CoHabitat Network
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HABITAT VILLAGE

ACTIVITY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2022

INTRODUCTION

During the first semester of 2022, various partners of **the CoHabitat Network** collaborated to conceptualise and facilitate an exhibition stand during the World Urban Forum 11, held in Katowice, Poland, from the 26th - 30th of June 2022.

This space called "Habitat Village" was the concretisation of a collective work between urbaMonde and the following CoHabitat partners: World Habitat, Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C), MOBA Housing SCE, Misereor, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Development Planning Unit of the University College London (DPU-UCL), Catalytic Communities (CatComm), Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and urbaSEN. Through this joint work, Habitat Village aimed at materialising a place for the reunion of all CoHabitat organisations, especially after the previous two years in which the pandemic restrictions caused by the COVID-19 health crisis affected and limited the opportunity for meetings and encounters.

Located in the exhibition pavilion of the WUF 11, the collaborative stand also worked as an alternative space to hold important events - some of which had not been accepted as official presentations at WUF 11. As a more informal and convivial space, Habitat Village created the ideal environment for exchange, networking, debate and collective reflection between all CoHabitat Network partners **around community-led housing and the right to adequate housing**.

With an engaging programme, partners have held a variety of events, from presentations, roundtables, documentary screenings to exhibitions and celebrations.

The exchanges put forward the work done by grassroot organisations and communities in advancing housing and land rights and building cities from the bottom-up, allowing for important discussions around strategies and the necessary steps in scaling up those initiatives to reach institutional and governmental support. Moreover, partners reflected on their own roles in advancing the right to adequate housing in a way that is more inclusive and responsive to local needs.

The success of Habitat Village has not only strengthened our ties as a Network, but has encouraged further collaborations among CoHabitat partners. Members of the Network and local partners of urbaMonde had the chance to discover each others' local projects and overall strategy - which aims at fostering future partnerships and further the exchange of practices. More than that, the richness of the exchanges and encounters held at Habitat Village proved the importance of joint work and collaborations at the centre of the CoHabitat Network.

Also, through networking and informal conversations, CoHabitat partners opened the door to those interested in exchanging and reflecting more about community-led housing and the right to adequate housing, from the exchange of contacts, information and presentations that **led to new reflections and important points of view to consider in the future**.

SUMMARY

FIRST DAY

MONDAY 27.06

Public Works Studio - Exhibition

The first day opened with the exhibition of the latest World Habitat Award Gold winning project: Housing Monitor.

Created by Public Works Studio (PWS), the Housing Monitor project is a housing rights project in Beirut, Lebanon, that provides a safe and secure database for people to report housing violations and responds to individuals' housing needs with access to legal and social services, **building awareness among vulnerable groups**, particularly refugees and migrant domestic workers who have limited legal representation and/or knowledge of their rights.

Composed of professionals specialised in architecture, urbanism and design, PWS specialises in defending and producing socially-inclusive and sustainable spaces, as well as creating and managing diversified affordable housing programs and related planning tools through the advocacy for institutional and legal reforms.

Through various research projects, they have been able to identify the importance and relevance of addressing the gap between inclusivity and equality in the harsh reality of urban policy in Lebanon. At the same time, they have managed to integrate Arabic culture and language as fundamental tools that allow **the integration and active democratic participation of local residents** in the planning and co-creation of the future of their city.

MORE INFORMATION

- world-habitat.org
- publicworksstudio.com
- housingmonitor.org

SECOND DAY TUESDAY 28.06

CoHabitat Network
Systematising community-led housing in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe - Introduction and Methodology

The second day at Habitat Village started with the presentation and discussion of **Co-Habitat Network's main activity in 2022**: the systematisation of different community-led housing projects in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The event counted with the presence of ACHR, Lumanti, SDI, urbaSEN, CatComm, HIC, IIED and DPU-UCL - therefore, bringing together grassroot organisations, international resident networks, NGOs and academic actors, each with important views around the documentation and sharing of experiences.

The session began with a brief presentation by the urbaMonde team of the overall process of systematisation of experiences, and its importance for the documentation of projects and experience exchange through a methodology formulated and applied by local communities themselves as protagonists.

It also discussed the usefulness of this process to local projects since the main goal of systematisation is to improve local practices, learning from the experiences lived by a project and local communities.

After this initial presentation, participating organisations took the floor to share their views around their main needs, key challenges and capacities to be defined and considered in the implementation of the systematisation of experiences as a collective process.

Among the different needs raised by partners were:

- **the creation of spaces in which communities are heard** at local, national and international levels;
- **support for local empowerment** in relation to government policies and visibility to communities in the academic framework;
- **more experience exchanges** between south to south organisations;
- **sustainable and ethical financing to support local communities** in their projects, and so on.

Among the challenges to overcome during the process of systematisation, partners raised important questions around:

- **language gaps** and the necessity to support minorities through linguistic integration and language justice;
- **funding and advocacy** at the policy level;
- **capacities for documentation** and exchanges.

This event was the first gathering to set off the systematisation process among partners of the CoHabitat Network.

Other workshops will be facilitated throughout 2022 by the Network aimed at establishing a common methodology and a precise line of work with local partners and communities in the systematisation of four community-led housing projects.

DPU - UCL: Climate change and resilience in urban Africa

Hosted by **DPU-UCL**, this session addressed and discussed the issue of climate change and its effects on the African urban area. Chaired by Emmanuel Osuteye (DPU-UCL), the session included testimonies of Kabelo Lethunya from the **Housing and Urban Resilience Lead of the African Union**, Karl-Heinz Gaudry from **GIZ** Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Management, and Selene Angelone, Urban Resilience Specialist at **UN-Habitat**.

Speakers presented a variety of tools and initiatives aiming to support sustainable urban development in African cities while taking into account the challenges of informal settlements, citizen participation, resilience and climate adaptation and so on.

They also discussed about the **Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want"** and its strategic framework with tools and practices on how to best use natural resources and strategies on how to build resilience throughout countries, engaging people in the process, while highlighting the importance of capacity-building of grassroot leaders and communities who are the first ones to respond to climate disasters.

Other resources and tools presented included UN-Habitat's Urban Resilience Hub and **Technical Centre for Disaster Risk Management, Sustainability and Urban Resilience** - which include processes carried out by UN-Habitat regional offices in collaboration with local authorities, communities and other relevant stakeholders aiming to respond in a collaborative way to the challenges of climate change in the African context while promoting capacity-building and knowledge sharing.

MORE INFORMATION

- urbanresiliencehub.org
- unhabitat.org

GPR2C: The Right to the City Indicators for municipal policies

To answer the question "how to really materialise the right to the city?", the **GPR2C** together with the **Observatori DESC** have published a guide with indicators to monitor the implementation of municipal policies targeted at advancing the right to the city.

Featuring a set of 22 indicators organised around the **eight right to the city components**, this guide also aims to serve as an accelerator for the implementation of global agendas such as the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Based on the GPR2C's conviction of the relevance of the NUA, especially after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, during the discussions held at the Habitat Village stand, the GPPR2C emphasised the importance of implementing human rights commitments and the right to the city.

During this session, Sophia Torres, coordinator of GPR2C, has presented the main goals of this guide, the challenges in its conceptualisation and the advances on its very first implementation at the city of Barcelona. Moreover, these indicators can be used as tools for advocacy, evaluation, support and exhibition of new urban policies in the local territory.

Considering the achievements and lessons learned from the experience proposed in Barcelona, **the indicators guide is expected to be studied and improved in order to be applied in different cities and contexts**.

MORE INFORMATION

- right2city.org

DPU-UCL: Activating universities' 'public' role in producing just habitats

Considering the central role of universities in the research and production of information on housing and habitat, this session organised by **DPU-UCL** brought together the voices of civil society organisations and other actors to discuss the importance of collaboration and dialogue in order to achieve meaningful and impactful research projects that can further advance the production of socially just habitats. In analysing the way in which knowledge is produced in universities (academic bodies) and its relationship with the knowledge that is produced by organisations and communities, participants in this roundtable rose questions related to:

- the different contexts of knowledge production;
- the way such knowledge is collected academically;
- how it is subsequently presented to the academic community and to local communities with their direct participation;
- its impact and use by the communities involved.

Participants reflected on the traditional learning imparted by the academy and **how it can inhibit the participation of the communities producing knowledge**. For instance, it is important that research projects have outputs that are interesting and useful for communities in their fight for socially just habitats. It is also crucial that communication is done within a language justice perspective - respecting and giving space to local languages. With this debate emerged the necessity to formulate a new way of exchanging experiences and producing knowledge and data that benefits all those involved and at the same time promotes inclusion and representation. For this purpose, it is necessary to recognize the equal value of all the actors involved in the production of knowledge, both academia and local communities. Likewise, it is necessary to address which channels will be used to exchange experiences, in what spaces and under what conditions. **New means should be considered that allow this exchange in a new and effective way**, such as: collective and participatory learning of digital platforms. However, it is also necessary to consider the accessibility restrictions that these methods require in the local contexts of the communities, such as access to material, the language in which it is produced and the way in which it is presented. Finally, considering the difficulties involved in innovating in the production of knowledge, participants concluded that **it is of vital importance to recognize the legitimacy of communities in the creation and practice of knowledge** and therefore, it is necessary to rethink the way knowledge is produced and taught in a democratic way.

HIC: Climate displacement: the HLRN Violations database

The last session of the day led by **Habitat International Coalition** (HIC) presented the **Violations Database**, created by HIC, in which any housing and land rights violations are reported.

Based on the work done and data collected by HIC's Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), the main subject was focused on the newly emerging violations, such as the climate change emergency.

The number of people displaced due to environmental phenomena such as droughts and floods, or due to conflicts and the belligerent occupation of peoples' sovereign territories – often motivated by ideologies of violence to control the extraction of resources — has been rising. This is why this database is intended to encourage the reporting of these problems and to locate the areas where the risks or violations are highest.

For this purpose, **the discussion was focused on the role of the database as a platform for information and denunciation**, and as an element of mitigation and support to the communities whose rights are most violated.

In its challenges and improvements, this database must contemplate the modifications needed to denounce new violations, such as those associated with climate change.

At the same time, this platform should also try to be versatile enough to be able to refer to other types of emerging violence such as those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, considering the great role that this platform plays, it should strive to improve some aspects such as the provision of information from all regions and areas of the world. Likewise, it must also **seek the resources to remain updated and evolve according to global emergencies** and problems in order to continue countering violence to rights in the world.

MORE INFORMATION

- hlrn.org
- hic-net.org

CoHabitat Network: Claiming and producing housing rights: cross-regional experiences from grassroots organisations and international networks (Part 1)

Organised by the **CoHabitat Network**, this roundtable gathered HIC, ACHR, SDI, IIED, Lumanti and CatComm. **Divided in two blocks**, the first session was moderated by Yolande Hendler from HIC, and had testimonies from Lumanti Joshi, housing project manager at the NGO Lumanti, Sheila Magara, National Leader of Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation from SDI, and Tarcyla Fidalgo, project coordinator of the Favela CLT from CatComm.

They presented how their organisations work with local communities in projects that claim and produce housing rights. These ranged from community finance and women cooperatives in Nepal, to the adaptation of the Community Land Trust model to informal settlements in Brazil, passing through to the use of incremental slum upgrading as a strategy to secure tenure in informal settlements across cities in Africa.

The session allowed partners of the CoHabitat Network to better know each other's projects, promoting an experience exchange that led to **interesting discussions and insights on the common challenges** while inspiring project managers on solutions and tools applied in other contexts.

The session ended with an interesting discussion on how those initiatives need to have the necessary support to scale-up. Participants raised questions and important points on how international organisations, global networks and governments should come in support in order to multiply those local efforts and foster institutional and policy change that could further the implementation of the right to housing at a larger scale.

Among those, speakers and participants highlighted the **importance of guaranteeing space for grassroots in high-level events** so that advocacy efforts can have an impact at an international level. Increased dialogue with international organisations and governments are also crucial.

At the local level, grassroots need support to reach local stakeholders - municipalities, banks, and so on - in order to scale from the bottom-up.

World Habitat: Community Land Trusts for affordable housing and against displacements

Closing the day, **World Habitat** hosted a discussion around the Community Land Trust model for affordable and sustainable housing. Two speakers from organisations that are implementing this model in different contexts were invited.

Representing the **Community Land Trust Brussels** (CLTB), Thibault Leroy presented an illustrative video on the founding and evolution of the CLT model in Brussels, Belgium. He explained how the success and acceptance of the model is due in large part to the great place occupied by the strong participation and commitment of the community, which is essentially composed of low-income migrant families.

The great support received from the Brussels Capital Region to the projects has made it possible to forge ties and promote the replicability of the model in future and different contexts. It is remarkable how this model is opposed to real estate speculation and generates very innovative solutions for low-income households. Partnering with other Brussels-based organisations, some housing projects involve cohousing, **a house for birth and end of life**, housing first solutions, among others.

Representing the **Favela Community Land Trust project** (Termo Territorial Coletivo, in Portuguese), Tarcyla Fidalgo presented the advances and challenges in the pathway to implement the first Community Land Trust in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The idea of a **favela CLT** was strongly inspired by the experience of Caño Martín Peña CLT, which guaranteed the permanence, development and preservation of the territories of different low-income communities in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Community leaders from Rio de Janeiro and San Juan had the opportunity to visit each other to exchange practices.

The Favela CLT project has been increasingly gaining attention of social movements in Brazil and is included as an instrument to access land and affordable housing in the Draft Law of the Master Plan of Rio de Janeiro.

If implemented, the Favela CLT would allow residents of favelas to stay in their territories when their neighbourhoods are regularised while empowering the community to have a stronger influence in their demands with the local government.

In that sense, the CLT model will allow residents to be protected from the threats of speculation and evictions that often come with individual titling programmes, empowered and organised to fight for the development of their territories while participating and self-managing all decisions concerning their land and houses.

The discussion concluded by recognizing the difficulties encountered at the beginning of the implementation of the model, especially in contexts in which there are no legal frameworks around CLTs.

At the same time, speakers acknowledged **the essential and central role communities play for the development and appropriation of the model**, since they are the ones managing all development concerning their territories.

MORE INFORMATION

- cltb.be
- catcomm.org

The land tenure situation

HIC's 45 years Celebration

On the third day of Habitat Village, balloons decorated the stand for the **special anniversary of the Habitat International Coalition** created in 1976 - the year of the Habitat I conference in Vancouver.

It was an opportunity for speeches, glasses of champagne and reunions between members, current or former staff and board members of this large coalition particularly established in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa and Europe.

CoHabitat Network: Claiming and producing housing rights: cross-regional experiences from grassroots organisations and international networks (Part 2)

The last day of the Habitat Village began with the second block of the discussion on transregional experiences in «*Claiming and producing housing rights*» by the CoHabitat Network. In this session, participants reflected on the experiences previously presented at the first block and how international organisations and federations, as well as research centres and governments, can help **scale-up local initiatives claiming and producing housing right**s, while approaching possible strategies to reach this outcome.

The session provided interesting discussions around the importance of spaces of dialogue and exchange between different organisations in order to promote solutions, find synergies and advocate. Participants also raised questions around the role of the CoHabitat Network in the processes it follows and supports together with its members.

As key points, participants mentioned **the importance of continuing to share experiences and creating spaces to meet and exchange** as members of the Network, especially at international events, while creating new practices of sharing and documenting. Additionally, partners of the Network committed to continue working collectively to promote projects related to the right to land and habitat, locally and globally through meetings and presentations of the grassroot organisations themselves in appropriate spaces. The search for and creation of new spaces (digital or physical) for the exchange of experiences and the documentation process becomes evident.

Participants also mentioned **the need to influence policy making and local, regional and national governments**, pushing for the recognition and support of community-led housing and the implementation of legal frameworks that forward the right to housing. Speakers highlighted the difficulties and challenges in reaching those spaces and the importance of strategising and creating alliances between international and local NGOs.

Finally, a proposal by IIED emerged to establish a HUB for Housing Justice, to define a common agenda, share good practices of political incidence strategies and help communities in their struggles.

HIC's pedagogies: How do we learn to become agents of change for a socially just habitat?

The session opened with the screening of three short documentaries produced collaboratively by members of **Habitat International Coalition Latin America** and the **DPU-UCL**, which showed different ways of dealing with habitat and the access to the city. The event focused on pedagogies for the social production of habitat and for equality in diversity.

The first topic of discussion was **the role of universities in sponsoring and promoting the social production of housing**. Educational training deserves a perceptual change that considers collective interlearning, academic articulation with the community and the creation of links between academia and formulation of urban housing policies. For this, it is essential to consider new methodologies that reduce the gap in access to knowledge and strengthen the link between communities, organisations and academic actors through the production of knowledge that can be easily shared, understood and fed back to others.

In a second moment, participants discussed the importance of creating pedagogical and democratic methodologies that involve all individuals who experience and produce the city - the residents and end-users of urban spaces. This means that it must include residents in the problem identification, design and in the execution stages, through participatory processes that allow them to be the protagonists of city-making.

Lastly, participants insisted on inclusivity, intersectionality and non-discrimination. It is essential that all minorities and types of users are involved, in order to consider their particular needs without negatively affecting others. The design of urban spaces should be **fully accessible and welcome all its inhabitants simultaneously**, from the youngest to the oldest and most vulnerable ones.

DPU-UCL: Inclusive neighbourhood planning, case of Banjarmasin with Kota Kita

Following the same line as the previous session, the theme of inclusion in urban development was taken up again in this session organised by **DPU-UCL**. Speakers presented the participatory action research project «*Building Capacity and Participation for Community-Led Solutions*» in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, carried out by local NGO **Kota Kita**, in partnership with the DPU-UCL and Leonard Cheshire from **Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre** (SLURC) and supported by the City Government of Banjarmasin.

As part of a wider project called «*AT2030: Life-Changing Assistive Technology for All*» led by the Global Disability Innovation Hub, **the research activities' goal** was to "support persons with disabilities in accessing better life outcomes through increasing the relevance and uptake of assistive technologies". The activities in Banjarmasin were carried out in four different informal settlements.

Divided in two stages, the project used a range of participatory methods to map and the community-led solution that answered them. Besides, the project facilitated and encouraged residents with disabilities to photograph their hopes, aspirations, and perceived barriers when navigating daily life,This methodology stimulated discussions between the researchers and the participants, resulting in the production of proposals for collective responses and community interventions.

Recently, a communal facility has been constructed, serving as a meeting and integration point for each of the local residents. **With successful results and impressive community mobilisation**, the project demonstrated the importance of rethinking urban development through its users' aspirations and needs, not only in Banjarmasin, but also in all cities around the world.

MORE INFORMATION

- kotakita.org

CONCLUSION

More than a place for hosting events, networking sessions and roundtables, the Habitat Village was the main meeting point for all organisations interested in community-led housing and the right to housing. It provided **a unique space** within the World Urban Forum for dialogues, experience exchanges and encounters between a diversity of stakeholders working towards cities built by and for their residents (grassroots, NGOs, academia, international networks, practitioners, foundations).

It also allowed members of the CoHabitat Network to find synergies and put forward their work all along strategizing and thinking about advocacy and the necessary conditions to scale-up their efforts. The friendly and interactive atmosphere allowed partners to strengthen their bonds and meet new persons after two years without physical meetings due to the COVID-19 health crisis.

With professional media coverage, all activities at the stand and some official events from members of the Network were documented in a Twitter account **@HabitatVillage**, which allowed other CoHabitat partners and allies to follow the activities during WUF at distance.

Also, the attractive and dynamic programme at the stand made it possible to meet new stakeholders interested in learning more about community-led housing and the work of CoHabitat Network partners.

The richness of exchanges and discussions demonstrated the importance of continuing to organise in person reunions that promote participation and collective learning within the CoHabitat Network on a frequent basis, facilitating and stimulating reflection, discussion and face-to-face meetings.

Along with the spaces for exchange and reunion, Habitat Village was also home to celebrations, festivities and friendly reunions. The expectations for the stand and events were exceeded **thanks to the organisation and collaboration of the representatives of urbaMonde, Misereor, World Habitat, HIC, GPR2C, MOBA, IIED, DPU-UCL, CatComm, ACHR, SDI and urbaSEN**.

Their comments and positive post-event feedback have been a sign of the success of the Habitat Village and the possibilities it created to continue working together.

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Network

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Organisations present at Habitat Village

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

cltb

ComCat
COMUNIDADES CATALIZADORAS

dpu
Development
Planning Unit

UCL
THE BARTLETT

iied International Institute
for Environment
and Development

Global Platform for the Right to the City
Plataforma Global por el Derecho a la Ciudad
Plateforme Globale pour le Droit à la Ville

HIC
Habitat International Coalition

misereor
GEMEINSAM GLOBAL GERECHT

moba
HOUSING NETWORK

PUBLIC WORKS
Publicworksstudio.com

sdi.

urbaMonde

urbaSEN

world habitat