

## INTRODUCTION

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### I. Introduction

How can the set of rights that underpin the notion of the “right to the city” be advanced? In seeking answers to this question over several decades, social mobilisations have been assembled and new political and legal frameworks promoted, especially in Latin America (where the cases of Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia stand out), but also in Europe and at global level (PGDC, 2014). This has been shown, for example, by the New Urban Agenda adopted in 2016 by the United Nations,<sup>1</sup> or by the Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing and the Right to the City,<sup>2</sup> approved in 2018 under the leadership of the city of Barcelona and the auspices of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Multiple interpretations and resignifications have been made of the right to the city since it was coined in the late 1960s (Lefebvre, 1968). The concept may be summarised as a narrative that appeals to residents to collectively appropriate their cities, to shape their form and content through their daily activity. Since the late 1980s, it has been claimed as a way to channel struggles for housing and so-called “urban rights”, which include tangible issues such as the right to public transport, sanitation, basic services, urban infrastructure, public spaces and quality facilities, as well as more intangible demands such as the right to centrality, environmental quality and political participation (Borja, 2013).

New interpretations and political articulations of the right to the city, especially those that have emerged since the end of the 2000s, encourage us to view it through the lens of identity politics (Goonewardena et al., 2008; Liss, 2012). They propose that attention should be given to the diversity of the social groups that live in urban environments, whose voice and agency must be recognised in the construction of the city in the interests of equality and social justice. Whether as a result of the legacy of colonialism in the form of racialised communities, the arrival of migrants or refugees, the attraction of international “talent” or, simply, the presence of different identities, groups and socioeconomic segments, cities are spaces in which a wide range of people and groups coexist that are not always recognised and do not always communicate with each other. In these conditions, how is it possible to implement the right to the city based on difference? How can cohesive cities be built in highly diverse and even polarised contexts? How can a city be modelled that both expresses the social mix and at the same time addresses the inequalities and oppressions that course through it?

Addressing these issues not only involves recognising and valuing the subjects that have historically been marginalised in the construction of urban space, both physical and symbolic (women, migrants, people of African descent, the poor, religious minorities, etc.). It also means

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1. See: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-Spanish.pdf>.
2. See: <https://citiesforhousing.org/#section--0>.

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bearing in mind, as certain social scientists remind us (Robinson, 2006; Simone and Pieterse, 2017), that the city materialises and is experienced in a different way by the different groups that inhabit it through their practices and uses and, in short, how their daily life takes shape. This intimate relationship between space and its inhabitants, as well as the multiple interdependencies between the two (Lefebvre, 1974), is what gives each neighbourhood and city an idiosyncratic character in the different regions of the world. Recognising the different layers and connections that comprise urban diversity, from bodies to territories, via the multiple ways of living and producing the city, is the focus of new debates on the right to the city.

Faced with these complexities, local governments in various corners of the world have worked over the past two decades to respond to the challenge of promoting diversity and equality in the city through rights policies. To do this, they have resorted to several mechanisms: municipal charters, human rights departments, strategic plans and evaluation indicators, to name just a few examples. Similarly, metropolitan areas are subject to new frameworks of metropolitan and multilevel governance that seek to respond to the pressing social, political, economic and cultural challenges that divide their territories between centres and peripheries and provoke the proliferation of ghettos, gated communities and non-places (Augé, 1992).

However, long before an institutional response emerged, urban civil society in both the Global North and South has for several decades promoted initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life and recognition of the urban dweller as a political actor and rights-holder. Through these – often transnational – dynamics new processes of social production of the city and new forms of citizenship construction detached from the nation-state have been come about (Holston, 1998).

This CIDOB monograph explores how to combine processes of redistribution and recognition, institutional change and the social production of the city in an increasingly urban world. The volume is the fruit of the debates that took place in the framework of the international seminar “The right to the city, the right to difference: Methods and strategies for local implementation” held in Barcelona on November 27th 2018. Representatives of local governments, civil society and academia from different regions of the world participated and were subsequently invited to develop their contributions in writing. The results of this exercise fill the pages that follow.

## II. The right to the city as the right to difference

The right to the city concept has travelled from academia to social mobilisation and, from there, to institutions at local, national and global levels; it has passed through several regions of the world, through various types of actors and several historic moments. In this geographical, social and temporal to-and-fro, it has acquired new meanings and interpretations (Garcia-Chueca, 2016). In terms of the academic interpretations that have emerged around this concept, the best-known concerns political-economic issues around the redistribution of and access to existing urban resources and opportunities. The starting point

for this analysis is the diagnosis that the main problem with the current urbanisation model is its intertwining with neoliberal capitalism, as it comprises one of the conditions of its expansion via several types of processes: the construction of urban infrastructure and housing (new housing developments), the redevelopment (and gentrification) of certain areas, the promotion of a lifestyle based on consumption and the financialisation of land and urban property (Harvey, 2008; Rolnik, 2018; Sassen, 2017). From this point of view, the main objective of the right to the city is to ensure greater democratic control over the economic processes and material conditions that sustain urban life. The collective enjoyment of the use values of urban resources, rather than their exchange value, is demanded. Hence, a framework that is sensitive to the various concrete forms of social appropriation of the city begins to be established, challenging the processes of homogenisation and abstraction entailed by its integration into monetary circuits.

Since the 1980s analytical categories such as *daily life*, *lived space* and *difference* have been acquiring importance in urban analyses (Soya, 1989; 1996). These new readings emerging from postmodern schools of thought have gone on to coexist with issues related to the politics of identity and difference, which are intimately related to the reality of cities, the quintessential spaces for social mixing and diversity. These new approaches have strengthened the idea that the right to the city is the right to the production of a place to live that is shaped by the inhabitants themselves and is, in consequence, an inherently contradictory space that contains various rhythms of life and uses of urban space and time (Goonewardena et al., 2008). A “differential space”, to use Lefebvre’s term (1974), that is radically opposed to the abstract space favoured by modern urbanism.

This reading of the right to the city as a right to difference is not based on a pluralistic liberal conception of diversity – it does not consist of celebrating differences *per se*. Rather, it proposes to understand it as the right to be equal when difference prejudices us and the right to be different when it homogenises us (Santos, 2005). In other words, it means granting a new centrality to the demands of marginalised social groups that fight against a discriminatory and segregating urbanisation (Kipfer, 2008) and, from there, questioning the construction of the city and the place these groups occupy in these processes.

### III. Contribution of this volume

#### Right to the city, right to difference

This monograph aims to provide reflections and practical experience on advancing the exercise of rights in cities through processes and policies for the recognition and appreciation of differences that enable progress to be made towards greater equality. With that aim in mind, the first two contributions establish the main theoretical and conceptual frameworks around the right to the city.

**Michele Grigolo**, Lecturer in Sociology at Nottingham Trent University (United Kingdom), begins this volume with a theoretical reflection on

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what it means to interpret the right to the city from the perspective of the right to difference. After discussing the two notions, Grigolo proposes their synthesis, based on the idea of the “right to a different city”. Using this concept, he addresses the interconnections between the redistribution of resources and political representation in the city. The “right to a different city” implies recognition of the diversity of urban experience, while addressing the structural inequalities that run through it.

Next, **Jordi Borja**, Professor Emeritus at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain), reviews the theoretical and practical trajectory of the right to the city from a historical point of view, placing particular emphasis on its deployment in Spain and Latin America. He goes on to question the role of urbanists and urban planning policies in the processes of constructing the right to the city which, he argues, should be led by citizens. These processes struggle between dynamics of rupture and reform, as they are subject to the interaction between a mobilised society and representative political institutions.

### The role of local governments

The next section focuses on programmes and measures promoted by local governments around the world to promote rights policies. Since the end of the 1990s, a local government movement has taken shape that cares about diversity and seeks to manage it with the aim of promoting greater equality and social cohesion. To this aim, they have defined rights policies via multiple mechanisms: municipal charters (Montreal, Vienna, Mexico City, Bandung), human rights offices or departments (Barcelona, Nuremberg, São Paulo, Venice), commissions (Mexico City, Eugene or New York), strategic plans or road maps (Bogotá, Graz, Madrid), evaluation indicators (Gwangju, York), local ombudsmen (Montreal, Lleida or Vitoria-Gasteiz), municipal ordinances (Higashiōsaka, Oizumi, Seoul) and highly diverse public policies conceived with a human rights approach (social welfare, housing, culture, education, environment, citizen participation, etc.) (Garcia-Chueca, 2018).

These examples show how the development of local social cohesion projects based on the recognition and assessment of differences does not constitute an abstract, static exercise. Forging cohesive urban societies is a complex, long-term project that must make social diversity fit with a common project of collective coexistence. It is a project that must be flexible in order to adapt to the constant changes cities experience as a result, for example, of a rise in the migrant or refugee population, of gentrification dynamics, strategies for attracting international innovation or processes of impoverishment of certain neighbourhoods, among others.

This monograph explores some of these examples, specifically the work of local governments in the United States, Mexico, Austria, Spain, Jordan and South Korea.

**JoAnn K. Ward**, Lecturer at Columbia University (United States), reports that in her country human rights have historically been a controver-

sial policy framework and that local governments have established themselves as the sphere of government most committed to their defence and implementation. Typically, their approach has revolved around the protection of civil rights, especially the right to non-discrimination, as evidenced by the work of experienced human rights commissions (Seattle, Washington, Los Angeles) and some municipal ordinances (San Francisco). However, a growing number of cities are focusing their efforts on also promoting economic and social rights, particularly the right to housing (Eugene, Madison), and implementing measures that consider the impact of intersectional identities on the redistribution of goods.

Going deeper into the US context, **Thomas Angotti**, Professor Emeritus of Urban Policy and Planning at Hunter College at the University of New York (United States), takes a close look at the case of New York City to show how the legacy of colonialism, a profoundly racist system, has shaped the current urban model. Angotti argues that behind the image of New York as a diverse, cosmopolitan city lies an ethnically and racially segregating city. The uncontested right to individual property, the cornerstone of colonialism and later engine of urban development, combined with the conversion of urban land into an element of the expansion of neoliberal capitalism, is primarily responsible for gentrification, the displacement of poor and racialised communities and the generation of deep social inequalities.

**Jaime Morales**, Undersecretary of Human Rights for the Government of Mexico City (Mexico), reviews the main legal and political documents on the right to the city, focusing on those that address the right to difference and the promotion of diverse cities. In particular, he refers to the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2010), the recently approved Political Constitution of Mexico City (2017) and the government plan of the current mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum (2018–2024). Morales concludes by pointing out that the work carried out in the Mexican capital focuses not only on promoting specific policies aimed at combating discrimination against certain groups (women, indigenous communities, LGBTTTI community, etc.), but also on promoting territorial justice, the equitable distribution of public goods and the democratic management of the city.

From Vienna, **Shams Asadi**, Human Rights Commissioner for the City of Vienna (Austria), describes how the city moved on from the paradigm of integration policies focused on the migrant community in place since the early 1990s in favour of promoting diversity policies from the turn of the millennium onwards. The targets of these policies were not only migrants, but also the host population. A participatory process was promoted to adopt the Vienna Charter for good neighbourly relations (2012), which was followed by a broader strategy to make Vienna a city of human rights (2014). Since then, Vienna has worked to mainstream human rights in the administration and its public policies and actively promotes international cooperation, training and public awareness about human rights.

Staying in Europe, the next contribution comes from **Enrique López**, former Chief of Cabinet of the Third Deputy Mayor's Office of Madrid (Spain). He shares Madrid's experience in the development and prepa-

ration of the Strategic Human Rights Plan promoted between 2015 and 2019. Despite the initiative's short duration, other cities around the world linked to the human rights cities movement watched its experiment with the participatory design of local human rights strategies with interest. Several aspects should be highlighted: the plan's motivation of mainstreaming a human rights, gender equality and intersectionality approach in municipal policies; the prior participatory diagnosis on the basis of which the plan was prepared – also in a participatory manner; and the development of an exhaustive system of indicators to evaluate the plan's execution.

Testimony from the other side of the Mediterranean comes from **Haleemah Alamoush**, Head of Social Responsibility Plans for the city of Amman in Jordan. Historically, Jordan has received a number of refugee flows: Palestinians in 1948 and 1967, Iraqis in the early 1990s and Syrians since 2013, as well as smaller groups of Libyan, Yemeni, Somali and Sudanese nationals. This broad social diversity is reflected in the Jordanian capital, with 30% of its population being foreign-born. To handle this complex reality, ensuring social cohesion has become one of the main objectives for Amman's metropolitan government, which also faces the challenge of increasing pressure on the city's public services and facilities. Alamoush identifies the main policies and projects undertaken in this respect.

**Soo A Kim**, former director of the Human Rights Office in the Metropolitan Government of Gwangju (South Korea), takes us to East Asia to contribute her city's experiences. Internationally renowned as a human-rights promoting city, Gwangju has been working intensely since the turn of the century on the development of several types of instruments for "localising" human rights, including several human rights ordinances (2005, 2009), a human rights office (2010), a master plan, a participative committee, an education programme, a system of evaluation indicators (2012) and a local ombudsman (2013). Added to this are specific policies for citizen participation and social inclusion aimed, in particular, at promoting gender equality and care for children, the elderly, people with disabilities and migrants.

**Jordi Baltà**, consultant expert in culture for the global organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), concludes this section with a reflection from the field of culture, exploring the link between the right to the city, the right to difference and local cultural action. According to Baltà, this link, despite its potential, only materialises occasionally because cultural policies and programmes often deviate from inclusive, participatory and rights-based approaches. Baltà proposes the Agenda 21 for Culture adopted in 2004 by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and revised in 2015, as a tool that can contribute to re-establishing this link according to three lines of action: decentralisation, inclusive access and citizen participation in cultural activities; recognition and support for the cultural ecosystem, which is inherently plural and diverse; and the establishment of participatory governance frameworks. Baltà provides several examples that show how cities from different regions of the world are taking inspiration from this document when designing their local cultural policies.

## Addressing the metropolitan challenge

Metropolitan environments play host to multiple challenges related to their territorial dimension, demographic concentration and institutional fragmentation. They are territories threaded with multiple socio-spatial fractures that provoke deep inequalities in, for example, access to housing, basic services, health and education, public transport, livelihoods and job opportunities.

Far from being homogeneous, these inequalities are experienced in different ways by the different urban groups that inhabit the metropolitan territory. They experience a degree of exclusion based on their social class, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity or religion, among other factors. When several of these factors of social differentiation (and ranking) combine, the degree of discrimination to which these people are subjected multiplies (Crenshaw, 1991).

This section explores possible ways to address these challenges via new formulas for metropolitan and multilevel governance that produce political and institutional frameworks to promote territorial cohesion and equality in metropolitan areas.

**Ricard Gomà**, Director of the Barcelona Institute of Regional and Metropolitan Studies (Spain), considers whether the right to the city in the 21st century can continue the civilisational work the welfare state began in the 20th century. The author argues that it is necessary to move towards a “local-level welfare” model that combines the fight against inequalities with the recognition of differences as well as incorporating spatial justice and ecological transitions. In this framework, municipalism becomes a key tool for redefining not only public policies, but also a new geography of global governance. In turn, the metropolitan level becomes particularly central to the configuration of the main political proposals and challenges of today’s urban era. For Gomà, the right to the metropolis gives the right to the city effective content.

But the right to which metropolis? **Antonio Aniesa**, Advisor to the President of Plaine Commune (France) asks whether the same urban realities are experienced in spaces with 10,000, 100,000, 500,000 and several million inhabitants? Metropolitan areas host a diversity of territories and life experiences that cannot be objectified by homogenising perspectives. Since 2006, a network of local governments, the Forum of Peripheral Local Authorities (FALP), has engaged in international municipalism to promote “another view of metropolises”. This view expresses the aspirations of peripheral cities to have a greater say in metropolitan governance and to articulate policies that allow progress to be made towards greater justice and inter-territorial solidarity. To this end, FALP promotes a polycentric metropolitan governance model that breaks with the centre/periphery duality, prizes intermunicipal cooperation over domination and centralisation, and allows each territory to define the right to the city based on its own reality and lived experiences.

**Fernando Carrión**, coordinator of the Area of City Studies at FLACSO-Ecuador, ends this section by addressing the new patterns of urbanisation and the institutional frameworks they require, with particular emphasis on the Latin American reality. Complex urban geographies

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produce multiple centralities and peripheries, exceed administrative and national boundaries, and generate relationships beyond strict territorial contiguity. In this scenario, the challenge facing the realisation of the right to the city is to build an institutional structure within which this right can be claimed and developed.

### Social innovations

The political history of the right to the city is closely linked to the emergence and evolution of urban social movements that have used this narrative to articulate their claims and advance the right to housing and “urban rights”, sometimes in collaboration with local governments (Mayer, 2012; Sugranyes and Mathivet, 2010). Their activity has shown that there are different ways of producing the city and urban space; and through them, new forms of citizenship have emerged from a grassroots level that break with the predominant state-centric frameworks. The US anthropologist James Holston (1998), in line with schools of thought linked to “legal pluralism” (Santos, 2005), defines these practices as forms of “insurgent citizenship”, as they emerge from the practices of city dwellers themselves, and subvert the classic forms of rights attribution that depend exclusively on the state.

**Alex Frediani**, Associate Professor at University College London (United Kingdom), reflects on these issues in an exploration of the practices and ideas that have emerged from grassroots social movements for the right to the city in Latin America, Africa and Asia. For Frediani, these experiences reflect an “ethos of engagement” and not a defined project. By analysing a range of cases, Frediani extracts three key crosscutting ideas: (1) a more substantive formulation of citizenship, demanding rights for all urban dwellers beyond their formal affiliation with the nation-state; (2) an emphasis on highlighting the inequalities in access to and appropriation of urban resources; and (3) the link between the collective production of space and the expansion of rights in cities, exemplified, for example, by the relationship between the social production of habitat and the right to housing.

Finally, **Irene Escorihuela**, Director of the Observatori DESC (Spain), focuses her chapter on identifying dynamics of cooperation and conflict between civil society organisations and local governments in the construction of the right to the city in Europe. Based on concrete experiences in Barcelona, Berlin, Terrassa and Zagreb, Escorihuela illustrates how the virtuous combination of institution and movement can multiply the impact each element would have alone. For her, the main challenge of municipalism is to give space to social initiatives that emerge outside institutions and implement them without co-opting or leading them.

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