Analysis of the Habitat III Framework Document
Policy Unit 2 - Socio-Cultural Urban Framework

Presented by the UCLG Committee on Culture, January 2016

1) A brief analysis of the Framework Paper

While the policy paper framework contains some interesting ideas (e.g. some references to the need to recognise cultural rights and to enable access and participation and culture for all, as well as some welcome reflections on cultural diversity in urban areas), overall it reads like a long list of disconnected items, lacking a coherent vision and message. In addition, some of the elements addressed seem general principles or preconditions that could apply to all urban policies, or focus on other policy areas altogether (e.g. housing, land management, employment) – ultimately, this deprives the paper from making a more substantial contribution to its core policy issues.

Therefore, it would be desirable that the final policy paper strives to address socio-cultural aspects and their policy implications more clearly. As regards the cultural dimension in particular, it should also focus less on anthropological approaches (which, whilst being interesting, are difficult to turn into effective policy tools) and place emphasis on the specific policy mechanisms that could ensure the integration of a cultural dimension in the New Urban Agenda.

2)   Identify messages or proposals that are problematic for us: a brief comment or propose an alternative wording.

Key messages (page 2):
- Item 1 ("To increase citizen participation in all levels of planning and implementation leading to more inclusive cities and better urban environments") is interesting but should apply to all policy areas – it is not clear why this emerges from the socio-cultural urban framework only.
- Item 2 reads like a pertinent approach to the social dimension of the New Urban Agenda and could remain as currently phrased.
- On the other hand, Item 3, which should cover cultural aspects, lacks a clearer focus – it should cover access to and participation in culture for all and recognise the need for policies and the role of local governments in this respect. A possible alternative wording would be as follows: "*Recognise cultural diversity, promote the integration of cultural aspects in sustainable urban development and ensure that access to and participation in culture is a core component of urban policies, including heritage protection, cultural interaction, the recognition of diversity and the development of creativity for all.*"

Other aspects:

- As suggested above, an effort should be made to leave out of the final paper the issues which do not concern socio-cultural aspects and their policy implications in particular. In particular, references to housing policies, land management and employment may not apply here. The final paper should also follow a more consistent thread.
- The reference to integrating "new charters and obligatory agreements on the world-wide conservation of heritage" (page 8) is difficult to understand.

3)   Are there critical points or questions that are absent in the Framework Paper? Which ones?

- The link between culture and sustainable development, which was included in issue paper #4 on "Urban Culture and Heritage", is less visible here and should be integrated in the final paper.
- References to the following aspects should also be included:
  a) the availability of creative opportunities and cultural participation for all;
  b) the relation between culture and education, e.g. how formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning should integrate arts and cultural education;
  c) the relation between culture, health and well-being, e.g. how health and welfare policies should be responsive to cultural diversity and explore the benefits of cultural participation;
  d) the relation between culture, technologies and knowledge, e.g. how cultural participation may enhance individual and collective knowledge and how cultural policies should be concerned with access to digital tools;
  e) the relation between culture and economic development, e.g. the role of the cultural and creative industries in creating employment, 'creative transfers' to other economic sectors, and the role of cultural sites, facilities and activities in attracting tourism.
- One specific contribution that the paper could make is to suggest the introduction of cultural impact assessment tools when designing and implementing measures in other policy areas.