessments, in such a way that enhances the provision of local government services.

**Taking an intersectional approach to participatory policy and programming** that allows for recognizing, valuing and building the capabilities of structurally discriminated groups. This implies actively facilitating their engagement in inclusive, deliberative and transparent bottom-up processes.

**Using deliberative strategies at various stages of policy processes, including mini-publics, referenda, citizen initiatives and thematic or group-centred councils**, encouraging more diverse sources of knowledge as well as fostering respect and mutual trust.

**Fostering collaborative spaces to co-produce services with civil society and across sectors**, promoting grassroots empowerment, government accountability and cross-sectoral approaches. Community-led partnerships and community finance may be used to establish strong ties for long-term engagement.

**Recognizing diverse forms of knowledge and data collection by civil society** and other local actors, incorporating democratic values and comprehensive rights-based approaches in all activities.

- Enhanced and combined participatory, deliberative and collaborative democratic spaces
- Increased recognition of intersecting identities through a rights-based approach
- Empowered inhabitants that increasingly participate in local decision-making through dialogue and cocreation
- A supportive enabling environment that institutionalizes and fosters participation and other democratic mechanisms
- Increased partnerships and community-led initiatives that enhance the delivery of public services

How can local democratic practices and innovations contribute to addressing complex multidimensional inequalities and to giving voice to people who are structurally marginalized?

How can an enabling environment for local democracy be created, as well as an environment for increased involvement of civil society and stakeholders in local decision-making and collaborative governance mechanisms?



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This chapter has been produced based on the following valuable contributions, which are available as part of the *GOLD VI Working Paper Series* and the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*:

### Democratising pathways for equality in Latin America

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# Conclusions and final recommendations

Achieving urban and territorial equality



# Abstract

GOLD VI has discussed the arenas in which local and regional governments (LRGs) are taking action to address urban and territorial inequalities, with multiple chapters presenting different pathways for LRGs to join in trajectories for change and implement future-oriented courses of action. This concluding chapter begins by revisiting the main findings that each pathway to equality has offered in this Report: **Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering** and **Democratizing**. It then offers some reflections on the challenges of scaling up these pathways in transformative ways. Understanding that the most significant changes to promote equality take place at the intersection of these pathways and as a result of their cumulative effects, this conclusion presents five key principles that LRGs should consider when building pathways towards equality.

These five principles emerge from the pathways. First, a rights-based approach is the basis of any LRG efforts to build pathways to equality. Second, the spatial dimension of inequalities is central to LRGs' efforts to promote equality. Policies and planning should challenge socio-spatial fragmentation; promote proximity, accessibility and urban-rural reciprocity; and foster more equal and sustainable territorial development which is compatible with just ecological transitions. Third, a new subnational governance culture is crucial in the face of growing inequalities. It is necessary to promote broad local partnerships, encourage greater participation and adequately empower LRGs, thus making multilevel governance truly effective. Fourth, an adequate fiscal and investment architecture is essential to strengthen and localize finance and propel alternative financing models that recognize and optimize the value of the many and varied resources that exist. And finally, LRGs can advance pathways to equality by engaging practically with time frames that look beyond electoral cycles: recognizing different and unequal historical legacies and structural constraints, addressing the issue of time poverty, supporting radical incremental practices and working together to establish bold visions for a sustainable and equitable future.

These five principles are explored further by offering a series of political recommendations to help advance urban and territorial equality. These recommendations are the result of the intersection between the different pathways and the principles discussed.

This chapter concludes by returning to different dimensions of urban and territorial equality: (a) the equitable distribution of material conditions for a dignified quality of life; (b) reciprocal recognition of identities and claims; (c) parity political participation in decision-making; and (d) solidarity and mutual care among people and between people and nature. It then offers some reflections on the critical role played by LRGs, which are committed to making the political choices needed to pursue a more equal, peaceful and sustainable future.

# 1 Fighting inequalities with LRGs at the forefront

For the local and regional government (LRG) movement, it is no longer an option to allow inequalities to grow. Inequalities have multifaceted impacts in cities and territories: intensifying and creating new forms of social segregation, urban segmentation and regional marginalization; amplifying disaffection and unrest; and limiting opportunities for structurally marginalized people to live dignified and fulfilling lives. LRGs have a duty to take action and use all their capacities to lead and support transformative local forces that can address inequalities through local strategies and thereby ensure local populations a just and sustainable future, and the respect, fulfilment and protection of their human rights. Current approaches to framing global inequalities tend to minimize the fundamental role that local action, strategies and knowledge can play in tackling the territorial manifestations of inequalities. These approaches also underestimate the importance of local attempts to deal with some of the underlying causes behind social and economic disparities. **This Report is a collective effort to position the role of LRGs at the forefront of the construction of more equal futures.** It recognizes their function as key players in the articulation of diverse partnerships, in supporting citizen-led initiatives, in promoting long-term sustainable visions and radical democratization, and in providing the basic conditions for collective life to flourish.

**This is a challenging task and, as important as local action is, responses to inequalities led by LRGs need to be firmly embedded within wider strategies, working at different scales, that can tackle the structural conditions that drive inequalities.** Although many of these structural trends go beyond the competences of local authorities, local communities are the first to be hit by inequalities. This means that LRGs require adequate support and recognition from national structures at different levels in order to respond to them, including appropriate enabling environments and capabilities. This implies having the necessary financial, political and administrative mechanisms to advance equality-enhancing, transformative actions at the local level.

This task is, however, backed up by a global architecture of important dialogue, commitments and agreements. This has permitted the recognition of both the centrality of the equality agenda, and the importance of grounded and territorial action, which are important ways of helping to achieve the objective of sustainable development. As discussed in the previous chapters of this Report, the centrality of localization processes for the 2030 Agenda has led many international voices to recognize that whether or not the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda are achieved will largely be decided in cities and territories. This has led a



Source: Alexandre Apsan Frediani.  
City learning platform meeting, Sierra Leone.

growing number of LRGs to commit to the localization of the global agendas. What is more, many have developed voluntary local and subnational reviews to monitor and reflect upon the state of SDG localization and action being taken against climate change in their respective cities and territories.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Human Rights City movements have focused the role of local authorities on respecting, fulfilling and protecting human rights. LRGs have a central role to play in the recognition of everyday and collective practices relating to the production and advancing of rights, and occupy a privileged position to help to expand a new generation of rights (see Chapter 3). All in all, UCLG has a commitment to acting for *people*, the *planet* and *government* as reflected in its Pact for the Future.<sup>2</sup> This is reinforced by other initiatives within the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments.<sup>3</sup> This speaks of an international pledge to recognize the importance of acting, thinking and implementing locally when dealing with pressing global challenges. Addressing inequalities forms a fundamental part of these UCLG commitments.

<sup>1</sup> See UCLG, "Localizing the SDGs: A Boost to Monitoring & Reporting," Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3M8lxR0>; and Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, "Who We Are," 2021, <https://bit.ly/3pVDdXB>.

<sup>2</sup> See UCLG, "Facilitating a 'Pact for the Future': The Role of the International Municipal and Regional Movement Powered by UCLG," Media, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3zbikP6>.

<sup>3</sup> See GTF, "Global Taskforce," 2020, <https://bit.ly/3zBpsBP>.

**Through its different chapters, GOLD VI has discussed the space in which LRGs have taken action within this immense task. It has done this through the notion of pathways to urban and territorial equality, which are seen as trajectories for change that offer LRGs ways to act beyond sectorial silos. They also offer the possibility to define criteria for decision-making relating to future-oriented courses of action.** This concluding chapter begins by revisiting the main findings that each of the pathways to equality has offered in this Report. However, **it is precisely in the intersections and cumulative effects of these pathways that the most significant changes to promote equality take place.** The following sections begin by offering some reflections on the challenges of upscaling these pathways in transformative ways. They then provide a composite vision that looks across the different pathways, and proposes five key principles that LRGs should consider when building pathways towards equality. These five principles are then explored further by offering a series of political recommendations to help advance urban and territorial equality. These emerge from the intersection between the different pathways and the principles discussed. This chapter concludes by offering some final reflections on the different dimensions of urban and territorial equality, and on the critical role played by LRGs which are committed to making the political choices needed to address inequalities.



# 2 Pathways as a response to inequalities

As noted in this Report, the challenge of tackling urban and territorial inequalities is mainly a question of governance (see Chapter 3) and cannot be exclusively addressed through sectorial or siloed approaches. GOLD VI recognizes that addressing structural inequalities and current unsustainable development trends requires planning and building alternative trajectories of action that can turn sustainable and rights-based visions into practical realities. These courses of action are the pathways proposed by GOLD VI. The complex and interconnected nature of current trends in inequality (see Chapter 2) invites LRGs to find spaces for action through multiple, interconnected pathways:

**Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering** and **Democratizing**.

Providing access to adequate housing and basic services, in response to the global social crisis, and recognizing the needs and aspirations of diverse individuals and collectives, lie at the heart of promoting greater urban and territorial equality. It is therefore the duty of LRGs to deal with the current housing crisis, and its different manifestations in cities and territories, and also the consequences of the financialization of housing, land and services. Understanding the multiple

aspects of inequality manifested in these challenges, **Commoning** practices (see Chapter 4) offer LRGs a significant opportunity to redefine the social contract and to advance towards greater urban equality. They can do this by fostering collective efforts that guarantee access to decent housing and basic services for everyone, which must include not only access to water and sanitation, but also to culture and collective goods, in general. LRGs can engage with commoning practices in several ways to productively implement this pathway by: advocating and recognizing, protecting and regulating, investing in, remunicipalizing, and scaling these collective practices.

Among the many ongoing difficulties that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated, the care crisis has probably been one of the most visible, particularly within the generalized crisis of social protection. One central dimension of urban equality lies in acknowledging the usually invisibilized, gendered and racialized labour of care. Alongside recognizing existing caring activities, LRGs can acknowledge that many functions within their mandate can promote cities and territories that care for their residents. These functions include questions such as the provision of education, health care and

security, and working with segments of the population with particular needs, such as children, older people, migrants, people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ people, from an intersectional perspective. Importantly, this also implies highlighting the needs of those who have historically carried the burden of caring tasks: mainly women, racialized persons and migrants. **Caring** (see Chapter 5) is therefore a pathway via which LRGs can help to promote equality. This can be done in different ways, such as through interventions that prioritize proximity in their responses and that focus on: recognizing and democratizing care provision; redistributing and decommodifying the provision of care services; and reducing the burden of care activities and defeminizing care.

The fragmentation and socio-spatial segregation of cities and territories is one of the most visible manifestations of inequalities and presents challenges for territorial and urban planning, urban design, infrastructure and transport. These are usually old challenges that have had different trajectories in different countries, and which have often been shaped by particular colonial, economic and/or socio-political backgrounds. Today, more than ever before, cities and territories are confronting dramatic gaps in terms of mobility and access to infrastructure, as well as a pressing digital divide. Within this context, **Connecting** (see Chapter 6) has become a pathway to ensure adequate, sustainable, physical and digital connectivity for everyone and to guarantee access to livelihoods, services, public spaces and the different components that make it possible to lead a dignified life. By enabling physical and digital encounters and connectivity in a way that recognizes diverse needs and aspirations, as well as formal and informal practices, LRGs can make a huge contribution to the ability of human beings to communicate with each other. This can also foster values such as caring, creativity, innovation, trust and tolerance.

Addressing the climate emergency and environmental degradation that humanity is currently confronting is certainly a central pillar for building more sustainable and equal urban and territorial futures. This implies that LRGs should make every effort to mainstream the challenges of pursuing just ecological transitions and decarbonization, and transcending the existing economic dependence on natural resource extraction and carbon-intensive development. The **Renaturing** pathway (see Chapter 7) has emerged as an approach to address both socio-economic inequalities and socio-environmental injustices. It can do this by creating a renewed and sustainable relationship between humankind and the ecosystem and natural

resources. LRGs can promote this pathway by breaking with path-dependency and lock-in trajectories of urban growth, carbonization, environmental degradation and exploitation by: promoting the protection of natural resources, resilient communities, and rehabilitation in-situ; protecting the use of land for common purposes and safeguarding it from speculation; adopting sustainable procurement mechanisms; regulating land and real estate to prevent green gentrification; and securing the right to housing and land in order to prevent urban displacement.

Sustainable economic growth is one of the key ways to build more equal cities and territories. At present, economic development is not only hindered by extractivist development models and increasing inequalities between territories, but also by the increased segmentation of labour markets and the precarization of working conditions and livelihoods. Understanding the multidimensional character of a prosperity-based agenda, LRGs have a key role to play by advancing a **Prospering** pathway (see Chapter 8). It invites LRGs to support and guarantee the creation of decent and sustainable jobs, livelihoods and local economic development that are more inclusive and adapt to the diverse conditions of different social identities. These efforts can also help to promote social, green and circular economies, as well as inter-territorial cooperation, to foster more sustainable and equitable endogenous economic growth.

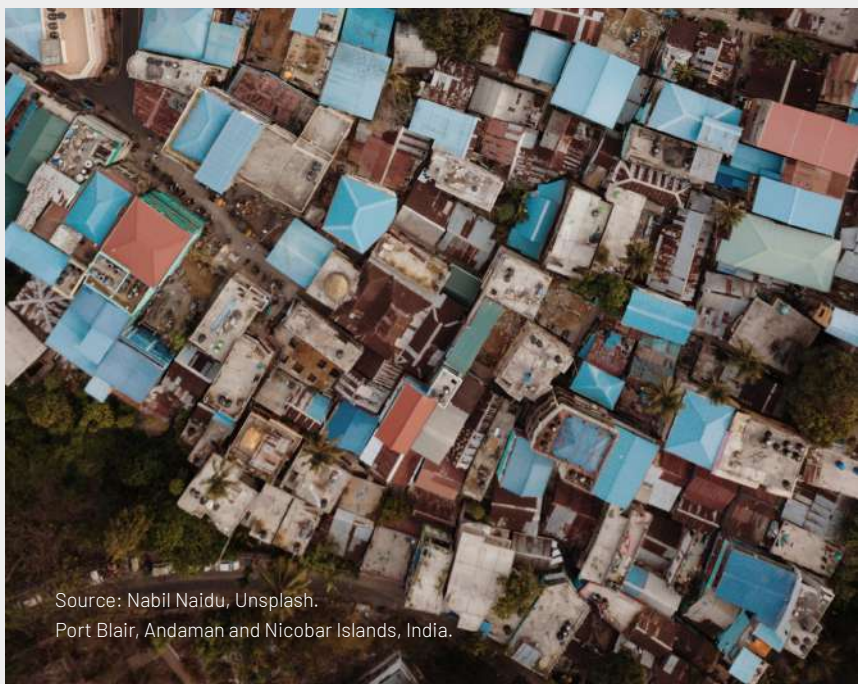
Democracy and equality are deeply interconnected. It is well acknowledged that the growth of inequalities has been closely linked to global and local threats to democracy. It is not, therefore, surprising that as inequalities increase, we witness growing calls to improve and strengthen the existing mechanisms of representation and decision-making. In this context, the **Democratizing** pathway (see Chapter 9) offers a lever with which to press for more inclusive principles of governance that recognize everyone's voice, and especially those of the historically and structurally marginalized. LRGs can promote greater equality by encouraging citizen engagement through a range of innovative means of local participation, which may include: instituting political quotas, creating partnerships, creating cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, recognizing diverse forms of knowledge and data-collection, and incorporating democratic values and rights-based approaches into all LRGs activities.

# 3 Upscaling transformations for urban and territorial equality

These different pathways are grounded in local experiences and have great transformative potential. However, in order to materialize and expand their potential, there is an urgent need to implement appropriate policies and planning, and also to upscale equality-building processes so that they are capable of responding to the diverse needs of different territories and national contexts.

The multidimensional expressions of inequalities analyzed in GOLD VI are deep-rooted in different spatial contexts and geographies and at different scales. They manifest themselves in the growing inequalities between urban systems and territories, and between globalized metropolises and regions. They can be seen in less integrated, or stagnant, intermediary cities and places, shrinking cities, and marginalized rural regions and towns. Spatialized inequalities manifest themselves at the intra-, inter-urban and regional scales.

Mitigating multidimensional inequalities and upscaling local initiatives that create alternative development pathways requires an enabling framework. This enabling framework needs to be buttressed by an effective decentralization that facilitates innovation at the local level, accompanied by solidarity-based policies and planning that can reconfigure unequal territorial



Source: Nabil Naidu, Unsplash.  
Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India.

systems. **No single level of government can address inequalities within cities and across territorial systems alone.** As underlined in the different global sustainability agendas, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda, adopting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches



requires collaborative governance, policy cohesion, participative planning and balanced urban and territorial development. Harmonizing sectoral policies and strategies across territories through effective multilevel governance is a necessary condition if we are to leave no one and no place behind.

Key actions to strengthen sustainable development at different scales already exist in some countries and regions. These include: territorial and urban policies (e.g. European Union cohesion policies, national urban policies in different countries), efforts to achieve SDG localization, and post COVID-19 recovery plans. However, in order to catalyze these transformative local actions, development policies and planning strategies need to highlight the realities of regional and urban inequalities in a more conscious and proactive way.

**The principles of subsidiarity, shared responsibilities, collaborative implementation and solidarity between territories are central to this endeavour.** These principles call for mechanisms such as cofinancing and monitoring, as well as closer and fairer collaboration between local, regional and national governments, and with civil society. They are necessary for effectively addressing inequalities in ways that strengthen local democracy and accountability. Within the framework of decentralization processes currently taking place in most countries across the world, devolution must be accompanied by an effective redistribution and sharing of powers, functions and resources between different social, environmental and economic domains.

LRGs need the fiscal capacity to increase their investment in urban infrastructure and services, to improve access to essential services and adequate housing, to promote caring and connectivity, to mitigate and adapt to climate changes, and to strengthen local resilience and prosperity, in ways that are cocreated with their communities. To achieve this, the rules of the game need to be renewed: it is necessary to promote financial ecosystems and partnerships that mutually support each other and to work to secure collaboration in urban and territorial investment projects. To boost local initiatives, national institutions should develop new financial models, as part of better balanced national urban and territorial strategies, and reinforce their technical capacity to localize finance.

As part of these efforts, poor neighbourhoods, cities and regions need to be given special consideration in order to foster endogenous development and strengthen local capabilities. This requires the delivery of adequate and

reliable intergovernmental fiscal transfers from national governments to LRGs, coupled with transparent equalization mechanisms. To respond to local and regional needs, subnational investment can be strengthened through mechanisms such as subnational development banks, local government funding agencies, local green banks, or the issuing of bonds. Where possible, this should be done working in tandem with appropriate community-led financing initiatives. Likewise, LRGs need to gain greater autonomy over their own-source revenue, to strengthen local capacities, and to rebuild their fiscal space, via an adequate system of local taxes. They should be able to collect and capture the added value generated by urban and local development. Giving LRGs adequate fiscal autonomy is a precondition to them becoming empowered and able to innovate and use a wide array of financing mechanisms, including equity and debt financing, to support local investment.

The need for accelerated mitigation and adaptation to climate change and to social and natural disasters implies that local, regional and national financing will need to be further supplemented, and especially in the Global South.<sup>4</sup> A large part of these adaptation efforts will require local, regional and national partnerships for their implementation, as well as support from development assistance and multilateral development banks, supplemented by contributions from NGOs and private climate funds. Investment projects developed by financial partners can have a significant social impact by supporting solidarity and circular economies. This can be done through cooperative and development banks, solidarity savings schemes, and financial and economic short circuits.

**For the pathways to equality identified in this Report to effectively unleash their transformational potential, they will need to be embedded in strong local alliances and accompanied by structural reforms that improve local and multilevel collaborative governance across different sectors and territories.** These are necessary conditions for upscaling the transformative actions that these pathways propose, triggering an incremental and cumulative effect. In doing so, these pathways can lead to a radical transformation of urban and territorial systems and help to make them more just and capable of meeting the sustainability commitments adopted by the international community.

<sup>4</sup> IPCC, "Strengthening and Implementing the Global Response. Global Warming of 1.5°C," 2018, <https://bit.ly/3t3bKWQ>.

# 4 Composite vision: Five principles for pathways to equality

These pathways invite LRGs to acknowledge that effectively addressing inequalities requires engaging with urban and territorial equality at different scales and in four different dimensions (see Chapter 1):

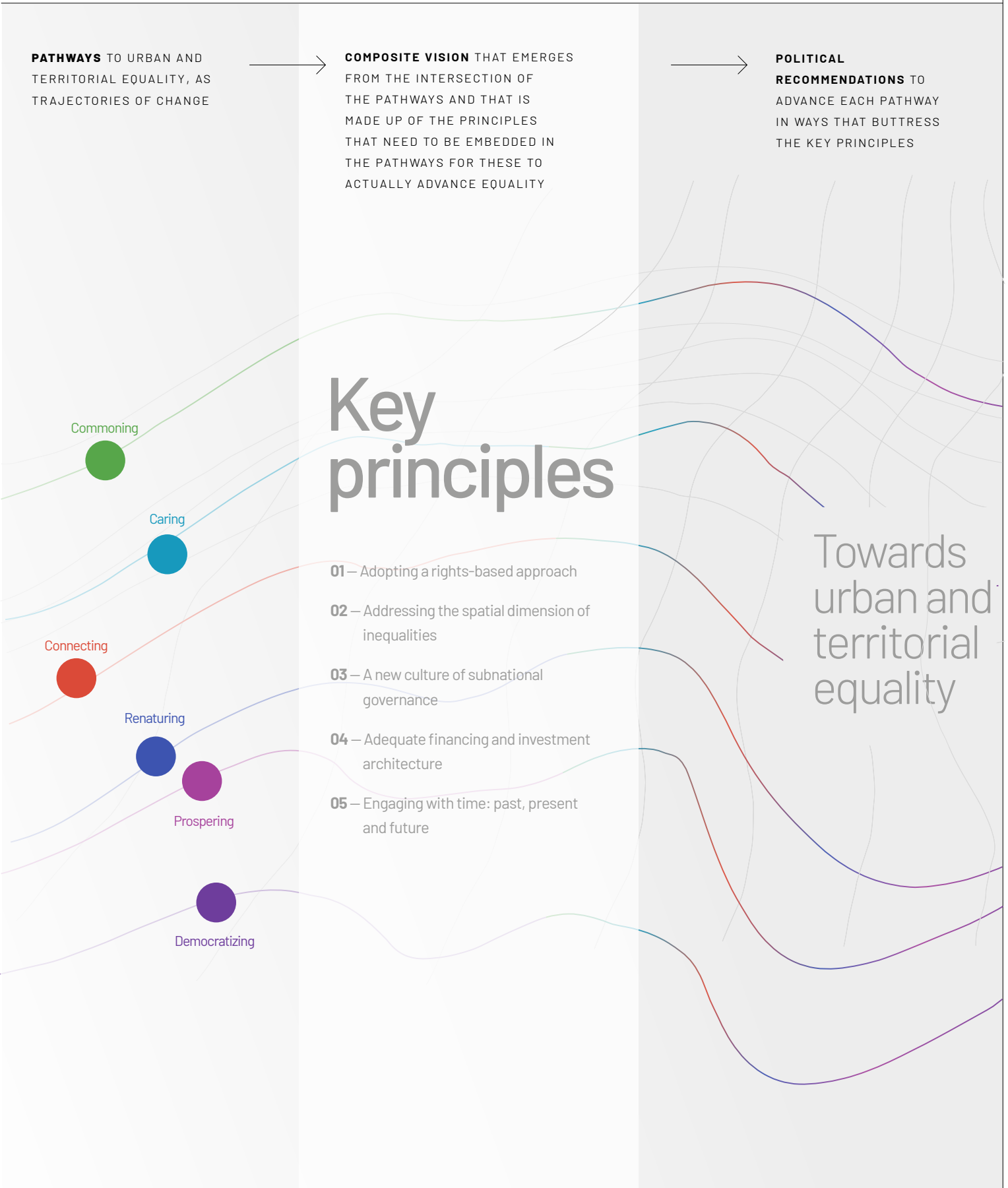
- **the equitable distribution** of material conditions for a dignified quality of life;
- **reciprocal recognition** of identities and claims;
- **parity political participation** in decision making; and
- **solidarity and mutual care** between people, and between people and nature.

Embracing this multifaceted understanding of equality and its links to environmental challenges invites us to look at the intersections and overlaps between the main messages identified by each of the pathways. Adopting this transversal overview has led us to the conclusion that LRGs should consider five key principles for building pathways towards equality. These principles constitute what GOLD VI proposes as a *composite vision* of the pathways to equality. This contains five key elements for LRGs to consider when addressing local priorities and localizing the SDGs in ways that advance equality, as well as mobilizing their vision of cities and territories that care. These five principles are the following (see Figure 10.1 for a visual conceptualization):

## 1. A rights-based approach is the basis of any LRG efforts to build pathways to equality.

By adopting this approach from a local perspective, LRGs can rethink the social contract that they have with local inhabitants and promote their Right to the City. This implies recognizing local aspirations, practices and needs from an intersectional and ecological perspective. LRGs can play a crucial role in advancing equality pathways by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their obligations regarding human rights and the commitments acknowledged by the United Nations. These include the universal rights to water and sanitation, adequate housing, education, health, decent work, and participation in public life, amongst others. LRGs should also lead the process of integrating a new generation of essential rights and entitlements, which should include access to caring systems, inclusive culture, public and green spaces, a fair valuing of time, connectivity, and the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, among others. These should be seen as fundamental rights for both the present and future generations. LRGs can also play an active role in recognizing and supporting day-to-day and collective practices that effectively expand citizens' rights on the ground. Adopting a rights-based approach requires cocreating pathways that recognize the different ways in which inequalities and

**Figure 10.1**  
**Composite vision diagram**





needs are experienced differently by different people. It should also help to tackle some of the structural drivers behind interrelated processes of discrimination, violence and exclusion towards certain groups based on gender, class, age, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, migration status and sexuality, amongst others.

## 2. The spatial dimension of inequalities is central to promoting the advance of equality by LRGs. Policies and planning should challenge socio-spatial fragmentation; promote proximity, accessibility and urban-rural reciprocity; and foster more equal and sustainable territorial development which is compatible with just ecological transitions.

To support the realization of rights at the local scale, LRGs need to challenge spatial inequalities. To do so, they need to promote more sustainable and fairer planning and ensure that it reduces distances between people and provides the necessary support of life. This includes tackling problems of pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These initiatives may also include the promotion of a mixture of social and functional activities, pluricentric cities, active mobility and connectivity, accessible local care infrastructure, and inclusive public and green space. The climate emergency also needs urgent action to decouple urban development from environmental degradation. This should involve fostering more symbiotic relations with the environment, promoting renewable energies, and renaturing urbanization through less extractive relationships between urban and rural territories. Addressing inequalities and sustainability requires taking action at different scales and applying policies and planning that address the spatial dimensions of economic, social and environmental injustices, as well as promoting cooperation and solidarity between territories and their LRGs.

## 3. A new subnational governance culture is crucial in the face of growing inequalities. It is necessary to promote broad local partnerships, encourage greater participation, and

## adequately empower LRGs, thus making multilevel governance truly effective.

LRGs need adequate powers and capacities to be able to play an active role in building pathways to equality and reducing the impact of urbanization on the environment. This requires multilevel and collaborative governance, based on the principle of subsidiarity. This new governance culture should allow LRGs to not merely act as providers, enablers, and implementers of national policies, but also as guarantors of just, inclusive, democratic and sustainable local development processes that seek to leave no one and no place behind. This implies reinforcing forms of cross-sectoral governance that break away from institutional silos and strengthen participation and democratic mechanisms at different levels. It must therefore involve creating the institutional conditions for effective engagement with different social movements and community initiatives, and promoting alliances based on mutual recognition, respect and support. Strong local initiatives and partnerships are essential if we are to prevent the commodification of public assets and goods, protect the ecosystems that provide the basic foundations for life, and support non-speculative and sustainable forms of development.

## 4. An adequate fiscal and investment architecture is essential to strengthen and localize finance and propel alternative financing models that recognize and optimize the value of the many and varied existing resources.

LRGs can channel local, national and international investment to finance local sustainable and resilient development, through infrastructure, basic services, and other investments that generate large returns in equality while promoting just ecological transitions. This requires fiscal decentralization and investment mechanisms that boost endogenous territorial development, and decouple development from the extraction of natural resources. It entails acknowledging and better valuing the diversity of local resources, such as land, and natural and social resources. Intergovernmental fiscal transfers and localized financial flows must be used to support more balanced territorial development. It is also key to reframe the relationship between LRGs and the value generated by local stakeholders (which

includes organized communities and both the formal and informal private sectors) and to foster greener, circular, and social and collaborative economies. This implies valuing the role of existing networks and their social capital, cultural diversity and social ties. These are key resources for cities and territories, which might need financial support.

## 5. LRGs can advance pathways to equality by engaging practically with time frames that look beyond electoral cycles: recognizing different and unequal historical legacies and structural constraints, addressing the issue of time poverty, supporting radical incremental practices, and working together to establish bold visions for a sustainable and equitable future.

This means developing mid- and long-term strategies that consider time in its different dimensions: past, present and future. The first involves recognizing the

historical trajectories that have shaped and which explain current inequalities and environmental degradation, which include histories of oppression, exclusion and colonialism and which need active processes of reparation. The second dimension consists of recognizing inequalities in the availability and use of time, taking into account inequalities related, amongst others, to social class and gender. For instance, this highlights the double day of women who combine paid work and care work within their homes. The third involves pursuing bold and ambitious imaginaries of a more sustainable and fairer future. This entails acting in strategic ways that consolidate local alliances and are supported by a long-term vision. Structural transformations must be coupled with radical incremental interventions, by LRGs and other groups, that recognize the needs and aspirations of current and future generations. In combination with large-scale urban investment, radical incrementalism can build up momentum over time, until reaching tipping points at which it is possible to generate pathways that lead to, and can deliver, structural change. This engagement with time enables LRGs to imagine ambitious, alternative visions of urban and territorial futures which can open up possibilities for the cocreation of more equitable and sustainable development pathways.



Source: Pedro Lastra, Unsplash.  
Maras, Peru.

# 5 Political recommendations: Pathways towards achieving urban and territorial equality





Source: Huda Shaat Alagha.

"Castelldefels, a sustainable city", Barcelona, Spain. From the initiative "Metropolis through Children's Eyes" by Metropolis. See more: <https://imaginemetropolis.org>

# 5.1

## Principle 1: A rights-based approach

The pathways to equality discussed in GOLD VI require a grounded rights-based approach if they are to flourish in ways that recognize local people's needs and aspirations. The pledge made by LRGs to respect, protect and fulfil human rights obligations and commitments has been converted into several ambitious initiatives, networks and mechanisms (see Chapter 3). However, the different pathways discussed in this Report invite LRGs to embrace an expansive approach to rights that goes beyond these obligations. **They encourage LRGs not only to push for a new generation of essential rights, but also to recognize the multiple forms in which collectives are demanding and advancing entitlements on the ground.**

LRGs can make a substantial contribution to the rights and capabilities of human beings in order to advance equality and sustainability. They can do so: (a) by fostering solidarity and care, creativity and innovation, trust and tolerance, and democracy and civic life; (b) by facilitating the rights of communities to access basic services and protect the commons; (c) by guaranteeing connectivity and livelihoods that ensure the inclusion of different communities within the urban fabric; and (d) by ensuring just ecological transitions that support dignified life and sustainable futures.

**Adopting a rights-based approach to urban and territorial equality invites LRGs to actively engage with the rights of present and future generations,** in relation to a range of entitlements, which include both rights recognized by international conventions, and also new essential rights: (a) the rights to water and sanitation, adequate housing, education and health; (b) the right to care, whose importance has been evidenced by the current pandemic; (c) rights related to accessibility and sustainable mobility for all; (d) digital rights, and the right to time for personal and leisure activities; (e) the right to enjoy a healthy environment; (f) the right to decent work; (g) the right to participate in public life and decision-making processes; and, overall, (h) the right to the protection of human rights for structurally discriminated people and groups with specific needs, such as women, children, the victims of violence, LGBTQIA+ people, older people, persons with disabilities, migrants, and people in charge of care activities, among others. LRGs must regard this expanded understanding of rights as representing the core values for a renewed social contract that will advance the Right to the City.

Furthermore, LRGs have the opportunity to address inequalities by **recognizing and supporting civil society-led efforts which advocate, and seek to expand, the rights of groups that have historically been systematically marginalized.** As discussed earlier in this Report, everyday practices have a crucial role in expanding rights from the ground. This includes cultural occupations, saving groups, self-enumerations and mapping in informal settlements, commoning land, and other processes of social production of habitat. When adequately recognized and supported by LRGs, these practices can create synergies and extend the fulfilment of other rights, such as access to decent work and/or adequate housing. This implies understanding the ways in which rights are experienced in different territories, and recognizing diversity across gender, class, age, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, migration status and sexuality, amongst others.



## Commoning

Advance strategies and policies that **support everyday and collective processes of advancing rights**, by creating the conditions, and supporting environments, that allow the recognition and promotion of civic action and the expansion of rights.



## Democratizing

Respect, protect and fulfil the human **right to participate in public life**, coupling the right to vote with participatory innovations for decision-making and accountability that guarantee non-discrimination, freedom of dissent and to protest, and equal access to justice.

Respect and recognize diverse forms of **citizen-led democratic practices** that help to advance the rights and entitlements of historically excluded groups.

Support the **capacities to participate in decision-making processes** of structurally excluded groups, and guarantee their right to participate in public life in meaningful ways.

Promote the **right to culture, within a framework of mutual respect**, as a way to make democratic innovations more responsive to diverse and intersecting needs and aspirations.

Uphold human rights by guaranteeing **universal access to adequate health, education, water and sanitation, housing, and social protection**. This is particularly critical for structurally discriminated groups and people with specific needs.



## Caring

Promote the **right to care** as a high priority on public agendas to protect people with specific needs, and/or those affected by discrimination, as well as those who take care of others.

**Recognize, redistribute and reduce** the burden of care work in order to protect and guarantee women's rights. This requires policies and programmes that acknowledge the (often invisible) gendered, racialized and poorly paid nature of care work, and help to advance processes of defeminizing, democratizing and de-commodifying the provision of care.



## Renaturing

Fulfil the **right to a healthy environment** through policies that uphold socio-environmental justice as a core value, while localizing global commitments to protect the planet.

**Support community-led efforts and practices** that advance renaturing, which can help to expand rights on the ground by tackling the historically uneven distribution of environmental benefits and burdens.

**Disrupt the economic dependence on the extraction of natural resources** and carbon intensive development to promote the human rights of present and future generations.



## Connecting

Recognize rights related to adequate sustainable mobility which, alongside digital rights, ensure **accessibility, quality and affordability for all**, and particularly for groups that are socially excluded and segregated, or which live in disconnected territories. This requires providing adequate infrastructure to guarantee access to livelihoods opportunities and a fairer use of resources, including that of time.

Guarantee the rights of access to and movement in **public spaces** for everyone, without fear of violence, and ensure freedom of expression and privacy.



## Prospering

Respect, protect and fulfil the **right to decent work**; integrate informal sector economic practices into urban systems, ensuring that all men and women and, in particular, the poor and marginalized, have rights to economic resources and livelihoods that will enable them to live a dignified life.

Support, better regulate, and integrate **informal sectors** to urban systems to improve access to mobility and guarantee digital rights for low-income groups, while supporting inclusive livelihoods and activities.

# Upscaling

Adopt and support the **SDGs and international human rights agendas as the fundamental frameworks** through which to mainstream a rights-based approach. Synchronizing these commitments is key to facilitating the recognition of newly emerging rights, across all levels of government, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. These rights should also be anchored in the daily practices of institutions at multiple levels.

# How to advance a rights-based approach to urban and territorial development that builds pathways to equality?



## 5.2

# Principle 2: Addressing the spatial dimension of inequalities

The way that space is organized is not only a mirror of existing inequalities, but also a driver of their reproduction. It is therefore in the planning and management of space that LRGs must help to defend and promote rights. **Dealing with the spatial manifestations and causes of disparities should therefore be central to local strategies that seek to advance the interconnected pathways discussed in GOLD VI.**

More sustainable, responsive and fairer planning mechanisms are consequently some of the most powerful tools that can be used for addressing socio-spatial inequality and fragmentation. These include instruments to promote greater social and functional mixing, pluricentric cities, more inclusive public and green spaces that recognize the social function of land, and universal access to affordable and quality public services. **Prioritizing proximity lies at the core of this approach. Guaranteeing neighbourhood access to services, livelihoods, infrastructure and care facilities, at the appropriate scale, is crucial for ensuring more equal conditions for everyone.** Importantly, LRGs can promote proximity as a powerful means of supporting those who receive and provide care. This strategy can be used for reducing the use of motorized vehicles and travel; reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; supporting opportunities for local livelihoods that are compatible with different identities and ways of living; and strengthening local civic life in ways that promote democracy and participation.

Urban and territorial planning can also offer a way to implement spatial strategies and to decouple urban development from environmental degradation. **This requires several mechanisms that can foster more equal and sustainable territorial development which is compatible with just ecological transitions.** These include, amongst others: (a) renewing existing approaches to urban-rural reciprocity and accessibility; (b) providing key services and sustainable infrastructure; (c) promoting active and clean mobility and connectivity; (d) seeking and promoting complementarity and solidarity between territories; (e) advancing local strategies for food security, sustainable energy and waste management; and (f) rebuilding the interaction between urbanization and the environment from a renaturing perspective.

All in all, when looking to advance pathways to equality, the centrality of the spatial dimension invites LRGs to understand the interconnected nature of interventions at different scales. This involves engaging with interventions that operate at the intra-, inter-urban and regional scales and should include advancing, for example, equalization mechanisms and national urban policies. Generally, this calls for identifying what is the most adequate scale of intervention, based on the principle of subsidiarity, and supporting democratic and community-led mechanisms, such as area-based plans.



## Prospering

Promote **local livelihoods** that are compatible with diverse needs and aspirations. These should allow a better integration of productive and reproductive spaces, overcoming the fragmentation between spaces for work, residence and leisure. Recognize and support local informal economic activities to facilitate their integration into the urban fabric.

Promote **local economic development that supports endogenous development and facilitates multilevel cooperation and solidarity**. This includes promoting cooperation between regions and municipalities (e.g. intermunicipal cooperation), and urban-rural partnerships.



## Commoning

**Recognize and support local collective practices that promote access to well-located land and infrastructure**, such as auto-construction, collective land arrangements, slum upgrading, neighbourhood improvement, inclusive models of service provision, and promoting remunicipalization processes, when appropriate.



## Democratizing

Engage with democratic practices at the local level such as **area-based participatory strategies**.

Embrace equitable and inclusive forms of **participation in the design and implementation of local solutions** (at the neighbourhood and city-wide levels) in order to tackle cases of spatially concentrated disadvantage within cities.



Promote urban planning, land regulation, housing programmes and the provision of services, in ways that **address such problems as splintering urbanism, urban fragmentation and socio-spatial segregation**.



## Caring

Promote **a city model that favours proximity, social mixing, and access to social services over short distances**. Having inclusive and well-served neighbourhoods is a necessity in order to respond to the diverse needs and aspirations of people who receive and provide care. This includes promoting better integrated productive and reproductive spaces.



Promote **inclusive and secure public spaces and streets**, thereby facilitating pedestrian and active/soft mobility. Promote diversity, accessibility and safety for all, and especially for women, children and structurally marginalized groups.



## Renaturing

Use **multisectorial local planning and participatory mechanisms to promote environmental justice**. Ensure more inclusive outcomes for renaturing processes by preventing land and property speculation, green gentrification, displacement and socio-spatial segregation.



Favour connecting infrastructure and facilities that **promote short-distance travel**, reduce dependency on motorized transport, increase local connectivity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution.



## Connecting

Ensure that interventions and investment in transport, digital infrastructure, public spaces and street design are **people-centred and democratic**. This should actively seek to produce equality-based outcomes and to counter socio-spatial segregation and urban fragmentation.

Strengthen **mobility networks both within and between neighbourhoods and the urban periphery**. This may include approaches like transit oriented development, integrated mobility plans and polycentric urban development.

How to make the **spatial dimension** of inequalities central to policies and planning to advance equality?

## Upscaling

Mitigate multilevel inequalities through **national urban policies and territorial strategies** that acknowledge intra-, inter-urban and regional scales. Such an integrated view is crucial for promoting territorial cohesion and solidarity.

Support closer **collaboration between urban-rural areas** at different scales. Urban-rural partnerships are central to preserving key resources (water, land, agriculture, forestland, etc.) and ensuring sustainability.

Place the **social function of land** and its planning and management (regulation, ownership, taxation), as well as the provision of key services and infrastructures, at the heart of territorial policies in order to reduce inequalities more effectively.

## 5.3

# Principle 3: A new culture of subnational governance

The pathways to equality discussed in GOLD VI require a new culture of subnational governance that is able to deal with the interconnected and complex nature of inequalities. This new governance culture needs to start by rethinking the role that LRGs play in addressing disparities and socio-spatial asymmetries, as well as in guaranteeing rights. This role, as the different chapters of this Report have revealed, implies **understanding LRGs as active guarantors and not just as service providers**. Their mission is to put into place legal and institutional mechanisms that ensure their developmental role, while also guaranteeing everyone's rights, challenging asymmetries of power, and redressing inequalities. To perform these multiple functions, LRGs need certain capabilities – namely, power, resources and capacities – that must be facilitated by an appropriate enabling institutional environment.

As discussed in Chapter 3, to assume these roles, LRGs require effective political, administrative and fiscal decentralization. Among other considerations, this implies building an adequate architecture of collaborative governance that is based on the principles of subsidiarity, transparency and accountability. It also requires effective mechanisms that can facilitate multilevel governance. Importantly, appropriate institutional capabilities need to be in place to allow the promotion of integrated approaches. They also need to prevent the fragmentation of different governance structures across different territories and cities, and also different services and agendas. This is particularly evident in the fragmentation of caring services. Another example is the cost paid by the most disadvantaged sectors of the population as a result of the mismatch between connectivity, service provision, environmental policies and decent work programmes. Approaches such as “collibration” and other strategies for the “governance of governance” are crucial for facilitating these efforts, and especially when they are related to complex challenges such as those posed by the climate emergency.

**The new culture of governance needed to fulfil the role of LRGs as guarantors requires certain preconditions, such as the existence of appropriate accountability and transparency.** It is only then that it will be possible to mobilize participatory processes that can deepen democracy. Achieving this first entails incorporating participatory mechanisms into decision making, such as participatory planning or local assemblies. **It also implies the consolidation of a culture of governance that is able to recognize existing practices and demands that are present outside formal governance structures.** It is necessary to: (a) engage with, and coproduce, empowering civil society initiatives; (b) support grassroots practices of commoning and renaturing, and diverse forms of city-making; (c) recognize and support what are usually invisibilized and gendered care activities; (d) integrate formal and informal practices related to connectivity, livelihoods, culture, energy and/or waste management; and (e) meaningfully engage with processes of local democracy, and facilitate the right conditions and capacities for them to deal with asymmetries of power, amongst others.

Doing all of this also implies ensuring that all the required organizational conditions are in place for the effective delivery of adequate local public services to everyone and in ways that address existing disparities. **Importantly, it also entails creating meaningful partnerships amongst civil society, the private sector and the public sector, through both formal and informal initiatives. These partnerships need a governance culture which is capable of establishing collaborative mechanisms that can ensure fair and effective alliances.** LRGs need to recognize the existence of unequal conditions and then engage across different sectors. They also need to create supporting systems for historically marginalized voices – including those of women, structurally marginalized groups, traditional authorities, older people and young people. These mechanisms should allow these groups to engage more meaningfully in participatory processes and thereby combat entrenched power asymmetries.



## Commoning

Establish effective mechanisms for **recognizing and advocating; supporting; coproducing; protecting and mediating; and investing in and scaling-up** commoning practices. This requires strengthening institutional capabilities that nurture the development of coalitions and partnerships, and support collaborative forms of city-making.

## Prospering

Promote **enabling environments for local economic development** which should include, for example: efficient and transparent regulatory frameworks; local financial systems; land policies; and governance, representation, and social dialogue.

Establish institutional collaborative mechanisms to **recognize, regulate and decriminalize informal sector economic practices** in order to integrate them into the urban fabric and involve them in the delivery of public services. This is essential to fulfil the right to decent work, and facilitate their access to basic services.

Support community-led efforts to produce essential goods, secure livelihoods, and advance food security, by **strengthening the social, circular, green and collaborative economies**.

Engage organizational development to **fight corruption** and strengthen the integrity and accountability of existing systems, as well as providing open-government tools to facilitate transparency and involve civil society in tasks of monitoring and assessment.

Ensure public responsibility for the **delivery of local public services** to everyone, through accountable management models that address the intersectional nature of inequalities.

## Democratizing

Strengthen **institutional capabilities that deepen democratic values and practices**, such as: transparency and accountability, open government, participatory planning, resource allocation, and deliberative and collaborative democracy.

Promote **participatory processes through diversified mechanisms** and an effective regulatory framework. These measures should include a wide range of democratic innovations that go beyond providing local elections. They could include: (a) consultative processes (e.g. consultative councils, public hearings, local assemblies, referenda, internet consultative platforms); (b) local planning participatory mechanisms (e.g. participatory budgeting); (c) the recognition of autonomous civil society movements and organizations; and (d) the creation of partnerships for inclusive service delivery.

Provide **support for structurally marginalized groups** to allow them to meaningfully engage in democratic and participatory processes.

Establish **collaborative and solidarity-based approaches** to enhance cooperation between local governments (e.g. inter-municipal cooperation), local stakeholders (public-private-people partnerships) and public institutions (public-public partnerships), especially for the delivery of public and social services.

Include structurally discriminated groups in democratic **decision-making processes in order to foster just ecological transitions**, and recognize and provide centrality to the ecological practices of everyday city-makers, including informal practices.

Utilize **digital technologies and social media in responsible ways** to facilitate participation, data collection, communication and coordination. This should take into account civil society's knowledge and data collection mechanisms, acknowledge the digital divide, respect privacy, and ensure a democratic and rights-based approach.

Promote **effective decentralization**. This requires an enabling institutional environment to provide LRGs with adequate powers, capacities and resources to assume their responsibilities. Decentralization is also crucial to make LRGs accountable to their respective communities.

Ensure **multilevel and collaborative governance** based on the principle of subsidiarity, and enhance policy coherence between territorial and sectoral policies, at all levels. This should include collaboration between government and civil society actors and the private sector.

Promote **strategic and spatial planning and national urban policies**, as critical pillars for reinforcing multilevel governance and reducing territorial inequalities.

At the regional level, incentivize and facilitate **collaboration and complementarities between metropolitan areas, intermediary cities, small towns and their respective hinterlands**. These partnerships should be based on cooperation and solidarity within city systems, and support upscaling efforts.

How to create a **new culture of subnational governance** that promotes broad local partnerships, encourages participation, provides effective multilevel governance, and ensures that LRGs are adequately empowered?

## Upscaling

## Renaturing

**Design, build, operate and maintain urban infrastructure** that can conduct resource flows through urban and territorial systems in ways that decouple improvements in well-being from the increased use of natural resources.

Establish effective governance mechanisms that make it possible to **deal with complex and multiscalar climate-related challenges**. This includes adopting forward-looking planning mechanisms that are sensitive to social and environmental diversity.

Create mechanisms to identify and address the **undesired social impact of certain interventions**. These unwanted impacts may include: the commodification of vital ecological systems and services; green gentrification; displacements; the over-consumption of resources; and the externalization of risks to particular social groups and geographies.

Approach responses to **connectivity from a multiscalar perspective** and through appropriate multilevel governance structures.

Establish institutional mechanisms to **address mitigation and adaptation goals** in ways that foster health and improve the well-being of all residents.

## Caring

Set up governance structures and institutional capabilities to facilitate partnerships for the **coproduction of caring, anti-violence and anti-discriminatory policies**, as well as recognizing and supporting the usually gendered and insufficiently acknowledged labour of caring.

Contribute to **overcoming the fragmentation of care and of social services**, by promoting new forms of social organization through more comprehensive coverage and policy coherence. Encourage efforts of cooperation and harmonization, effective multilevel governance, and consistent work in collaboration with local stakeholders.

Advance **democratic practices that involve both care providers and care receivers** (e.g. women, older people, migrants, people with disabilities, chronically ill people, etc.), and which consider the structural inequalities that shape the division of care.

## Connecting

Establish the **institutional capabilities to work in partnership** with formal, informal and hybrid systems of service provision and to improve mobility. This is essential for fostering more integrated and multimodal responses to diverse connectivity needs and aspirations.

Enhance **participatory processes in mobility and connectivity interventions**, and recognize the diversity of local formal and informal actors.

## 5.4

# Principle 4: Adequate financing and investment architecture

**Without the appropriate public resources, any effort to tackle disparities will fall short of its goal.** The localization of financing mechanisms is instrumental to LRGs being able to deliver their mandate of providing services and infrastructure to advance pathways to equality. In order to support *Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering* and *Democratizing* pathways, it is necessary to develop new approaches which include actionable measures and which are able to unlock the necessary financing. LRGs need to go one step further in this regard: they require a governance culture and financial architecture that will increase their resources and enable them to build a new social contract with their citizens. Achieving this will involve recognizing, and mobilizing, the value generated by local stakeholders.

To this end, there is first a need (a) to consolidate the local fiscal space; (b) to strengthen LRGs' own revenue sources; (c) to increase and stabilize formula-based fiscal transfers from national governments; and (d) to enable LRGs greater access to borrowing from banks, international development partners and the private sector. On the one hand, national institutions need to develop new financial models as part of their national urban and territorial policies and to reinforce technical capabilities that support the localization of financing. They need to ensure adequate and reliable intergovernmental fiscal transfers to LRGs, and that these arrive on time and are coupled with transparent equalization mechanisms that ensure more balanced territorial development. Special consideration should also be given to small and intermediate local government bodies and to lagging regions, in order not to prevent these territories from being behind. In response to their needs, national and local intermediations for subnational financing need to be strengthened (through, for example: subnational development banks, local government funding agencies, local green banks, and special purpose vehicles). Accelerated adaptation to climate change implies that the local, regional and national levels will need supplementary financing mechanisms. They will also need to establish new partnerships between different sectors and scales, especially in developing countries. On the other hand, LRGs in many regions need to strengthen their capacities and to become more creditworthy, gain greater authority, and achieve autonomy over their own-source revenues and the rebuilding of their own fiscal spaces (e.g. improving tax collection and land value capture). This is a precondition for empowering them to use a wide array of financing mechanisms, including equity and debt financing, conducted either directly or via intermediaries.

**The rules of the game must be renewed to create local financial ecosystems and partnerships that are able to mutually support each other and which can work to secure financing for urban and territorial investments at the local, national and international levels.** Local financial ecosystems are crucial for boosting endogenous territorial development. This can be achieved through: promoting livelihoods that recognize different identities; financing adequate connecting and basic service infrastructure; and promoting balanced territorial development and economic activities that guarantee just ecological transitions. Importantly, an adequate financial infrastructure also requires the effective monitoring of public resources, accountability and transparency. This can be delivered through the use of inclusive mechanisms such as participatory budgets and open government tools.

These approaches must be based on strengthening local alliances, building capacity and developing participation to mobilize a wider range of resources. This means, on the one hand, **valuing the diversity of the non-monetary, urban and territorial resources produced by everyday practices, and social networks, and the radical innovations taking place in territories.** On the other hand, it means supporting the financial needs of those spaces and groups, as a way to increase the social and equality returns associated with their activities. This includes, for example, recognizing and providing financial support to the, usually non-monetized, work performed by carers and the social fabric that underpins their activities.

This approach requires LRGs to advance in **strategic and collaborative partnerships and to deliver more inclusive financing systems. These partnerships should be vehicles for recognizing the existing value produced by local stakeholders.** This should include their reproductive value, how they help to deepen democracy, and promoting commoning, connecting, and/or renaturing. Importantly, this recognition calls for LRGs to innovate and to find more inclusive ways of distributing financial resources and integrating the formal, informal and hybrid sectors.



## Commoning

Advocate, promote, create and implement fiscal and financial instruments linked to land, housing and services that **use and distribute resources in a fairer and more progressive and equitable way**. These include mechanisms such as: land value capture, progressive tariff structures, cross-subsidies, the adoption of a sites and services approach, and the provision of free access to essential services for the most marginalized groups.

Promote **strategic partnerships to foster more inclusive ways of financing goods and services, and supporting bottom-up and coproduction initiatives**. These measures include commoning practices involving people-people, public-people partnerships, and public-public initiatives such as remunicipalization; and also better regulated and monitored public-private partnerships.

Recognize and encourage the value of **pooling resources and using collective finance**, promoting cooperatives, popular savings, and credit groups that can contribute to community projects. These are crucial to help resist exclusionary trends engrained in market logics and commodification.

Take an active role in **monitoring and regulating the land and housing markets** to limit speculative investment and the commodification of urban assets, and to better regulate urban development.



## Caring

Use local revenues and proactively target national funds and transfers to facilitate the use of **cross-subsidies and promote cities and territories that care**. Provide support to people in need of care and to poorly, or unpaid, care workers, who are often women.

Recognize the **value added by existing social bonds and local safety nets that provide care**. Promote partnerships with CSOs, collectives and the private sector in order to expand access to, and improve the quality of, care services.



## Renaturing

Revise local taxes to generate **"green" revenues and adopt financial incentives to support environmental improvements**, taking care not to negatively impact disadvantaged groups.

Redirect current and future **capital flows towards resilient urban infrastructure, either new or retrofitted** (e.g. energy, transport and buildings). These flows should prioritize locally-led processes, and target poor neighbourhoods and peripheral areas in order to reverse long-term trends of disinvestment and inequalities.

Strengthen partnerships with residents, civil society and local businesses **towards more just ecological transitions**. These measures would include protecting the social and ecological functions of land and housing.

Promote local, regional and national **partnerships to fund climate mitigation and adaptation schemes**. These should also include pooling support from national funds, development assistance and multilateral development banks.

Adopt innovative **financing tools to reduce the transit of polluting private vehicles**. Complement these measures with investment in more integrated, and greener, public transport and soft mobility.

Promote **finance mechanisms and partnerships to reduce the digital divide**, providing free internet access in public spaces and buildings, and also digital infrastructure in marginalized and hitherto unconnected areas. This could include local and/or national taxes on operators and major Internet service companies.

## Connecting

Advocate and mobilize appropriate amounts of funding for the development and operation of robust and equitable mobility and connectivity infrastructure. This requires **financial partnerships at the local and national levels**, across the public and private sectors, supported by an adequate system of revenue sharing (users payment, tax, fees and subsidies).

Support the **integration of formal, informal and hybrid sector** provision of mobility, through inclusive and multimodal transport systems and, where possible, with integrated tariff and redistributive mechanisms. Promote the recognition, regulation and integration of the value generated by informal mobility operators.

How to advance towards an adequate **fiscal and investment architecture** that can support more equitable and sustainable urban and territorial development?

## Upscaling

Revise national **intergovernmental fiscal frameworks and fiscal decentralization policies** to ensure the localization of finances. These may include adequate assignment of expenditure and revenue, supported by local taxes, national transfers and equalization mechanisms, and subnational access to borrowing.

Strengthen **local financial ecosystems and partnerships to effectively transform resources into pathways toward equality**. Systems should guarantee LRGs a meaningful degree of decision-making power over finances. Adequate mechanisms for accountability are essential, involving local inhabitants in monitoring and follow-up processes.

Facilitate LRGs and local partners **to access national funds** (e.g. through development banks, local government funding agencies, and special purpose vehicles) **and emerging, innovative international funding modalities** to invest in local plans and projects that promote social justice and a greener transition.



## Democratizing

Facilitate the **monitoring of public resources and inclusive programming**, in collaboration with CSOs to increase downward accountability.

Include **financing and budgeting mechanisms to support democratizing initiatives** that are responsive to local contexts. Create the conditions necessary for diverse groups to meaningfully participate in decision making processes, through mechanisms such as participatory budgets and public consultations.

Mobilize **resources to support local democratic practices**, recognizing the value that they generate. These include facilitating collective mobilization and encouraging community networks, recognizing the social assets that they produce, and supporting their financial needs.



## Prospering

Pool **resources to promote decent work and livelihoods** that recognize local realities, needs and aspirations. This includes, for example, managing the burden of licensing fees and fostering tax incentives, social impact bonds, local social currencies, tax share donations, crowdfunding, impact investment, social venture capital, and social, solidarity, green and circular economy models.

Examine the feasibility of providing **social security coverage or insurance** to help extend social protection to more precarious forms of employment, and especially those whose working conditions are within the scope of LRG competences.

Establish financial **support mechanisms for local formal and informal economic activities**, recognizing the value they generate for local and regional development. These include initiatives such as cooperatives, saving groups, and popular credit initiatives.



## 5.5

# Principle 5: Engaging with time: past, present and future

The notion of pathways inevitably invites LRGs to rethink their strategies and interventions in ways that engage with time frames that extend beyond electoral cycles. Addressing inequalities entails recognizing the different entanglements of urban and territorial disparities with long-term trajectories, and engaging with time accordingly. In order to fully flourish, the pathways to equality discussed in this Report must meaningfully engage with questions relating to the past, present and future.

Inequalities have been (re)produced over long periods and through different histories that underpin current asymmetries of power, structural constraints and patterns of exclusion. **Recognizing these unequal historical legacies is an essential first step in the process of dealing with the roots of inequalities.** It is therefore essential to engage in processes of active reparation related to dynamics of exclusion and oppression created and sustained by colonial, classist, racist, ableist and patriarchal trajectories. For LRGs this implies, amongst others: (a) considering the historically uneven, and gendered, distribution of the burden of care activities; (b) responding to the historical intersection between environmental degradation, natural resource extraction, colonialism and social inequalities; and (c) actively repairing the uneven distribution of climate-related threats that affect cities, and particularly the residents of informal settlements, migrants, and historically marginalized groups.

Contemporary inequalities are grounded in these historical trajectories, which also reflect the ways that different individuals and groups relate to their current use of time. **Giving attention to time in the present invites LRGs to address the problem of time poverty and the uneven distribution of the demand for, and scarcity of, time suffered by people of different genders, classes, races, abilities, and ages.** When advancing towards better urban and territorial connectivity, LRGs should pay special attention to the way that infrastructure and investment are related to uneven pressure on time in different areas, and between different social groups. Likewise, interventions to promote decent livelihood opportunities, adequate housing, more public space, and better services should also allow a fairer use of time, particularly for certain structurally marginalized groups.

Finally, **LRGs will only be able to address inequalities by being bold when planning for the future.** The pathways discussed above will only be possible if they rely on cocreated, radical visions of a sustainable and more equitable future. This implies that LRGs should take strategic action to deal with the previously discussed structural constraints, while also supporting radical incremental practices on the ground. **Organized civil society and collaborative initiatives are currently building alternatives through everyday practices of commoning, caring, connecting, prospering, renaturing and democratizing.** While in isolation these may seem insufficient, when properly recognized, supported and scaled up, they can reach tipping points and help bring about structural change. In other words, LRGs can support forms of radical incrementalism and expand upon them, over time, in ways that will transform bold local visions into more equitable futures.

# How to engage practically with **time**, taking into account past, present and future considerations in the coconstruction of collective imaginaries?

## Democratizing

Provide support for structurally marginalized groups to allow them to meaningfully engage in democratic and participatory processes, which need to be **compatible with existing pressures and demands on their time**.

Recognize and support different democratic innovations that are currently taking place in territories, and link them to legal, policy and planning frameworks that can **sustain and scale them over time**. This should make democratic systems more robust and resilient to changes associated with political cycles.

## Commoning

Envision processes of **active reparation for structurally marginalized groups**, recognizing their claims in relation to historical inequalities in access to land, housing and basic services.

Facilitate the **multiplication and scaling up of initiatives to provide collective and equitable housing, land and basic services**. Support the continuity and foster the expansion of initiatives that bring about systemic change over time and work towards providing universal access to housing and services.

Envision and activate **bold alternative interactions between the state, civil society, and the market**, with the commons as a central principle for advancing towards greater equality.

Engage and promote **anti-discriminatory policies that address long-term inequalities**, which are often spatially and culturally embedded in territories, institutions, and social and cultural practices.

Envision alternative economic models that allow a sustainable future, prioritizing approaches, such as the **social, solidarity, green and circular economy models**, that promote a renewed relationship with resources such as waste, energy, food and time.

## Prospering

Support and promote **decent work and livelihoods that are compatible with demands and pressures upon people's time**, thereby promoting fairer and more equitable uses of time and resources.

## Caring

Advance policies that recognize and redistribute responsibilities for caring and seek to tackle the **historically uneven distribution of the burden** associated with the provision of care.

Develop programmes and policies that share **responsibilities for providing care and consider inequalities in the use of people's time**. These should provide concrete policies with implications for the use of time from a gender perspective, strengthening people's capabilities to break out of poverty traps.

Reimagine a new social contract in which the reproductive and productive spheres of life are better integrated. Advance in the **provision of urban services in ways that are compatible with diverse time schedules** and which consider the organization of the cycle of care tasks.

Improve physical and digital connectivity through the promotion of **functionally mixed neighbourhoods** and pluricentric and compact cities in order to reduce the need to commute and to respond to diverse needs for time relating to work and providing care.

## Renaturing

Respond to the historical intersection between environmental degradation, natural resource extraction and social inequalities, by tackling the **uneven distribution of climate-related risks** in cities and territories.

Reinforce local initiatives in ways that **produce sustainable change over time in order to promote radical incrementalism**, by supporting community-led renaturing actions.

Promote **fast and transformative changes in the relations between cities and nature**, in order to disrupt existing path-dependencies and processes of carbonization, environmental degradation and exploitation.

Promote **clean, active and inclusive mobility plans and infrastructure** that recognize the needs and aspirations of current and future generations.

## Connecting

Promote affordable and inclusive access to public transport and digital infrastructure to overcome urban fragmentation and **tackle inequalities in the use of time**, especially for those living in marginalized or poorly served areas.

## Upscaling

Implement mechanisms to foster **collaboration at different scales to envision alternative futures**. Future-oriented challenges require structural reforms at different scales. Structural crises call for responses and collective imaginations at different scales.

Introduce mechanisms at different scales to **support and increment local practices of radical transformation**. Local initiatives that help to advance equality need to be supported, upscaled and multiplied to reach tipping points of structural change on the path towards more just urban futures.

Contribute to **shifting unequal development trends in spatially locked-in territories**, which are usually the consequence of long-term trajectories of inequalities. These require the creation of a shared national vision for territorial cohesion and strategic regional programmes focusing on marginalized regions.

# 6 Conclusions

Inequalities are at the heart of our time's most pressing challenges. Despite the commitment adopted in 2015 by the international community, through the 2030 Agenda, to "eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions" and to "combat inequalities within and among countries", they continue to grow. Extreme inequalities are increasing, dividing and fragmenting communities, threatening social coexistence, and undermining democracy and trust in public institutions.

**Addressing inequalities is imperative.** It is a precondition to combat the social crises that exacerbate existing conflicts and violence; to ensure just and ecological transitions that confront the climate emergency; to respond to the increased complexity of migration processes; and to tackle the uneven impact that crises such as COVID-19 have upon our societies. In sum, despite increases in global wealth, inequalities remain one of the greatest obstacles to ensuring well-being and guaranteeing a dignified life for everyone. **Political choices lie at the heart of tackling them effectively, which is essential if we are to achieve the respect and fulfilment associated with an expanded notion of human rights.**

Inequalities are always embedded in the spaces in which people live. Even when they are shaped by structural macro-dynamics, inequalities manifest themselves through the urban and territorial fabric, across poor neighbourhoods, in stagnant cities, and in marginalized regions. **This means that shaping more equal, just and sustainable futures requires local policies and planning. LRGs should be at the forefront of those localized efforts.** Modifying the structural trends that shape inequalities (economic, social, cultural and governance structures) requires actions that usually

go beyond the powers and responsibilities of LRGs. However, LRGs have a duty to mobilize all their capacity to address the manifestations of inequalities, and to put all their efforts into reverting the very dynamics that have produced these inequalities in the first place.

Equality implies much more than simply achieving a fairer distribution of wealth. An expanded multifaceted notion of equality is central to the approach adopted by the SDGs and other international frameworks, and this Report has made it its own. **Fighting for equality requires confronting the intersectional and multidimensional nature of urban and territorial inequalities, which tend to compound and exacerbate one another.** As discussed throughout this Report, this task requires efforts that advance at least four dimensions of equality: a fairer distribution of material conditions for well-being; reciprocal recognition of multiple intersecting social identities; parity political participation in inclusive and democratic decision-making processes; and solidarity and mutual care in responsibilities involving citizens, and between citizens and the natural environment.

GOLD VI has been developed as a collective effort to identify and coproduce actionable pathways through which LRGs, working in partnership with civil society, other actors and different levels of government, can embrace this endeavour and generate alternative development trajectories. **No single level of government, nor any single actor, can tackle these challenges alone. Aware of the complex multisectoral nature of the responses needed, the six following pathways have been discussed in ways that seek to challenge siloed actions: Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering and Democratizing.** These are trajectories through which to advance towards more equal



futures and to foster synergies between institutions and communities. They propose actionable policy and planning initiatives which are based on concrete experiences that have already triggered transformational change in cities and regions around the world. These are cumulative and complementary efforts to revert the trend of growing inequalities. Together, they can help achieve tipping points, beyond which these actions are no longer punctual initiatives, but will constitute markers of structural change on the way to more equal societies and territories.

The five key principles discussed in this concluding chapter involve:

- a rights-based approach;
- alternative ways of conceiving and managing space;
- a new culture of subnational governance;
- seeking adequate financing and, in many countries, a revision of the current architecture of investment; and
- engaging practically with time.

These five principles provide a common normative framework and a composite vision that brings together the different pathways as a collective effort for working towards achieving more equal cities and territories. This is critical if humanity aims, amongst others: (a) to improve living conditions in informal settlements; (b) to provide access to adequate housing, water and sanitation to billions of people; (c) to ensure adequate care and social services for those in need, and to protect those who take care for others; (d) to facilitate decent work and connections for everyone, and also opportunities and livelihoods; (e) to halt environmental degradation and alleviate the climate emergency, without shifting the burden of achieving this onto the most vulnerable; and (f) to fight against all forms of discrimination by taking into account the intersectionality of the structural forms of oppression.

This is the basis for a dynamic participatory democracy that renews the social contract and lays the foundations for a “Pact for the future” that establishes as its core principle the notion of caring for people, the planet and the government.

**The experiences of LRGs and civil society groups discussed throughout this Report have shown the power of collective action that seeks to advance the different pathways to equality.**

They do this, firstly, by acknowledging the diversity of the actors involved; and, secondly, by building strong local alliances, and engaging with social movements and community initiatives. They also work towards their goals by making political choices that make the equality agenda the central pillar of sustainable urban and territorial development. Strong local alliances can transform multilevel governance, making it more collaborative and able to support the scaling up of local innovations, thus protecting the commons and ecosystems. These political commitments can be triggered by imagining alternative, more sustainable and fairer futures, by reframing governance and finance, by recognizing the needs and aspirations of citizens and of groups with different identities, by focusing on and extending rights, and by generally acting in strategic ways that promote local and structural transformations.

**Only through collaboration, a collective vision, and action that mobilizes the strengths of our communities will it be possible to pursue a more equal, peaceful and sustainable future.**

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## Chapter 10

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Cities and regions are experiencing challenging times. Despite the international community's 2030 Agenda commitments to "eradicate poverty in all its forms" and to "combat inequalities within and among countries", inequalities continue to grow. They are perpetuated by structures created throughout a longstanding history of injustice and intersecting discrimination and are exacerbated by phenomena such as wars, the concentration of wealth, the climate emergency, forced migration and COVID-19.

Inequalities are always embedded and experienced in the spaces where people live. No single level of government or actor can tackle these challenges alone. Nevertheless, local and regional governments (LRGs) are at the forefront of meeting these challenges in their territories. They are crucial to leading localized and collaborative endeavours aiming to address acute inequalities that undermine the human rights of large parts of the population, especially the rights of structurally marginalized groups. **This Report is a collective effort to put inequalities at the centre of urban and territorial debates, actions and policies, and to actively look for pathways to address these inequalities through strategies for local transformation.**

GOLD VI begins by defining urban and territorial equality as a multidimensional challenge – as recognized by the SDGs – which involves distribution, recognition, participation, and solidarity and care. It then presents the different trends that shape the current state of inequalities, followed by a discussion on governance from a rights-based perspective and an introduction to the notion of pathways. **Pathways are multisectoral trajectories for change that allow urban and territorial governance to imagine flexible, systemic and future-oriented actions towards equality while also acknowledging issues of power and scale.**

The Report offers a series of pathways that LRGs, civil society groups and other actors are taking to advance towards equality: **Commoning, Caring, Connecting, Renaturing, Prospering** and **Democratizing**. Through the lens of each pathway, diverse topics are addressed, such as housing, land, basic services, informality, education, urban health, migration, gender and racial inequalities, violence and discrimination, food security, sustainable transport, digital connectivity, decent livelihoods, resilience, the energy transition, culture, finance, governance and capabilities, all within a framework of participation and accountability.

Drawing upon and grounded in local experiences, GOLD VI concludes by offering a series of political recommendations. **Understanding that significant change takes place at the intersection of these pathways and as a result of their cumulative effect, the Report suggests five cross-cutting principles that LRGs should consider for building pathways towards equality.** These are a rights-based approach; alternative ways to conceive of and manage space; a new culture of governance; adequate financing and investment architecture; and the use of time to build more equality-oriented collective imaginaries.

The experiences, key messages, political recommendations and reflections in this Report result from a long and inclusive process of cocreation and exchange. Such a process has aimed to produce a rigorous and relevant report and also to facilitate a coproduction process, supporting and strengthening multistakeholder dialogues and ensuring the participation and involvement of UCLG members, civil society networks, researchers and other partners. **For this broad LRG movement, allowing inequalities to grow is no longer an option.**

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