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THEMATIC MEETING
PUBLIC SPACES
BARCELONA 4-5 APR. 2016

BARCELONA DECLARATION
—— FOR HABITAT III ——

"PUBLIC SPACES"

BARCELONA
5 APRIL 2016

United Nations

We, the participants to the Habitat III Thematic Meeting on Public Space, representing a wide range of stakeholders including national, regional and local governments, organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, , academy and research institutions, workers and trade unions, private sector, social and solidarity enterprises, community based organizations, philanthropies, women and youth organizations; while thanking the Municipality of Barcelona for hosting the event, propose the following Declaration be considered and included as an essential input to the process towards the preparation of a New Urban Agenda to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016.

We recall the outcomes of "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030", the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" which provides a focus on cities through Goal 11 and the specific target on public space (Target 11.7) as well as other interlinked goals and targets across the whole agenda and the recently adopted "Paris Agreement".

We particularly welcome the acknowledgement of the importance of public space to achieve sustainable development, made by the 2030 Development Agenda, through the established target 11.7 which states that by 2030 we should "provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities".

We acknowledge with satisfaction the considerable attention that has been devoted to the concept of public space in the preparatory process including the issue paper on Public Space and the reports of Policy Unit 6 "Urban spatial strategies: Land markets and segregation". All of them concurring with the following definition of public space: "Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive".
We advocate for a central role of Public Space in the New Urban Agenda being a key driver to achieve our collective aspiration for more sustainable, just and democratic cities and human settlements for all temporary and permanent inhabitants and users of the city whether living in legal or informal condition.

Why public space?

We stress that:

·Human rights are key to advancing and developing an urbanization that is sustainable and socially inclusive, that promotes equality, combats discrimination in all its forms and empowers individuals and communities. The New Urban Agenda is a unique opportunity for state authorities at all level to realize the human rights of all inhabitants.

·The Right to the City is a new paradigm that provides an alternative framework to re-think cities and urbanization. It envisions the effective fulfillment of all internationally agreed human rights, sustainable development objectives as expressed through the Sustainable Development Goals, and the commitments of the Habitat Agenda.

·There is a need to preserve the character and quality of existing historical public areas, in order to promote local identity and to transmit heritage to the future generations; improve existing public areas in central and peripheral parts of the city, in order to upgrade their quality and foster the sense of belonging of the communities; design new public spaces in built areas and in new urban expansions, to increase the quality of life of the inhabitants and strengthen social stability.

·In an ever more urbanized world, the right to the city must be guaranteed to the people who share the urban space today and to the coming generations who are going to inherit it tomorrow. This means it is necessary to have urban planning and public policies capable of producing more mixed and compact cities and human settlements marked by gender and social justice. Compactness and mixture make them fairer and more sustainable and, therefore, better prepared for facing the erosions to the right to the city such as gentrification, spatial segregation or sprawl. Urban public space is not only the setting in which these erosions become more evident; it is also the place from which they can be they staunchly reverted fought with greater firmness with greater firmness. However, in order for the public space to respond to its true purpose and be at the service of people in communities in order to achieve the democratisation of our cities, it should be tackled from a complex and integral logic which goes beyond its own physical boundaries and address fundamental dimensions such as 1)"agora" (its social and political dimension), 2) mobility, 3)economy 4) housing.

1-	**AGORA (social and political dimension)**
	Accessibility and inclusivity
·The public spaces should be free of charge and free from physical, legal and architectural barriers that discourage the presence of homeless low and income people (preventive or dissuasive design) and make it difficult for the people with reduced mobility to circulate,   for the full exercise of its rights and liberties
·It is important to ensure the access to the natural zones, the waterfronts or the heritage sites.
·Public space enables the population to remain engaged and to stake a claim on the city. This implies to respect and protect a number of rights and freedoms, such as the right to freedom of expression and assembly, the right to information, consultation and participation in decision-making processes.
·Public spaces may be places where social tensions exacerbate or places where harassment, threats and violence can occur. These issues need to be addressed at their root causes but also through the design and elements (lights, etc.) of public spaces in consultations with inhabitants, especially women, children, LGTB and youth. Moreover proximity relations or rather positive social relations and community control strongly contributes to the enhancement of citizens' security and its perception.

Versatility

·The public space should be versatile to allow multiple uses and accesses, including through translations of public and commercial signs for ethnic minorities.

·The empty and neutral areas can be better adapted to neighbourhood appropriation or the possibility of hosting extraordinary community-based events.

·The public space can represent an alternative to temporary sheltering and provide space for evacuation in cases of emergency; this should be considered particularly given climate change and migration issues.

Quality design, environmental and human scale

·Public space should reflect a human scale, a territorial distribution and a degree of integration with the immediate surroundings which fosters its everyday use, maintenance, security and safety for all,

·The Design process should be a co production of stakeholders input and include physical, cultural and social identities that define a place.

·Public spaces design can contribute with many co-benefits to minimize the impact of cities on the global climate system, both through mitigation (energy savings and resource efficiency in public services) and adaptation measures (green and blue grids, infrastructure, heat wave control). It can more generally lead to a better resilience of cities.

· Public spaces are key to protect urban biodiversity, in particular through ecological continuities promotion.

Distribution and integration

·Capillary distribution of public space at all scales in the urban territory is also important at all scales. All neighbourhoods should have a suitable public space and green areas for recreation and social interaction at a reasonable distance from home.

·Far from only being a free and open area, the public space has a complex spatial nature that includes porches, underground areas and closed buildings. Integration with other physical elements of the city such as municipal facilities, public infrastructure housing and commerce should be pursued.

·The street and the house are interrelated spaces. Friendlier and safer public space are those that reflect a greater level of participation and appropriation by neighbours. Accordingly, a visual and circulatory relation between the domestic spaces and the open places is fundamental.

·The public infrastructures (railway and metro stations, markets and treatment plants) should transcend the mono-functional specialization and take on the sufficient degree of complexity so as to become spaces of social interaction with a pedagogical function.

·Adequate and well connect network of streets and other public spaces particularly in new urban expansions and at time of urban transformation, should be secured, considering that successful, dense mixed cities in general have 35-50% of urban land as public space. This will require development of legislation on re-plotting and land readjustment to acquire suitable public land.

Recreation and health

·The public space should provide equal opportunities for enjoying indoor/outdoor spaces and promote healthy practices and sustainable consumption and production patterns in harmony with nature. The public space should contribute to the wellbeing of people in vulnerable situations (including children, older persons, , homeless, the sick and people with disabilities, irregular migrants)and facilitate the equitable distribution of tasks that traditionally have fallen on the shoulders of women within the domestic field.

Cultural and political expression

·Public spaces can create the environment to dispel the myths and destructive stereotypes associated with migration by fostering public debate about the varied and overwhelmingly positive contributions of migrants to the local communities.

·Far from threatening their natural or heritage values, public access to conservation-oriented or fragile areas allows people to fully get to know them, value and defend them, which in itself is a greater guarantee of their preservation.

·The public spaces and municipal educational and cultural facilities (schools, libraries, civic centres, and museums) have a pedagogical function that is essential for democracy and social transformation contributing to the construction of a critical, committed and well-informed citizenship. The pedagogical function, which should foster critical debate and avoid indoctrination, should be fully promoted and impregnate any public space.

Conflict resolution and cohabitation

·The Public space is where dialogues and confrontations take place defining the mechanisms to enable conflicts to evolve and be solved, between users, particularly in the complex multicultural cities, so that public space is able to bring its added value to different groups and needs.

Governance

·The quantity and quality of public space can be guaranteed trough a proper Urban governance mechanisms developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and by ensuring inclusive and participatory decision making.

·Public space requires a legal and policy framework at central level that both enables local authorities to effectively implement national urban policies and empowers them as policy makers benefiting from a sufficient level of autonomy in decision-making in accordance with their competences.

·The resulting multi-level governance system requires political commitment from all echelons of government for an efficient and effective share of functional assignments for coordination and cooperation. Such a policy should be shaped through a transparent and participatory process involving - beyond national, subnational and local authorities - all relevant non-state actors, such as NGOs, citizens and the private sector.

2-   ECONOMY

·Promote the mainstreaming of social and solidarity economy in all sectors as an inclusive, viable human-rights based economic altenative and key lever for the future of cities"

·Establish mechanisms for redistribution of the increases in property value brought about by good public space in the case of housing, commercial or production uses, and to prevent its solely private capture, by introducing fair taxation and site and city wide redistribution of gains in view of increasing equity and social development and ensuring the contribution of land owners to urban development.

·Public space should include governance that ensures the preservation of territorial, peri-urban and urban land for food production by small-scale food producers from real-estate speculation.

·In order to better integrate cities and mitigate climate change, the democratization, municipalisation, transparency, and sustainable production and management of energy, water, and telecommunication provision – as well as municipally managed access to urban waste and sanitation should be a right for all inhabitants including migrants.

Foster micro, small, and medium scale – both formal and informal - economic activities, with specific attention to integrating urban with rural and natural spaces and revitalizing unproductive spaces in order to improve the livelihoods of local producers and workers. including those of the informal sectors

·Promote responsible local sustainable production and consumption, social interactions, as well as vibrant, inclusive, and diverse public space through enabling accessible networks of municipal markets, local commerce, street vendors and waste pickers.

·To introduce regulatory frameworks that guarantee the territorial balance in urban-rural linkages through public space networks, as the base for economical systems

·The public character of public space needs to be guaranteed and its privatization avoided even if the use remains public especially referring to streets and built environment open spaces like squares. Worldwide trends at different scales put this issue as priority highlighting the need of a mutual positive relation between public and private space, including housing and residential blocks.

·A new form of partnership where people & stakeholder have the right to access and participate in the process. And Formulate stricter regulation against privatization of Public space.

·Reiterate multi-sectorial cooperation on cross-cutting issues such as labour, land-use, food and foster public space which include governance which ensures the preservation of territorial, peri-urban and urban land for food production by small-scale food producers. Ensure adequate infrastructure which connect small scale producers to local markets.

3-   MOBILITY

·There is the need of a paradigm shift from a private-car based mobility model towards a more democratic, climate-oriented and sustainable mobility, boosting efficient modes of transport including considering the Modal Split of the daily journeys. Cultural policies and awareness raising on the effects of massive use of private motorized vehicles on health, productivity, sustainability and equity should be promoted.

·Promoting walkability and "cycling" is a key measure to bring people into the public space, reduce congestion and boost local economy and interactions, as well as improving safety in cities. Walkability helps to reduce automobile reliance, alleviate congestion, air pollution and resource depletion issues.

·Walkable and cycling public spaces, designed on the human scale, are effective tools for women, children and Age-Friendly cities, increasing liveability and enjoyment.

·Public policies and urban planning must foster public transport as a structural way for promoting a more democratic and sustainable mobility. Public transport must have a good spatial and temporal distribution, as well as being afordable and accessible for everybody. They must be intermodal and its infrastructures must have a balanced relation with the neighbourhoods they cross, not producing big barriers and large.

·To develop urban planning capacity to make strategic public space plans on the scale of the city, the districts and the street level, that responds in a transversal way to urban challenges on mobility, ecology and social issues.

·To define planning measures and rules that guarantee in a quantitative way the creation of accessible public spaces with a priority for pedestrian and cycling mobility for all, being part of a vibrant and diverse living environment.

4 -   HOUSING

Right to adequate housing

·Access to quality public space for all should be strengthen as an essential component of the definition of the right to adequate housing, currently including security of tenure, affordability, accessibility, location, cultural adequacy, security and access to water, sanitation, electricity.

·The provision of quality public space can greatly improve housing conditions both in the existing urban setting and newly developed extension, with particular regard to the needs of vulnerable groups including people living in informal settlements.

·Social housing with quality public space should become the norm rather than exception in cities. Instead of being limited to distant and peripheral locations it should be distributed in all parts of the city, prioritizing urban renewal, in order to counteract gentrification and in specific context "touristification".

Social function of land, property and city

·Policies and interventions should promote alternative housing options shifting from a predominant private ownership to rentals, and tenure diversity, including cooperatives solutions as cohousing and community land trust, enhanced by provision of adequate public space.

·Access to quality public space for all is threatened by two opposite phenomena, the appropriation of public space as a result of gentrification and the privatization of Public space as a result of exclusive housing development and gated communities.

·The worldwide speculative escalation of rental prices in the most attractive locations, desertify the city and its public spaces by expelling and evicting inhabitants, communities, small formal and informal businesses. Regulation of the private market and rentals control as well as discouraging empty housing can counteract the above and promote the social function of the property.

· Land and housing, especially when equipped with quality public space, are very valuable assets. Therefore they should be subjected to fair taxation and value capture mechanisms. These revenues should be re-distributed to less priviledged neighbourhoods according to principles of urban solidarity.

Housing policies and tools

·Housing policies need to foster local integrated housing approaches meeting people needs and addressing the strong links between education, employment, housing and health aiming to desegregation. In the same way, ensuring security of tenure including preventing forced evictions and displacements guaranteeing the provision of dignified and adequate re-allocation by corporate landlords and public authorities in case of individual landlords eviction. Dedicated human rights based strategy and policies and social protection are needed to tackle homelessness as comprehensive and sustainable housing first programs with measurable goals and timelines and in an inclusive manner.

We conclude that:

In order to have more democratic cities, namely fairer and more sustainable ones, we need to develop public policies and urban planning that best foster more compact and mixt urban fabrics in which:

• [Agoras] Freedom, gender equality, equity and diversity of expression, transparency, pedagogy, culture of civic and critical engagement, as well as binding participation and accountability pave the way for the democratic co-production of urban space. for all inhabitants whether temporary or permanent, living in legal or illegal conditions.
• [Mobility] Dependence of private car and its catastrophic consequences on health, equity, climate change, energetic waste, urban sprawl and spatial segregation are overcome by walkability, cycling and public transport.
• [Markets] Opportunities to participate of the common wealth and democratisation of economic activities are ensured to include small–scale operators and local producers.
• [Housing] The right to adequate, affordable and sustainable housing is guaranteed simultaneously with the right to a diverse and well located neighbourhood.

These four fields are universal because they concern cities all around the world. That is why local governments have to be provided with sufficient resources in order to address them properly and be able to guarantee human rights and the right to the city.

We finally commit to promote the principles and the recommendations included in this Barcelona Declaration for Habitat III, ensuring that this effectively contributes to the formulation of the New Urban Agenda at the next United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to be held in Quito (Ecuador) in October 2016.