



Analysis of the Habitat III Framework Document Policy Unit 8 - Urban ecology and resilience

1) A brief analysis of the Framework Paper

The paper defines Urban ecology as a system recognizing the interactions between different systems - natural, social economic and cultural (lack of coherence in the document where all systems are not always mentioned). The paper is looking at urban ecology and resilience jointly as overlapping systems based on cities, people and landscape, having a fundamental role in well being and transformative change at urban scale.

It points out the need to enable city systems with eco-systems oriented approach and as such, raises that challenges vary in each city depending on their unique cultural, natural and socio-economic contexts.

The paper identifies challenges under some key topics : governance, policies, capacity, planning infrastructure, environment, culture, livelihoods and consumption.

One of the main challenges identified is the difficulty to address urban ecology and resilience as eco-systems and identifying all interconnections (urban-rural, sectorial, territorial) and work in coordination with the different levels of governance, authorities and sectors in the city.

The paper identifies the need for improved legal and institutional frameworks, capacity building and expanded knowledge of those issues by the authorities and the public.

Key transformations include:

- improved governance, including decentralized decision-making and action and participatory processes with local communities.
- improved stakeholders participation and coordination, in particular with residents and local communities-including women and marginalized communities- to ensure locally relevant policies.
- empowerment of local authorities, that should be devolved greater authority and financing capacity
- Increase of financial capacity and long term investments

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

The paper is rather positive for local governments that are referred to as a key level of governance and policy implementation. However it is not always clear what should be of local/ national/ regional competencies.

We would invite to replace the reference to “the place” made in different parts of the text (b.2.b – policy; d.2 indicators) by “local level”. And to clearly state that indicators should be disaggregated at local levels and that governance and policies should follow the subsidiarity principle.

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

It is positive to note that urban ecology is defined as an interrelation between social, economical, environmental and cultural systems but the cultural dimension could be further looked into. Recommendations should identify culture as a driver of change and should integrate the need to work on cultural beliefs and backgrounds to change behaviors.

The paper could also be more specific on the territorial approach, often limited to urban-rural linkages. Under 1.b.4 Planning we would propose “need to recognize interdependence of all levels of governance at local, subnational and national levels including urban and rural areas interlinkages”

The paper is making no reference to existing tools and policies such as the guiding principles for city climate action planning (UN Habitat) and the ten essentials for making cities resilient (UNISDR). The 5 years action plan adopted at the COP 21 and specific finance mechanisms that will have an impact

on ecology and resilience are not mentioned either. (See work of the UCLG Commission on finance and the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance – CCFLA).

Comments from UCLG Committee on Culture

- Interesting ideas on the role of culture as a key dimension of sustainable cities.
- Cultural actors to be included in a more explicit way, as fundamental actors in the generation of locally-rooted “resilience narratives”. Some ideas follow:
 - Culture explains and gives meaning to the identity of people and societies, often related to the founding land, to place, to landscapes, to mountains, seas and rivers. Leading thinking about landscapes recognizes that all territories (even degraded ones) hold environmental, cultural and other values that are worthy of valuing and preserving. Historic narratives of cities also include culture and nature.
 - Cultural actors (artists, historians, heritage experts) provide the local knowledge for contextualised resilience, by emphasizing locality and historical continuities, which are key elements in the fight against climate change and natural hazards like earthquakes and floods.
 - Cultural actors (mainly artists) raise awareness of the impacts of our ecological footprints, the need to transform production and consumption patterns (e.g., slow food, 0 km products, etc.), and our collective responsibility to reconnect our values towards a more harmonious balance with the environment.