

REPORT OF THE PARALLEL SESSION

The Right to the City: fighting against urban inequalities

Thematic Round-Table on "PROMOTING DIVERSITY"¹

3 October, 16:00 – 17:30

Organiser

- **UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights.** Focal point: Ms. Eva Garcia Chueca (e.chueca@uclg.org)

Partners

- **UCLG Committee of Peripheral Cities.** Focal point: Mr. Djamel Sandid (djamel.sandid@mairie-nanterre.fr)
- **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).** Focal point: Mr. Maxime Ramon (maxime.ramon@ccre-cemr.org)

List of Speakers

Presentation and moderation: Ms. Maite Fandos, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain) and President of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG.

- **Mr. Gérard Perreau-Bezouille**, Vice Mayor of Nanterre, France
- **Ms. Halima Tijani**, Mayor of Raoued, Tunisia
- **Mr. Thabo Manyoni**, Mayor of Mangaung and President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), South Africa
- **Ms. Nadia Campeão**, Vice Mayor of São Paulo, Brazil
- **Mr. Frédéric Vallier**, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
- **Mr. Giovanni Allegretti**, Researcher at the Center for Social Studies (CES), University of Coimbra (Portugal)

Rapporteur: Mr. Nelson Saule Júnior, General Coordinator of Instituto Pólis, Brazil

Key questions raised during the parallel session

- a) Tools to implement, monitor and evaluate the Right to the City at local level (social policies and action plans, provision of equitable public services, municipal human rights charters, indicators and human rights diagnosis).
- b) The challenge of realizing the Right to the City in a metropolitan context.
- c) The role of the Right to the City in the post-2015 debate and Habitat III.

¹ The concept note of the parallel session can be found here: <http://www.uclg-cisdg.org/en/news/events/right-city-fighting-against-urban-inequalities-cisdg-parallel-session-congress-rabat>.

Session structure

Person/s	Role	Time
Chair	Welcome and presentation of the session	7 min.
Speaker 1	Intervention	7 min.
Speaker 2	Intervention	7 min.
Speaker 3	Intervention	7 min.
Speaker 4	Intervention	7 min.
Speaker 5	Intervention	7 min.
Speaker 6	Intervention	7 min.
Rapporteur	Intervention and synthesis of debate	7 min.
Public and speakers	Debate	30 min.
Moderator	Conclusions and Closing	3 min.

Chair of the session: Ms. Maite Fandos, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona, Spain and President of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG.

As president of the Committee and Deputy Mayor of Barcelona, Ms. Maite Fandos opened the event presenting some proposals based on her experience in the city council of Barcelona. Ms. Fandos' intervention highlighted the importance of considering social participation in a renewed and deeper way. As part of this approach she emphasized that it is particularly relevant to promote joint work initiatives among city councils and civil society, from the diagnosis to the implementation of social programmes. As an example of an innovative practice in this regard, Ms. Fandos mentioned the Citizens' Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona (ACBI): a "shared strategy" of work between the government and more than 500 social organizations in order to prepare the 2012-2015 Barcelona Social Inclusion Plan. She highlighted that the current diverse context of cities requires the authorities to reduce bureaucracy and adopt a more flexible and cooperative approach to the definition and implementation of policies that are tailored to the individuals and respectful of the social dynamics. Finally, she stressed her conviction that it is possible to advance in the construction of more inclusive cities reinforcing social policies by increasing the budgets and creating new spaces to assess and tackle current challenges.

Speaker 1: Mr. Gérard Perreau-Bezouille, Vice Mayor of Nanterre, France

Mr. Perreau started his intervention apologizing for the absence of the Mayor of Nanterre, Mr. Patrick Jarry, who could not be present at the Rabat's Congress due to last minute duties. He recalled that the city of Nanterre holds the presidency of the Committee of Peripheral Cities of UCLG. Mr. Perreau's presentation focused on a series of highly revealing images shown to demonstrate, through the overlap of statistical and territorial

data, the spacialization of inequality in different metropolis. He considered that the Right to the City also implies the “right to solidarity-based metropolises”. As part of this approach, he first presented the difference of average income within the territory of Paris, Buenos Aires, Sidney and Mexico, revealing the considerable economic inequality between urban centres and periphery. Other indicators related to urban mobility, location of social houses and youth unemployment were also shown to highlight that inequality within cities has a strong spatial component. In Paris, for example, it takes more time to reach the centre from the peripheral cities than from cities located 200 km away. He also drew attention to the territorial fragmentation within the cities of Chicago, São Paulo and Washington by presenting the differences of centre and periphery among rates of Afro-American decedents, infant mortality and habitants born abroad, respectively. In his conclusion, Mr. Perreau highlighted that from the Right to the City stems the right to policentrality, a crucial right to be guaranteed as a way of access to the different dimensions of urban life.

Speaker 2: Ms. Halima Tijani, Mayor of Raoued, Tunisia

Ms. Tijani’s presentation emphasized the most important aspects of the violation of the Right to the City. She stressed that urban development and the vast complexity of cities, combined with the continued growth of the population since the end of XIX century, have strongly contributed to the intensification of urban injustice. Ms. Tijani defined the Right to the City as a human right principle that must be illustrated in the competence, complementarity and access to public services. In order to guarantee this right, she underlined the relevance of establishing laws that regulate the relationship between local communities and the material components of the city. Ms. Tijani noticed that the state of the Right to the City changes from one country/continent to another: while it focuses on the environmental and historical aspects in developed countries, it is reduced to a functional component related to infrastructure issues in developing regions. Political will and socio-economic differences between countries with real democracy and local governance, and those where democracy is fragile and the administration centralized, were highlighted as main factors contributing to this variance. Ms. Tijani mentioned the city of Raoued as an example of a municipality where the lack of clear strategy for regional development and low economic potential have led to a precarious scenario in which 60% of the inhabitants do not have access to basic sanitation or paved road, and stressed that the Right to the City is synonymous with the right to life with dignity, what she considered to be at the heart of the demands of the Arab Spring. Finally, she concluded that the fight against injustice and inequality within the city and between cities inevitably involves the establishment of a system of municipal governance to enhance local democracy.

Speaker 3: Mr. Thabo Manyoni, Mayor of Mangaung and President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), South Africa

Mr. Manyoni began his presentation questioning if the Right to the City was only about individual liberty to access urban services or if it was related to the demand for

transformed and renewed access to urban life. He considered that community life is slowly being pushed out of the city context, which has become very expensive to live in, making it completely inaccessible to the (urban) poor. As part of this approach, Mr. Manyoni presented a general picture of South African experience and challenges regarding the promotion of the Right to the City. He highlighted that his country is still challenged with the legacies left by apartheid urban planning and human settlements. In this sense, the level of inequality, poverty and injustice in South African cities were highlighted as key challenges that require authorities to provide quick, sustainable and creative answers. Four main areas of responses were highlighted in his presentation: the incorporation of informal settlements as part of the city scape; the need to increase the access of these communities to the benefits and opportunities to be found in their cities; the promotion of substantial incentives to support the development of inclusive housing and state-subsidised rental stock and the increase of public participation. Finally, he concluded stressing the importance to re-assert the poor's right to be involved in the making and shaping of their city, and claimed the benefits of being urban citizens.

Speaker 4: Ms. Nadia Campeão, Vice Mayor of São Paulo, Brazil

Ms. Campeão started her intervention presenting a general picture of the improvement of Brazilian socio-economic indicators, through which she stressed the importance of combining economic growth with the decrease of social inequality. Within this general picture, she highlighted that Brazil has resumed its course to economic growth after more than two decades of stagnation, and that in the last twelve years twenty eight million people were lifted out of extreme poverty. Ms. Campeão considered that the city of São Paulo is part of this general context, although inequality is still rife: around 30% of citizens live in insecure accommodations and approximately two hundred thousand families are beneficiated with the federal government program that guarantees a minimum income for the poorest families. As part of the newly elected government, she stressed her understanding of the Right to the City as a collective right, based on the improvement of quality of life, collective well-being and access to quality public services. In this sense she considered that the recent protests that took place in different cities of Brazil last June were very important to teach the authorities that society demands more ways to participate in the politics of the city. Finally, to demonstrate the efforts of the new administration in promoting the Right to the City through an open and transparent process, Ms. Campeão presented three initiatives: the democratic participation in the drafting of the new master plan of São Paulo city, the creation of participatory councils for each district of São Paulo and the improvement of urban mobility.

Speaker 5: Mr. Frédéric Vallier, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Mr. Vallier emphasized that the Right to the City has many different facets, being the equality between men and women one of the most important aspects. In light of this challenge, since 1983 CEMR has been working actively to promote gender equality in decision-making processes. Mr. Vallier pointed out the importance of the *European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life*, adopted in 2006 and the result of

two decades of efforts and networking between women elected representatives. This has been one of their most successful initiatives, as 1,370 cities from 29 different European countries have signed the Charter, which has been translated into 25 different languages. Its success, according to Mr. Vallier, is due to the fact that it reconciles different visions of equality in Europe, as well as being very practical, offering tangible methods. Mr. Vallier said that since its adoption there has been many requests from signatory cities to get support on how to implement the Charter and especially on how to draw action plans. Following this demand, they launched an Observatory of the Charter (www.charter-equality.eu), which facilitates the exchange of experiences and good practices between signatory cities, besides offering a search engine to access information about them. Furthermore, Mr. Vallier drew attention to the need of implementing worldwide the *Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life*, adopted last January in Paris. He concluded by underlining the importance of these tools to reduce urban inequality and implement the Right to the City that can be replicated in other parts of the world, as well as the implementation of the broader global development agenda both before and after 2015.

Speaker 6: Mr. Giovanni Allegretti, Researcher at the Center for Social Studies (CES), University of Coimbra (Portugal)

Mr. Allegretti defined the concept of the Right to the City as a radicalization of social struggles to promote a distinct and more holistic understanding of collective rights. As part of this approach, he emphasized the importance of developing and coordinating two major work fronts: one related to the elaboration of programmatic documents and the other focused on the promotion and exchange of information on concrete practices implemented in the area of the Right to the City. He considered that the first process is substantially important to foster the building of an evolutionary vision of collective rights, which should be broader than just the sum of individual rights and more focused on an organicist understanding of the city and its social function. As an example of an important programmatic document, Mr. Allegretti mentioned the *Global Charter Agenda for Human Rights in the City* (2011), underlining its meaningful contribution in offering examples of pivotal actions and in drawing attention to cultural diversity during its drafting. Comparing this charter with the *European Charter for Human Rights in the City*, Mr. Allegretti noticed that the *Global Charter-Agenda* gives greater attention to the connections between urban environment and countryside. He also added as a positive aspect the introduction of elements stemming from different cosmogonies and the growing emphasis on the inter-municipal cooperation. He then presented the *Inclusive Cities Observatory*² as a tool of strong relevance for inspiring policies through existing good practices involving cities or regions, an example of militant research in the field of the Right to the City. Mr. Allegretti concluded affirming his belief that both, programmatic and databases, are key tools to influence the Post-2015 process and the new Urban Agenda that will be adopted at HABITAT III.

² <http://www.uclg-cisdp.org/en/observatory>

Rapporteur: Mr. Nelson Saule Júnior, General Coordinator of Instituto Pólis, Brazil

Mr. Nelson Saule Júnior summarized the interventions of previous speakers and added the following ideas to the debate: the existence of democratic, just, sustainable and human cities implies the recognition and implementation of the Right of the City as a new political and cultural pattern for rebuilding our cities. This concept stems from an emerging paradigm aiming at ensuring an equitable, fair and sustainable distribution and benefit of urban resources, wealth, goods and opportunities for all urban dwellers, regardless of their permanent or transitory situation in the city. The Right to the City, which is based on the idea cities are a privileged space for the exercise of citizenship and democracy, calls for the establishment and realization of engagements and measures to be undertaken by civil society, local and national governments, members of parliaments and international organisms so that all urban dwellers can live with dignity in cities.

Recommendations stemming from the session

- The Right to the City is a strategic and political tool to build more inclusive, democratic, egalitarian and sustainable cities.
- UCLG should advocate for the recognition of the right to the city in the new Urban Agenda that will be defined at Habitat III, in dialogue with civil society organizations and networks.
- The Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights is the channel through which a specific work on the right to the city should be delved in order to provide evidence and key political messages to UCLG.
- Possible tools to move forward the Right to the City globally: creation of platforms fostering a political dialogue and joint action between local governments and civil society organizations for Habitat III; setting up observatories in order to promote research and gather evidence and best practices at national, regional and international level; defining goals and local indicators to operationalize the Right to the City and monitor progress.