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Department of  
Economic and  
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CEPA strategy guidance note on  
**Long-term territorial planning and spatial development**

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The [United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration \(CEPA\)](#) has developed a set of principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The essential purpose of these voluntary principles is to provide interested countries with practical, expert guidance on a broad range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. CEPA has identified 62 commonly used strategies to assist with the operationalization of these principles. This guidance note addresses long-term territorial planning and spatial development, which is associated with the principle of intergenerational equity and can contribute to strengthening the inclusiveness of institutions. It is part of a series of such notes prepared by renowned experts under the overall direction of the CEPA Secretariat in the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

In reading this guidance note, individuals in government ministries and agencies who are less familiar with the topic will be able to understand the fundamentals. Those who have perhaps taken initial steps in this area with limited follow-through or impact will be able to identify how to adjust elements of their practice to achieve better results and to better embed and institutionalize the strategy in their organizations. Those who are more advanced in long-term territorial planning and spatial development will be able to recognize the practices which contribute to its success.

## Understanding the strategy

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‘Territories’ and ‘spaces’ are terms referring to the wide diversity of land-based places on earth, whether inhabited or not. They are often delineated by administrative boundaries but functional areas, such as water basins and urban agglomerations, are also used to define the perimeter of territorial planning areas. The quality of life in such places is highly dependent on how humans use, develop and manage an area’s physical resources, including both the built environment and natural assets. Moreover, the need for linking physical planning aspects to financial needs and requirements have often been overlooked. In this note, ‘spatial’ planning and ‘place-based’ planning are synonyms.

Long-term territorial planning and spatial development are closely related to urban planning and urban development, respectively, but apply to the broader spectrum of both urbanized and non-urbanized areas and address a multitude of interrelated sustainable development goals (SDGs). The often-used terms ‘urban planning’ and ‘urban development’ only refer to the urban component of territorial planning and spatial development.

Given the association with cities and urban settlements, territorial planning concerns are still often rooted in housing and health crises that originated during the industrial revolution. Many, if not most, governmental planning systems are not up to the task of addressing the economic, social and environmental trends and issues that have emerged over time, such as in sustainable transport, net zero-carbon green and blue economies, urban farming and nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and the general well-being of urban dwellers, just to name a few. By way of illustration, while there is no comprehensive global monitoring and reporting on the state of our territories, the monitoring of the state of cities and urban areas and the state of, for example, biodiversity and the oceans, inform us that population and economic growth or decline are not too well anticipated nor mitigated by sustainable territorial planning policies, plans and designs. Hence territorial planning and policymaking processes will need to (better and more quickly) adapt to those changes to ensure that no one, and no place, is left behind.

Long-term territorial planning and spatial development are most effective when a territorial lens is applied to all relevant policies. Territorial planning can be understood as the process of policymaking by the responsible authorities that systematically considers the place-based aspects and impacts of multiple policy goals in a coordinated way, minimizing trade-offs and contradictions, and maximizing synergies to achieve better places with more compact urban development, that are better connected by public transport and micro-mobility, and that are climate resilient and socially inclusive.

Territorial planning is more effective when it’s not performed in a ‘silo’—for instance by a stand-alone national ministry or municipal department for urban and spatial planning—and this requires more integrated and ‘coherent policymaking’ in both horizontal and vertical ways through a multi-governance collaborative approach. Coherent territorial policymaking can be pursued, and assessed, at all stages of territorial policymaking, from agenda framing and goal

setting, to the process of policy instrument design, implementation on the ground and follow up and evaluation. The promotion of coherent policymaking is one of the strategies for sound policymaking and is considered in a separate note in this series.<sup>1</sup>

The absence of coherence in territorial planning may result in many types of (broader) governance problems, such as compartmentalization, fragmentation, competing and incoherent objectives, and inconsistent policy mixes; as well as in many types of spatial problems, such as dysfunctional urban spaces, broken ecosystems, spatial inequalities and higher exposure and vulnerability to climate and pandemic crises and other system shocks (economic, social and environmental). While territorial planning provides an appropriate mechanism to anticipate desired and undesired impacts from sectoral policies on the sustainable development of defined areas and places, territorial plans as such also need to be assessed on their integrated sustainability impact. Such assessments are often referred to as strategic impact assessments.<sup>2</sup>

### Sustainable Development Goal 11 and territorial development

To “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (SDG 11), 10 targets have been defined for action (by 2030), including “Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries” and “Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.” Fifteen indicators have been defined for SDG 11, the metrics by which the world aims to track whether these 10 targets are achieved. [SDG Tracker](#) monitors the achievement of these indicators, based on available data. Unfortunately, as data are limited or are not available for these indicators, it is difficult to measure how far off track we are, but the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates a deficit that will be hard, if not impossible, to bridge without targeted and coordinated action by governments (national to local), business, civil society and planning professionals (practitioners and scholars).<sup>3</sup> Coordinated territorial policymaking must also expand the scope from SDG 11 to all territorial and place-based dimensions and impacts of all other SDGs.

### Notions of intergenerational equity in territorial planning and spatial development

Long term territorial planning and spatial development is recognized as an important strategy to promote coherent land use policies in the interest of current and future generations. Frameworks for territorial planning need to incorporate a range of sustainability issues and become more effective at achieving results that protect future generations.

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<sup>1</sup> See [CEPA strategy guidance note on Promotion of coherent policymaking](#), UN DESA, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> See for example <https://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/concepts/21-sia.html>

<sup>3</sup> See also

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/194452018\\_HLPF\\_Thematic\\_Review\\_of\\_SDG\\_11\\_UNHabitat\\_12\\_June\\_2018\\_original.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/194452018_HLPF_Thematic_Review_of_SDG_11_UNHabitat_12_June_2018_original.pdf)

The limitations and rigidity of earlier planning methods were gradually replaced by the new paradigm of ‘strategic spatial planning’. This approach aimed at combining long-term spatial visioning with short-term spatial interventions through stakeholder and community-involvement to address the socio-economic and service needs of the urban centre. In this way, intergenerational considerations were introduced into the planning process.

Long-term territorial planning and spatial development strongly relates and can contribute to intergenerational equity in a range of ways. Among the main entry points are:

- a) An **age-based approach** in all territorial planning processes and its outputs (policies, plans and designs). This requires the consultation and involvement of all age groups in planning processes, with a special focus on the most vulnerable age groups in society, such as children, youth and the elderly. It is widely accepted that places where children and the elderly can thrive are generally most liveable for all other age groups.
- b) A **resource-based approach** in planning that ensures equal access to resources for current and future generations—the very core of sustainable development. While it is not possible to plan with (unborn) future generations, envisioning the future of our cities and other territories (through techniques such as ‘future foresight’) must take into account the resources and space needed for future unborn generations. Strategic planning and foresight is one of the strategies for sound policymaking, and is considered in a separate note in this series.<sup>4</sup>

While ‘intergenerational equity’ is not a commonly used term within the professional planning practice and research community, the principle is clearly embedded in participatory planning and is based on five basic ideas:<sup>5</sup>

1. Spatial development affects existing generations differently: the young and the old are among the most vulnerable physically and economically in most societies, and thus are most in need of a safe living environment and free access to assets like common space.
2. The development of places also affects future generations since it can have long-lasting effects on the physical environment as well as on public finances given the high cost of infrastructure.

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<sup>4</sup> See [CEPA Guidance Note on Strategic Foresight](#) UN DESA, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> See also the International Guidelines of Decentralisation & Strengthening Local Authorities (2007) [https://smartnet.niua.org/sites/default/files/resources/International%20guidelines%20on%20decentralisation\\_UNHabitat.pdf](https://smartnet.niua.org/sites/default/files/resources/International%20guidelines%20on%20decentralisation_UNHabitat.pdf) and Access to Basic Services (2009) [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/guidelines\\_0.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/guidelines_0.pdf).

3. The development of places is important for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and the preservation and restoration of biodiversity on which the well-being of future generations depends.
4. The integrated development of places is essential for coherent policymaking. Aligning policies across different government levels and between different governmental sectors, in the short term and for intergenerational equity, will avoid policies and expenditure in one field being undermined by those in another, and will help limit passing problems from one generation to the next. Long term public debt management is also one of the strategies for intergenerational equity and is considered in a separate note.
5. The place dimension of policies and actions—from national to neighbourhood levels—is best focused in some kind of spatial plan, because that gives transparency, shares aspirations and commitments, and provides a basis for delivery, monitoring and evaluation. Intergenerational equity is most likely to be achieved when inputs from all generations feed into that spatial plan.

The spatial qualifiers of intergenerational equity will be further explored throughout this note.

## Public sector situation and trends

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### Evolution of territorial planning systems

Throughout modern nation-state history, the public sector established regulatory planning systems,<sup>6</sup> mechanisms and tools to regulate the use of public and private land, to prevent and mitigate negative environmental and social externalities of economic investments and developments, to regulate the private and public housing markets, as well to provide (very basic) legal consultation procedures. Gradually, ‘town, city and urban planning’, ‘regional planning’, ‘spatial planning’ and more recently ‘territorial planning’ became the more common denominations in large parts of the world, with a creative local language mix from country to country (including, for example, ‘spatial ordering’ and ‘city-building’). Typically, countries with a more performant public sector overall also perform better on urban and territorial planning. The planning systems of developed countries were often replicated in developing countries and were mostly instrumental for colonizing territories.<sup>7</sup> Once planning systems are established and well enshrined within a country’s overall legal system, societal megatrends and disruptions typically have a greater impact on the implementation and enforcement of the system, rather than on the substance of the system.

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<sup>6</sup> The planning system approach will be further explored later on in this guidance note.

<sup>7</sup> See [Learning from Other Places and Their Plans: Comparative Learning in and for Planning Systems](#), K. Van Assche et al. (2020).

Acknowledging the limitations and rigidity of outdated planning systems—often solely focused on building rights through land zoning—concerned professional planners (practitioners and scholars) gradually established and applied ‘strategic spatial planning,’ to combine long-term spatial visioning (including so-called strategic foresight) with short-term spatial interventions through stakeholder and community involvement. National governments are gradually establishing units and capabilities to ensure longer-term thinking (for example in Canada, Finland, Singapore, and the United Kingdom).<sup>8</sup> The paradigm shift from static, rigid planning to more dynamic and strategic planning doctrines also marks a shift from top-down technocratic planning towards more bottom-up and participatory planning approaches and methods. The two doctrines do not only co-exist on a global scale but are also applied by different cities or regions within a country. While anecdotal evidence suggests that countries in the Global North apply more adaptive planning systems and that many countries in the Global South inherit colonial or postcolonial planning systems, the rift between the two planning doctrines cannot be reduced to a matter of national income or geography.

An authoritative source on the status of and future options for planning systems worldwide is UN-Habitat’s Global Report on Human Settlements: [Planning for Sustainable Cities](#), complemented by ISOCARP’s [International Manual of Planning Practice](#) (IMPP), wherein 135 national planning systems were summarized and reviewed. Among the 135 countries included in the 2015 edition of the IMPP, many critical comments were voiced about the “powerlessness or downright dysfunction of existing planning systems.” Several constructive proposals were put forward to improve and strengthen planning. Environmental issues, climate change, natural hazards and risk management occupy a prominent place in redressing planning systems.

Territorial governance and spatial planning systems have now evolved to become one of the key components of integrated cross-sectoral development strategies and policy delivery mechanisms among European Union members and partner states. In 2020, ESPON published a study titled [Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe](#) covering the 2000-2016 period. The diversity of conditions for territorial development in Europe means there can be no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to territorial governance and spatial planning.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, there is a common concern for all countries and European Union institutions to advance the role of spatial planning and territorial governance to meet their full potential in contributing to shared European Union goals.

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<sup>8</sup> See [CEPA Guidance Note on Strategic Foresight](#), p.4 (2021).

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, context-based planning forms the core point of departure for realizing sustainable development, as context-based planning responds to social sustainability objectives, taking the needs of specific communities and cultures into account and tailoring the planning of their environments to reflect such.

Based on the above and related research,<sup>10</sup> many authors from the 135 contributing countries to the IMPP compendium raised doubts about the pertinence of their existing planning systems, including the role of planners. Planning systems need to be surrounded by checks and balances on the use of investment and regulatory resources to limit the arbitrary use of planning measures by powerful groups. While planning systems need the support of a legal framework that defines rights and responsibilities with respect to land and property development and contributions to the public realm, it is helpful to resist over-legalization and the accompanying rigidities and time-consuming processes.

Planning systems' regulatory powers need to be combined with investment powers, in an integrated and proactive way, to release the potential of many different actors to contribute to the urban development process. Where planning systems and practices lack strength, respect, and trust, it is helpful to focus initially on the actions that bring clear benefits to many and provide the basis for greater respect in the future. Such positive experiences help to build local capacity to address more complex issues.

#### **Towards a common understanding of territorial planning**

The need for long-term planning is crucial. Policies that are not informed by strategic foresight can exacerbate imbalances in the spatial distribution of people, leading to an increase in the density and extent of urban slums, environmental degradation, social inequities and segregation, problems that are passed on to future generations.

As previously mentioned, different approaches to urban and territorial planning are being used worldwide without universally agreed principles to guide decision-makers towards sustainable urban and territorial development. Considering this, in 2013 UN-Habitat's Governing Council (GC) requested a guidance document on urban planning that could be globally relevant, in line with the guidelines so far developed on decentralization (2007) and access to basic services for all (2009). Following a consultative process of normative work and consensus building at the global level, the [International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning](#) (IGUTP) were adopted by the GC in 2015 under Resolution 25/6 as: "A global reference framework for improving policies, plans, designs and implementation processes for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change."

Based on strong evidence and lessons learned from various regions and contexts, the guidelines consist of 12 key principles (see Table 1) and 114 action-oriented recommendations targeted to specific stakeholder groups: national governments; local authorities; planning professionals and their associations; and civil society and its organizations. The guidelines emphasize the need for an integrated approach to planning and cover areas of urban policy

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<sup>10</sup> See for example, [Learning from Other Places and Their Plans: Comparative Learning in and for Planning Systems](#), K. Van Assche et al., and [Rethinking Planning Systems: A Plea for Self-Assessment and Comparative Learning](#), F. D'hondt et al., *Urban Planning* (ISSN: 2183-7635) 2020, Volume 5, Issue 1.

and governance, sustainable urban development, planning components, and implementation and monitoring mechanisms. They enable the integration of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of planning systems by opening thematic entry points for improvement, while considering the potential for interventions to occur at different levels. Moreover, the guidelines bring forth a territorial perspective to planning as their application is not constrained to spatial developments within the urban boundary, but instead consider the processes, actors, and issues throughout the spatial planning continuum—from urban to rural planning.

**Table 1. Summary of the 12 principles for urban and territorial development**

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<b>Urban policy and governance</b>
1 Urban and territorial planning is an integrative and participatory decision-making process that addresses competing interests and is linked to a shared vision, an overall development strategy and national, regional and local urban policies.
2 Urban and territorial planning promotes local democracy, participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability.
<b>Urban and territorial planning for sustainable development</b>
<i>Urban and territorial planning for social development</i>
3 Urban and territorial planning primarily aims to realize adequate standards of living and working conditions for all through social inclusion and cohesion, recognizing the distinct needs of various groups.
4 Urban and territorial planning is a precondition for a better quality of life and successful globalization processes that respect cultural heritages and cultural diversity.
<i>Urban and territorial planning for sustained economic growth</i>
5 Urban and territorial planning provides an enabling framework for new economic opportunities, regulation of land and housing markets and timely provision of adequate infrastructure and basic services.
6 Urban and territorial planning provides a mechanism to ensure that sustained economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability go hand in hand to promote better connectivity at all territorial levels.
<i>Urban and territorial planning and the environment</i>
7 Urban and territorial planning provides a spatial framework to protect and manage the natural and built environment of cities and territories, including their biodiversity, land and natural resources.
8 Urban and territorial planning contributes to increased human security by strengthening environmental and socioeconomic resilience, enhancing mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.
<b>Urban and territorial planning components</b>
9 Urban and territorial planning is a continuous and iterative process, grounded in enforceable regulations, that aims to promote more compact cities and synergies between territories.
10 Urban and territorial planning aims to facilitate and articulate political decisions based on different scenarios. It translates those decisions into actions that will transform the physical and social space and will support the development of integrated cities and territories.

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### Implementation and monitoring urban and territorial planning

- 11 Implementation of special policies and plans requires political leadership, appropriate legal and institutional frameworks, efficient urban management, and improved coordination, consensus-building approaches to respond coherently and effectively to current and future challenges.
  - 12 Effective implementation and evaluation of urban and territorial planning requires continuous monitoring, periodic adjustments and sufficient capacities at all levels, as well as sustainable financial mechanisms and technologies.
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Source: IGUTP.

### Adopting a more scientific approach to urban development

The [New Urban Agenda](#) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016. The New Urban Agenda represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future: “If well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries.” The New Urban Agenda sets the following goals:

- Embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlement. More appropriate policies can take advantage of urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks.
- Integrating equity into the development agenda. Equity becomes an issue of social justice, ensures access to the public sphere and extends opportunities.
- Fostering national urban planning and planned city extensions.
- Deciding how relevant sustainable development goals will be supported through sustainable urbanization.
- Aligning and strengthening institutional arrangements with the substantive outcomes of Habitat III, to ensure effective delivery of the New Urban Agenda.

The implementation of the New Urban Agenda hinges on three concurrent clusters of activities:

- Urban Rules and Regulations: the outcome in terms of quality of an urban settlement is dependent on the implementation of a set of rules and regulations. Proper urbanization requires the rule of law.
- Urban Planning and Design: establishing the adequate provision of common goods, including streets and open spaces, together with an efficient pattern of buildable plots.

- Urban Finance: for the good management and maintenance of a city, local fiscal systems should redistribute parts of the urban value generated.

Article 93 of the New Urban Agenda acknowledges the aforementioned International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning as a tool to implement the New Urban Agenda.

National Urban Policy (NUP) is considered a pivotal instrument and mechanism to ensure policy integration of the urban dimensions of all relevant policy sectors such as economy, infrastructure, transportation, environment, health, social welfare, housing and territorial planning. NUPs need to have a dedicated focus on children and the elderly. NUPs also need to establish a connection between the dynamics of rapid urbanization and the overall process of national development. This will be further explored in the next section.

Mainstreaming the SDGs (and derived or related global policy frameworks) in all policy sectors at all governance scales can be considered as the most important trend to achieve more sustainable development overall. This is well illustrated by the growing number of countries engaging in establishing an NUP. A recent on national urban policy concluded:<sup>11</sup>

- Definitions of NUPs vary but commonly refer to a coherent set of decisions through a deliberate, government-led process rallying and co-ordinating diverse actors towards a common vision and goal to promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term.
- All 162 countries studied have national-level urban policies, although in different forms, at different development stages and with varying thematic foci. More than two-thirds of countries recognize the potential of NUPs to advance the SDGs. Beyond the SDGs, many countries recognize NUPs as keys to other global and regional urban agendas such as the National Urban Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement.
- The COVID-19 crisis raised the profile of NUPs and forward-looking NUPs can help cities be more resilient.
- Challenges to effective NUPs persist, including coordination, resources, capacity and data gaps. The lack of financial and human resources are the two main challenges to implementation. Despite growing concerns, socio-spatial inequalities and divides in cities, for example pertaining to urban-rural connectivity and spatial segregation, are not extensively addressed in surveyed NUPs.

Many outdated rigid regulatory planning systems are slowing down, if not entirely obstructing, this SDG/National Urban Agenda-mainstreaming process. While some national governments have taken up the baton to review and reform their planning systems (e.g., Belarus, China, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka<sup>12</sup>), in many if not most other countries, governments,

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<sup>11</sup> [Global State of National Urban Policy 2021](#), OECD, UN-Habitat and United Nations Office for Project Services (2021).

<sup>12</sup> See '[Implementing the IG-UTP 2015-2017](#)', UN-Habitat, 2017, p.29.

entrepreneurs, planning professionals and civil society ‘bypass’ dysfunctional planning systems with formal and informal ‘planning tools’ such as public-private partnerships,<sup>13</sup> slum-upgrading<sup>14</sup> and neighbourhood contracts,<sup>15</sup> placemaking<sup>16</sup> and tactical urbanism. The Urban Maestro project<sup>17</sup> conducted by UN-Habitat concluded that the paradigm shift from static or technocratic planning towards strategic and participatory planning needs a better understanding of the positive interplay between ‘hard’ (formal regulatory) and ‘soft’ (informal non-regulatory) planning and communication tools. Many developing countries are better on the ‘soft’ than on the ‘hard’ side of planning and vice versa. Collaboration between developed and developing countries is needed to find the middle-ground.

While spatial plans and urban designs will always be a staple of any urban and territorial policy toolkit, many countries and communities are reinventing plan-making as a means rather than a goal. While the traditional ‘master-planning’ tends to be very top-down and expert-centred, the strategic participatory plan-making and placemaking is more bottom-up and community-driven, using techniques such as community-based urban and territorial visioning workshops, as successfully demonstrated in places such as Curaçao, Kosovo and Somaliland.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The UN-Habitat report ‘[Public-Private Partnership in Housing and Urban Development](#)’ examines how the PPP model can be applied to help promote and finance sustainable housing, urban infrastructure and urban services for cities and countries around the world, by identifying key opportunities and challenges faced by PPPs in general, providing PPP best practices and guiding principles adopted by governments at various levels of economic development. However, PPPs can pose challenges, because, by definition, the financial interests of the different parties are not completely aligned.

<sup>14</sup> An integrated approach that aims to turn around downward legal, physical and/or social trends in an area characterized by informal (non-planned/licensed) housing and development. The activities tend to include the provision of basic services such as housing, streets, footpaths, drainage, clean water, sanitation, and sewage disposal. Often, access to education and healthcare are also part of upgrading. Ideally, slum-upgrading results in adjustments of the planning system. See for more information <https://www.citiesalliance.org/themes/slums-and-slum-upgrading>.

<sup>15</sup> A form of ‘participatory budgeting’ by assigning public funds for neighbourhood quality improvement by the community, based on a mutually agreed ‘improvement programme’ that is limited in space, time and budget. See, for example, Romańczyk, M. (2015). “Towards urban governance: Twenty years of neighbourhood contracts in the Brussels-Capital Region,” *Cities*, Volume 44, Pages 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2014.12.002>.

<sup>16</sup> A multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. It is political due to the nature of place identity. It can be either official and government led, or community-driven grass roots tactical urbanism, such as extending sidewalks with chalk, paint, and planters, or open streets events such as Bogotá, Colombia's Ciclovía. See <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://urbanmaestro.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> See D’hondt, F. (2019). “[Beyond the Plan: the need to build in-house capacity to plan, design and implement urban and territorial strategic spatial plans](#),” ISOCARP Review 15.

## Methods of implementation

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### Evolution of territorial planning systems

In [Leading Change - Delivering the New Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning](#) (UN-Habitat, 2018), the starting point is that planning is adjusting to a new global context and traditional forms of planning were formulated before concerns such as climate change, inclusion, ‘metropolitanization’, spatial justice, gender, or resilience were considered. The report argues that an unprecedented extent of urban development is now unplanned, and cities are overwhelmed by dysfunctional and often slum-led urban growth: “Planning needs to adjust to these new realities so that we do not continue on the current trajectory. Many of the ideas on how to do this are not new but need re-examination.” Hence, ‘Leading Change’ recommends that new forms of planning must be simpler, faster and more cost effective, focused on implementation and achieving positive results such as equitable prosperity, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adequate housing for all. Urban and territorial planning should be proactive rather than regulatory. This can be done by focusing less on land use regulation—although this will still be done where resources are sufficient and development pressures demand it—and more on initiating, guiding, and integrating the provision of infrastructure. The publication concludes that planning needs a pro-poor bias to substantially contribute to eradicating poverty and realizing all SDGs while leaving no one behind.

Also in 2018, the [IGUTP Handbook](#) was published, together with the first [review of implementing the Guidelines](#) (2015-2017). As part of the implementation, more specialized handbooks are and will be provided on topics including [urban health](#). The first mentioned handbook provides an overview of the scope of topics covered by the IGUTP and puts special emphasis on planning processes, products and outcomes.

In 2020, UN-Habitat also published an [illustrated handbook](#) of the New Urban Agenda, to enable global awareness and its implementation, as well as [guidelines](#) for (national) reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Until 2023, all five United Nations Regional Commissions and UN-Habitat engaged in a collaborative effort to support national governments and selected cities in consolidating their role in achieving sustainable development; increasing policy coherence among member States across the regions; and promoting the improved capacity of institutions and “human agents of change” in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This requires a greater integration of various dimensions (regional, national, local) of the programme through a variety of activities, including:

- Building the capacity of national and local-level decision makers in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the New Urban Agenda and urban SDGs and the need for a coherent approach towards urban development.
- Establishing mechanisms for the sharing of information and successful practices.

- Facilitating an inclusive process of knowledge generation and dissemination through regional monitoring and reporting on sustainable urbanization.

Also in 2020, in its landmark-report [A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals](#), the OECD provides action-oriented recommendations on planning, policies and strategies; multi-level governance; financing and budgeting; data and information; and stakeholder engagement. Concrete examples and good practices from leading cities, regions and national governments complement the recommendations and aim to inspire other governments in their efforts to localize the SDGs.

### Critical issues in territorial planning and spatial development

Inspired by these guiding documents to apply and implement the enveloping international policy framework and taking into consideration the implications for intergenerational equity, ‘what’ can be done, ‘how’ it can be done and by ‘whom’ can be summarized in 10 key objectives:

#### **1. Getting the planning right at the street and neighbourhood levels**

While policies are needed to ensure quality places for all people and their eco-systems, well-managed local spatial planning is the cornerstone of any sustainable development at any time and in any place. Municipal and city-wide spatial plans remain essential tools to aspire to achieving sustainable development, but the most critical are plans and projects developed at the neighbourhood and street levels and complemented by bottom-up, pro-poor and intergenerational ‘placemaking’, ‘tactical urbanism’ and ‘slum upgrading’.

#### **2. Applying national territorial policy frameworks**

Boosted by the United Nation’s New Urban Agenda, National Urban Policies (NUPs) are gaining traction. In their absence, cities and urban areas typically suffer from very fragmented and place-blind national policies that are hardly integrated or coordinated. As a growing number of countries establish NUPs, there is still a long way to go, in terms of quantity and quality improvement. A future generation challenge will be to integrate NUPs into national territorial policies, to ensure that urban area policies are well balanced with rural and natural area policies as part of wholesale sustainable territorial development, with a ‘pro-poor’, ‘intergenerational justice’ and ‘urban health’ policy lens. The NUPs themselves should integrate urban social protection frameworks to address the needs of children, women, older persons, disabled persons and other vulnerable groups.

#### **3. Strengthening regional planning**

The regional scale, in between the national and local or municipal levels, is largely considered as the ‘future generation’ planning scale. Mayors and city administrations engaging in well-established city-regional institutions overall increase their chances for inter-generational sustainable urban planning and development, especially when these institutions are well enshrined within National Urban Policies. Local and national

territorial players will need to step and scale up efforts to invest in new or improved city-regional institutions and services. Special attention is needed for large metropolitan areas (up to 10m residents) as well as future generation ‘megalopolitan’ territorial collaboration and integration (beyond 10m residents). The regional scale is also gaining importance to plan for rural and natural areas, including coastal areas, river basins, eco-districts and rural or agricultural specialization areas. NUPs should recognise the role of metropolitan and district development committees in regional planning to promote integration as well as a clustered approach to urban development to achieve economies of scale.

#### **4. Embracing multi-level territorial governance**

It is no longer ‘either/or’ but ‘and/and’ to prioritize a certain level of ‘planning governance’ (local, regional, national or transnational). Any given planning challenge or opportunity deserves to be addressed through a collaborative approach including all relevant planning levels at stake within a given country. Planning at the street and neighbourhood levels will benefit from regional cooperation and national guidance or incentives. Conversely, national infrastructure or corridor planning need to involve regional and local governance tiers to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability beyond the short-term sectoral benefits. While consultation in the early stages of planning is crucial, true involvement evolves towards co-decision making and generally delivers a stronger basis for efficient plan implementation. A bottom-up approach to planning, from city to metropolitan or regional levels and eventually the national level, should be part of the process.

#### **5. Engaging children and youth in planning their futures**

Involving children and youth in complex planning processes beyond the traditional tokenism is one of the greatest challenges in planning and overall human development. Good practices involving children and youth in community-based vision workshops to establish urban visions (city-wide or partial) indicate a growing awareness and intelligence in understanding and processing the need to turn today's planning challenges into opportunities – very often in a much more creative and pragmatic way than with only adults in the room. In many countries in the Global South this is also a great way to involve girls and young women, as well all other vulnerable groups in society. NUPs with a dedicated chapter on child-friendly cities can bolster action.

#### **6. Thinking and planning beyond borders**

As very few spatial issues are neatly confined within the administrative planning boundary, cross-border planning should be less of an afterthought and more of an integrated component of planning from the very early start of any planning process – hence the need to think beyond borders. This will require enhanced cross-border planning capacities as well as specialized institutions to rely on. Where border cities have invested in institutional cross-border planning and collaboration, urban areas on both sides of the border(s) thrive.

Transnational planning and development is however not limited to urban areas, but also needed in rural and natural or wildlife areas – e.g. transnational wildlife parks.

### **7. Reducing our use of remaining ‘open space’**

Arguably the biggest ‘future generation’ challenge will be to reduce the anthropic impact on earth’s distorted ecosystem, both in terms of carbon emissions and loss of biodiversity. The ‘zero-carbon growth’ paradigm should be matched with a ‘zero-land growth’ paradigm shift, where feasible. In practical terms, the green shift towards the use of more renewable energies should not be planned and developed at the expense of unbuilt rural and natural areas. While expanding our cities or even building new cities seems inevitable to cater to population growth, governments at all levels will need to compensate for future hardening and construction of greenfield sites by softening and deconstructing brownfield sites, or simply preventing greenfield development by prioritizing brownfield redevelopment. NUPs should reflect the World Health Organization recommend minimum of 9 m<sup>2</sup> of green space per individual and ideal urban green space value of 50 m<sup>2</sup> per individual.

### **8. Embracing nature-based solutions**

The green shift needs to be more than planting trees. It is about restoring ecosystems and biodiversity. Nature-based solutions are defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.” Applying these principles in spatial planning and placemaking is an intergenerational challenge that needs to be embraced now to address both the climate and biodiversity crises.

### **9. Reforming outdated planning systems**

Acknowledging that many if not most national planning systems are outdated as they a) do not address the current challenges such as climate adaptation and biodiversity restoration and/or b) are rooted in colonial or postcolonial eras, current and future generations will need to review and reform these planning systems in a wholesale fashion, based on the incremental global policy framework on urban and territorial planning, and with ‘intergenerational equity’ as a leading principle. Integration of spatial, infrastructure and investment planning in national planning systems can also contribute to the timely achievement of the SDGs.

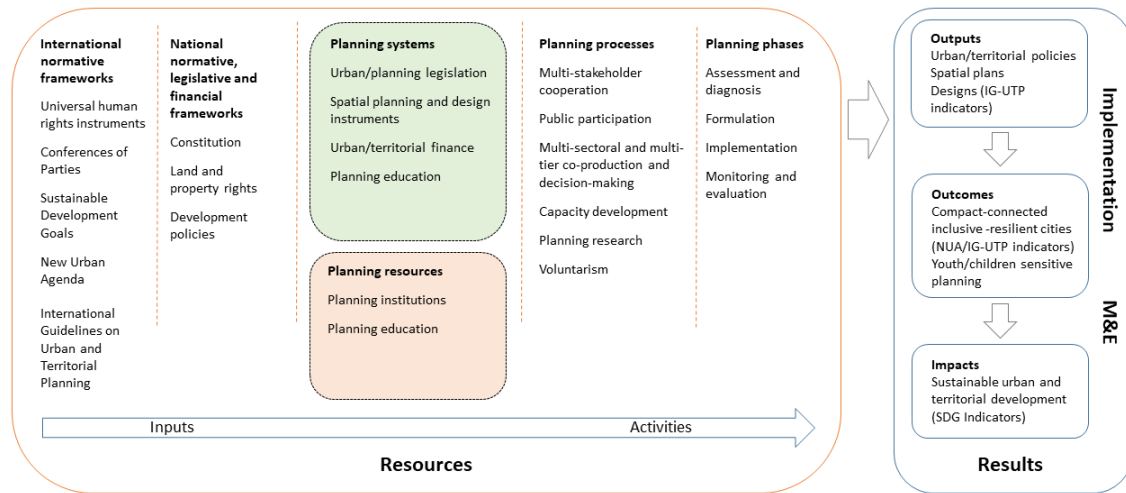
### **10. Investing in planning education and capacity**

Planning systems, planning education and capacity-strengthening is often rooted in and flawed by outdated or (post)colonial governance regimes. While we do need more trained planners, we also need better or differently trained planners. Strengthening intergenerational planning capacities will require more and better specialized institutions.

## Reforming planning systems

Territorial planning and spatial development require ‘management of change’, to resolve conflicting political and social demands on space, while protecting the earth’s generative capacity.<sup>19</sup> Applying the theory of change to establish a more performant planning system (key message 9), is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Planning systems**



**Planning actors:** National Government, subnational authorities and civil society groups representing, among others, youth, older persons, community organizations, planning professionals and the private sector

**Planning scales:** International, transboundary, national, regional, metropolitan-city, municipal, neighbourhood and/or street

Source: Author.

In this view, planning systems are part of the resources needed to achieve the desired sustainable urban and territorial development goals. They depend on international and national normative, legal and financial frameworks and development policies, but by including all planning actors, planning systems will become more bottom-up and people-oriented, taking into account all the planning scales, including the transnational and trans-boundary levels. A planning system should include the three-pronged planning approach (plans, regulations and finance),<sup>20</sup> combined with the institutional and human resources and skills needed to operationalize the system through the application of appropriate processes and phases of the planning cycle, to produce outputs, outcomes and desired impacts as results.

<sup>19</sup> See Campbell, 1996:296; Cilliers & Cilliers, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> See also “[Economic Foundations for Sustainable Urbanization: A Study on Three-Pronged Approach Planned City Extensions, Legal Framework, and Municipal Finance](#)”, UN-Habitat, 2017.



### Institution-building

Anticipating the case studies presented in the next section, the quality of territorial policymaking for sustainable spatial development critically depends on the excellence of governmental planning institutions complemented by parastatal and non-governmental institutions. Hence, the tenth key message presented in Text Box 1—Investing in planning education and capacity—might be last but is certainly not the least important. While this message primarily calls for stepping and scaling up investments in planning education and capacity-strengthening, it is obvious that more and better ‘institutions’ are needed to achieve this goal.

Planning capacity deficits are typically experienced by planning departments in national, regional and especially local governments, and more gravely in the Global South, albeit with disparities between large and small cities. Often, this prevents or erodes the capacity to plan ‘in house’ and increases the risk of ‘outsourcing’ without a positive capacity-return—resulting in lack or loss of ‘local ownership’ of planning processes and spatial developments.<sup>21</sup>

Strengthening intergenerational planning capacities may require more and better specialized institutions. Capacity-strengthening services already provided by international agencies such as UN-Habitat, the World Bank, OECD, Cities Alliance or ISOCARP need to be scaled up and better used in both the Global South and the Global North. Initiatives such as National Urban Observatories<sup>22</sup> and Global Planning Aid<sup>23</sup> can help build up the planning capacities of children, youth, elderly, grassroots communities, acknowledging the structural shortage of properly trained urban and territorial planners. Agencies such as UNICEF are also involved in developing child-friendly planning systems.

### Case studies

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The cases below, selected from several sources, aim at illustrating the added value of long-term strategic and participatory planning.

#### **Gauteng City Region, South Africa – City-regional integration for prosperity<sup>24</sup>**

For Gauteng, the enduring legacy of apartheid has left high levels of social exclusion, poverty, inequality, and spatial dislocation. Additionally, high polluting industrial uses and derelict manufacturing areas have left city cores in a state of decline and created further spatial discontinuity. Realizing that these urban pressures were impeding Gauteng’s sustainable development and economic competitiveness, the Provincial Government rallied the twelve

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<sup>21</sup> See D’hondt, F. (2019). “[Beyond the Plan: the need to build in-house capacity to plan, design and implement urban and territorial strategic spatial plans](#)”. ISOCARP Review 15.

<sup>22</sup> See [UN-Habitat’s Global Urban Observatory](#)

<sup>23</sup> See <https://isocarp.org/activities/global-planning-aid/>

<sup>24</sup> See “[Towards a Compendium of Inspiring Practices](#)”, UN-Habitat.

municipalities within its boundaries to commit to establishing the Gauteng City-Region (GCR). At the forefront of this challenge was moving from a sectoral approach of development to a territorial approach. To begin, the provincial government established an 'Integrated Urban Planning Framework', to guide inclusive, resilient, and liveable urban settlements through spatial integration. Achieving this required consensus from multiple public and private stakeholders on the idea that Gauteng as a city-region would provide more sustainable and competitive development as compared to a sectoral approach. Working collaboratively between provincial and municipal governments, a unified agenda was established, with the view to promote the city-region concept among stakeholders and abroad. While the expected outcomes of GCR are to be delivered over the long term, some indications of progress are already being made. Access to basic services has increased across the region, even though the area is still experiencing rapid population growth. The move away from a silo-based approach to an integrated territorial strategy has led to the horizontal and vertical coordination of public and private actors.

### **The Rhine-Ruhr Metropolitan Area – breathing new life into post-industrial cities<sup>25</sup>**

The Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan area is the largest urban agglomeration in Germany and one of the largest urban areas in Europe, having developed as a major manufacturing and coal mining centre through the first half of the 20th century. With the de-industrialization process that took place in Germany from the mid-1970s and the transformation of the energy production model, industrial activities have relocated, jobs have disappeared and the number of inhabitants in the area has consequently dropped. To stimulate ecological, environmental, and urban revitalization, the International Building Exhibition (IBE) at Emscher Park was initiated by the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1989.

Over a period of ten years, the IBE project aimed to give the region a greener image and to breathe life into the old industrial plants. A vision for the area was developed and a master plan was drafted, including specific projects that targeted abandoned industrial sites, transforming them into facilities to improve the quality of the urban areas surrounding the old industries. After more than 20 years of planning and implementation, the 'Emscher Landscape Park' has gone from a purely fantastical vision to a reality that has inspired new urban development. The project has achieved lasting improvements in the living and working environment of the surrounding towns by upgrading the ecological and aesthetic quality of the nearby countryside. Furthermore, by reusing and preserving the impressive relics of the industrial era, the Ruhr region has been able to keep its unique identity and has branded itself as a monument to industrial society.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

### Partnership in Malaysia<sup>26</sup>

The country of Malaysia is featured in this case to illustrate and showcase how national-level authorities can involve other stakeholder groups of the Guidelines in the improvement of urban and territorial practices (UTP). Malaysia's Federal Department of Town and Country Planning has established several partnerships which operate at multiple levels and through different channels for the achievement of sustainable urban development. For example, the Department has engaged with the following institutions a) at the national level, with the Ministry of Wellbeing, Housing and Local Development; b) at the local level, with the Department of Local Government; c) at the international level, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); d) with the Malaysian Institute of Planners Association; and e) with the Real Estate and Housing Development Association Malaysia, a private sector organization. Other types of stakeholders included universities and the research sector. The means for outreach and engagement are focus groups and technical working groups, the latter being described as a group responsible for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Under this setting, these meetings have fostered knowledge exchange among partners, becoming a valuable and effective method of engagement for this stakeholder group.

### Parramatta City Council Youth Forum<sup>27</sup>

Formalized planning processes can help empower young people in decision making and help create cities that are fairer, safer and more inclusive. This two-stage project (The Needs of Young People in the Parramatta CBD and the Parramatta Youth Forum) is a best practice example of how engagement with young people can be embedded in the decision-making process on a local level in Australia, with principles and processes that are transferable to other countries. This includes building young people's capacity to organize, communicate and advocate; building officers' capacity to engage effectively with young people; prioritizing and demonstrating accountability from government to young people; handing over ownership and power where appropriate; and supporting a broad base of young people to be involved in decision-making processes. This project also demonstrates transferable approaches to engage young people in city planning and design that will be useful to other countries facing increasing and rapid urbanization and changing cityscapes.

## Peer-to-peer learning and research

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A growing number of international organizations are contributing to territorial planning and providing peer-to-peer learning opportunities, by building capacity, drafting guidance papers and hosting conferences.

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<sup>26</sup> See ['Implementing the IG-UTP 2015-2017'](#), UN-Habitat.

<sup>27</sup> See <http://credconsulting.com.au/parramatta-youth-forum>

For local and regional governments, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG, including its [Committee on Urban Strategic Planning](#)), metropolis, [Local Governments for Sustainability](#) (ICLEI), [C40](#), [World Covenant of Mayors](#) and many others, provide policy and learning opportunities to achieve more sustainable and intergenerational local and regional development.

Outside the sphere of public sector-oriented associations, the global community of professional urban and territorial planners also provides meaningful learning opportunities. Large member organizations such as the [Commonwealth Association of Planners](#) (CAP, with over 40,000 members) and the [Global Planning Education Association Network](#) (GPEAN, with a global network of 11 planning schools associations), as well smaller organizations such as the [International Federation of Housing and Planning](#) (IFHP) and the [International Society of City and Regional Planners](#) (ISOCARP) have collectively stepped up and scaled up their efforts to weigh in on both the formulation and implementation of territorial planning and governance policies, through congresses, publications, trainings and most importantly the exchange of sustainable planning practices to feed into more workable policies and planning systems. The largest member-organization of the CAP, the [Royal Town Planning Institute](#) (RTPI, with over 25,000 members) launched a landmark campaign “[Plan The World We Need](#)”, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, to raise awareness of the vital role planners have in every aspect of pandemic recovery in order to revive the economy, tackle inequality and meet net-zero targets by 2050. RTPI also published a guide on [planning and dementia](#), raising awareness among planners on the vulnerability and special needs of older generations.<sup>28</sup>

Collectively, at the occasion of the annual ‘World Town Planning Day’ (8 November), the global planning community, through the associated [Global Planners Network](#) (GPN), advocates for the need for a more pivotal role of territorial planning in ‘coherent policymaking’ at all levels of governance, from local to national and transnational levels.<sup>29</sup> GPN partners also contribute to the [Habitat Professionals Forum](#) and the [World Urban Campaign](#), both administered by UN-Habitat.

While ISOCARP can already look back at 56 consecutive annual [World Planning Congresses](#), the biannual [World Urban Forum](#), organized by UN-Habitat currently provides the largest platform for urban and territorial development actors worldwide—peaking at more than 13,000 participants at its ninth event in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2018. WUF10 (February 2020) was challenged by the COVID-19 outbreak and [WUF11](#) is staged for June 2022 in Katowice, Poland. Every 20 years, since 1976, the World Urban Forum is replaced and eclipsed by the United Nations Habitat Conferences on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, better known as the HABITAT conferences, organized by UN-Habitat. The last Habitat III conference was held in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador, resulting in the New Urban

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<sup>28</sup> See also Pani, B. (2016). “[Improving the lives of people with dementia through urban design](#)”, *Journal of Urban Design and Mental Health* 2016;1:9.

<sup>29</sup> See GPN [Abu Dhabi Declaration](#) and [GPN World Town Planning Day 2020 Declaration](#).

Agenda. With nearly 50,000 registered participants, Habitat III was by far the largest gathering of urban and territorial actors in human history, preceded by a long and inclusive preparatory process. Point 128 of the New Urban Agenda suggests: “We build on the legacy of the Habitat III conference and the lessons learnt from its preparatory process, including the regional and thematic meetings. We note, in this context, the valuable contributions of, inter alia, the World Urban Campaign, the General Assembly of Partners for Habitat III, and the Global Land Tool Network.”

The [World Urban Campaign](#) is an advocacy and partnership platform to raise awareness about positive urban change in order to achieve green, productive, safe, healthy, inclusive, and well-planned cities. Its goal is to place the Urban Agenda at the highest level in development policies. It is coordinated by UN-Habitat and driven by a large number of committed partners from around the world. Programmes such as the [Urban Thinkers Campus](#) provide ample opportunities for exchange and peer learning.

A promising emerging opportunity for peer and collaborative learning to follow up on is the [World Urban Pavilion](#) initiative. The Pavilion will be a global knowledge exchange hub focusing on best practices in inclusive urban development. It will share science, research and innovation, supporting cities and countries around the world to achieve SDG 11 and interrelated SDGs. At its second annual congress in 2020, the Urban Economy Forum, alongside its global and local partners, UN-Habitat, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation – Government of Canada, City of Toronto, Regent Park community and the Daniels Corporation announced the Regent Park [World Urban Pavilion](#). This World Urban Pavilion will exist virtually and physically. It will be an excellent addition to Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood and will highlight the world-renowned revitalization as an example of how a challenged neighbourhood can be re-imagined and transformed.

## International development cooperation

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The [United Nations Programme for Human Settlements](#) (UN-Habitat) specializes in urban planning, development and management, and largely contributes to establishing and applying a territorial planning policy framework in collaboration with countries and cities in the Global South and North, through normative planning research, territorial project-implementation, global awareness campaigns and training and learning opportunities for governmental and non-governmental territorial stakeholders. This is largely demonstrated in the previous sections and Case studies.

Many other United Nations system agencies stand out on territorial cooperation issues such as:

- [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP): featuring “Planning for an uncertain future - do we bend or do we break” on its website homepage, UNDP plays a pivotal role in international development as a knowledge broker, capacity builder,

innovator, and facilitator of exchanges in the global development debate. By applying the ‘development’ lens, UNDP has a comprehensive territorial approach to both urbanized and natural ecosystems.

- [United Nations Office for Project Services](#) (UNOPS): featuring ‘Building the future’ on its website homepage, UNOPS is an operational arm of the United Nations, dedicated to implementing projects for the United Nations system, international financial institutions, governments and other partners around the world. Apart from building, UNOPS also facilitates urban and territorial planning, often combined with capacity building and peer learning. UNOPS also hosts the [Cities Alliance](#) initiative, a global partnership fighting urban poverty and supporting cities to deliver sustainable development, with a place-based focus on slums and informal settlements.
- [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP): responsible for coordinating responses to environmental issues within the United Nations system, including very relevant thematic topics including ecosystems, biodiversity, climate action and green economy, as well its territorial focus on forests and oceans. UNEP shares its headquarters (in Nairobi, Kenya) with its sister-organization UN-Habitat, which is more specialized in urban ecosystems and governance.
- [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO): aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, the sciences, and culture. Major initiatives include the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, with UNESCO’s World Heritage List as a flagship programme that provides extensive opportunities for peer and collaborative learning.
- [United Nations Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF): mandated to protect the rights of all children, actively involved in child responsive urban and territorial planning and development. UNICEF’s [Shaping Urbanization for Children: A Handbook on Child Responsive Urban Planning](#) (2018) provides useful resource materials for public and private urban actors, while its Child Friendly Cities Summit conferences feature peer and collaborative learning opportunities. UNICEF’s [Shaping Urbanization for Children: A Handbook on Child-Responsive Urban Planning](#) (2018) provides materials for public and private urban actors. The Fund is also partnering with UN-Habitat to further develop guidance on child responsive urban policies and planning standards.
- [World Health Organization](#) (WHO): while its current focus is on the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis, the WHO is also actively engaging in place-based health initiatives such as [WHO Healthy Cities](#) and [Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities](#)—appealing to intergenerational equity and justice. Jointly with UN-Habitat and ISOCARP, WHO provides many more relevant resource materials and meeting and learning opportunities.

Each of the regional United Nations' economic commissions have taken initiatives in specific areas including land use related issues. Recently, [UNESCAP](#) has discussed carbon emissions from Land Use and Management in East and North-East Asia, linking desertification, land degradation and climate change;<sup>30</sup> [UNECA](#) provided online training on 'Urbanization and inclusive economic growth in Africa';<sup>31</sup> [ECLAC](#) and UN-Habitat assumed the role of Technical Secretariat of the Forum of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI);<sup>32</sup> [UNECE](#) is organizing the second Forum of Mayors (2022) back-to-back with the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to provide a platform to exchange information on experiences and best practices on city level policies and practices;<sup>33</sup> and [UNESCWA](#) has established the Arab Centre for Poverty Reduction and Social Policy to promote coherent and integrated growth in the region.<sup>34</sup>

The [World Bank Group](#) works in every major area of development and provides a wide array of financial products and technical assistance to help countries share and apply innovative knowledge and solutions to the challenges they face, including the [Open Learning Campus](#).

Outside the United Nations system, the intergovernmental [OECD](#) is an active contributor to normative planning work and providing learning opportunities.

[World Resources Institute](#) is a global research non-profit organization with funding from the MacArthur Foundation, focused on place-relevant thematic areas including food, forests, water, energy, cities, climate and ocean, working with governments, businesses, multilateral institutions and civil society groups to develop practical solutions that improve people's lives and protect nature.

The [Global Land Tool Network](#) is a dynamic and multisectoral alliance of international partners, facilitated by UN-Habitat, and committed to increasing access to land and tenure security for all, with a particular focus on the poor, women and youth. The Network's partners include international rural and urban civil society organizations, research and training institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and international professional bodies.

The [Urban Economy Forum](#) is a recent initiative that focuses on urban economics and municipal finance. It does this by bridging the gap between mayors, municipalities, and other city leaders with banks, investment firms and other financial stakeholders.

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<sup>30</sup> See [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/NEASPEC\\_joint%20webinar%20concept%20note.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/NEASPEC_joint%20webinar%20concept%20note.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See <https://knowledge.uneca.org/idep/sites/default/files/styles/slider/public/2021-08/>

<sup>32</sup> See <https://www.cepal.org/en/notes/eclac-and-un-habitat-assume-role-technical-secretariat-minurvi>

<sup>33</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/355104>

<sup>34</sup> See [https://stage.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/arab\\_poverty\\_center.pdf](https://stage.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/arab_poverty_center.pdf)

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