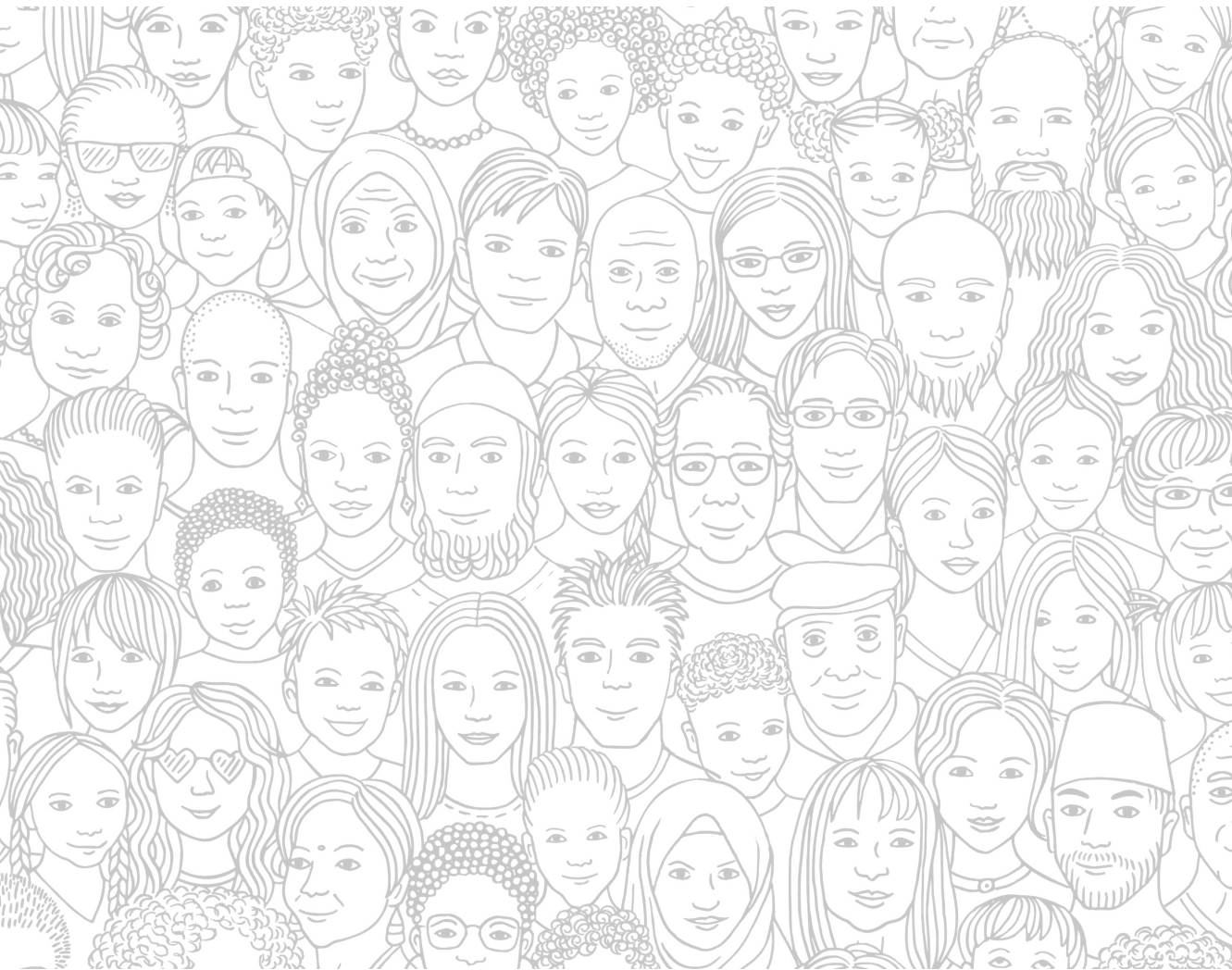


# ENABLING MEANINGFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESSES



# ENABLING MEANINGFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESSES

A TOOLKIT



## ENABLING MEANINGFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESSES

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## ACRONYMS

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CEPA: Committee of Experts on Public Administration

CSO: Civil society organization

IDP: Internally displaced people

NUA: New Urban Agenda

NUP: National urban policy

NUF: National Urban Forum

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlement Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, reaffirms the role of spatial planning as a strategic vehicle for the localization of the Goals. While regulating endogenous economic growth, prosperity and employment resulting from spatial transformations, spatial planning addresses the needs of priority groups by securing the redistribution of public value and narrowing socio-spatial polarization (UN-Habitat, 2015a).

To ensure that spatial transformations are not for the benefit of the few, and hence fulfil public value, the Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda emphasize the need for inclusive and collaborative governance in spatial planning processes. Thus, rather than advocating for a technocratic and normative model of spatial planning based on standards and regulations, the Goals and New Urban Agenda refer to spatial planning as a multi-stakeholder decision-making process during which participation is a key governance feature to reach sustainable development. This will be explored further in chapter I of this paper.

Building on the call for participatory spatial planning required by the Goals and New Urban Agenda, the aim of this toolkit is twofold. Firstly, the kit aids in the exploration of how participation in spatial planning can be operationalized, including the challenges and the benefits of applying such an approach as well as the direct and indirect actors to involve during planning decision-making processes. Secondly, the toolkit



**Various stakeholders, during the national validation workshop, discussing the findings of the UN-Habitat spatial planning legal and governance assessment. Muscat, Oman, © UN-Habitat, 2022**



**National Validation Workshop with Key Namibian Stakeholders on Law and Climate Change (Urban Law for Resilient and Low Carbon Urban Development Project) © Samuel Njuguna (UN-Habitat), 2022**



proposes a series of legal, governance, fiscal and digital tools that can be used to mainstream participation in the whole planning process.

Despite the numerous and extended experiences of participatory approaches in spatial planning, from a policy-making point of view, the vagueness of participation often results in confusion over expectations and methods (McArthur, 1995, pp. 61-71). Participatory outcomes are often aspired to but challenging to implement in practice. Participation is costly in terms of resources and capacities. Established power relations often steer participatory practices. Priority groups are often prevented from participating by structural or political barriers. In addition, the participation of the public in the decision-making processes is often reduced to merely information sharing and consultation. This does not meet the benchmark aspired to by the Goals and New Urban Agenda, which call for additional forms of participation such as empowerment that improve the position of communities and the public in negotiating the shape and management of cities. Considering the principles of effective governance developed by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA, 2018) and the Declaration on the Right to Development (United Nations General Assembly, 1986), chapter II of this paper operationalizes the call for meaningful participation by discerning and analysing two dimensions, namely inclusiveness and effectiveness.

Chapter III focuses on the differences between normative planning and participatory planning. It explores the reasons why inclusive and effective participatory governance in spatial planning processes is key to achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals. Participation increases decisions' legitimacy by sharing policy ownership with a wide range of actors. In addition, the empowerment of stakeholders, especially priority groups, is strategic to foster the creation of a collective territorial intelligence that is useful to devise plans adaptable to the territorial needs.

Before moving to the presentation of a series of practical tools to enable meaningful participation, chapter IV discusses a tentative list of stakeholders to be considered when dealing with planning issues. The chapter emphasizes that all types of actors, such as public institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, knowledge institutions and grassroots movements are heterogeneous groups. To be inclusive, participatory practices should value diversity of views and positions among stakeholders. Moreover, to be effective, such practices should be built on a detailed analysis of the actors' interests and the resources that they are able to leverage.

The second part of this toolkit seeks to fill the gap between participatory theory and practice by elaborating on the following leading questions (chapter V):

- A.** What are the instruments that public institutions at multiple levels can mobilize to establish an enabling environment where the right of participation in public affairs and the right to active, free and meaningful participation in development is fulfilled?
- B.** What are innovative legal, policy and governance tools that public institutions at multiple levels can employ to facilitate the

engagement and ensure the empowerment of all members of society to facilitate the co-creation of spatial planning solutions tailored to local needs?

Acknowledging the impossibility of having a “one-size-fits-all” approach, the toolkit does not feature a step-by-step process perspective on how to engage the public and civil society. Instead, a series of mechanisms are described that can be adapted and aggregated in the form of policy mixes that can better suit the local context, the stage of the process and the available resources.

To ensure that all stakeholders, and most importantly priority groups, have the capacities and resources to participate in the whole planning process, flexible legal, governance, fiscal and digital tools are given, that governments at all levels can mobilize to regulate the inclusive and effective aspects of participation.

Overall, rather than just presenting a mere list of tools to follow, the aim of the toolkit is to support policymakers in mainstreaming meaningful participation when designing planning processes. The implementation of the presented participatory mechanisms also assists public institutions to reposition technicians and spatial planners as facilitators of processes of consensus building and collective territorial intelligence construction. Furthermore, the toolkit may be valuable to other planning stakeholders such as civil society organizations and grassroots movements. The presented mechanisms, along with the case studies analysed in the form of text boxes, are an insight into the challenges and opportunities of possible solutions for which these actors can advocate.



Illustration by frimages source: envato elemenis

# CHAPTER I.

## Introduction - a global call for participatory spatial planning



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The Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda underline the increasing role that local governments are acquiring in driving sustainable development. The presence of a goal focused on cities and communities (Goal 11), along with the call for stronger public institutions in steering development (Goal 16), mirrors the increasing responsibility devolved to cities in driving sustainable development. Rather than “platforms” for change, cities are depicted as far stronger “vectors” for change. Within this framework, environmental and spatial planning is increasingly recognized by the Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda as a strategic vehicle for localization of the Goals (Watson, 2016).

In renewing the centrality of spatial planning as a tool to achieve sustainable development, the Goals and New Urban Agenda underline how the Goals cannot be achieved without championing inclusive decision-making processes. As cities continue to develop and grow, inequity and poverty become increasingly commonplace, and are also the result of a “lack of community participation in urban development and decision-making” (UN-Habitat, 2020a, p. 63). Cities’ transformations can be sustainable only if they involve priority groups, of “underrepresented and underserved populations in participatory civic processes, enabling them to contribute to their own development” (ibid.). The call for open and multi-stakeholder governance models builds on the enabling role of participatory decision-making in the advancement of human rights (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018). Indeed, participatory governance plays a crucial role in the promotion of democracy, the rule of

law, social inclusion and economic development. The focus on inclusiveness through the broad and meaningful participation of all stakeholders leads to the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 25). Moreover, inclusiveness is closely linked to the full realization of the right to peaceful assembly, association and information, along with the right to freedom of expression (ibid.).

Several Sustainable Development Goals call for multi-stakeholder decision-making processes, with special references to the participation of priority groups. For instance, Goal 16 – to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – is a call for participation where all stakeholders, including communities, civil society organizations and other public and private institutions, are involved in public decision-making from the planning phase, implementation and in maintaining and sustaining the benefits and outcomes (whole-of-civil society approach). More specifically, target 16.7 aims to “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.” Inclusive development in Goal 11 is explicitly applied to planning, financing and management processes. In particular, target 11.3 is intended to enhance “inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries”. Moreover, the target’s indicator stresses the importance of the direct participation of civic

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society in spatial planning processes. Indicator 11.3.2 looks at the “proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically”. The Goals propose not only the participation of those directly involved in spatial transformation, but also those who are indirectly affected. For instance, target 11.a recognizes the high degree of influence and impact urban planning has on rural areas and thus underlines the importance of a comprehensive and continuous approach to participation able to engage with all interested actors (UN-Habitat, 2019b).<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the Goals, the New Urban Agenda stresses the enabling role of public institutions in promoting institutional, political, legal and financial mechanisms to allow meaningful participation in decision-making, planning and follow-up processes fostering civil engagement, co-provision and co-production (New Urban Agenda, paragraph 41). Paragraph 48 underlines the concept of participation by encouraging “collaborations among all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector and civil society, women, organizations representing youth, as well as those representing persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, professionals, academic institutions, trade unions, employers’ organizations, migrant associations and cultural associations, in order to identify opportunities for urban economic development and identify and address existing and emerging challenges”. Even though the shift in the urban planning paradigm called for by the New Urban Agenda requires substantial

regulatory, technical and normative measures, an integrated participatory approach is considered to be the key mechanism leading to sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and environmental protection (para. 15, c, ii). To further stress the inclusiveness principles, the New Urban Agenda introduced the concept of people-centred development. United Nations Member States committed to “urban and rural development that is people-centred, protects the planet and is age- and gender-responsive, and to the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, facilitating living together, ending all forms of discrimination and violence, and empowering all individuals and communities while enabling their full and meaningful participation” (para. 26).

Overall, it can be argued that the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda consider a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach as key governance features to reach sustainable development. As for spatially related transformation processes, rather than referring to traditional, regulatory and normative spatial planning, the focus on inclusiveness adds to the field of planning a political and governance value.

Major limits of the traditional planning approach include (UN-Habitat, 2016b):

- A.** It is often seen as a bureaucratic activity of land management, drafting legally required documents and issuing permits. It is often reduced to a checklist of legal steps.
- B.** It is often “overregulated” by an unnecessary complex legal framework.
- C.** It often fails to address the problem of

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<sup>1</sup> See principle 9.

plan implementation from the beginning, making urban plans as spatial blueprints only, unrelated to policy, a legal framework or a financing strategy.

- D.** It often relies on an institutional framework organized in administrative silos and sectoral division of functions.
- E.** When faced with more complex challenges, business as usual planning is often externalized and privatized.

Neglecting its intrinsically political dimension, a technocratic planning approach risks leaving little room for progress and innovation, while lowering the implementation rate and the policy ownership. Conversely, from a political perspective, spatial planning is “more than a technical tool; it is an integrative and political participatory process that addresses and helps to reconcile competing interests regarding city form and functionality within an appropriate urbanization perspective” (UN-Habitat, 2020c, p. 57). In other words, rather than being a technical tool, spatial planning is first and foremost a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory decision-making process (UN-Habitat, 2015a, p. 2). Urban and territorial planning is “a decision-making process aimed at realizing economic, social, cultural and environmental goals through the development of spatial visions, strategies and plans and the application of a set of policy principles, tools, institutional and participatory mechanisms and regulatory procedures” (ibid.).



UN-Habitat conducting field visits and data collection for evidenced-based enhancement of urban rural linkages © UN-Habitat 2021

## CHAPTER II.

# Towards a definition of meaningful participation



Indigenous leaders from across the Amazon rally by Mitch Anderson—Amazon Frontlines

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The previous chapter showcased how the Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda call for multi-stakeholders' participatory approaches in spatial planning processes to achieve sustainable development. Despite the numerous references to the importance of inclusivity, participation, engagement or collaboration in relation to the way different stakeholders interact, both the Goals and the New Urban Agenda do not provide a conclusive definition of participation. Faced with the upcoming implementation challenges related to the Decade of Actions (United Nations, 2019), it is important to explore how participation can be defined and operationalized.

From a power and governance perspective, the discourse on participatory approaches in planning policies cannot be simplified or flattened to a homogeneous set of practices (Smith, 1973, pp. 275–295). Participatory practices range from the devolution of voting power to citizens, to exercises of engagement, direct deliberation and empowerment. Considering different degrees of power redistribution among stakeholders, it is possible to distinguish at least three distinct levels of public participation in policy processes (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 24–34):<sup>2</sup>

- a.** Information, also described as non-participation, is a one-way relationship in which information flows from the government to other stakeholders.
- b.** Consultation, also referred to as tokenism, entails a two-way relationship in which stakeholders provide feedback and share

information with governments. However, no feedback loop mechanisms are in place to ensure the effective consideration of bottom-up knowledge. This type of participation is often criticized because of its limited transformative capacity and its blame-avoidance or consensus-building purposes (White, 1996, pp. 6-15; Cabannes and Lipietz, 2018, pp. 67–84).

- c.** Empowerment, in which stakeholders are enabled to influence the means and outcomes of relevant social reforms. They are given the appropriate resources, namely the capacity and the right, to enter the decision-making process with the necessary bargaining power to influence the agenda-setting and the policy outcome.

To cover the gap between what the Goals call for and their implementation, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration formulated 11 “good governance” principles which clarify how to achieve the Goals by building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels of government (CEPA, 2018). The CEPA approach focusses on mainstreaming multi-stakeholder engagement across the principles (see table 1), discerning two dimensions of participation, namely inclusiveness and effectiveness. Firstly, inclusiveness relates to who is allowed and enabled to have a chance to influence decisions regarding matters that directly and indirectly affect them. Secondly, effectiveness evaluates the extent to which stakeholders are enabled to have an influence on the agenda-setting and policy outcome.

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<sup>2</sup> Arnstein defined a “Ladder of Citizen Participation” by analysing empirical cases in the United States of America in the late 1960s.



<b>Effectiveness - collaboration</b>	To address problems of common interest, institutions at all levels of government and in all sectors should work together and jointly with non-State actors towards the same end, purpose and effect.
<b>Inclusiveness – leaving no one behind</b>	To ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality, public policies are to consider the needs and aspirations of all segments of society, including the poorest and most vulnerable and those subject to discrimination.
<b>Inclusiveness - participation</b>	To have an effective State, all significant political groups should be actively involved in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy.

**Table 1: Multiple aspects of a participatory approach, mainstreamed in the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration principles**

Thus, rather than using participation as a “symbolic gesture” with little transformative impact on urban governance structures and systems, meaningful participation needs to foster the empowerment and autonomy of social movements and local stakeholders and endow citizens with real decision-making powers (UN-Habitat, 2020c).

As opposed to the vagueness of meanings and expected outcomes of the term “participation”, empowerment refers to the purpose of gaining independence in formulating and implementing a political agenda. The World Bank has defined it as the transfer of control over decisions and resources to communities and organizations (World Bank Group, 1999). In other words, empowering people with participatory practices

improves the position of communities in negotiating with external agents (Lyons, Smuts and Stephens, 2001, pp. 1233–1251).

Using the inclusiveness and effectiveness perspectives, meaningful participatory practices that empower civil society and the public can be defined as follows:

- a. Inclusiveness operates on the dimension of communication, appreciation for diversity and accessibility, which are based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination with respect to age, gender, race and ethnicity. Inclusivity ensures that all human beings, including priority groups and those subject to discrimination, can have a voice in decision-making processes. In other words,

meaningful participatory practices expand the capabilities and freedom of individuals to enter the policymaking arena.

- b.** Effectiveness operates on the dimension of power dynamics between stakeholders, which ensures the right of people to self-determination by participating, contributing, and enjoying development processes and gains (United Nation General Assembly,

1986).<sup>3</sup> This is based on the principles of transparency and accountability. In other words, meaningful participatory practices redistribute resources to enable all stakeholders to be agents of change and have equal bargaining power.

<sup>3</sup> The relevance of participation is also specified in Art. 1 and Art. 2.

Free, active, meaningful participation	
Inclusiveness	Effectiveness
<p>The right to free, active and meaningful participation demands the expansion of those who are entitled to participate in the policy arena. Inclusive participatory practices are founded on the principles of equality and non-discrimination with respect to age, gender, race, ethnicity and other criteria, paying special attention to priority groups.</p> <p>Inclusiveness operates in the dimension of communication, appreciation for diversity and accessibility.</p> <p>Inclusive participatory practices focus on clarity of language, participants' selection process and the removal of barriers, including financial, social and cultural.</p> <p>Inclusiveness is significantly concerned with who is in and out of the policy arena.</p>	<p>The right to free, active and meaningful participation assesses the extent to which actors in the political arena are effectively enabled to have an influence on the agenda-setting and the policy outcome. Effective participatory practices are based on the principles of transparency, accountability and stakeholder's agency.</p> <p>It operates on the dimension of power dynamics between stakeholders.</p> <p>Effective participatory practices are intended to redistribute resources to enable all stakeholders to be active agents of change.</p> <p>Effectiveness is significantly concerned with how stakeholders bargain in the policy arena.</p>

**Table 2: Defining meaningful participation: inclusiveness and effectiveness. Sources: United Nations General Assembly, 1986; Piovesan, 2013)**

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## Challenges in engaging stakeholders

Participation practices aim to enable dialogue between actors with different resources and interests, however there are numerous challenges that inhibit, restrict, or constrain public participation. Before examining possible practical tools to guide constructive participation, it is important to look at the likely difficulties that stakeholders might encounter. Multiple challenges should be taken into consideration when outlining a stakeholder engagement strategy:

- A.** Lack of resources: despite limited funds, social capital and equipment, governments are under intense pressure to mediate stakeholders' interests. Governments often face limitations in securing staff and resources required to facilitate participatory practices that are long and expensive. Nonetheless, mainstreaming community empowerment in decision-making and ensuring community-based solutions reduces the costs of implementation and the risk of investments by external actors (Mazzucato and Collins, 2019).
- B.** Timeframe biased: planning decisions taken today may prevent future opportunities. The pressures of tackling imminent issues often steer policy solutions which disregard future consequences. In other words, participants in the decision-making process may have a timeframe bias. Intergenerational participation may avoid such a challenge. Dialogue between people of different age groups can help mediate between a short-term focus and a long-term sustainable perspective.
- C.** Boundary biased: the impacts of planning decisions often resonate well beyond the city's administrative borders. In spatial planning, decision-making processes, urban and rural areas should not be treated as separate entities. The reciprocal and repetitive flow of people, goods, financial and environmental services (defining urban-rural linkages) between specific rural, peri-urban and urban locations are interdependent (UN-Habitat, 2019b). Ensuring meaningful participation by people, local institutions and communities across the urban-rural continuum building an integrated territorial governance is key to prevent conflicts during implementation and to make the rural-urban resource flow efficient.
- D.** Reticent public officials: technicians may reject innovative and original operational practices such as those used in participatory planning since they are used to employing established administrative and technical tools. Even though the benefits of participation are acknowledged, public officials and technicians may be reluctant to consider bottom-up knowledge in the policy design stage (Eriksson, Fredriksson and Syssner, 2021). One reason for this is likely to be because formally trained planners and architects see themselves as experts instead of facilitators. It has been observed that when public officials acknowledge women, older persons, children and the overall population as real experts of their territory, participation is easier and the implementation of the resulting plan is better legitimized with lower levels of conflict (Ortiz Escalante and Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015, pp. 113–126).



Discussion on the Feasibility Study for the Hayenna Integrated Urban Development Programme- Egypt © UN-Habitat, 2016

- E.** Formulation of one-size-fits-all policies: Standardized solutions fail to consider the socioeconomic context and intersectional issues existing in each country. Public and civil society are not homogeneous groups. People experience the built environment and spatial transformations in multiple and different ways, therefore standard participatory tools do not exist. Special mechanisms that value diversity and reshape rooted power relationships are needed to map, engage and collaborate with different stakeholders and in particular marginalized priority groups.
- F.** Lack of political trust: public mistrust in governments is recognized as a rising global trend. Mistrust is directly supported by the perception of fairness of processes and outcomes of governments' policies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development (OECD), 2020). The lack of political trust leads to scepticism about the real transformational potential of participation. Participation is often seen as a means through which the public is invited to fulfil the requirement of consultation with communities. Moreover, low trust exacerbates polarization and it negatively impacts social cohesion, eventually challenging constructive participatory practices (OECD, 2017). Nonetheless, it has been found that giving citizens an effective role in public decision-making leads to more legitimate and effective policies and enhances public trust (OECD, 2020).

## CHAPTER III.

# Why participation matters in spatial planning processes



Local women actors discussing components of the Minna Integrated Development Plan-Niger State, Nigeria © UN-Habitat 2021

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With reference to UN-Habitat's International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, the first chapter of this toolkit defines planning as "a decision-making process aimed at realizing economic, social, cultural and environmental goals through the development of spatial visions, strategies and plans and the application of a set of policy principles, tools, institutional and participatory mechanisms and regulatory procedures" (UN-Habitat, 2015a, p.2). According to the guidelines, the reason for spatial planning is to generate endogenous economic growth, prosperity and employment, while addressing the common interest and, in particular, the needs of priority groups. Given the "inherent and fundamental economic function" of planning and considering how every aspect of human activity is affected by the physical arrangement of the built environment, (Abbott, 2020) it is important to question where the legitimacy for spatial planning as a public function lies. How do different levels of government justify their regulatory role in spatial development?

Conventional spatial planning based on technical knowledge and normative outputs has been historically justified by the rationality of its underlying decision-making process. Rational spatial plans seek the most efficient spatial setting to meet the public interest. However, a rational plan designed by technicians may not be democratically supported. As a result, since the 1990s, a communicative approach to spatial planning has been developed (see table 3) Innes, 1995, pp. 183–189). Also, articulated via the notions of collaborative planning (Healey, 1997) or deliberative planning (Forester, 1989), communicative

planning seeks to expand inclusive practical democratic deliberations through a respect for diversity and the recognition of others' values (Albrechts, 2002, pp. 331-347). The legitimization of communicative spatial planning lies in the process of consensus building, or in other words in the achievement of mutual understanding (Dryzek, 2001, pp. 651–669). The legitimacy of communicative planning, thus, depends on bringing the broadest range of actors into the process, representing conflicting interests and sources of power (Smith, 1973, pp. 275–295). The more the process is inclusive and effectively represents diversity, the stronger the legitimacy. The effective appreciation for diversity prevents the degeneration of technocratic authority into delegitimized power (ibid.). It justifies the process itself and it devolves policy ownership to the broad policy subsystem, thus increasing the chances of implementation success.

The adoption of a communicative approach requires a detailed reconsideration of the role of planners and the kind of knowledge spatial plans rely on. Rather than being mere technicians, planners acquire the power of creating deliberative processes and setting agendas that have the potential to include and exclude different people (Albrechts, 2002, pp. 331–347). Planners became empowering actors, ensuring that those potentially excluded are given a voice which facilitates the gathering of a collective territorial intelligence (see table 3). While conventional planning refers to technical knowledge to design static plans, regulations and standards, communicative planning recognizes its inherent uncertainty of means and goals (Balducci and others, 2011, pp. 481–

501). Therefore, it relies on the construction of a collective intelligence to fill the uncertainty gap and tailor plans to the territorial needs.

The participation of direct and indirectly affected stakeholders to the planning process is key to ground envisioned planned futures to the context and to evaluate the environmental and social consequences of alternative spatial settings. The empowerment of the public, civil society groups and priority groups is especially important because of their capacity to enhance “ordinary knowledge”, empirically co-produced, and to be intimately aware of contextual variables (Burby, 2003, pp. 33–49). The importance of aligning the technical objectives of planning to local realities cannot be underestimated. Research has shown how urban planners and lawmakers continue to believe in “urban fantasies” (Watson, 2014). Socially constructed territorial intelligence allows for a “collective reality testing” (Etzioni, 1968) influencing the feedback-loop mechanisms of the planning decision-making and enhancing the adaptability of the plan to the context (Burby, 2003, pp.33–49).

Shifting the perspective towards the benefits of participatory planning onto participants, it can be argued that beyond its legitimation function, participation is an investment in relational and social capital (Putnam, 1993; Mitlin, 2021). Public engagement in decision-making processes supports the development of actors’ capabilities. In addition, participatory planning enhances the positive norm of reciprocity and creates new networks of civic engagement fostering social trust, mutual assistance and cooperation (Hamdi, 2010). To represent investments in relational capital, participatory practices should

be founded on the acceptance of diversity and the fundamental freedom of humans to choose who they are (Broto, 2021).

Overall, the mainstreaming of participatory practices that aim at building collective territorial intelligence has the following benefits (OECD, 2020; World Bank Group, 2017; UN-Habitat, 2021b):

- A. **Increases community accountability and ownership of the development process, while it strengthens integrity and prevents corruption.**
- B. **Tailors the plan for the territorial needs, which enhances legitimacy, preventing potential conflicts during the implementation phase.**
- C. **Strengthens democracy helping counteracting polarization and reducing inequalities and social tensions.**



Type of planning	Type of mobilized knowledge	Political legitimacy	Role of planning practitioners
Rational Planning	Technical knowledge	Low	Normative
Communicative planning	Socially constructed	The more inclusive the process, the higher the legitimacy	Facilitator/ brokers

**Table 3: Differences in planning approaches. Source: Author<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>4</sup> Designed on the basis of Innes, J. (1995). Planning Theory's Emerging Paradigm: Communicative Action and Interactive Practice, Journal of Planning Education and Research, vol. 14, No 3, pp. 183–189.



Students and experts using UN-Habitat's Memorandum Game to identify metropolitan priorities and solutions, at Politecnico di Milano, Italy © UN-Habitat. 2022



# CHAPTER IV.

## Stakeholders in spatial planning policies



Workshop with key stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to discuss social housing initiatives during the implementation of the Developmental Housing Project. © UN-Habitat, 2020

According to the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, planning should be a multiscale, continuous and inclusive process. Spatial plans are intended to create multiscale synergies between territories (principle 9) (UN-Habitat, 2015a). A coherent planning system comprises a continuum of interrelated and coherent plans, which include:

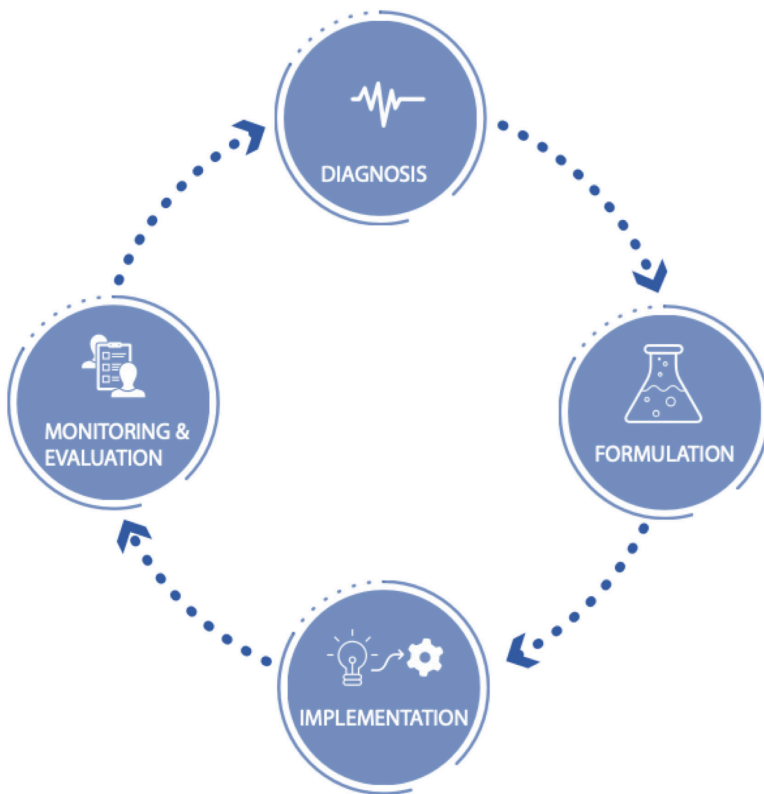
- A. Supranational and transboundary level
- B. National level
- C. City-region and metropolitan level

#### D. City and municipal level

#### E. Neighbourhood level

Spatial planning should be a continuous or iterative process. Despite specific contextual customizations, it always comprises the following cyclical phases (ibid.):

- A. Diagnosis, data collection and analysis
- B. Plan formulation, decision-making
- C. Implementation
- D. Monitoring and evaluation



**Figure 1: Spatial planning phases (ibid.)**

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For the full realization of the potential of spatial planning, the process should be inclusive. To achieve its primary aim, namely the equitable distribution of the costs, opportunities and benefits of urban development, spatial planning requires all the interested actors to be part of the negotiation process. The active stakeholders in spatial planning processes are all levels of government, the private sector, civil society organizations, and the public and knowledge institutions.

### **A. Public institutions**

Depending on different governance models and on the level of decentralization of the institutional structure, national, regional and local governments have distinctive competencies and roles in spatial planning processes. Despite the extent to which power is concentrated or devolved, the role of the governments is to lay down the enabling conditions for collaborative governance with adjacent jurisdictions and non-governmental actors. More precisely, governments are required to lead an open and engaging process through which public value is produced. They are responsible for leveraging legal and institutional capabilities to ensure that priority groups are empowered with the necessary resources and capacities to participate. Additionally, a human-rights based approach requires human rights principles such as participation to guide development, which also entails that people are empowered to know and claim their rights. This also includes increasing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions that are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from

interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights (OHCHR, n.d.).

In participatory processes, the role of public institutions is to mediate between different interests and to facilitate the identification of common and shared visions for territorial development. It is significant to observe that there is not a singular public interest. At different geographic scales, there are multiple and often conflicting public interests. To avoid conflicts between tiers of government, it is important to have a clear multilevel governance system that specifies governments' responsibilities and jurisdictions, indicating coordination and conflict-prevention mechanisms.

### **B. Private sector**

The private sector is a heterogeneous and fragmented group with competing interests. The variety of private actors involved in spatial planning processes includes land developers, landowners, investors and, overall, every private actor looking to benefit from spatial transformations. Given the economic assets and knowledge capacities they can mobilize, private sector actors play a central role in the governance of spatial transformations. Processes of privatization and financialization of land developments and infrastructure are further exacerbating the disparate power relationship between public authorities and private actors (Aalbers, 2008, pp. 148–166; Raco, Livingstone and Durrant, 2019, 1064–1082).

Power asymmetries undermine the core functions of institutions in three ways: exclusion, capture and clientelism (World Bank Group, 2017). Exclusion happens where some individuals or groups are “systematically sidelined from policy decisions that affect their interests” (ibid.). In the urban context, the most affected groups include women, children and young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, slum dwellers,

homeless people, workers, refugees, returnees, migrants and internally displaced people.

Influential groups can often “capture” policies and make them serve their narrow interests. For example, despite operating in the least productive sector of the economy, powerful firms may advocate for policies that protect their economic power, obtain preferential treatment and block competition. “Capture” in the urban context is prevalent as powerful actors often

Focus groups discussing priority issues during the National Urban Policy workshop in Beni, DRC © UN-Habitat 2021



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influence decision-making to get favourable outcomes, even when these result in net societal loss. Large landowners may, for instance, use their political connections to resist taxes on idle land, even when these taxes are needed to stimulate land supply and result in overall positive benefits such as lower housing costs.

Clientelism occurs where benefits are exchanged in return for political support. Examples include public officials soliciting for votes in exchange for short-term benefits such as transfers and subsidies, or when politicians become responsive to groups that wield greater influence (ibid.). In the urban setting, a good example is when public authorities side with property developers and wealthy landowners for political donations. Such donations may be acquired in exchange for better infrastructure and facilities in wealthy areas, including roads, schools, hospitals, police stations and public spaces. To ensure that spatial planning pursues its broader objective of producing and equally distributing public value, all levels of government should have multi-stakeholder monitoring, as well as transparency and accountability mechanisms to eliminate harmful private interests and power asymmetries.

### **C. Civil society organizations**

A civil society organization (CSO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group structured on a local, national or international level. CSOs include all non-market bodies that pursue shared interests in the public domain without significant government-controlled participation or representation. Examples include community-based organizations and village associations,

environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the not-for-profit media (OECD, 2012). Civil society organizations play a relevant role in spatial decision-making processes since they are a link between public authorities and the public. Being cause-based or service-oriented groups, such organizations monitor local needs and priorities. Moreover, they can raise awareness, mobilize public opinion and voice the concerns of the public (UN-Habitat, 2015a). Overall, CSOs relieve the exclusion of priority groups by lobbying for improved policies (Hirschmann, 1984) and supporting the creation of cultural, ethnic, class or otherwise collective identity (Mitlin, 2004).

### **D. Knowledge institutions**

Knowledge institutions such as universities, research centres or think tanks, are not homogeneous entities. They pursue a variety of missions and they play various roles in different territorial sites and scales (Uyerra, 2010). Despite the differences, these types of actors acquire a potentially relevant position in spatial strategies and plans. Indeed, knowledge institutions have specialized infrastructure and human resources that are difficult to provide by other means with the resources that local authorities often have at their disposal (Fernández-Esquinas and Pinto, 2014, pp. 1462–1483).

In the space of uncertainty and overlapping crisis that urban planning must deal with, the knowledge and capacities that research institutions are able to mobilize become a key to providing the highly

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skilled labour and technological innovations necessary for sustainable development. The type of assets knowledge that institutions can leverage, along with their position in local and global networks, strengthen their presence as active stakeholders in urban areas with spatial, economic, political and social interests.<sup>5</sup>

The territorialized impact of knowledge institutions is firstly determined by their educational role.<sup>6</sup> However, their potential function is broader than that of knowledge producers. The New Urban Agenda recognizes their involvement in applied research and their function as capacity-building actors that bring together diverse groups and ways of understanding the challenges of urbanization is central for the achievement of sustainable development. The Habitat Partner University Initiative further demonstrates the variety of roles that universities can acquire in partnering with local governments. Beyond education, the pillars among which the Habitat Partner University Initiative is defined range from applied research, capacity development, policy advice, knowledge management and dissemination (UN-Habitat, 2011). Other initiatives, such as the “City Labs” established by the African Centre for Cities in Cape Town, South Africa, or the university network organized by the Government of Namibia to jointly produce the national urban

policy, or the City Science Initiative promoted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (European Commission, n.d.), reframe the role of knowledge institutions as innovation brokers or collaboration partners for a multi-stakeholder governance (Battersby, 2017).

## **E. Public or grassroots movements**

Spatial planning decision-making and urban transformations directly affect everyone’s living conditions as well as social and economic opportunities. Beyond public authorities, private actors and civil society organizations, all members of the public have a stake in planning issues. Therefore, participatory planning is not limited to the integration of influential actors. To be “meaningful”, participation should ensure inclusiveness and accessibility for all. Special attention should be paid to vulnerable groups who have scarce resources to leverage their voices to enter the negotiation process. Special measures should be taken to ensure that the governance arrangement of the spatial planning process is accessible at any phase for children, young people, women, older persons, people with disabilities, the poor, the landless, migrants, internationally displaced people and indigenous people.

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5 An OECD report has revealed how knowledge institutions influence more and more the urban agenda setting in relation to economic, social, cultural and environmental issues. OECD (2007). Higher Education and Regions: Globally Competitive, Locally Engaged.

6 Sustainable Development Goal 4, to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, underlines the important of higher education institutions in educating policymakers.

This toolkit features mechanisms to influence the

# CHAPTER V.

## Tools to enable participatory spatial planning

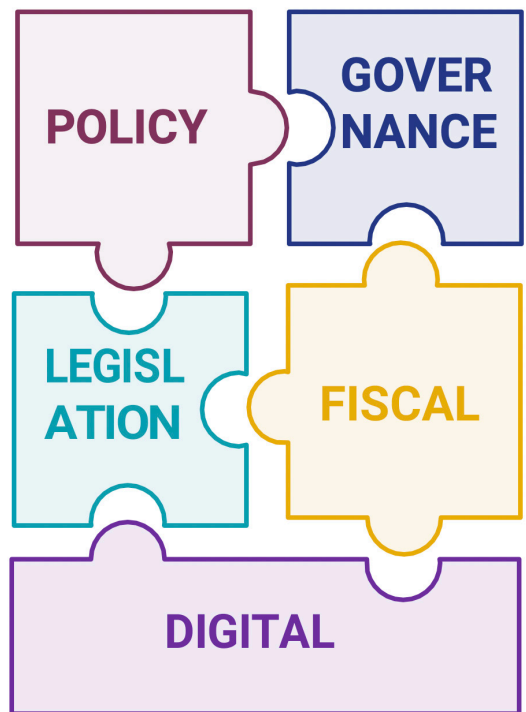


number of actors involved (inclusiveness) and the nature of actors' empowerment (effectiveness) in spatial planning policies. Different levels of government can use the policy instruments described in the following paragraphs to reshape established power relationships and empower civil society and grassroots movements (with a focus on priority groups) with the necessary resources to enter and influence spatial policy negotiations. In other words, rather than focusing on informative and consultative participation, the toolkit focuses on specific mechanisms that support the empowerment of all members of society to co-create inclusive and effective participatory spatial planning solutions.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" or any fixed public participation solutions in modern democratic governance (Fung, 2006, pp. 14–29; Bishop and Glen, 2002, pp.14–29). The achievement of public policies' objectives always requires the combination of several instruments (Gunningham and Darren, 1999, pp. 49–76). The increasing complexity and uncertainty of spatial planning decision-making calls for the design of flexible and experimental participatory mechanisms that fit the policy subsystem. Thus, unlike existing normative step-by-step guidelines on how to implement participatory practices (see appendix 1), or rather than providing an uncontextualized list of instruments to engage different stakeholders,<sup>7</sup> the toolkit has a set of flexible empowering mechanisms that can be selected, matched or combined according

to the sought effect, the political context, the policy phase and the available resources. In other words, it is proposed that this toolkit is used to take a puzzle-solving approach to policymaking (see figure 2). Aware of the limited knowledge decisions to rely on and of the conflicting stakeholders' interests, in order to mainstream participation in the whole policy cycle policymakers can incrementally select, adapt, aggregate participatory mechanisms in the form of policy mixes that better suit local conditions.

Presented according to the type of mobilized



**Figure 2: Puzzling approach for policymaking. Source : Author**

7 For a comprehensive list of participatory mechanisms see Geekiyanage, D., Fernando, T. and Keraminiyage, K. (2021). Mapping Participatory Methods in the Urban Development Process: A Systematic Review and Case-Based Evidence Analysis, Sustainability, 13, 8992.



policy domains (policy, legal, governance, fiscal and digital), the mechanisms operate by redefining rules that affect the inclusiveness and effectiveness nature of participation. Each mechanism affects at least four rules and incentives that govern the implementation of collective actions (see table 4 and figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Extracted from a more comprehensive list of rules affecting collective action by Ostrom, E. (2010). Beyond markets and states: Polycentric governance of complex economic systems, *American Economic Review*, 100(3): pp. 641–672.

<b>Inclusiveness</b>	Boundary rules define who is eligible as a participant in the policy subsystem. They answer the question of who participates.
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Aggregation rules enable participants with the necessary deliberative power. Aggregation rules refer to the agenda-setting and decision-making procedures. More specifically they define the procedures through which participants can contribute to a final decision. They answer the question of how participants reach a decision.
	Information rules narrow the communication gap and foster the co-production of knowledge. Information rules specify channels of communication among actors and what information must, may or must not be produced and shared. They answer the question of what type of information the policy should rely on.
	Payoff rules incentivize equity in negotiations by redistributing resources. Payoff rules specify how benefits and costs are to be distributed to actors in positions. They answer the question of how to incentivize all stakeholders to participate.

**Table 4: Four rules affect the inclusiveness and effectiveness nature of participation**

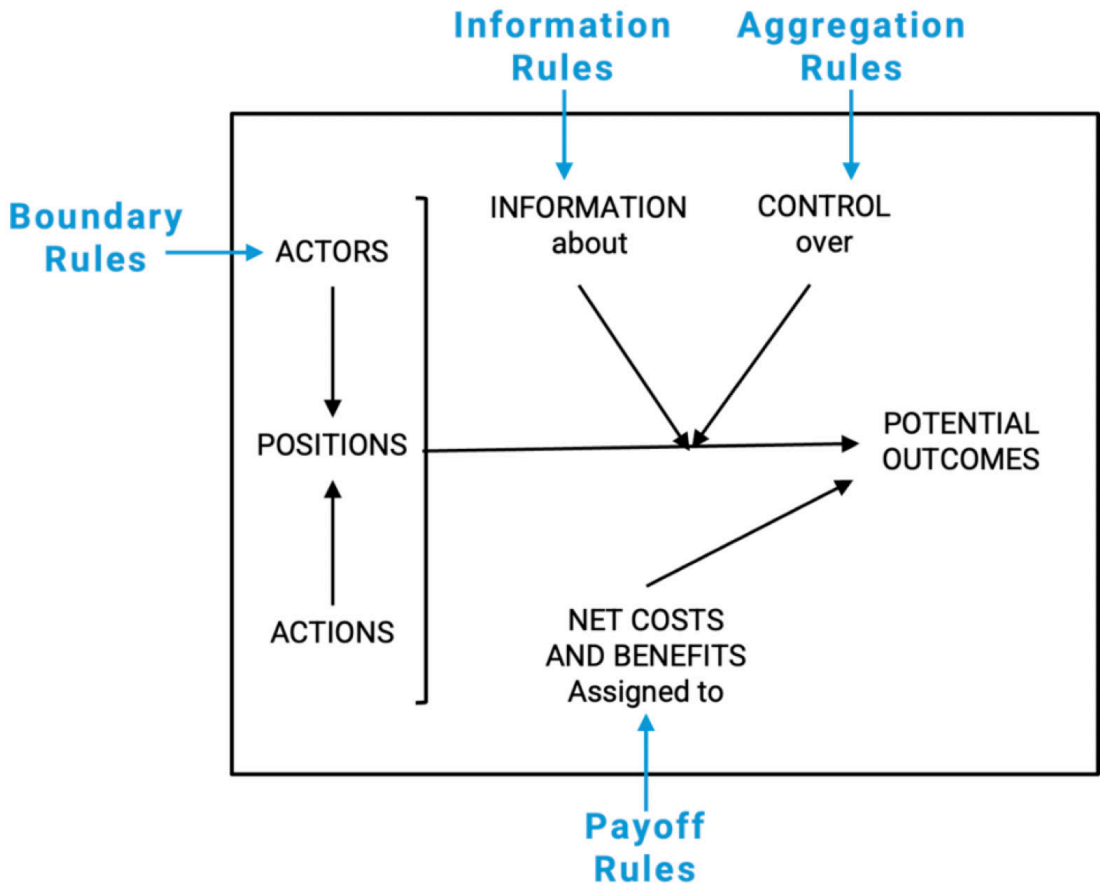


Figure 3: Rules affecting collecting actions. Source: Author

Table 5 illustrates to what extent each participatory mechanism focuses and affects different rules. The table can be used to understand which tool can be selected and how it can be complemented to design a comprehensive policy mix.

(Legend: \* low \*\*medium \*\*\* high)

<i>Policy domain</i>	<i>Tool</i>	<i>Boundary rules</i>	<i>Aggregation rules</i>	<i>Information rules</i>	<i>Payoff rules</i>
Legal	Public-private-people partnership	**	***	*	***
	Community land trust	**	***	*	***
Governance	Stakeholder mapping	**	*	***	*
	Urban profiling	**	*	***	*
	Deliberative mini-publics	***	***	**	*
Fiscal	Participatory budgeting	***	***	**	***
	Data crowdsourcing	***	*	***	**
Digital	Mixed reality	***	*	***	**
	Deliberation platforms	***	***	**	*

**Table 5: Mechanisms and degree of impact on rules affecting collective action. Source: Author**

## A. Mainstreaming participation in the policy cycle – national urban policies

“Achieving a true participatory approach to policymaking means integrating participatory processes throughout the formation of policy” (UN-Habitat, 2015b, p. 13).

National urban policies are opportunities for countries to integrate a participatory approach in the whole cycle of the planning process. International agreements such as the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development advocate for a renewed approach to spatial planning due to the limited capacities of traditional land-zoning policies to face emerging complex issues. UN-Habitat, in collaboration

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with the OECD and Cities Alliance, has been supporting countries in their efforts to devise national urban policies. To plan and effectively implement sustainable urbanization processes, UN-Habitat promotes national urban policies that emphasize the role of good governance, vertical and horizontal coordination, as well as creative partnerships outside of the public sector (ibid.).

The definition of a national urban policy well depicts how the governance aspect is championed as an indispensable pre-requisite for policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is a “coherent set of decisions through a deliberate, government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors towards a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term” (UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, 2014). Even though the major aim of a national urban policy is to provide structure and organization to urbanization, the spatial dimension is coupled with robust governance attentions. To ensure nobody is left behind and to promote equitable urban development, innovative policies are framed as coordination mechanisms which clarify the institutional framework and the enabling regulatory framework. The role of government is therefore one of facilitator. A national urban policy is a tool that Governments can use to coordinate nationwide urbanization as well as directly and indirectly interested actors (UN-Habitat, 2015b).

Governance refers to the mechanisms through which State and non-State actors interact to design and implement policies. Multilevel governance rules that formalize the vertical

coordination of duties and responsibilities of public institutions are of utmost importance. However, experience shows that implementation of national urban policies strongly depends on the success of horizontal partnerships, namely the support of a variety of actors who can be leveraged through formal or informal measures such as legal partnerships, economic incentives, political coalitions, etc. The more inclusive and participatory national urban policy processes are, the more implementable is the resultant policy (UN-Habitat, 2019a).

The attention on participation and inclusiveness repositions the value of policies from their outcome to the policy process. As theorized by UN-Habitat, the national urban policy process can be divided into five phases based on three pillars (see figure 4) (ibid.).

Integrating public participation into the process is the first pillar of the approach UN-Habitat takes to national urban policy development. The public should not only be allowed to participate by choosing between pre-determined policy options but should also be included in the making and shaping of the policy itself. By encouraging inclusiveness through the whole policy process, as opposed to seeking input at the end of the process, the public and stakeholders can have a say in (UN-Habitat Policy, Legislation and Governance Section, n.d.):

- A.** Developing the urban agenda
- B.** Identifying problems and challenges
- C.** Developing and assessing different policy options
- D.** Evaluate outcomes and results

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A well-prepared and participatory process of policy development will allow for key milestones such as the diagnosis and identification of urban problems, the setting of goals, the allocation of roles and the growth of capacities. Moreover, the initial involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders increases the likelihood of successfully building consensus for the policy proposal and consequently decreases the chance of the process being blocked at later stages.

It is important to observe how the UN-Habitat approach to national urban policies closely associates participation (first pillar) with capacity building (second pillar). As previously discussed, to assume an empowerment role, the participation of the directly and indirectly interested actors in decision-making cannot be separated by a continuous process of resource redistribution, knowledge transfer and capacity building. Given its goal – to “sustain a process of individual and organizational change and to enable organizations, grassroots movements and individuals to achieve their development objectives” (United Nations Environment Programme, 2006) – capacity building supports the enabling role of participation (UN-Habitat, 2022). Indeed, capacity-building measures coupled with participatory mechanisms enable participants to engage in fruitful discussions with experts and provide relevant feedback. The development of institutional, human, organizational and financial capacities allow priority groups who are often excluded from decision-making to reposition themselves, capture funding and elaborate issues into opportunities (European Commission, 2005).

Furthermore, participation is coupled with a third pillar, namely acupuncture projects and iterative policy design. Even in this case, the approach UN-Habitat takes to national urban policies confirms the discussed necessity for incremental, experimental approach that has been referred to as puzzle-solving policymaking. The type of participatory tools used in the national urban policy process vary greatly according to specific needs and context. To ensure inclusiveness and continuous capacity development along the policy cycle, a multiplicity of tools is often employed. For instance, the development of capacities following the actor mapping and assessment can take different forms: training, workshop, devolution of power, etc.

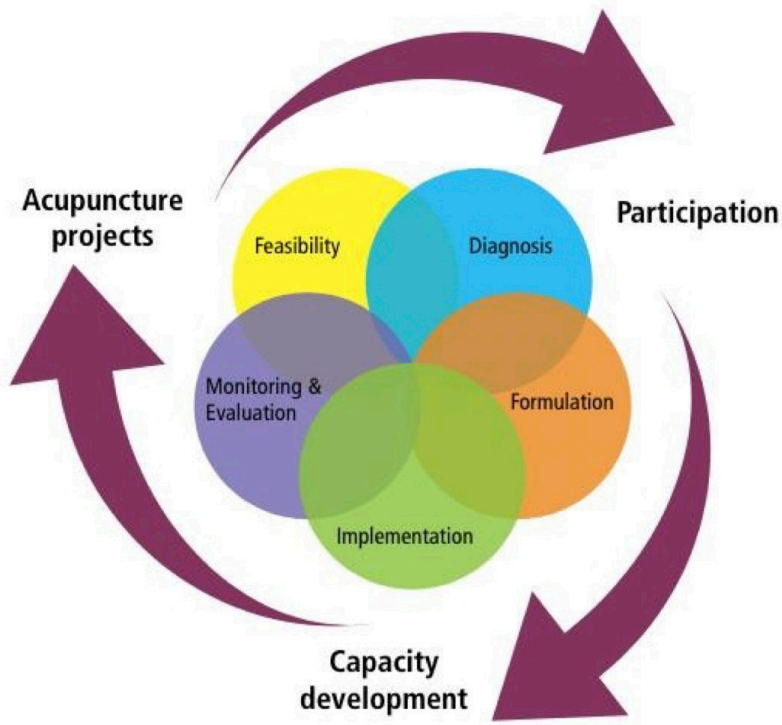
Among the possible tools, UN-Habitat strongly advocates for the institutionalization of national urban forums to support the national urban policy process (see box 1).

### Phases

- Feasibility
- Diagnosis
- Formulation
- Implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation

### Pillars

- Participation
- Capacity Development
- Acupuncture projects and iterative policy design



*Figure 4: National urban policy cycle and pillars (ibid.)*

## Box 1

### **Mainstreaming participation in national urban policies, the role of national urban forums**

National urban forums are possible tools to mainstream participatory practices along the whole national urban policy process. The forums are “multi-stakeholder platforms to support sustainable urban development processes and debates at the country level” (UN-Habitat, n.d.). A national urban forum is a venue where stakeholders can meet and openly discuss urbanization challenges and opportunities at the local, regional and national levels. They facilitate discussion and debate and allow stakeholders to have their voices heard. Beyond mainstreaming participatory practices in urban policies, national urban forums are an opportunity to involve stakeholders in the creation of policy feedback loop mechanisms and in the action plans and national urban policy implementation.

During the national urban policy starting phases, the forums provide a platform where stakeholders can bring inputs on the policy formulation and when such forums are permanent, they can be used to enrich the monitoring and evaluation phase. Maintaining a dialogue through permanent forums allows policymakers and stakeholders to continuously look forward and reflect back. Thus, they enhance accountability and ensure that lessons learned are considered in shaping the process (UN-Habitat, 2018b).

In addition, national urban forums support the shift from policy to action and translate some of the political will into a concrete roadmap for a national urban policy. While creating a “common vision” for sustainable urbanization, the forums provide opportunities to identify key milestones and to foster new partnerships with key stakeholders. For instance, the Government of Cambodia started its national urban policy formulation only after the recommendations from the national urban forum declaration (UN-Habitat, 2021d). In Cuba, the national urban forum built the appropriate political consensus to deliberate for a new urban and territorial planning law (approved in 2021) (ibid.).

In 2015, after launching the country’s national urban policy, Liberia held its first national urban forum which established the roadmap and priorities to formulate and implement the urban policy. The roadmap highlighted the key goals of the country’s policy: urban governance, housing, environmental degradation, access to infrastructure and services. In 2019, after the feasibility and diagnostic phase, the third National Urban Forum of

Liberia was held (UN-Habitat Policy, Legislation and Governance Section, n.d.). This attracted over 240 participants, including representatives from youth organizations, women's groups, persons with disabilities, city mayors and superintendents, township commissioners, community leaders, civil society, the private sector, and representatives of international organizations such as Cities Alliance, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UN-Habitat and other development partners working in Liberia. Beyond the reiteration of the national urban policy's relevance for the country's sustainable urbanization, the 2019 Resolution of the National Urban Forum announced the commitment of the stakeholders to be actively involved in the implementation (UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, 2019). "We will actively engage in the policy development process to ensure adequate political will, meaningful stakeholder engagement for effective coordination and shared vision of future urban development in Liberia; (...) We commit to be champions for the national urban policy in our respective local communities and jurisdictions (ibid., p. 2)."

Overall, experience shows that national urban forums can play a significant role in each phase of a national urban policy cycle (figure 3) (UN-Habitat, 2021).

- A. Feasibility.** In countries without a national urban policy, national urban forums can facilitate and support the beginning of a policy process. They can increase awareness of the need for a cross-sectoral national policy to support national urban development.
- B. Diagnosis.** National urban forums can be useful to map and identify all stakeholders and validate some of the diagnostic findings that have been produced around key urban challenges.
- C. Formulation.** National urban forums can be conceived as deliberative venues where stakeholders negotiate their interests, collaboratively build a common vision and plan for future urbanization.
- D. Implementation.** National urban forums can raise awareness of the existence of the national urban policy and its goals. Moreover, it sets the stage for possible partnerships and collaborations.
- E. Monitoring, and evaluation.** National urban forums can provide a feedback loop mechanism highlighting the gap between the policy and its implementation. It helps stakeholders to reflect on the achievements of the policy and learn about what has and has not worked.



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## B. Legal mechanisms

At national and subnational levels, participation can be assured by law. Legislation can set effective frameworks for inclusive and sustainable development. It provides the enabling environment for stakeholders to engage and collaborate in the planning policy. However, the effectiveness of laws is not always guaranteed. Many countries enact planning laws only to see them become ineffectual in shaping their built environment (Glasser and Berrisford, 2015). The mere existence of laws does not guarantee their effective implementation (Mousmouti and Crispi, 2015).

For instance, Peru recognizes the right to prior consultation for Indigenous People in its Constitution. Pursuant to the Prior Consultation Law enacted in 2011, Peru guarantees Indigenous People the right to prior consultation about any mining, logging or petroleum projects affecting them and their territories. However, despite legal recognition, most social conflicts with Indigenous groups in Peru stem from the lack of consideration and integration of the Indigenous People's feedback (Due Process of Law Foundation, 2011). To ensure meaningful implementation of the principle of participation, laws must include within them mechanisms to ensure that affected people are not only heard, but that their views are taken into consideration during the law making (Obradovic and Vizcaino, 2006). Involving the public in the formulation of urban laws improves the quality of the legislation by aligning the legal objectives to local needs and by increasing the likelihood of compliance. According to the UN-Habitat Planning Law

Assessment Framework, several parameters to measure the quality of urban law relate to the potential of legislation in creating a participatory enabling environment (UN-Habitat, 2018). Quality of urban laws relies heavily on (ibid.):

- a. Coherence of policy objectives that reflect local needs and challenges. The lack of coherent policy-based objectives has a negative effect on the law's consistency, interpretation and application (Mousmouti and Crispi 2015).
- b. Transparency and clarity of the mechanisms and processes. Unclear processes with overlapping or contradicting procedures often lead to higher discretion of public authorities and limited accountability.
- c. Flexibility and simplicity. Detailed, rigid and inflexible laws make compliance difficult and encourage people to go around them.
- d. Clear organization of institutional roles and responsibilities. Some countries have complex institutional set-ups which blur the line between their different roles. This overlap in mandates can lead to institutional wars.
- e. Capacity to create implementable enforcement strategies based on realistic financial and human resources considerations.

Overall, the UN-Habitat Planning Law Assessment Framework concludes that legislative quality is more than mere legal drafting. Legal mechanisms need to foster collaborations and partnerships between all the relevant stakeholders during the

whole process of conceptualizing a law up to its very implementation. The following paragraphs present possible innovative tools to foster and regulate multi-stakeholder interactions.



A workshop for women during the implementation of the Future Saudi Cities Programme (2014-2019).  
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## 1. Public-private-people partnership

Public-private-people partnerships stem from criticism of the limited success of public-private partnerships in delivering people-centred services (Majamaa, 2008). Public-private-people partnerships shift the more traditional public-private focus to residents' local needs. In legal terms, a partnership is a vague term that can be operationalized through formal contracts, informal cooperation agreements, statements of understanding or ad hoc arrangements. Among other legal devices, urban pacts (UN-Habitat, 2001), also called public-community pacts (Foster and Iaione, 2019), are increasingly used to formalize public-private-people partnerships.

Urban pacts bring together a broad network of governmental and non-governmental organizations and they enable all stakeholders to have a say on spatial and development subjects. Urban pacts are contracts used to negotiate a collective vision and to formalize the commitments of the parts. The contract articulates a plan, the goals and the strategic objectives that all stakeholders agree on. In addition, it sets specific responsibilities and obligations for each actor to collaboratively implement the plan.

Urban pacts are usually issued by subnational governments and are signed by all the parties. They are the formal statement of the outcomes of a participatory process through which stakeholders express their interests and reach an agreement. Even though the contract is signed at the end of a consultation, it affects the whole planning cycle. It identifies the role of each actor, in the implementation phases. In addition, the transparency of intents and commitments stated in the contracts improves accountability and facilitate the monitoring phase.

Urban pacts are not new tools. In the city of Nakuru in Kenya, the use of such an instrument dates to 1996 (UN-Habitat, 2014). Three subsequent pacts were signed by key urban stakeholders to set important milestones in the negotiation process for the formulation of a strategic 25-year vision for the city – the Nakuru Local Agenda 21. In rapidly evolving environments, urban pacts were used as an instrument as a reference for a firm agreement on priorities and interests towards a certain approach and expected outcomes. At the beginning of the millennium in Brazil, spatial master plans were defined as pacts between the population and its territory (Ministério das Cidades, Secretaria Nacional de Programas Urbanos, 2005). In this sense, the responsibilities and costs of plan implementation were shared between the state, private organizations and the broader public. Thus, the State assumed the role of facilitator or orchestrator of a networked and inclusive governance (Caldeira and Holston, 2015).

Urban pacts devolve significant power to local communities and formal or informal groups. However, specific measures must be taken to avoid the reproduction of crystallized disparate power relations. Indeed, urban pacts per se are not necessarily inclusive, especially when it comes to empowering priority groups who do not have the means and capacities to enter into any pacts. For instance, in 2014, the Municipality of Bologna, Italy, passed the “Bologna Regulation”<sup>9</sup> which institutionalized the possibility of signing pacts of collaboration between local government and city residents (Iaione and Nictolis 2021).

9 The Bologna Regulation formalizes forms of collaboration among citizens and the City of Bologna for the care and regeneration of urban commons (public spaces, parks, etc.). Comune di Bologna (n.d.) Bologna Regulation.

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Pacts allowed the public and civic organizations to collaboratively manage services and infrastructure such as open spaces, gardens, parks, libraries and mobility services. An analysis of the resulting contracts shows that formalized pacts failed in involving under-represented

groups such as women, young people and foreigners. Therefore, institutional, economic and digital tools should be coupled with such legal mechanisms to enable all stakeholders for inclusive and meaningful participation.

## **Box 2**

### **Co-Turin, pacts of collaboration to regenerate a shrinking city (Urban Innovation Action, n.d.)**

Turin is one of the largest cities in Italy. After its rapid expansion due to the pressure of the automotive industry in the last century, the city has experienced an economic crisis in recent years. Between 2008 and 2013, many residents were living in absolute poverty and the unemployment rate was higher than in other cities. One of the most visible signs of urban decline was the high number of abandoned buildings, most of them the heritage of the city's industrial past – 6.5 per cent of about 1,600 buildings owned by the city were unused or underused (ibid.).

To tackle the consequences of the financial crisis, namely poverty and socio-spatial polarization, Turin, within the European Urban Innovation Actions Project framework, experimented with the use of “pacts of collaboration” between residents, non-governmental organizations and local authorities to reuse and rethink underused public assets (ibid.). The project started in 2017 and employed three different mechanisms (Comune di Torino, n.d.):

1. A legal framework to enable associations or informal groups to have the right to manage public spaces and infrastructure.
2. A tutoring and capacity building process to help partners of the pacts to activate sustainable local economies and build paths of autonomy to community-led enterprises.

### 3. A digital platform (FirstLife, a georeferenced social network) used to map and coordinate the groups of collaboration (FirstLife, n.d.).

The regeneration of abandoned or underused spaces in different areas of the city contributed to the creation of new jobs and it increased residents' capabilities and participation. Between 2017 and 2019, 50 pacts of collaboration were signed (Urban Innovation Action, n.d.). The pacts enabled inhabitants to work closely together and with public officials, reinforcing trust in institutions and creating social cohesion. Pacts were used to reach agreements between residents' needs and the cities priorities. Indeed, the legal framework considered citizens as potential changemakers. At the same time, the public sector evolved from being a service provider to an enabler and partner.

One of the most relevant pacts in terms of governance complexity is the CUMINA15 Pact. The contract enabled a list of actors, among them sport and cultural associations, social cooperatives, social enterprises and informal groups, to collaborate to foresee and realize the transformation of a former car-manufacturing factory into a functioning, co-managed cultural-creative activities community hub.

## 2. Community trusts

Community land trusts were first employed in the United States of America to contrast gentrification and displacement, and to facilitate access to land security for priority groups (Davis, 2010). Today, community land trust experiences are increasingly common worldwide and successful examples can be found in Belgium, Kenya, the United Kingdom, Brazil and Bangladesh (Reddin, 2021).

Community land trusts allow for community control and stewardship of land for the benefit of the public. They are primarily used to ensure long-term housing affordability, however they can be designed for commercial

or retail developments, green or mobility infrastructure, or for access to agriculture land-use (Community-Wealth.org, n.d.). Trusts are also used to protect land tenure and avoid evictions from informal settlements and to protect Indigenous communities in rural and urban areas from a range of pressures (Gray, 2008).

A set of legal tools enables community land trusts to remove land from the real estate market. The trust develops land that is owned by the community land trust itself by acquisition or donation, answering a community need such building affordable housing. After development, the trust sells or rents the improvement (housing), while keeping the ownership of the land. In some

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cases, the community continues to manage the common and open space. In other cases, the buyers or renters of the infrastructure are granted a long lease on the land. Speculative resale of the infrastructure is prohibited to secure long-term affordability (Georgetown Climate Center, n.d.).

Beyond representing a possible means to overcome the widespread problems of housing affordability (Reddin, 2021), community trusts are recognized for their success in engaging and empowering communities (Diacon, Clarke and Guimarães, 2005). Community land trusts enhance community control over land-

use decisions and create shared community spaces, facilitating social interactions and improving social cohesion. Moreover, collective ownership gives the community an asset to leverage in spatial planning negotiations.

Such trusts also enhance local governance, fostering partnerships with public authorities, private enterprises, housing associations and developers (ibid.). Indeed, a community itself is rarely able to mobilize the whole set of legal, technological and economic resources to develop land. Therefore, the typical community land trust governance involves a complex network of actors (Davis and Jacobus, 2008).

### **Box 3**

#### **Sawmill Community Land Trust in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Adaptation Clearinghouse n.d.)**

The Sawmill Community Land Trust was formally founded in 1996 as the result of a community-driven planning process to create a redevelopment plan for the contaminated Sawmill-Wells Park neighbourhood. The participatory plan envisioned the revitalization of the neighbourhood, including the cleaning up of pollutants and the development of affordable housing, without displacing the existing, predominantly Hispanic, lower-income residents. The formation of the community land trust was strategically proposed to implement the plan.

To support the initial start-up of the trust, the city of Albuquerque acquired and transferred ownership of a 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> brownfield site to the trust for redevelopment. In addition, the city provided an economic grant for soil remediation and the community land trust successfully accessed grants from the federal State.

The trust provided the community with 93 housing units for low- and moderate-income residents, including housing typologies that better fitted the residents. The trust has also constructed housing for older persons and rental commercial units. Residents were provided with a 99-year lease and a resale restriction was included to maintain

permanent affordability.

Given the tough socioeconomic situation of city residents, exacerbated by climate vulnerabilities, the Sawmill CLT extended its services in the whole Albuquerque Metropolitan area since the successful implementation of the Sawmill-Wells Park. In Albuquerque, more than 68 per cent of low-and moderate-income households spend between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of their income on housing. Moreover, heat waves and water shortages pose threats to the most at-risk communities. Strengthening the partnership with the municipality, the Sawmill CLT expanded its scope to develop projects that “preserve natural attributes and cultural history of the community”, and that support “ecological renewal and energy conservation”.

Today, the Sawmill CLT manages over 200 housing units and has diversified the community assets to develop parks and gardens; to contribute to public health and food security, the trust developed an orchard. Overall, the experience of the Sawmill CLT shows how such trusts can support community redevelopment and reduce displacement of existing residents. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the city-community land trust partnership linked the challenge of housing sustainability with those of environmental justice and community cohesion.

### C. Governance and policy mechanisms

Even when participation is enshrined in law, in many cases legal provisions remain unapplied because of the limited capacities and scarce resources of executive bodies and of local civic actors. Involvement of priority groups becomes a question of awareness and capacity. For instance, in 2004 the Catalan (Spain) regional government enacted a Neighbourhood Law that mandated cities to promote gender equality in the use of public spaces and facilities (Catalan Government, 2004). Only after a long process of stakeholder mapping and a series of capacity building workshops, civil organizations and informal groups of women were acknowledged

and were eventually able to leverage their resources to enter the management of public spaces (Ortiz Escalante and Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015). Beyond legal tools, broad and meaningful involvement needs strong political will which translates to adequate resources, capacities, interests and potential influences of actors on the territory.

Overall, legal top-down provisions are key tools to enable a participatory environment. Law can enhance the legitimate character of participation, however it often lacks the ability to support participatory practices, to coordinate different policy streams and to improve capacities. National and sub-national governments can leverage other resources through policy and governance mechanisms to ensure meaningful

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participation of all stakeholders with particular attention on vulnerable groups.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme, launched in 2008 by UN-Habitat in partnership with African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and financed by the European Commission, depicts how the legal framework that ensures participation needs to be supported by other types of resources to be effectively implemented. The programme, whose present objective is to implement Sustainable Development Goal 11, target 11.1 “...by 2030, to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums”, is based on the recognition that sustainable slum upgrading is achievable through coordinated efforts through which all stakeholders are empowered to participate in defining the future of their cities. The objective of the programme is developed policies to create an inclusive environment and improve and to strengthen of all stakeholders through comprehensive institutional, legislative, financial, normative, and implementation frameworks.

The following paragraphs present possible policy and governance tools that governments at all levels can employ to identify, recognize and eventually involve actors to empower them in the spatial planning process.

## **1. Stakeholder mapping**

Stakeholder mapping is the key step to inform effective participatory approaches which rely on a comprehensive understanding of the policy subsystem. It allows the government to identify actors, along with their interests, needs and

capacities, that have a stake into the planning process. The result of stakeholder mapping is not simply a list of possible actors to engage with; mapping implies an analysis that aims at identifying strategies to empower communities.

The strategic benefits of stakeholder mapping are threefold. Firstly, it produces local and territorial knowledge; it is an opportunity to better understand the territory and its potential. Secondly, it has a communicative nature; strategic mapping is a step with which the intent to start a spatial planning or development process is communicated. Thirdly, stakeholder mapping is an opportunity to introduce local actors and begin the process of building deliberative networks or platforms (see section in this paper on deliberative mini-publics).

Given the strategic nature of stakeholder mapping, it is essential that its methodology is transparent and structured to be comprehensive and inclusive. Moreover, it is crucial to conduct the mapping at regular intervals throughout the planning process to consistently have an updated and evidence-based perspective of the situation (UN-Habitat, 2022).

The mapping phase can be pursued using different methodologies. The identification of actors often results from a snowballing technique fed by surveys coupled with interviews, focus groups, etc. It is recommended to identify as many stakeholders as possible for a comprehensive analysis. The use of matrices can be useful to assess, analyse and prioritize the engagement of specific groups based on their different roles in relation to the issue to be addressed. The European Territorial Cooperation Programme



“URBACT” encourages local governments to develop an assessment of a stakeholder’s ecosystem based on interest-power-capacity matrices (see figures 5 and 6),(URBACT, 2020). Similarly, when dealing with climate-change risks and action planning, UN-Habitat proposes a series of tools to assess stakeholders’ power, interests, stake and resources (UN-Habitat, 2020d). Moreover, it proposes mapping the stakeholders’ perspective. An assessment of actors’ understanding of the issue at stake and of their expectations helps to inform further engagement strategies, building knowledge on actors’ values, relationships and their willingness to support or contribute to the process (see figure 7).

The assessment of stakeholders’ influence and interests is potentially useful for the governance sustainability of the planning process (Mathur and others, 2007). On the one hand, looking at the influence of actors allows for understanding the distribution of power in decision-making and the representation of the population. Thus, influence assessment is relevant to know how to prioritize engagement with under-represented groups. On the other hand, mapping stakeholders in relation to their level of interests is an opportunity to identify those stakeholders who might otherwise be left out and who could oppose the process.

**Box 4: Examples of stakeholder mapping canvas**

STAKEHOLDERS ANALYSIS TABLE			
Stakeholder interest analysis (For understanding the various interested parties)			
Issue:			
Stakeholders	What interests? How affected by the issue?	Capacity? Motivation?	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
<b>Primary stakeholders</b>			
<b>Secondary stakeholders</b>			

**Figure 5: URBACT stakeholders analysis matrix (URBACT, 2020)**

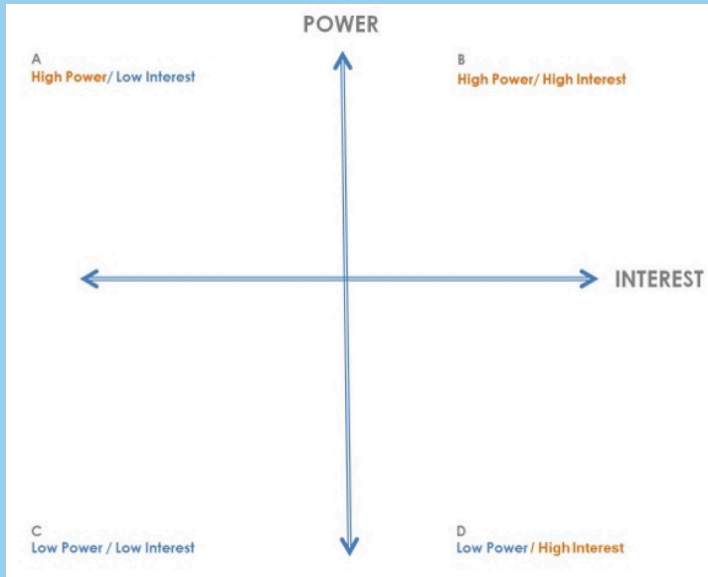


Figure 6: URBACT Stakeholder mapping matrix

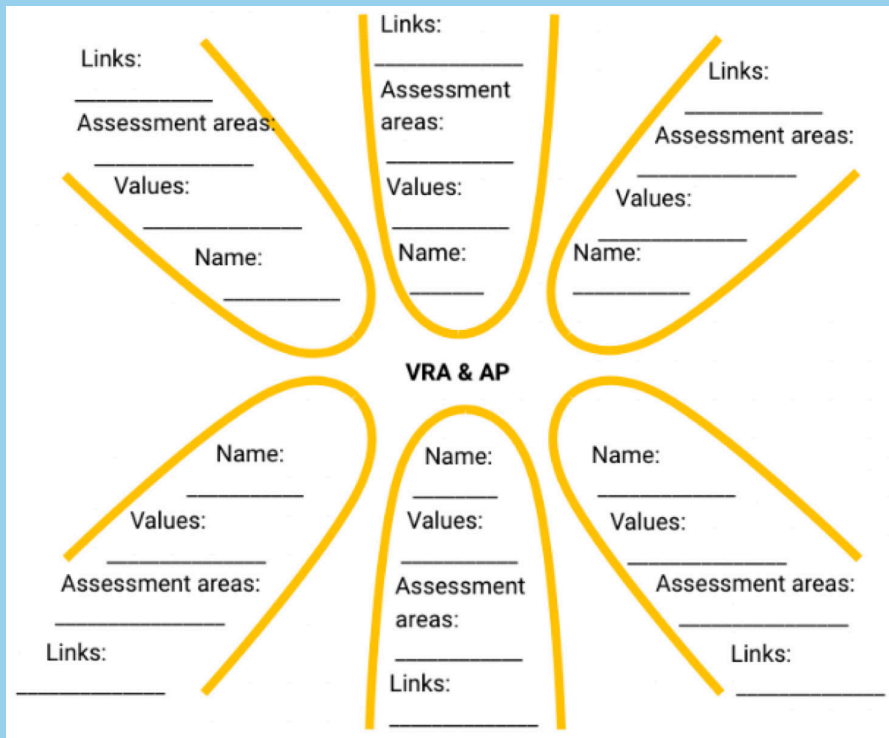


Figure 7: UN-Habitat stakeholders' perspectives mapping (UN-Habitat, 2020d)

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## 2. Participatory urban profiling

Urban profiling is a tool used to effectively develop an understanding of the complex nature of urban settings and cities. The goal in using the tool is to develop a spatial portrait at different geographic scales. The portrait depicts a shared understanding of the defined planning area, which sets the baseline for planning and design. In other words, the profiling process is a powerful forward-looking tool for change. It helps to prioritize workstreams and to build policies on existing resources.

The core idea of spatial profiling is that the quality of decision-making depends heavily on the quality of information. The profiling process does not seek to generate new information, but to assemble, organize and verify information to build a common understanding of the territory. Rather than being a general environmental mapping tool, spatial profiling is strategically used to organize and verify information according to specific themes, sectors and locations. It is therefore coherently structured and integrated within the overall planning process.

The outcome of the process is a set of maps that localize challenges and opportunities in the planning area. The use of maps and infographics as media for dialogue narrows the communication gap between policymakers and the public. Maps allows the collection of multisectoral evidence on the perception of people's complex interrelations with their socioeconomic and built environments. Such information verifies and localizes issues on the ground, reduces the implementation cost of future plans and increases policy ownership.

The strength of an urban profile depends on the extent to which the process is organized in a way that champions diversity and welcomes different perspectives. Participation by community and priority groups is fundamental in the process of building a shared understanding of the territory. Indeed, the built environment and open spaces are perceived differently according to social and political people identities. That is to say that women, young people or older persons experience spaces differently and perceive challenges and opportunities in different manners. The added value of a participatory process lies in the resulting increased diversity of information sources.

The thematic structure of the process and resulting maps helps priority groups with specific interests to enter focused discussions. For instance, the Her City project (see box 8), a joint initiative by UN-Habitat and the independent think tank Global Utmaning, developed a methodology that leverages women perspective in analysing urban areas (UN-Habitat and Global Utmaning, n.d.). The method focuses on gathering data about accessibility, safety, comfort and quality of facilities. Overall, the effectiveness of engaging priority groups in analysing the spatial setting is illustrated by the numerous emerging participatory mapping initiatives such as Missing Maps (Missing Maps, n.d.), the global YouthMappers network or Slum Dwellers' (International Global Alliance for Urban Crisis, 2019).

In practical terms, the profiling exercise can be divided into two separated phases. Firstly, public officials must present to the participants the specific themes the analysis will investigate

along with the entire planning process to align the analysis with national, regional and local plans. Secondly, participants are facilitated by civil servants to conduct the analysis. The spatial diagnosis can be carried out using different engagement tools (see box 5) and can be done

during static workshops or during collective walks. It can be supported by different mapping tools such as brainstorming mind maps, physical maps or geographic information systems (see the section in this paper on digital mechanisms).

## **Box 5**

### **Participatory neighbourhood profile in Lebanon**

UN-Habitat has developed an urban profiling methodology to monitor conflict-affected countries directly and indirectly and has developed city and neighbourhood profiles which informed corresponding recovery plans in five countries in the Arab States in recent years (UN-Habitat, 2021e).

Since the beginning of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2011, Lebanese cities have been considered to have been indirectly affected by the conflict due to the flow of refugees hosted in urban areas. Between 2016 and 2020, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN-Habitat analysed over 30 disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Lebanon (UN-Habitat and UNICEF, n.d.). Each urban profile led to strategy formulation and project implementation. In a national context of scarce data combined with ever-growing pressure to maximize efficiencies in intervention funding, neighbourhood profiles provided original multisectoral and spatialized data for government and non-state actors to plan how to mitigate vulnerabilities.

In most profiling processes, traditional tools to gather data were supported by participatory mechanisms. Information about building condition, connection to services, and housing living conditions were verified and further detailed with participatory tools such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

Focus group discussions were held to gather qualitative data that draws on attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions of a neighbourhood's inhabitants. The discussions were conducted with targeted social groups such as Lebanese and non-Lebanese; female and male; child, young people and adult participants.

Key informant interviews were used to collect in-depth information, including opinions from lay experts on the nature and dynamics of community life. They were conducted personally with main stakeholders living in and/or linked to the neighbourhood who had

first-hand knowledge of the location. Respondents typically included local government actors, representatives of NGOs, social service actors, business owners operating in the local economy, key religious and political influencers.

The production of the neighbourhood profile of the Nabaa area located near the eastern gate of the centre of Beirut followed two phases process. After a group of students conducted the field analysis, findings were validated through a series of meetings with local representatives of different ages, genders and professions. Participants ranged from practitioners from the municipalities to school directors, activists. The participatory approach to urban profiling means information may be gathered on people's perceptions of their interactions with the socioeconomic and built environment.

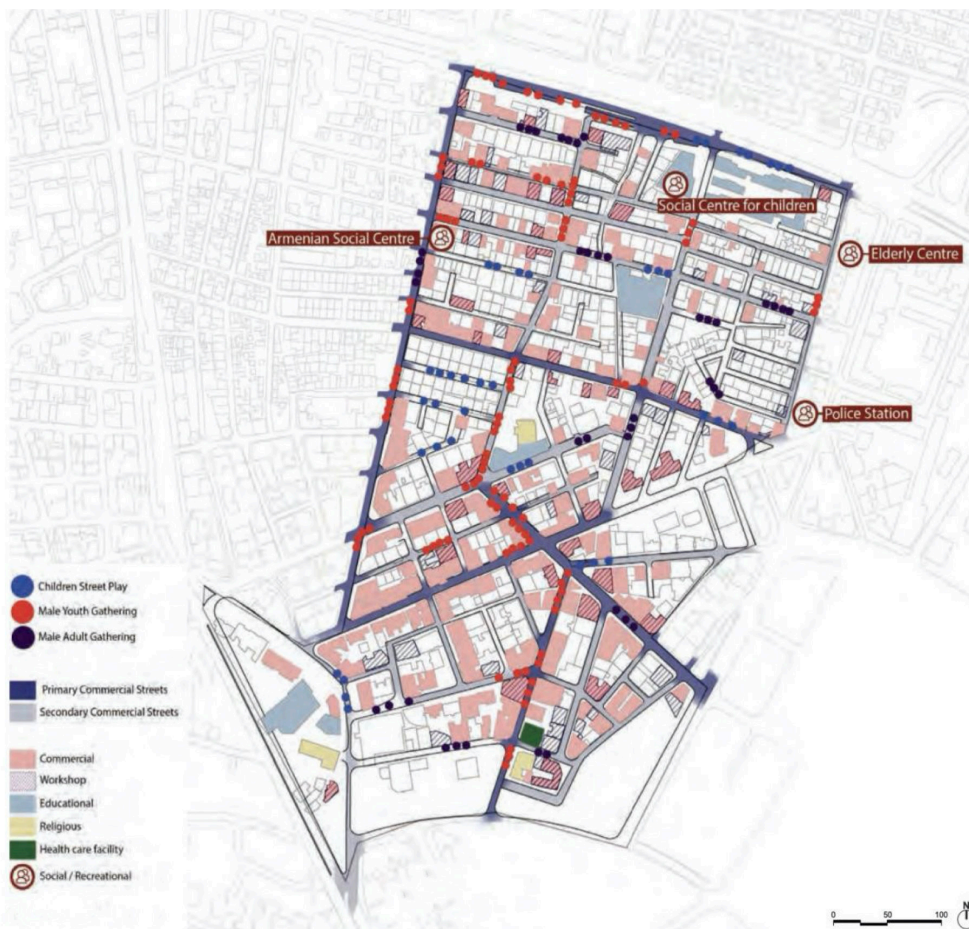


Figure 8: Space use map

### 3. Deliberative mini-publics

Deliberative mini-publics are an institutionalized form of public engagement. First proposed in 1989, they can be broadly described as representative assemblies of people to discuss, advance proposals and deliberate, and to provide collective recommendations for policymakers (Dahl, 1989). Deliberative mini-publics are founded on two pillars: representation and deliberation (Farrell and others, 2019).

- A.** Representation. Deliberative mini-publics are groups of randomly selected people to ensure the political representation of the public. The choice of people is usually based on specific characteristics, such as gender, age, ethnicity, education level and geography.
- B.** Deliberation. Deliberative mini-publics are shadow participatory institutions used to enrich the discussion and inform the negotiation leading to the decision-making (Lodewijckx, 2020). As opposed to representative democracy through election, the concept of deliberation focuses on the power of small group discussion to make or to influence a decision through discussion and negotiation (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004).

Deliberative mini-publics are multifaceted tools and at least 12 models of representative deliberative processes have been identified (OECD, 2020). They have been institutionalized in different forms, such as citizens' assemblies, councils, juries or forums. Case studies have demonstrated that these types of deliberative

institutions are especially successful in giving citizens a voice in tackling complex and long-term issues (ibid.). However, there is no consensus on the effective power of deliberative mini-publics in steering final decisions. While most of the time deliberative mini-publics maintain a relevant level of independence in organizing their discussion and in setting their agenda, government adoption of the reached outcomes is rarely ensured (ibid.). To avoid the risk of cherry-picking by government, specific binding measures should be added during the institutional design process.

Deliberative mini-publics can be organized ad hoc to address specific complex issues or they can be permanent and formalized in the institutional framework. In Brazil, during the re-democratization process which followed the 1988 Constitution, public policy councils were largely used as tools to ensure democratic management at all levels of government.<sup>10</sup> As for the city level, only between 2007 and 2017, 624 urban councils were formed (Silva and Vincentin, 2017). Brazilian urban policy councils are institutionalized venues which mediate among civil society organizations, city dwellers and the State. They are permanent political-institutional structures which meet regularly and include non-State actors in permanent participatory forums. Their structures vary considerably since their forms and function depend on municipal law. Moreover, their effectiveness in steering political decisions has not been demonstrated.

<sup>10</sup> The 2001 Statute of the City (Estatuto da Cidade), federal law on urban planning, proposed urban policy councils as one tool to ensure democratic inclusion. However, public councils in Brazil date back to the to the early 1900s in non-democratic contexts as forms of economic elite and technical expert participation.



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However, it has been found that urban councils publicize policy issues and expand the variety of governance actors of the policy subsystem, democratizing the executive branch (Pimentel Walker and Friendly, 2021, pp. 436–455).

A more recent example of a deliberative mini-public is the permanent deliberative body City Observatory which was institutionalized by the Madrid City Council in 2017. The observatory is composed of 49 randomly selected citizens. It has the mandate to discuss and filter bottom-up

proposals gathered for the participatory budget through an online platform (Decide Madrid) and to eventually call for public consultation organizing a referendum for a citizen vote (International Observatory on Participatory Democracy, n.d.). Thus, the City Observatory has the staffing capacity which has a direct impact on the public agenda. Similar cases of permanent deliberative mini-publics are the Toronto, Canada Planning Review Panel at a metropolitan level and the City of Kingston, Australia Ward Committees at the neighbourhood level.

## **Box 6**

### **Toronto, Canada Planning Review Panel**

Each year, Toronto has 20,000 net new residents and the Planning Review Panel was established in 2015 to keep pace with the rapid changes in a metropolis with 5 million people. Via a randomized civic lottery, 28 members (32 as of 2022) were selected “to improve public engagement by capturing input from a broader segment of the population”. The panel was created not to replace existing methods of consultation, but to complement them and to “support the city planning division guide growth and change in Toronto”.

Every two years the panel is renewed to better represent demographic dynamics in Toronto. Thousands of invitations (on average 1 in 87 households) are sent to randomly selected households in proportion to the population living in certain areas of the city. The letters of invitation ask members of the public to apply to participate in the ballot. In 2017, over 425 people applied and 32 were randomly selected to sit on the panel. The selection guaranteed proportionate representation of city residents of different ages, genders and geographies. The people selected were a proportional representation of the city's different race groups and guaranteed the inclusion of Indigenous People and people with disabilities. There was also a proportionate number of renters and housing owners.

The panel was requested by the planning division to give input on issues such as transport plans, the desired density and character of different neighbourhoods, the importance of historic buildings and public art, and the location of new community



amenities such as parks, libraries and community centres. Before deliberating on recommendations for the planning division, independent experts and local government staff provided the panel with capacity building workshops and technical support.

Since 2015, the panel has addressed topics such as the draft Townhouse and Low-rise Apartment Guidelines, the Complete Streets Guidelines, the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, the Growing Up: Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities Study, the Neighbourhood Urban Design Guidelines, and the City's Ravine Strategy.

## D. Fiscal mechanisms

### Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is one of the most successful democratic innovations of the last 25 years (Allegretti and Hartz-Karp, 2017). Tested at first in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 1989, participatory budgeting quickly gained popularity worldwide. As multidimensional policy tool, this form of budgeting has been adopted at all levels of government to champion democracy while deliberating over the allocation of funds for multiple issues, among which spatial developments. Participatory budgeting is a form of decision-making that involves the public in prioritizing the spending of public resources. It is a mechanism through which people advance proposals and vote on the destination of all or a portion of the public resources available (Cabannes, 2019, pp. 1–19).

Several examples illustrate how participatory budgeting is a “citizenship school”. Direct democracy supports people to better understand their rights and duties, and it helps in raising awareness on government responsibilities. The politicization of specific issues through

participatory budgeting mechanisms supports public debates. Through such budgeting processes, people learn to bargain among themselves and with the Government over the distribution of resources and the prioritization of the public agenda. In other words, participatory budgeting renews civic and political culture by repositioning local communities as central agents of the decision-making process.

The direct public control of public financial resources contributes to the redesign of established power dynamics and patterns of social exclusion. Innovative examples of participatory budgeting have been designed to benefit traditionally excluded and disadvantaged social groups, such as homeless people (Paris in France, São Paulo in Brazil), women (Solo/Surakarta in Indonesia, Seville in Spain), ethnic minorities (São Paulo, Rosario in Argentina), extremely poor people (Yaoundé in Cameroon) and people with disabilities (Sanxia district in Taiwan, La Serena in Chile) (Cabannes, 2019, pp. 1–19). The participatory budgeting initiative led by Valongo Municipality in Portugal has lowered the minimum age for participation in order to include students in the process (Municipality

## Box 7

### **Participatory budgeting in Cuenca, Ecuador (Cabannes, 2021) (International Observatory on Participatory Democracy and others, n.d.)**

Since 2001, the Municipality of Cuenca, Ecuador, has had participatory budgeting programmes. In the last 20 years, around 4,000 projects featured the participatory process and on average 75 per cent of them have been implemented every year (ibid.).

Participatory budgeting in Cuenca did not specifically target urban planning issues. The implemented projects ranged from infrastructure, community services, awareness and education projects, however, given the climate vulnerability of the city due mainly to hydrological and flood risks, the proposals for participatory budgeting were largely dedicated to climate adaptation and mitigation, and were mainly concerned with spatial transformation and water infrastructure.

Cuenca is an example of where participatory budgeting has been successful because the municipality devised a combined space-based and actor-based budget. To avoid channelling resources to areas well-represented by public policies, participatory budgeting was initially introduced only in rural areas of Cuenca, where there is the most extreme poverty and where most migrants are located. When the project was scaled up to all the administrative territory, the municipality introduced an innovative climate justice index to orient the allocation of participatory budget resources in priority areas. In 2019, the local government designed a new indicator composed of four weighted sub-indexes to divide \$ 6.5 million between the 21 parishes as follows:

- a) Population: 40 per cent
- b) Parish Human Development Index: 30 per cent
- c) Administrative management: 10 per cent
- d) Territorial equity 20 per cent: (the indicator measures territorial configuration, environmental services and climate vulnerability).

As a result, over the year, the participatory budget successfully targeted parishes with the least environmental services and where communities most vulnerable to climate change live. According to the index result, parishes accessed participatory budget resources ranging between \$ 109,000 and \$ 557,000 (ibid.).

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of Valongo, 2018). Going beyond citizenship, participatory budgeting has been employed to involve migrants and refugees. Besides such budgeting initiatives with specific social groups, the tool has been used to channel resources in order to narrow spatial inequalities. Since the first trials in Brazil, participatory budgeting has been used to advance proposals to revitalize informal settlements, plan open spaces and to provide public amenities in some districts.

## E. Digital mechanisms

Information and communication technologies offer new opportunities for public participation in spatial planning processes. Time and resources constraints risk limiting in-person engagement to a small group of people. Instead, digital technologies narrow the gap between policymakers and city users by both advancing communications tools and offering deliberative venues. Thus, digital technologies succeed in expanding the number of people engaged in participatory processes. The World Development Report 2016 – Digital Dividends highlights the way in which digital technologies can “provide new platforms for citizens to engage with the government, lowering the costs to citizens of providing information and enabling policymakers and service providers to seek information and track the feedback loop” (World Bank, 2016). Spatial planning policies have also been affected by new digital technologies. In recent years, digital innovations like geographic information systems, shared economies, open data and digital platforms have changed how people understand, manage and participate in cities.



The coronavirus disease pandemic catalysed the use of digital tools to inform, consult and engage people in decision-making processes. Emergency notifications and digitalized public administration services have become prominent features at all levels of government. Nonetheless, the pandemic

## **Box 8**

### **Her City – integrating digital technology to foster women participation**

Her City was originally launched in 2017 by the #UrbanGirlsMovement Initiative and financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency with the purpose of mapping methods and tools for increased equality and inclusion in urban development. The project was then later developed as a global knowledge tool, the Her City Toolbox (UN-Habitat, Global Utmaning, 2021) by UN-Habitat and Global Utmaning together with multiple partners and with the financial support of Vinnova (Swedish National Innovation Agency).

As previously seen in this toolkit, Her City is based on the definition of spatial planning as a tool to redistribute resources and prosperity gained from development (see chapter III) (UN-Habitat, 2015a, p.2). The core idea of the project is, therefore, that sustainable urban development or shared urban prosperity can be achieved when all stakeholders are engaged and provided with appropriate infrastructure and opportunities to participate, work, care for families, access health, education and other basic services.

Acknowledging that participatory processes create openings for more inclusive, equal and sustainable urban development, Her City highlights and addresses the lack of knowledge and of engagement of vulnerable groups from a gender-equality perspective. Therefore, part of the proposed approach by Her City is focused on the promotion of girls' and womens' empowerment through their participation in the collection of qualitative and quantitative gender- and age-disaggregated data to understand the beneficiaries, their challenges and aspirations.

While valuing in-person forms of participation, Her City has demonstrated the potential to integrate digital tools for the participatory collection, analysis and presentation of spatially related data in design and planning processes. The approach was tested in different contexts, among them informal settlements, post-crisis or development areas. Depending on the context, the phase of planning processes and capacities of local actors, different projects integrated different digital interactive tools such as Jamboard, KoBo collect, MethodKit, Minecraft (through the partnership with the Block by Block Foundation (see box 10), SketchFab and SketchUp, among others.

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crisis has highlighted the emerging digital divide, which represents a critical governance issue in terms of universal access to services. Even though Internet connectivity has become a requisite for full participation in society, including access to education, affordable housing and critical government services, 3.7 billion people were offline in 2019 (International Telecommunication Union Development Sector, 2020). Disparate access to the Internet and information technologies is a global challenge, especially for women and older person (Alliance for Affordable Internet, 2021).

To address this yawning digital divide, a report from the United Nations Secretary-General, entitled Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, laid out key areas for action, including universal connectivity, the promotion of digital public goods and to ensure trust and security in the digital environment (United Nations, 2020). In line with the report and building on multiple digital tools already tested on the ground (see boxes 8 and 10), in 2020 UN-Habitat launched the flagship programme “People-Centered Smart Cities” (UN-Habitat, 2020b). The programme acknowledges the importance of placing people at the centre of the development process to gain the tremendous societal benefits in using technologies in smart cities. However, there seems to be an upward trend in the uncritical application of technology based on supply rather than demand. Smart cities projects increasingly employ technologies for surveillance, private ownership of digital public goods and infrastructure, and the perpetuation of discrimination through automated decision-making powered by artificial intelligence. The People-Centered Smart Cities programme

aims to show how smart cities can be an inclusive force for good if implemented with a firm commitment to improving people’s lives and building city systems that truly serve their communities (UN-Habitat, 2021a). In this approach, specific tools are needed to engage the public and civil society and to reshape governance power relations, specifically focusing on spatial planning processes.

### **1. Participative geographic information systems – data crowdsourcing**

Coined in the late 1990s, the term public participation geographic information system (PPGIS) refers to the employment of geographic information system (GIS) technology to support public participation in spatial data collection. Planning processes require a large amount of territorial information. PPGIS allows for an inclusive collection of quantitative and qualitative data pursued by the public. Since the 1990s, public participation geographic information systems have been extensively used to inform plans at different scales and to provide a variety of quantitative and qualitative data. Through online, open-access GIS software, the public is enabled to actively map spatial attributes, environmental and natural resources to inform neighbourhood, regional or national planning.

For instance, the project Open Seneca Nairobi – Air Quality Monitoring Powered by Citizen Science provides geo-localized data about air pollution in Nairobi (UN-Habitat, 2019c). Led by a partnership between UN-Habitat, the University of Nairobi’s Maker Space Lab, Open Seneca and the University of Cambridge, the project is to teach residents to build air pollution sensors

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using simple materials and tools reachable in makerspaces or fab-labs.<sup>11</sup> The sensors, accompanied by a GPS module, correlate the air pollution data with location mapping. The whole technological

11 A Fab Lab, or digital fabrication laboratory, is a place to play, create, learn, mentor, or invent: a place for learning and innovation. Fab Labs provide access to the environment, the skills, the materials and the advanced technology to allow anyone anywhere to make (almost) anything.

## **Box 9**

### **Safetipin – collaborative mapping of womens’ cycling safety in Bogotá**

Between 2014 and 2016, the Secretary of the Women’s Department in Bogotá city, in partnership with Safetipin (a private organization) and supported by UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance, launched a project to map cyclists’ perspective of safety (Safetipin, 2016).

Safetipin is a social enterprise which uses technology and applications to collect data for the safe movement of women in urban spaces. At the core of its mapping process there is the Women’s Safety Audit, a tool that increases awareness of violence against vulnerable groups and helps users and decision-makers understand how men and women experience the urban environment in different ways. It gives legitimacy to women’s concerns and is an effective tool for building community safety (Women in Cities International, 2009).

In Bogotá, the Women’s Safety Audit was empowered with data collected using two different Safetipin mobile applications: MySafetipin and Safetipin Nite. MySafetipin, which is available to download for free, allowed volunteer users to give feedback about how safe they felt. Using GIS technology, people could also assess the place where they were, taking and uploading pictures of the environment. The second application complemented and verified the gathered information with data collected by smartphones mounted on bicycles to capture the photographs of the cycle tracks. The photographs were analysed on a daily basis to produce maps of the city.

Data collection was based on nine parameters (rated from 0 to 3, with 0 being poor and 3 being good):

- a.** Lighting
- b.** Openness
- c.** Visibility

- d.** Crowd
- e.** Security
- f.** Walk path
- g.** Availability of public transport
- h.** Gender diversity

The partnership between the government of Bogotá and Safetipin showed the potential of integrating traditional spatial statistics with data on public perceptions to inform decision-making. A total of 19,351 safety audits were collected covering 1,927 kilometres of roads and bike lanes. Data helped local authorities to prioritize policies. The analysis revealed that for people using bicycles at night lighting had the biggest impact on the perception of safety. Having geospatial data, local authorities were advised on where lightening was lacking. Where feelings of unsafety emerged because of other parameters such as visibility or security, the local government installed closed-circuit television cameras or it refurnished the cycle path. The 19 sub-local government authorities integrated data on safety into their land-use planning to better locate local services such as police stations.

infrastructure is attached to vehicles such as bicycles to dynamically measure air pollution in different areas of the city. The results from these experiments are used to raise awareness about pollutants along transport corridors. Moreover, they can steer changes in commuters' behaviour and influence urban planning and legislation.<sup>12</sup>

Public participation geographic information system practices have been employed by Governments to encourage public participation. Despite the high potential of such initiatives, the method has been criticized because of its

limited potential to empower people to influence decision-making (Brown, 2012, pp.7–18). One reason why participatory data collection initiatives risk having no meaningful impact on the planning process is the lack of data ownership by the local communities. In most participatory GIS examples, people upload data on institutional platforms and data ownership then rests with the platform itself or with the Government leading the project. At the end of the process, the public who has collaborated in gathering data is treated as a one-stop consultant and people do not acquire any leverage to participate further in the decision-making process.

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<sup>12</sup> More information on the Open Seneca Project is at the Open Seneca website, [www.open-seneca.org](http://www.open-seneca.org).

The non-government organization Slum Dwellers International avoids this issue by empowering the communities with the ownership of the collected data. The organization launched Know Your City, a programme that gets slum dwellers to gather citywide data to develop their negotiation tools when dealing with upgrading programmes. In informal settings, data scarcity and reliability

are often design and implementation issues for Governments. When communities themselves drive the data-collection process, the locally gathered knowledge becomes essential to envisioning the way forward for upgrading. Following this logic, Slum Dwellers International has already collected data of over 7,000 informal settlements across the globe (Anni, 2014).

## **Box 10**

### **Block by Block – Using Minecraft as a participatory design tool**

In 2012, UN-Habitat launched the Global Programme on Public Space to improve the availability, accessibility, inclusiveness and quality of public spaces worldwide. As part of the programme, participatory planning workshops were held with local authorities and members of non-governmental and community organizations. To facilitate the participation of the public in the design process, UN-Habitat entered into an innovative partnership with the Swedish computer game company Mojang AB, the makers of the popular computer game Minecraft. Through the partnership, known as Block by Block, UN-Habitat uses Minecraft as a community participation and engagement tool in the design and implementation of public space projects (UN-Habitat, 2016a).

Minecraft is a computer game that allows people to build virtual models and portray real-life scenarios by using blocks (similar to building toys like Lego, but in a digital world). Minecraft is not a precise architectural design tool but it creates a close approximation of the users' ideas.

The use of Minecraft in participatory processes well describes how technology is not an end in itself or a panacea to engage residents. Minecraft has been used to facilitate and encourage participation in more complex engaging processes. The game has been used during one- or two-day-long workshops which included other participatory tools such as discussion forums, brainstorming, training and deliberation (UN-Habitat, 2021c).

The Block-by-Block methodology has been applied widely across the world in 87 cities impacting the lives of more than 1.8 million people. The extensive and successful implementation of the methodology demonstrated how the use of technology as a



tool for participatory urban planning and design could be a powerful way to include often excluded stakeholders in decision-making processes. The game-ification of the design phase was an opportunity to open up new ways of working that broke down the barriers to young people's participation. Minecraft is easy to learn and use. People can learn within a few hours and can contribute and participate in the design process, even though they might not be familiar with computers or architecture.

The methodology was used to engage boys and girls in envisioning new public spaces in Gaza, older women in Lima, and homeless people in Addis Ababa. In the United Arab Emirates, the method was employed to foster the participation of the deaf community; in Kenya and Lebanon it was used during workshops with refugees, migrants and the host communities together, and in Ecuador the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex+ community was involved in the planning discussion.

From the standpoint of participants, the use of Minecraft promotes creativity, innovation and visual learning. It contributes to the development of important skills such as collaboration, public speaking and negotiation as well as giving participants a more powerful voice. The employment of technology allows young people to develop a better understanding of the environment and build new social networks, while at the same time cultivating skills such as eloquence and imagination. Mastering such skills is necessary for individuals to engage in critical thinking and contribute to social and political change, thus having a positive impact on community cohesion and further civic engagement.

## **2. Mixed reality – collaborating in designing**

Mixed reality is based on virtual reality technology. With the support of a digital device like a smartphone or a tablet, virtual reality technology allows for exploration of a proposed new plan and built environment superimposed on the real environment. Overlapping the planned and the current real environment, the mixed reality removes the language barriers in the planning debate. Mixed reality contrasts the technical language of spatial planning (plans, maps, zoning

schemes, etc.) and narrows the communication divide between inhabitants, policymakers and architects. Mixed reality makes the urban plans more readable and the overall process more transparent.

Mixed reality can be used to collect proposals and insights from the bottom up. Successful use of mixed reality technology to strengthen public participation have been in Johannesburg and Stockholm by UN-Habitat in collaboration with Ericsson and in partnership with Microsoft and local universities UN-Habitat, Ericsson, 2019).

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Using a simple three-dimensional design tool such as Minecraft, urban transformation sites were virtually replicated. Students and local young people invited to workshops were asked to use the Minecraft model to propose urban design alternatives. The results were then used to define a better-quality proposal.

Alternatively, mixed reality can be used in the decision phase to spread awareness and collect feedback. Spatial planning processes often entail the choice between different opportunities. Interacting with three-dimensional models, all stakeholders, including final users, can better understand trade-offs between different opportunities. Users of mixed reality technologies are supported in understanding and evaluating the necessary resources, the possible gains and losses in the implementation of alternative spatial transformations.

### **3. Deliberative platforms**

Over the past few decades, public authorities at all levels of government have introduced deliberative institutions such as citizen assemblies, juries or panels in their organizational charts (see the section in this paper on deliberative mini-publics). Due to the use of information technologies and online participatory platforms, such a “deliberative wave” is increasingly digitalizing (OECD, 2022).

As already seen for mixed reality and participatory GIS, information technologies allow for the rethinking of more traditional forms of public participation. Similarly, Governments are increasingly developing institutional online applications that work as virtual arenas where the

public can discuss and eventually deliberate on specific issues. Rather than referring to councils composed of representative residents randomly selected, online deliberative applications allow for broader participation, for direct engagement with the public and therefore for more robust legitimacy in decision-making.

Deliberative platforms are quickly gaining ground worldwide at satisfying a variety of different functions. It should be noted that not all online participatory platforms are necessarily deliberative. In most cases, they allow for text-based exchanges in the form of posts or comments fostering online discussion and consultation (Peña-López, 2017). For instance, in 2019, an online application was employed by the Government of Morocco to gather information, proposals and feedback to design a national development plan. Because of the complex set of socioeconomic challenges faced by the country, the Government encouraged the development of an online venue to engage all key stakeholders to generate a form of collective intelligence (Morocco World News, 2019). An online platform was launched allowing the public to give feedback and discuss proposals for the plan. To stimulate priority groups to participate in the consultation process, a social media campaign reached over 3.2 million citizens. In addition, online events, workshops and field visits were organized. From January to December 2020, the special commission for the development of the national plan received over 10,000 written pages of contributions from 6,600 individuals and 165 organizations (Paulson, 2021).

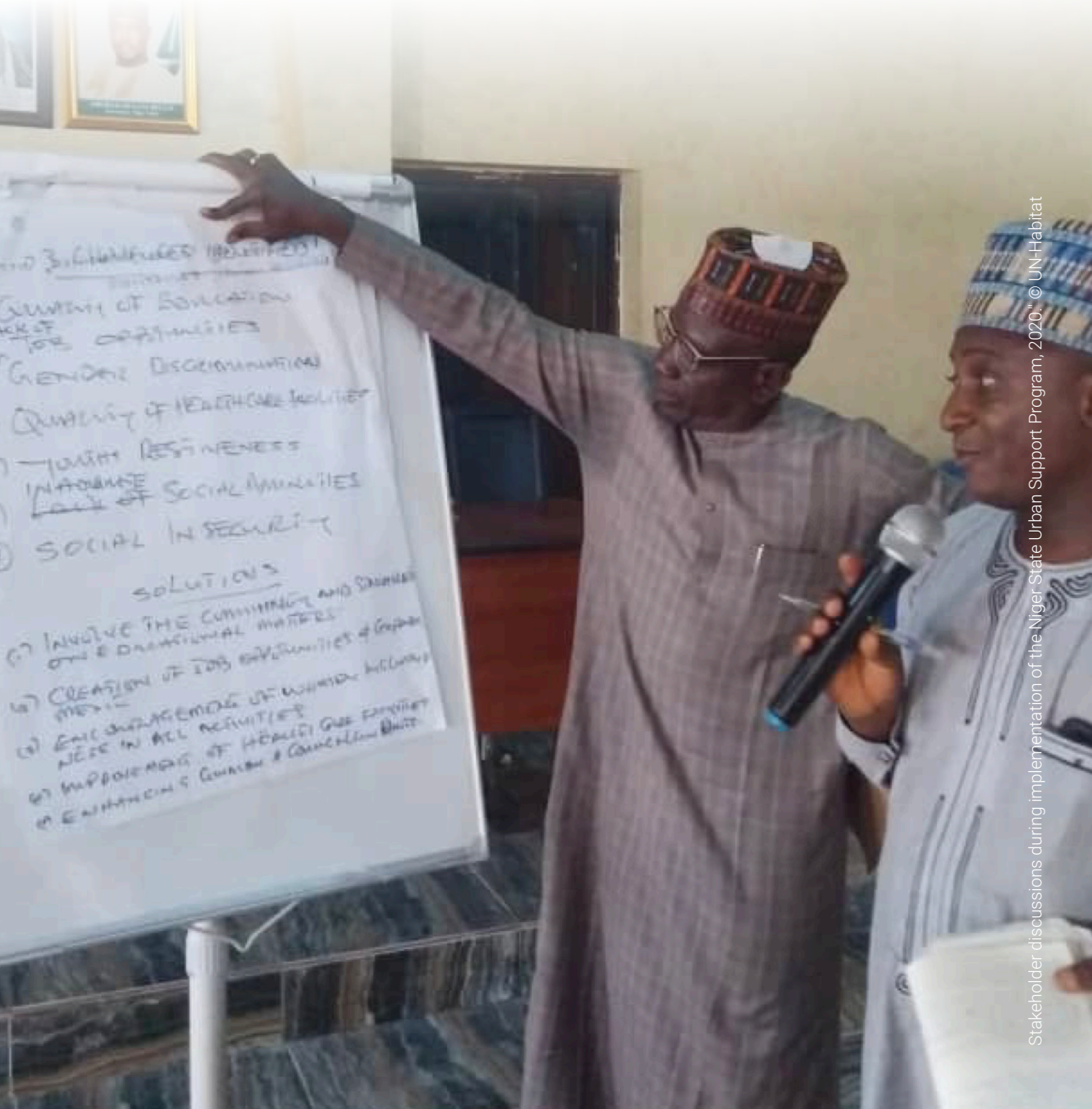
Online platforms that enable deliberation are increasingly used at the local level of government.

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A successful case is Decidim, a platform used in Barcelona (Spain) since 2016. Employing Decidim, users can open discussions, react to comments and vote whether a proposal is positive, negative, or neutral. Overall, it promotes online discussions and consequently, online deliberation. Using a threaded interface, users can engage in debates, propose their ideas, and vote for council budgeting decisions and the city's alternative plans. Building on a long tradition of participation in district-level planning, Decidim was first used to develop and approve the Municipal Action Plan (2016-2019). In total, more than 30000 people participated in the plan co-production process, which combined online and face-to-face interactions (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.).

Overall, platforms for public participation and deliberation are increasingly used to complement traditional forms of public engagement. Decidim, along with other examples such as Democracy Seoul in Seoul (South Korea), have enabled new forms of large-scale citizen participation, expanding the scope of already used tools such as participative budgeting, mini-publics or citizen assemblies. Successful cases, however, do not entirely replace offline participation with platform services. Madrid, for instance, is advancing multiple and integrated participatory tools. To implement its participatory budget, Madrid uses both an online platform to gather proposals and vote, and a citizen assembly, the City Observatory (see section on deliberative mini-publics), to evaluate feasibility and priorities. Overall, a hybrid format (online and offline) is desirable to counteract digital divides which disproportionately affect priority groups.

# Key reflections



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Spatial planning creates a path for urban growth that seeks to maximize the positive and minimize the negative effects of urbanization. Urban plans help revitalize physical facilities in urban areas and develop and conserve areas of natural environmental significance. This transformative impact is more meaningful if it benefits all in society and not just a select few, through the redistribution of public value and narrowing socio-spatial polarization. Therefore, the most effective way of achieving urban inclusion is ensuring that all segments of the population are involved in the management of urban areas. Meaningful participation promotes the interests of all, including the most vulnerable, and is ultimately helpful in facilitating the enjoyment of human rights.

The Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda emphasize the need for inclusive and collaborative governance in spatial planning processes. Thus, rather than advocating for a technocratic and normative model of spatial planning based on standards and regulations, the Goals and the New Urban Agenda refer to spatial planning as a multi-stakeholder decision-making process during which participation is a key governance feature to reach sustainable development.

This toolkit has demonstrated that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to public participation. To this effect, the toolkit features a step-by-step process perspective on how to engage the public and civil society and has a series of mechanisms that can be adapted and aggregated in the form of policy mixes that can better suit the local context, the stage of the process and the available resources. More importantly,

rather than using participation as a “symbolic gesture”, with little transformative impact on urban governance structures and systems, it is recommended to foster the empowerment and autonomy of social movements and local stakeholders and entrust citizens and residents with real decision-making powers.

To ensure that all stakeholders, and most importantly priority groups, have the capacities and resources to participate in the whole planning process, the toolkit presents flexible legal, governance, fiscal, and digital tools that governments at all levels can mobilize to regulate the inclusive and effective nature of participation. Overall, rather than just presenting a mere list of tools to follow, this toolkit will be a support for policymakers in mainstreaming meaningful participation when designing planning processes. The implementation of the participatory mechanisms presented here will also assist public institutions to reposition technicians and spatial planners as facilitators of processes of consensus building and collective territorial intelligence construction. Furthermore, the case studies in the text boxes provide insights into the challenges and opportunities of possible solutions for which these actors can advocate.

# Annex I: Key resources

Title	Synopsis	Cover
Theoretical background on law, governance, participation, deliberation in urban policies		
<p>UN-Habitat (2015). International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning</p>	<p>The guidelines provide national governments, local authorities, civil society organizations and planning professionals with a global reference framework that promotes more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change.</p>	
<p>UN-Habitat (2018). Planning Law Assessment Framework, Urban Law Tools, vol.1</p>	<p>The Planning Law Assessment Framework is a quick self-assessment tool that will aid in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an urban planning legal system. It looks at the laws, regulations and decrees that are applicable in a city and enacted at different levels.</p>	

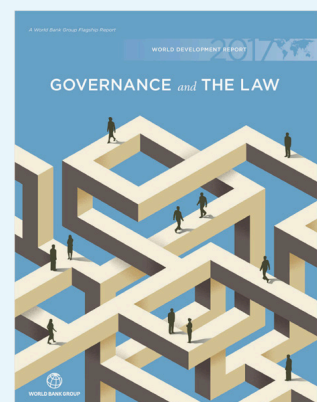
OECD (2020). Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave

The report has gathered close to 300 representative deliberative practices to explore trends in such processes, identify different models, and analyse the trade-offs among different design choices as well as the benefits and limits of public deliberation. It includes Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision-Making, based on comparative empirical evidence.



World Bank Group (2017). Governance and the Law, World Development Report

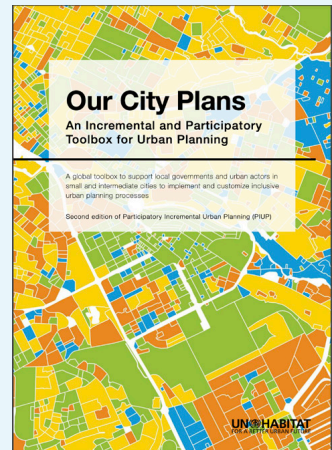
Why are carefully designed, sensible policies too often not adopted or implemented? When they are, why do they often fail to generate development outcomes such as security, growth and equity? And why do some bad policies endure? This report addresses these fundamental questions, which are at the heart of development.



## Guides and tools for participation in urban planning processes

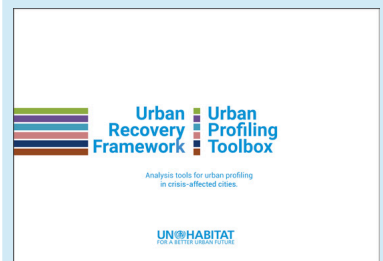
UN-Habitat (2021). Our City Plans - An Incremental and Participatory Toolbox for Urban Planning, Second edition of Participatory Incremental Urban Planning

Our City Plans is a toolbox that guides and supports local governments and urban actors to better understand, customize and develop inclusive and integrated urban planning processes, using a participatory and incremental methodology that adapts to their local context. By guiding users through an adaptable step-by-step methodology, Our City Plans democratizes and articulates a comprehensive planning framework developed and utilized by UN-Habitat.



UN-Habitat (2021). Urban Recovery Framework Urban Profiling Toolbox

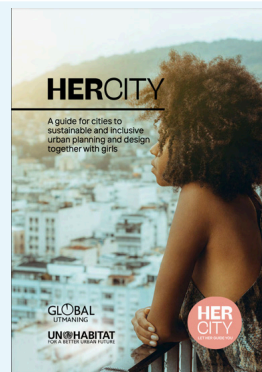
Urban profiling is a methodology implemented in various conflict-affected countries. Urban profiles provide up to date, holistic documentation and analysis of the impact of the crisis in key cities. This document has been developed with the goal of assisting practitioners in implementing urban profiles by providing an analysis toolbox and an analysis framework.





UN-Habitat, Global Utmaning (2021). Her City – A Guide for Cities to Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Planning and Design together with Girls

Her City supports urban development from a girl's perspective. The report guides urban actors to implement projects through a step-by-step methodology providing an open and digitally accessible platform for all.



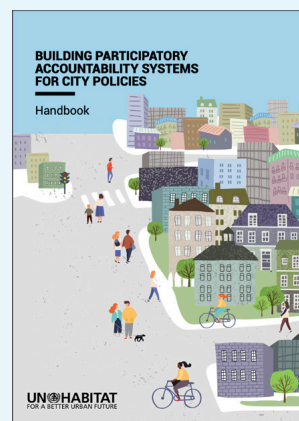
UN-Habitat (2021). The Block-by-Block Playbook: Using Minecraft as a participatory design tool in urban design and governance, Block by Block foundation and UN-Habitat

The purpose of this playbook is to outline UN-Habitat's approach to using Minecraft as an enabler to encourage community participation in urban design and governance. The publication showcases how the Block-by-Block Programme provides technical support in developing city-wide public space strategies, conducting participatory design/visioning workshops, setting up public space management frameworks, conducting city-wide public space assessments, developing indicators to monitor implementation and assess impact, amongst others.



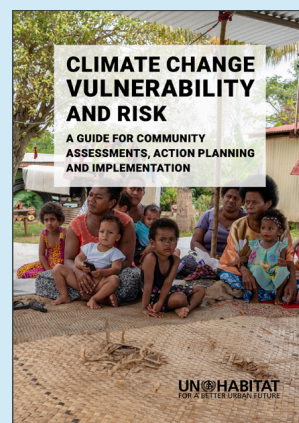
UN-Habitat (2020). Building Participatory Accountability Systems for City Policies: Handbook

The Handbook for “Building Participatory Accountability Systems for City Policies” offers guidance on how to develop urban projects and interventions through a participatory and consultative approach with city stakeholders, while allowing for flexibility to tailor interventions to the specific needs of individual cities and regions.



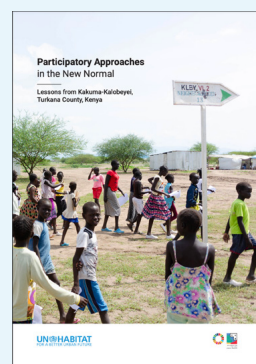
UN-Habitat (2020). Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk – A Guide for Community Assessments, Action Planning and Implementation

The publication provides guidelines on how to conduct Vulnerability and Risk Assessments (VRAs). VRAs are key to understand which people and which areas are most at risk and why and to ensure that projects and related activities are adequately targeted at reducing climate change vulnerabilities in communities.



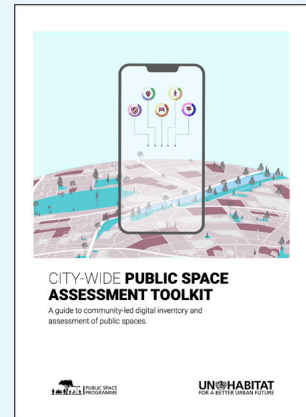
UN-Habitat (2020). City-wide public space assessment toolkit: A guide to community-led digital inventory and assessment of public spaces

This report seeks to better mainstream the utilization of participatory approaches, by recognizing and considering participatory approaches and strategies utilized during past UN- Habitat urban planning process in Kenya.



UN-Habitat (2020). City-wide public space assessment toolkit: A guide to community-led digital inventory and assessment of public spaces

This guide provides a flexible framework designed to aid local governments and partners working in public spaces to engage communities to assess public spaces and develop a prioritized set of interventions – both spatial and non-spatial– that government and private entities can take to address them.



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# ENABLING MEANINGFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESSES

The Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda emphasize the need for inclusive and collaborative governance in spatial planning processes. Thus, rather than advocating for a technocratic and normative model of spatial planning based on standards and regulations, the Goals and the New Urban Agenda refer to spatial planning as a multi-stakeholder decision-making process during which participation is a key governance feature to reach sustainable development.

This toolkit on **Enabling Meaningful Public Participation in Spatial Planning Processes** has demonstrated that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to public participation. The toolkit features a step-by-step process perspective on how to engage the public and civil society and has a series of mechanisms that can be adapted and aggregated in the form of policy mixes that can better suit the local context, the stage of the process and the available resources. More importantly, rather than using participation as a “symbolic gesture”, with little transformative impact on urban governance structures and systems, it is recommended to foster the empowerment and autonomy of social movements and local stakeholders and entrust citizens and residents with real decision-making powers.

To ensure that all stakeholders, and most importantly priority groups, have the capacities and resources to participate in the whole planning process, the toolkit presents flexible legal, governance, fiscal, and digital tools that governments at all levels can mobilize to regulate the inclusive and effective nature of participation. Overall, rather than just presenting a mere list of tools to follow, this toolkit will provide support for policymakers in mainstreaming meaningful participation when designing planning processes. The implementation of the participatory mechanisms presented here will also assist public institutions to reposition technicians and spatial planners as facilitators of processes of consensus building and collective territorial intelligence construction. Furthermore, the case studies in the text boxes provide insights into the challenges and opportunities of possible solutions for which these urban practitioners can pursue.

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