

# The Urban Dimensions of Inequality and Equality

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# Introduction

The spatialisation of inequalities through processes of urbanisation have become increasingly significant over the last fifty years as disparities have both widened and concentrated in and between urban and territorial areas in most parts of the world. As local and national governments, development agencies, and scholars increasingly converge on the need to address the impacts of inequality and inequity, a common concern is how to make cities and their territories fairer and more equal places. This demands recognition at three levels: of the everyday hardships caused by inequalities; that inequalities exist in and as a result of urban, territorial, national and global processes, including through policy and planning at these different scales; and that there is a necessity for effective and inclusive action towards “levelling the playing field politically, socially and economically in... local and global arenas.”<sup>1</sup>

Struggles for urban and territorial equality have emerged forcefully in recent years both as a response to growing inequality at different scales, but also building on a longer and more diffuse history of social and political struggle relating to issues of citizenship, suffrage, dignity, decent work, social identity and human rights. More than four decades ago, the Nobel Laureate in Economics, Amartya Sen, posed the fundamental question, “equality of what?” and located the response firmly within the specific politics, socio-economic and natural environment of context, also highlighting the importance of recognising human diversity in experiences of inequality in that context.<sup>2</sup> Both Sen and David Harvey have pointed to the importance of not only recognising the outcomes of inequality and equality, but also the institutional environment and structural drivers reproducing those outcomes. In Harvey’s terms, this is the recognition of “a just distribution, justly arrived at.”<sup>3</sup> The authors recognise that local governments have a crucial role to play both in reducing urban inequalities and addressing the structures and processes through which they are produced.

This paper provides evidence and debates around the different dimensions of inequality from an urban and territorial perspective, understanding the relational and multiple nature of equality and the interactions with urban dynamics, structural constraints and everyday practices. Territorial and urban dynamics represent the field in which LRGs implement their policies, plans and activities, and therefore their understanding of the urban dimensions of inequality is crucial to start addressing them. Building on the aforementioned discussions, and the subsequent seminal work on social justice by Young<sup>4</sup>, Fraser and Lynch<sup>5</sup> this paper is structured around four intersecting principles of urban equality, a response to the dimensions of inequality and their outcomes that are situated in different urban and territorial contexts, and the institutional environments and structural drivers that (re)produce them, namely:

**1. Equitable distribution** focuses on the material outcomes of equality that constitute a dignified quality of life, including equitable access to income, decent work, housing, health, basic and social services, and safety and security for all citizens in a sustainable manner.

**2. Reciprocal recognition** focuses on the ways in which citizen claims and urban and territorial governance recognise multiple intersecting social identities, across class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, migration status and sexuality, which have been unevenly recognised throughout history. This recognition intersects the way in which different actors co-produce knowledge, organise collectively, and plan, operate and manage urban and territorial activities.

**3. Parity political participation** focuses on the equitable conditions that allow democratic, inclusive, and active engagement of citizens and their representatives in processes of urban and territorial governance, and the deliberations, imagination and decisions about current and future urban and territorial trajectories.

1. UN-Habitat, “Urban Equity in Development – Cities for Life” (Nairobi, 2013), 4.

2. Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

3. David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City (Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation)*, Revised (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1973), 98.

4. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Iris Marion Young, “Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser’s Dual Systems Theory,” in *Theorising Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate*, ed. C Willet (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 50–67.

5. Nancy Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Post-Socialist’ Age,” in *Theorising Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate*, ed. C Willet (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 19–49; Nancy Fraser, “A Rejoinder to Iris Young,” in *Theorising Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 68–72; Nancy Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1996, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2011.05856.x>; Lynch, K. “Why Love, Care, and Solidarity Are Political Matters: Affective Equality and Fraser’s Model of Social Justice” in Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Ann Ferguson Love (eds) *A question for feminism in the twenty-first century*, [2013] Routledge, Ch.12, 18 pp. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315884783>

**4. Solidarity and mutual care** focus on how cities and territories guarantee the provision of care, prioritising mutual support and relational responsibilities between citizens, and between citizens and nature, and actively nurturing the civic life of cities and territories.<sup>6</sup>

In using these equality principles, we draw together evidence that relate to a range of thematic entry points that demonstrate the state of urban inequality, drawing on cases to illustrate their manifestation in particular contexts. Following a brief overview of urbanisation and inequalities in section two, the third section focuses on inequality of outcomes in urban contexts, which engages with the ways that inequalities and injustices manifest across different domains of urban life, corresponding to the notion of equitable distribution above. The fourth section of the paper focuses on structural inequalities in urban processes, which sets out the literature that examines the mechanisms, structures and relations that drive urban inequality outcomes. This section is organised around the principles of reciprocal recognition and parity political participation above. The concluding section of the paper reflects on the notion of solidarity and mutual care as a key and less explored principle of equality, as well as a mobilising principle to advance urban equality.

## BOX 1: Official Definitions of Urban Areas

There is no universal definition of an urban area. Definitions vary significantly across countries. Some countries consider an area to be urban when it reaches a specific threshold of inhabitants. However, this threshold varies significantly between countries; in Denmark it is 200 inhabitants, in Japan it is 50,000. Many countries also use other variables such as population density, dominant livelihood sectors, civic or other infrastructures, or a combination of these. In India, for example, urban areas are defined as areas with at least 5,000 inhabitants, where at least 75 per cent of the male working population is engaged in non-agricultural occupations, and which has a density of at least 400 inhabitants per square kilometre.<sup>7</sup>

The United Nations adopts national definitions of urban areas in its reporting processes, which means that urban statistics are often not directly comparable across countries.<sup>8</sup> However, others such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation for Development employ a 'Functional Urban Areas' approach to define 'urban territories' that exist beyond municipal boundaries.<sup>9</sup> While a territorial approach is useful for capturing interdependencies across political and jurisdictional boundaries, for example issues related to labour markets, it can result in awkward units of analysis which do not lend themselves to discussion of public policy.<sup>10</sup> In response to these challenges, a number of multilateral organisations contributed to the development of a "harmonised methodology" for classifying all areas within a national territory as part of an urban-rural continuum, which can be supplemented by more detailed concepts, such as 'metropolitan areas' or 'semi-dense towns', which can facilitate international comparisons.<sup>11</sup>

6. These four dimensions of urban equality were developed and applied within the KNOW programme. For more information visit [www.urban-know.com](http://www.urban-know.com)

7. United Nations DESA, "World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision," *World Urbanization Prospects* (New York, 2019), 19, <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/>.

8. Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, "Urbanization," *Our World in Data*, 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanization>.

9. OECD, "A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis Report" (Paris, 2020), 79.

10. Edward L Glaeser, Matthew G Resseger, and Kristina Tobio, "Urban Inequality," NBER Working Paper Series (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

11. European Union-FAO-UN-Habitat-OECD-The World Bank, "Applying the Degree of Urbanisation: A Methodological Manual to Define Cities, Towns and Rural Areas for International Comparisons" (Luxembourg, 2021).

## 2. Urbanisation and inequalities

Urbanisation, the spatial concentration of economic, demographic, socio-cultural, environmental and political processes, is not a neutral process. Urbanisation has concentrated wealth and historically has driven inequalities through the intersection of increased economic specialisation and capital accumulation, social stratification, environmental exploitation, and unrepresentative political and governance practices.

While modes of urbanisation vary significantly across cities and regions, there are some clear trends in the relationship between urbanisation and inequality.<sup>12</sup> The first is that urbanisation is associated with rising urban-rural and intra-urban income inequality. Inequalities emerging between rural and urban contexts include indicators such as pricing biases.<sup>13</sup> However, intra-urban inequalities in many cases are more severe than intra-rural inequalities.<sup>14</sup> The second is that high rates of urban growth are closely associated with high levels of income inequality.<sup>15</sup> The third is that greater inequality is found in larger cities.<sup>16</sup> The fourth, paradoxically, is that measures to inhibit urbanisation can exacerbate inequalities further, as seen in Apartheid-era South Africa and in the proliferation of Brazil's favelas as a response to Brazil's more passive measures to curb urbanisation.<sup>17</sup> The relationships, then, between urbanisation and inequality are not straightforward and concern both economic and socio-political processes.

The inequalities generated through urbanisation have been a persistent focus of research, beginning in the 19th century when Marx famously expounded the notion of a 'metabolic rift' to describe both the alienation of urban populations from the natural environment and the socio-ecological and spatial disorder generated by urbanisation. In doing so, he characterised the inevitable uneven development of rural-urban conditions by which the depletion and exhaustion of rural resources mirror the excesses, waste, and accumulation of cities.

Urbanisation is central to processes of local, national and global capitalist development, playing a key role in the accumulation, mobilisation, and spatialisation of capital.<sup>18</sup> For David Harvey, the basic premise is that capitalist development is shaped by the "perpetual need to find profitable terrains for capital-surplus production and absorption" and cities are central for this process "since urbanization depends on the mobilization of a surplus product."<sup>19</sup> Urbanisation, then, can be understood as a process of socio-spatial reorganisation that concentrates and territorialises capital flows.

In his book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas Piketty evidenced the relationship between wealth and income inequality, arguing that in the absence of policies that specifically advantage labour, rates of return on capital (wealth) exceed rates of economic growth (income), leading to "an endless inegalitarian spiral" whereby wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of those who accumulate and control capital.<sup>20</sup> This inequality has been "brutally exposed and deepened" by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>21</sup>

Urban inequalities manifest differently in each city and region; mediated by political, economic, socio-cultural, and ecological processes and historical legacies, nested at multiple levels. The reproduction of inequalities is partially regulated through market mechanisms, but also through the orchestration of social and political interactions and relations, which contribute to "inter-local inequalities",<sup>23</sup> which take a diversity of forms, and which are experienced differently by different groups at different times.

Although urbanisation and inequality have always had a complex relationship, a series of current dynamics present a particularly challenging scenario. According to a recent report on "Equal cities", there are currently four main challenges for the process of urbanisation towards sustainable and more equal cities: (1) "Highest rates of urbanisation in sub-Saharan

12. R Kanbur and A Venables, *Spatial Inequality and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

13. Deborah Fahy Bryceson, "Urban Bias Revisited: Staple Food Pricing in Tanzania," *European Journal of Development Research* 4, no. 2 (1992): 82–106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09578819208426572>; Michael Lipton, *Why the Poor Stay Poor: Urban Bias in World Development* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977).

14. Michael Lipton, "Urban Bias Revisited," *The Journal of Development Studies* 20, no. 3 (1984): 139–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388408421910>.

15. B T Hirsch, "Income Distribution, City Size and Urban Growth. A Final Re-Examination," *Urban Studies* 19 (1982): 71–74; S Nord, "Income Inequality and City Size: An Examination of Alternative Hypothesis for Large and Small Cities," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 62 (1980): 502–8

16. Nathaniel Baum-Snow and Ronni Pavan, "Inequality and City Size," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 95, no. 5 (2013): 1535–48; Somwrita Sakar et al., "The Scaling of Income Distribution in Australia: Possible Relationships between Urban Allometry, City Size, and Economic Inequality," *Environment and Planning A: Urban Analytics and City Science* 45, no. 4 (2018): 603–22.

17. G McGranahan and D Satterthwaite, "Urbanisation Concepts and Trends" (London, 2014).

18. Harvey, *Social Justice and the City (Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation)*; David Harvey, "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation By Dispossession the Spatio-Temporal Fix and Its Contradictions," *Social Register* 40 (2004): 63–87; David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012).

19. David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (2008): 24.

20. Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

21. Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2021), [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org).

22. Abdoumalig Simone, "The Social Infrastructures of City Life in Contemporary Africa," *Discussion Paper* (Uppsala, 2010).

23. Richard C Schragger, "Is a Progressive City Possible? Reviving Urban Liberalism for the Twenty-First Century," *Harvard Law & Policy Review* 7, no. 1 (2013): 232.

Africa, South and Southeast Asia”; (2) “Urbanisation is now happening in more low-income countries than in the past”; (3) “The share of poor people living in urban areas is on the rise worldwide”; and (4) “Cities in the global South have the fewest public resources per capita.”<sup>24</sup>

The ‘circulatory flows’ of capital and wealth in contemporary cities illustrate the reproduction of inequalities in these new urbanisation challenges. Foreign Direct Investment in urban infrastructure, for example, remains one of the most visible ways that global capital flows contribute to urban inequality through the displacement of marginalised urban populations.<sup>25</sup> These international flows of capital interact with regional, national, and local flows of production and exchange. Likewise, hyper-financialization processes have driven commodification and marketisation of land and housing production, with direct implications in the ways cities reinforce patterns of exclusions and inequality.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding financialization, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing pointed out that: “The value of global real estate is about \$217 trillion USD, nearly 60 per cent of the value of all global assets, with residential real estate comprising 75 per cent of the total. In the course of one year, from mid-2013 to mid-2014, corporate buying of larger properties in the top 100 recipient global cities rose from US\$ 600 billion to US\$ 1 trillion.”<sup>27</sup> This volume of assets is critical, as “financialization is linked to expanded credit and debt taken on by individual households made vulnerable to predatory lending practices and the volatility of markets, the result of which is unprecedented housing precarity.”<sup>28</sup>

There is also a relationship between the growth of urban centres, broader socio-ecological flows and the widening of inequalities. Urban geographers, for example, have urged us to understand cities in terms of their continuous de- and re-territorialisation of what they have called ‘metabolic circulatory flows’,<sup>29</sup> such as nutrients, materials, water, and even viruses. In this way urbanisation can be understood as a “socio-spatial process whose functioning is predicated upon ever longer, often globally structured, socio-ecological metabolic flows that

not only fuse together things, natures and peoples, but does so in socially and ecologically and geographically articulated, but depressingly uneven, manners.”<sup>30</sup> The ways that these flows are controlled by and serve to benefit some groups over others is key to producing and sustaining structural drivers of urban inequality, whereby power, wealth, and influence is concentrated in the hands of particular urban interests, such as landowners, property developers, and the extractive industries; contributing to “social and economic polarisation.”<sup>31</sup>

Governance structures and processes are also critical in the reproduction of inequalities in fast growing cities. According to a World Resources Institute Report, urban growth and inequality in the cities in the Global South are shaped by multiple forces “some of which are within a city’s control, and some of which are not”, and which can be synthesised in three key challenges: “the presence of distorted [private and public] land markets that offer few returns to public sector stakeholders”; “deficient services in growing areas”; and “disjointed informal expansion.”<sup>32</sup> Governance challenges and their implication for urban inequalities, are made even more complex when there is a spatial mismatch between urban growth and the jurisdictions of service-providing agencies in the urban periphery, as in the urban expansion experienced by cities like Mexico City or Bengaluru, described in the same report. When looking at trends in these two Metropolitan Areas, there is a clear pattern of inequitable access to services in recent areas of urban expansion outside official city limits.

24. V A Beard, A Mahendra, and M I Westphal, “Towards a More Equal City: Framing the Challenges and Opportunities” (Washington DC, 2016).

25. Ramin Keivani, “A Review of the Main Challenges to Urban Sustainability,” *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development* 1, no. 1–2 (2010): 5–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463131003704213>.

26. D Madden and P Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis* (London-New York: Verso, 2016); R Rolnik, *Urban Warfare: Housing under the Empire of Finance* (London: Verso, 2019).

27. UN General Assembly, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context” (New York, 2017), para. 3.

28. UN General Assembly, para. 5.

29. Nik Heynen, Maria Kaika, and Erik Swyngedouw, “Politicizing the Production of Urban Natures,” *In the Nature of Cities -- Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, no. January (2006): 1–20, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/50671647/In\\_the\\_Nature\\_of\\_Cities\\_Urban\\_Political\\_Ecology\\_20161202-26132-10bua0h.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1511804781&Signature=Uz6BQdVZriEpQHSru5ynFDIGZWE%3D&rresponse-content-disposition=inline](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/50671647/In_the_Nature_of_Cities_Urban_Political_Ecology_20161202-26132-10bua0h.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1511804781&Signature=Uz6BQdVZriEpQHSru5ynFDIGZWE%3D&rresponse-content-disposition=inline).

30. Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw, “Radical Urban Political-Ecological Imaginaries: Planetary Urbanization and Politicizing Nature,” *Eurozine*, 2014.

31. Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

32. A Mahendra and K C Seto, “Upward and Outward Growth: Managing Urban Expansion for More Equitable Cities in the Global South” (Washington DC, 2019), [www.citiesforall.org](http://www.citiesforall.org).



## BOX 2. Measuring Multidimensional Urban Inequality

Specifically urban studies of inequality began in the late 1980s and 1990s with detailed household surveys that combined demographic indicators with multiple choice questions on economic and social factors such as housing, employment and immigration status, as well as specific questions on household income and expenditure.<sup>33</sup>

The issue of how to measure income inequality has been a particular focus of research. Widely cited studies such as those by Piketty and Saez, found a substantial increase in income inequality between 1979 and 2002 in the United States, since 91 per cent of income growth during the period went to the wealthiest 10 per cent of the global population.<sup>34</sup> However, there is no methodological agreement on how to calculate household income.<sup>35</sup> Subtle differences in the ways that household income is measured can lead to substantially different conclusions. For example, decisions about how measures of household income are adjusted for household size and inflation, and how they quantify non-monetary benefits, such as healthcare provision or other government services, profoundly affect the picture of income inequality that emerges.

These debates mirror discourses on measuring poverty and extreme poverty, which have seen a gradual shift away from income-based thresholds towards more multidimensional measures of deprivation such as the Alkire-Foster Method,<sup>36</sup> which aggregates multiple types of deprivation, or the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke Method,<sup>37</sup> which calculates the minimum food and energy requirements to meet a household's basic needs.

More recently, researchers have turned to the ways that these different forms of data are spatialised in a territory, including statistical approaches such as the Theil Decomposition Method, as well as the development of cross-scale spatial indicators for understanding the distribution of inequalities.<sup>38</sup> In

this regard, the accessibility and availability of GIS technology has become key to understanding the spatialisation of urban inequalities. GIS has been widely utilised in academic studies, but crucially also by local authorities, community-based organisations and social movements, such as Slum and Shack Dwellers International (SDI), to produce their own data regarding, for example, clean water and sanitation infrastructure distribution, to increase the visibility of the issues facing marginalised urban populations across Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Approaches to measurement, as well as data, are not neutral; they are embedded in power relations and reflect inherited and naturalised values, positions, and assumptions. Approaches to measuring, mapping, and quantifying different forms of urban inequality are functions of the context and actors involved as much as they are a product of a specific methodology or type of data. For this reason, it should not be assumed that one methodology or approach to measuring urban inequality can necessarily travel from one city or region to another.

33. Lawrence Bobo et al., "Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992-1994: [Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles]" (Ann Arbor, 2000), <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR02535>.

34. T Piketty and E Saez, "Income Inequality in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 113, no. 1 (2003): 1-39.

35. S J Rose, "How Different Studies Measure Income Inequality in the US: Piketty and Company Are Not the Only Game in Town," Urban Institute, 2018, [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99455/how\\_different\\_studies\\_measure\\_income\\_inequality\\_1.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99455/how_different_studies_measure_income_inequality_1.pdf).

36. Frank Vollmer and Sabina Alkire, "Towards a Global Assets Indicator: Re-Assessing the Assets Indicator in the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index," Research in Progress Series (Oxford, 2018).

37. James Foster et al., "A Class of Decomposable Poverty Measures," *Econometrica* 52, no. 3 (1984): 761-66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1913475>.

38. Loeiz Bourdic, Serge Salat, and Caroline Nowacki, "Assessing Cities: A New System of Cross-Scale Spatial Indicators," *Building Research and Information* 40, no. 5 (2012): 592-605, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09613218.2012.703488>.

### 3. Inequality of outcomes in urban contexts: Distributional and Spatial Inequalities

Inequality has most frequently been associated with economic indicators like wealth and income inequality. However, in the past three decades, this focus has moved to more multidimensional approaches that attempt to capture the whole range of quality of life. This shift was marked globally when in 1990 UNDP produced its first Human Development Report, based on Sen's capability approach. At the urban and territorial level, this was reflected in a growing body of research that focused on re-conceptualising urban poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon.<sup>39</sup>

In this section we present an overview of some of the primary areas in which inequalities manifest as outcomes in urban contexts - what we refer to as

distributional and spatial inequalities that reflect differential access to urban income, employment, housing, health, infrastructures, and services, and environmental risk, and the ways that these inequalities are spatialised within cities and territories. In the discussion of each primary area, there is recognition of the crucial lens that intersecting social identities like class, gender and race play in the differential manifestation and experience of inequalities. Setting out different forms of spatial and distributional inequalities in this disaggregated way is not to suggest that they are likely to be experienced, or can be responded to, in isolation. Rather, these inequalities exist in relation to one another and compound one another.

#### 3.1 Measuring income and wealth inequality

Issues with regards to measuring household income notwithstanding (see Box 2), macro-level approaches to measuring income inequality examine how income (and income growth) is distributed across a population. Such approaches, most famously the GINI coefficient (Figure 1), are useful for measuring, tracking, and communicating the levels of income inequality within a territory. However, within the diversity of studies that examine income inequality, there is no methodological consensus; each approach emphasises some dimensions of income inequality over others.

A common approach to measuring income inequality focuses on the share of income growth captured by the richest 10 per cent of a population,<sup>40</sup> while others focus on the income share of the wealthiest one per cent. However, studies that mobilise each of these approaches find dramatically different outcomes.<sup>41</sup> Another common approach to measuring income and wealth inequality is to track median income through time, which combined with GDP expansion over the same period, gives a useful proxy for middle income living standards.<sup>42</sup> This approach is useful for understanding income

inequality for the majority 'middle' of a population but fails to capture the trends at extremes of income and wealth inequality: the richest and poorest groups.

In response to the challenge of better understanding the extremes of inequality, Gabriel Palma proposed the Palma ratio.<sup>43</sup> Recognising that the income share of the middle 50 per cent of a population (the fourth to ninth deciles) remains remarkably consistent across the world, Palma proposes that the ratio between the incomes of the richest 10 per cent and the poorest 40 per cent gives a more accurate and intuitive understanding of the state of inequality. An analysis at the urban scale using the Palma ratio finds that the most unequal cities are concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas,<sup>44</sup> specifically the most unequal cities in terms of income in 2016 were found to be Johannesburg, Lagos, and Nairobi. In the case of Johannesburg, a Palma ratio of 13.4 indicates that the richest 10 per cent of the population receive 13.4 times the total income of the poorest 40 per cent.

It has long been recognised that income inequality is concentrated in urban areas,<sup>45</sup> is closely associated with

39. Ellen Wratten, "Conceptualizing Urban Poverty," *Environment & Urbanization* 7, no. 1 (1995): 11–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624789500700118>; Philip Amis, "Making Sense of Urban Poverty," *Environment & Urbanization* 7, no. 1 (1995): 145–58; D. Satterthwaite, "Reducing Urban Poverty: Constraints on the Effectiveness of Aid Agencies and Development Banks and Some Suggestions for Change," *Environment and Urbanization* 13, no. 1 (2001): 137–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780101300111>; Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite, *Urban Poverty in the Global South: Scale and Nature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite, *Reducing Urban Poverty in the Global South* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

40. Piketty and Saez, "Income Inequality in the United States."

41. Stephen J Rose, "How Different Studies Measure Income Inequality in the US: Piketty and Company Are Not the Only Game in Town," 2018, 7.

42. S J Rose, "The Growing Size and Incomes of the Upper Middle Class" (Washington DC, 2016).

43. J G Palma, "Homogeneous Middles vs. Heterogeneous Tails, and the End of the 'Inverted-U': It's All about the Share of the Rich," *Development and Change* 42, no. 1 (2011): 87–153.

44. F V Razvadauskas, "Income Inequality Ranking of the World's Major Cities," *Euromonitor International*, 2021, <https://blog.euromonitor.com/income-inequality-ranking-worlds-major-cities/>.

45. Michael S. Fogarty and Gaspar Garofalo, "Urban Size and the Amenity Structure of Cities," *Journal of Urban Economics* 8, no. 3 (1980): 350–61, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0094-1190\(80\)90036-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0094-1190(80)90036-4); Glaeser, Resseger, and Tobio, "Urban Inequality."



specific modes of urbanisation and urban governance, and is continuing to rise.<sup>46</sup> However, scholarship on the specific causes and character of income inequality in urban contexts only emerged significantly in the 1990s through detailed household surveys on multiple cities in China,<sup>47</sup> and the United States.<sup>48</sup>

In the United States, urban income inequality has been closely linked to employment conditions, as well as social indicators, and racial and demographic conditions.<sup>49</sup> Income inequality, in this sense, can be understood as the product of social and economic factors that contribute both to differentials in human capital and differential conditions within which to mobilise this capital.<sup>50</sup> By contrast, research in other countries, such as Indonesia, has found that educational attainment level is a key determinant of inequality, measured in terms of household expenditure rather than income.<sup>51</sup> Important to this discussion have been debates on informal urban economy and its role and complicated relationship with informal employment, income and wealth distribution.<sup>52</sup>

The relationship between income inequality, wage growth, and poverty in urban contexts is not straightforward. A study across multiple regions of China in

the period 1986-2000, for example, found that a 10 per cent increase in inequality is associated with a 28.4 per cent increase in poverty measured in terms of income, offsetting the impacts of wage growth over the same period.<sup>53</sup>

A common theme across this literature is that income inequality is produced through the interactions between global and local processes, mitigated by local socio-cultural identities, national institutional differences, and the social and economic history of particular cities.<sup>54</sup> For this reason, some scholars have advised that local, and particularly community-led, action can only go so far in mitigating the global economic conditions and macro-level political structures that contribute to urban income inequality.<sup>55</sup>

It is important to recognise income inequality as both a cause and a consequence of other urban distributional inequalities. However, one form of inequality cannot be understood as a proxy for another; different forms of urban inequality have their own sets of drivers and impact different groups in different ways at different times. One example of this is urban health inequalities that, like income inequality, have been a focus of research at the household level.

Figure 1: Gini coefficient in cities of different regions.  
Source: World Cities Report 2020, based on UN-Habitat, Global Indicators Database 2020

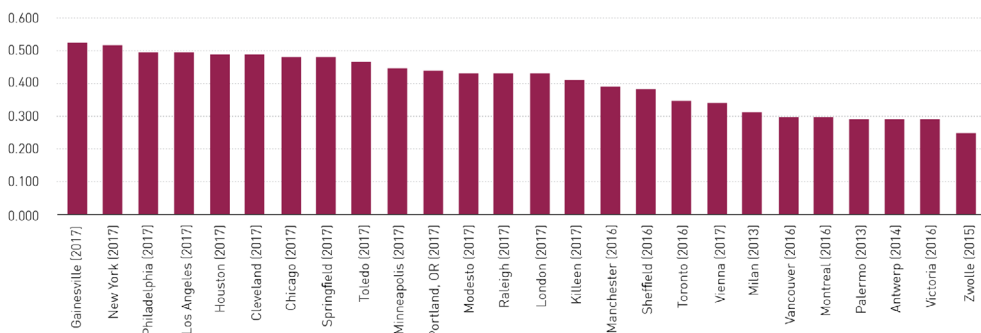


Figure 1a: Gini coefficient for selected cities in Europe and North America

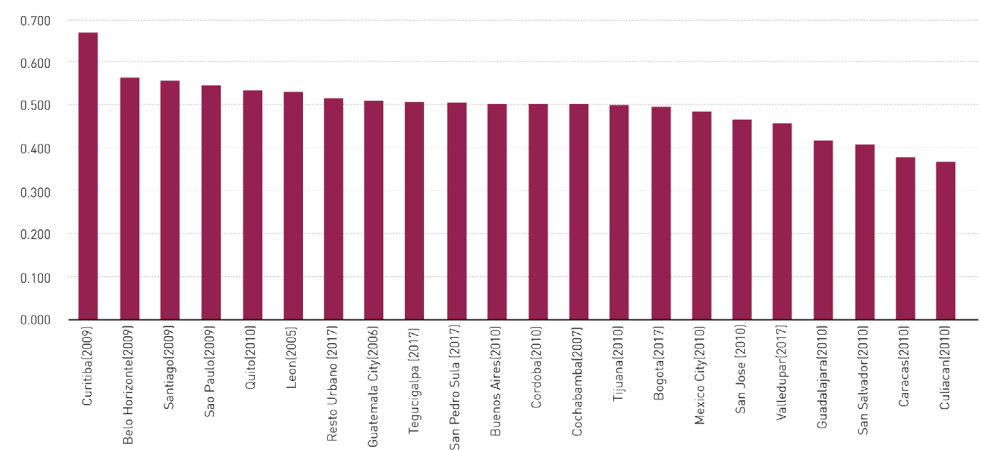


Figure 1b: Gini coefficient for selected cities Latin American cities

46. Nathaniel Baum-Snow, Matthew Freedman, and Ronni Pavan, "Why Has Urban Inequality Increased?," *American Economic Association* 10, no. 4 (2018): 1-42, <https://doi.org/10.1257/APP.20160510>.

47. Athar Hussain, Peter Lanjouw, and Nicholas Stern, "Income Inequalities in China: Evidence from Household Survey Data," *World Development* 22, no. 12 (1994): 1947-57, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(94\)90185-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(94)90185-6); S J Yao and L W Zhu, "Understanding Income Inequality in China: A Multi-Angle Perspective," *Economics of Planning* 31, no. 2-3 (1998): 133-50, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1003491509829>.

48. Sanjoy Chakravorty, "Urban Inequality Revisited," *Urban Affairs Review* 31, no. 6 (1996): 759-77; James H. Johnson Jr., Melvin L. Oliver, and Lawrence D. Bobo, "Understanding the Contours of Deepening Urban Inequality: Theoretical Underpinnings and Research Design of a Multi-City Study," *Urban Geography* 15, no. 1 (1994): 77-89, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.15.1.77>.

49. Chakravorty, "Urban Inequality Revisited."

50. Glaeser, Resseger, and Tobio, "Urban Inequality," 32.

51. Takahiro Akita and Alit Pirmansah, "Urban Inequality in Indonesia," 2011.

52. David Hulme, Andrew Shepherd, and Paul Spray, "The Chronic Poverty Report 2004-05" (Glasgow, 2005); Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (2005): 147-58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360508976689>; Cecilia Tacoli, "Urbanization, Gender and Urban Poverty: Paid Work and Unpaid Carework in the City," *Urbanization and Emerging Population Issues* (London, 2012).

53. Xin Meng, Robert Gregory, and Youjuan Wang, "Poverty, Inequality, and Growth in Urban China, 1986-2000," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 33, no. 4 (2005): 725, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2005.08.006>.

54. Jack Burgers and Sako Musterd, "Understanding Urban Inequality: A Model Based on Existing Theories and an Empirical Illustration," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, no. 2 (2002): 403-13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00387>.

55. Scott L Cummings, "Recentralization: Community Economic Development and the Case for Regionalism," *The Journal of Small and Emerging Business Law* 8 (2004): 131-49, <https://doi.org/10.3366/ajcl.2011.0005>.

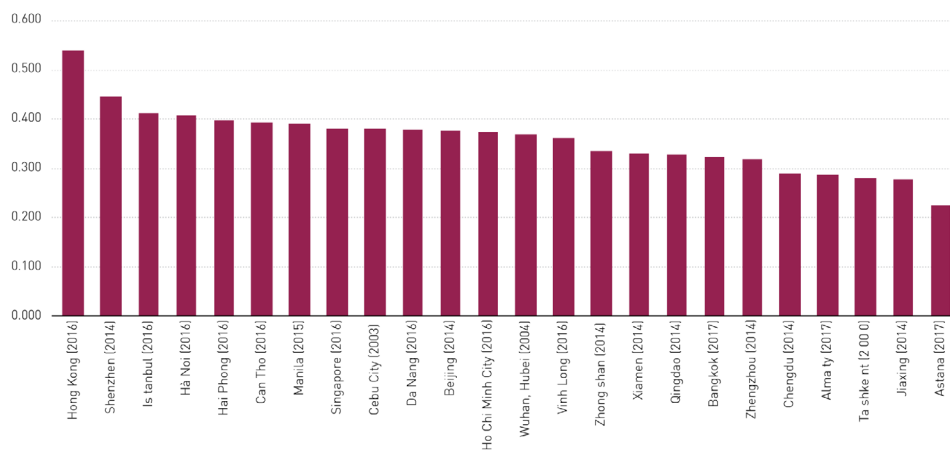


Figure 1c: Gini coefficient for selected cities Asian cities

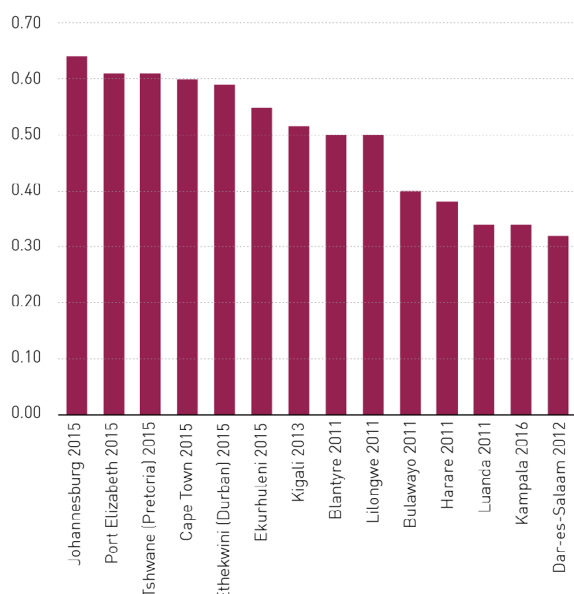


Figure 1d: Gini coefficient for selected cities African cities

## 3.2 Employment and decent work

The proportion of the global working-age population living in urban areas has risen from 50 per cent in 2005 to 55 per cent in 2019, indicating substantial migration from rural to urban areas.<sup>56</sup> Over the past fifty years, the employment profiles of cities around the world has changed significantly, influenced by processes of globalisation and the rise of neoliberal approaches to urban governance that frequently position cities around the world in perpetual competition for employment and capital investment. Indeed, Scott argues that this is a third phase in the relationship between capitalist development and urbanisation, following a first phase which witnessed the increasing number of manufacturing towns in 19th century Britain, and a second phases characterised by “fordist mass production which reached its highest

expression in the large metropolitan areas of the American Manufacturing Belt”<sup>57</sup> in the mid-20th century. Various referred to as the ‘new’ economy, the knowledge economy or the creative economy, across urban and territorial areas in the Global North this has meant a long-term shift away from manufacturing and Fordism towards digital and high technology enterprises, along with financial and business services, and media and culture industries.<sup>58</sup> The division of labour reflects growing inequality between the top-skilled labour force and at the bottom, a trend towards casualised, short term, and precarious forms of employment, particularly for young people,<sup>59</sup> migrants and women, an employment trend that is increasingly identifiable in urban regions of Asia, Latin America and now Africa.<sup>60</sup>

56. International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020*, International Labour Organization, 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ddgreports/-ddcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_734455.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ddgreports/-ddcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_734455.pdf).

57. A J Scott, “Emerging Cities of the Third Wave,” *City* 15, no. 3/4 (2011): 289–321.

58. Scott.

59. Robert Macdonald, “Precarious Work: The Growing Précarité of Youth,” in *Routledge Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, ed. Andy Furlong (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 156–63; S Wilson and N Ebert, “Precarious Work: Economic, Sociological and Political Perspectives,” *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 24, no. 3 (2013): 263–78.

60. Scott.

These shifts have led to well-documented inequalities not only in incomes but in working conditions and security.<sup>61</sup> For this reason, the ILO stresses that having employment is no guarantee of adequate income or decent working conditions, with over 630 million workers still living in extreme or moderate poverty around the world.<sup>62</sup> The unequal distribution of decent work is a key driver of other distributional inequalities including income and health-related inequalities.<sup>63</sup> However, the specific nature of inequalities with regards to labour and employment varies significantly with context and intersects significantly with different identity groups, not least women and young people.

The challenge of generating decent livelihood opportunities is a global one, but it takes on a particular character in cities in the Global South, where the informal economy<sup>64</sup> comprises 50-80 per cent urban employment.<sup>65</sup> When looking at inequalities in urban labour markets, informal sectors have been a particular focus of research, emphasising not only the ways that some urban groups are excluded from formal labour markets, but also the ways that some groups are “unfairly included” or exploited.<sup>66</sup> In this regard, looking at informal or ‘emerging sectors’ in Kampala, Uganda, inequalities in certain areas of the city manifest in “disparities in relation to decent and rewarding available jobs and, equally important, in relation to livelihood opportunities.”<sup>67</sup> Scholars and policymakers have also recognised that informality is not a condition that

exists ‘outside’ of formal urban systems, rather it is a set of market logics, linked practices, and structures that are vitally constitutive of contemporary urban life around the world.<sup>68</sup> Informal markets, in this sense, are intricately connected to ‘formal’ markets in myriad ways; value chains for basic goods and services frequently negotiate a path across formal and informal sectors; millions of urban inhabitants rely upon both formal and informal incomes.

This inequality has a critical gendered dimension. In cities across the Global South the proportion of women tend to be higher than men in the informal sector;<sup>69</sup> in Africa 89.7 per cent of employed women are in informal employment compared with 82.7 per cent of men, and women are disproportionately likely to be in more vulnerable employment situations such as domestic or home-based workers.<sup>70</sup> Across both formal and informal labour markets, women and young people face additional barriers to employment and to decent work. According to data from WIEGO, even if overall the portion of men in informal employment is higher than women worldwide (63 versus 58 per cent respectively), this ratio shifts when looking at developing countries, where women in informal employment counts for 92 per cent of total employment (Table 1). This is particularly relevant for cities in the Global South where, according to a World Resources Institute Report (Figures 2-3), half or more of all employment is informal, with the highest rates in Africa and South Asia.<sup>71</sup>

61. F Leiva, “Toward a Critique of Latin American Neoliberalism,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 50 (2008): 1–25; F Obeng-Odoom, “Neoliberalism and the Urban Economy in Ghana: Urban Employment, Inequality, and Poverty,” *Growth and Change* 43, no. 1 (2012): 85–109.

62. International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020*.

63. R Labonté and D Stuckler, “The Rise of Neoliberalism: How Bad Economics Imperils Health and What to Do about It,” *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 70, no. 3 (2016): 312–18.

64. “The informal economy is the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state” (WIEGO, 2021). The term refers to livelihood activities which are not taxed by the State but excludes illicit or illegal activities.

65. ILO, “Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture. Third Edition” (Geneva, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1179/bac.2003.28.1.018>.

66. Ursula Grant, “Opportunity and Exploitation in Urban Labour Markets,” Briefing Paper (London, 2008).

67. Shuaib Lwasa, “Scalable Solutions for Social Inclusiveness and Embracing of Informality: Waste Economies to Enhance Urban Livelihoods in Informal Settlements in Kampala,” in *Institutional Capabilities towards Urban Equality: Reflections from the KNOW Programme in Bangalore, Kampala and Havana*, ed. A A Frediani et al. (London: Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality, 2019), 10.

68. Roy, “Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning.”

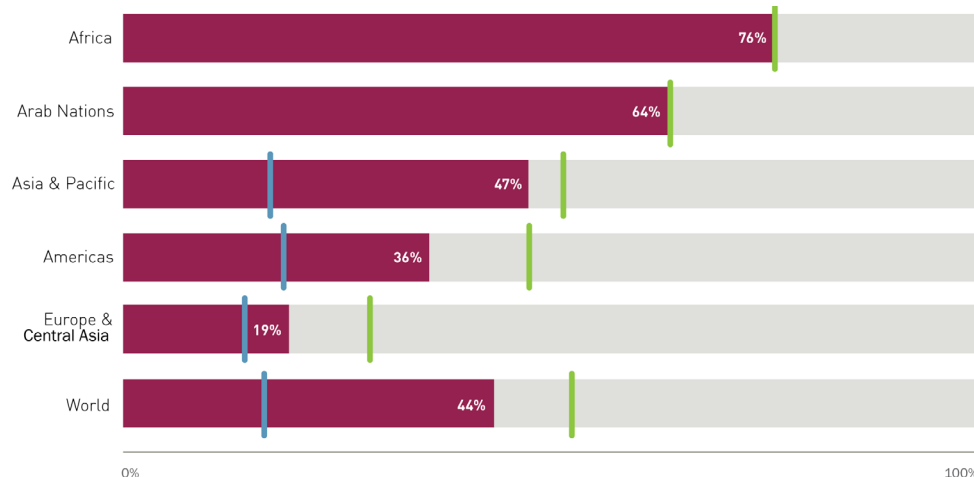
69. Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine, *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South: Towards a Feminised Urban Future* (London: Routledge, 2016).

70. ILO, “Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture. Third Edition,” 20–21.

71. M A Chen and V A Beard, “Including the Excluded: Supporting Informal Workers for More Equal and Productive Cities in the Global South” (Washington DC, 2018), [www.citiesforall.org](http://www.citiesforall.org).

Countries by income level*	Total	Women	Men
World	61	58	63
Developing	90	92	87
Emerging	67	64	69
Developed	18	18	19

Table 1: Informal employment as a percentage of total, women’s and men’s employment. Source: WIEGO Dashboard, 2021.



- All countries
- Developing and emerging
- Developed countries

Figure 2: “Half or more of all employment in the Global South is informal, with the highest rates in Africa [and South Asia]”. Source: Chen and Beard, 2018, based on ILO, 2018.

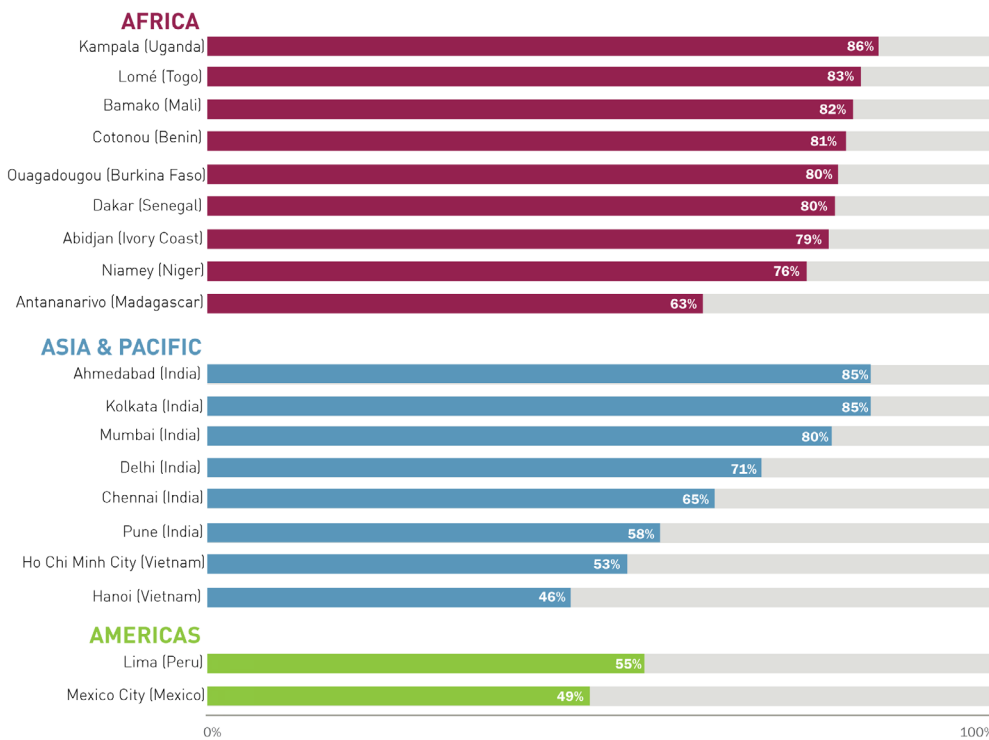


Figure 3: "Informal employment is between 46 and 85 per cent of total employment in selected cities (2003-2015)". Source: Chen and Beard, 2018, based on WIEGO Dashboard, 2018.

### 3.3 Land and housing

Housing inequalities relate to the differential distribution of housing affordability, accessibility and quality across urban contexts. The impact of real estate and rental markets on the affordability and availability of land and housing for the poor is considered a key driver of urban inequality.<sup>72</sup> In a crisis that has been described as 'urban warfare',<sup>73</sup> global activists and researchers have called for the recognition that "in almost every single country, in every region, in cities and towns across the globe, we are experiencing a human rights crisis – the housing crisis".<sup>74</sup> The latest World Cities Report 2020 states: "Tackling urban inequality and unaffordable housing remain urgent priorities: Cities will not be able to offer opportunity and create value if workers do not earn liveable wages that permit them access adequate housing and other services."<sup>75</sup> It points out that "currently, 1.6 billion people or 20 per cent of the world's population live in inadequate, crowded and unsafe housing."<sup>76</sup>

As a key factor in the housing crisis, affordability affects both homeowners and renters in formal and informal housing markets. In this regard, the World Cities Report 2020 states that, "[g]lobally, prospective homeowners are compelled to save more than five times

their annual income to afford the price of a standard house. Renter households often spend more than 25 per cent of their monthly income on rent."<sup>77</sup> Local governments have a key role to play in questions of generating institutional mechanisms to improve housing affordability as, "[i]n many developing and developed countries, poorly defined property rights and/or land use regulations have a huge economic impact that limits value generation. This institutional deficit results in higher housing prices and less inclusive cities."<sup>78</sup> Recent scholarship has also identified the role of online markets and algorithms in reproducing housing inequalities.<sup>79</sup>

This crisis has several faces in different parts of the world. As the same World Cities Report 2020 states, "[w]hile many of the world's richest countries have an oversupply of housing, in Eastern and Central Europe and in developing countries, shortfalls of formal housing tend to be quite large. In South Asia, housing shortfalls amount to a deficit of 38 million dwellings. (...) In much of the developing world, the informal sector accounts for 60–70 per cent of urban housing in Zambia, 70 per cent in Lima, 80 per cent of new housing in Caracas, and up to 90 per cent in Ghana."<sup>80</sup>

72. R Martin, J Moore, and S Schindler, *The Art of Inequality: Architecture, Housing, and Real Estate. A Provisional Report* (New York: The Trustees of Columbia University, 2015); Madden and Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing. The Politics of Crisis*.

73. Rolnik, *Urban Warfare: Housing under the Empire of Finance*.

74. The Shift, "The Global Movement to Secure the Human Right to Housing," The Shift, 2021, <https://www.make-the-shift.org>.

75. UN-Habitat, "World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization" (Nairobi, 2020), xviii.

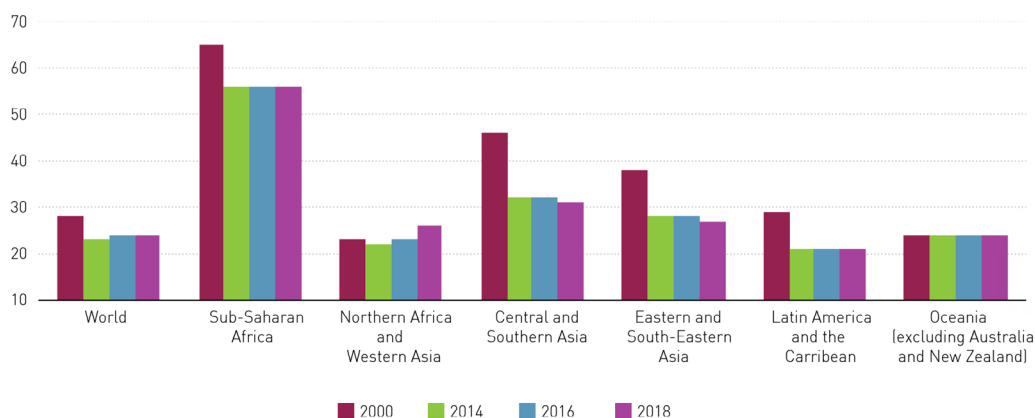
76. UN-Habitat, 25.

77. UN-Habitat, 24.

78. UN-Habitat, "World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization" (Nairobi, 2020), xxi.

79. G Boeing, "Online Rental Housing Market Representation and the Digital Reproduction of Urban Inequality," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 52, no. 2 (2020): 449–68.

80. UN-Habitat, "World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization," 25.



Urban population living in slums (millions)				
Region	2000	2014	2016	2018
World	803.126	897.651	1003.083	1033.546
Sub-Saharan Africa	131.716	202.042	228.936	237.840
Northern Africa & Western Asia	46.335	63.814	71.720	82.123
Central and Southern Asia	205.661	206.704	223.643	221.092
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	317.123	349.409	364.684	368.898
Latin America and the Caribbean	115.148	104.652	112.602	109.946
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	0.234	0.602	0.648	0.643
Australia and New Zealand	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.01
Europe and Northern America	0.764	0.833	0.842	1.022

Figure 4: Percentage of urban population living in slums (above), and urban population living in slums (below). Source: World Cities Report 2020, p. 26, based on UN-Habitat, Global Indicators Database 2020.

According to a recent report, housing challenges in the Global South can be summarised in relation to three main issues: “The growth of under-serviced, substandard, and insecure housing that is disconnected from livelihood options”; “The overemphasis on home ownership, which excludes the poor”; and “Inappropriate land policies and regulations, which can push the poor to city peripheries.”<sup>81</sup> Particularly in cities across Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, one of the most visible ways that this inequality is identified is through the proliferation of informal settlements. The character of these settlements varies significantly with context. Although a contested term,<sup>82</sup> urban ‘informality’ is broadly understood as an urban condition dominated by housing that is built outside of, against or despite formal urban regulations, mostly associated with low-quality shelter and infrastructure, unreliable or non-existent utilities, and insecurities linked to threats of eviction or displacement. Despite significant progress to reduce the proportion of the global urban population living in informal settlements from almost 40 per cent in 1990 to 30 per cent in 2014, absolute numbers increased by almost 200 million, from 689 million to 880 million people over the same period,<sup>83</sup> distributed as shown in the figures below.

Beyond informal settlements, there are manifold ways that housing inequalities intersect with different social relations, including class, but also race, ethnicity, and migration status, often resulting in housing segregation of different kinds. There has been a particularly extensive body of research focused on the origins of housing segregation, as one of the clearest manifestations of urban inequality in highly fragmented cities.<sup>84</sup> In his far-reaching work on the topic, Loic Wacquant reflects on the political roots of urban marginality and segregation: “urban outcast is the product of an active process of institutional detachment and segregation (in the etymological sense of ‘setting apart’) fostered by the decomposition of the public sector.”<sup>85</sup> The negative impacts of segregation have been conceptualised by scholars through different mechanisms. Some authors refer to the idea of ‘neighbourhood effect’ to “measure how neighbourhood social processes bear on the well-being of children and adolescents”,<sup>87</sup> while others have referred to the idea of a “geography of metropolitan opportunities,” which are affected by segregation. The location within a city that housing provides has consequences in multiple arenas: “The poor location of housing may, for instance, increase commuting times and hamper access to good schools,

81. R King et al., “Confronting the Urban Housing Crisis in the Global South: Adequate, Secure, and Affordable Housing” (Washington DC, 2017), [www.citiesforall.org](http://www.citiesforall.org).

82. Colin Marx and Emily Kelling, “Knowing Urban Informalities,” *Urban Studies* 56, no. 3 (2019): 494–509, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018770848>.

83. UN-Habitat, “Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures” (Nairobi, 2016).

84. S DeLuca and C Jang-Trettien, “‘Not Just a Lateral Move’: Residential Decisions and the Reproduction of Urban Inequality,” *City & Community* 19, no. 3 (2020): 451–88; L Tach and A. D Emory, “Public Housing Redevelopment, Neighborhood Change, and the Restructuring of Urban Inequality,” *American Journal of Sociology* 123, no. 3 (2017): 686–739.

85. L Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 224.

86. R Sampson, J Morenoff, and T Gannon-Rowley, “Assessing Neighborhood Effects: Social Processes and New Directions in Research,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 447.

87. C Galster and S Killen, “The Geography of Metropolitan Opportunity: A Reconnaissance and Conceptual Framework,” *Housing Policy Debate* 6, no. 1 (1995): 7–43.



clean air, transportation and a wide range of other services, recreational and commercial spaces, and so forth.<sup>88</sup>

A well-studied manifestation of class in housing segregation takes the form of gentrification and gated communities. Gentrification of neighbourhoods in urban areas have been the focus of much recent research. Cocola-Gant,<sup>89</sup> for example, traces the expansion of gentrification from a spatial expression of class inequality and displacement in cities such as London and New York in the 1950s to a global strategy of rent extraction which takes new forms in each context, driven by neoliberal urban policies,<sup>90</sup> and the growth of middle classes in Asia and Latin America in particular. Gated communities, often alongside informal settlements and the ghettoization of certain urban areas in many contexts, have also been a growing housing form and expression of class inequality in urban areas in both the Global South and Global North.<sup>91</sup>

These discussions have had a particular take in relation to racial segregation in cities of the US, linked to questions of urban marginality, stigma and division,<sup>92</sup> and structural power relations and violence.<sup>93</sup> There have been also challenges to the neighbourhood contact hypothesis, which states that interracial neighbourhood contact serves to break down prejudice, showing that the impacts of such contacts are not equal for black and white urban populations,<sup>94</sup> and that changes in attitude do not necessarily lead to changes in the racial makeup of the neighbourhood.<sup>95</sup>

In African cities explicit policies of racial segregation were in place as part of the colonial era. In Sub-Saharan Africa, researchers have shown the ways in which hygiene and health narratives around diseases such as Malaria were used to implement racial segregation laws during the colonial era, affecting urban trajectories of housing segregation and inequality ever since, as these patterns persists in different forms in many urban areas.<sup>96</sup> In South Africa, where official and legally reinforced “racial discrimination underlay the fragmented and unequal apartheid city”, inequalities have continued well into the post-apartheid era.<sup>97</sup> In Sao Paulo, Brazil, factors

such as length of residence in the city and state of origin combine with other social factors to influence internal migrant housing patterns; both factors are a driver and reflection of social segregation and housing segmentation.<sup>98</sup>

Gender inequalities in access to land and housing are evident in most urban and territorial contexts across the globe.<sup>99</sup> This relates primarily to women’s differential access to land and secure housing tenure in many contexts because of social and legal constraints and/or marriage/marriage break up and inheritance practices, in addition to issues of affordability and housing quality. For example, drawing on work in Mumbai, India, researchers emphasise the ways that tenure and patrilineal inheritance systems are disadvantageous to women, leading to gendered tenure insecurity.<sup>100</sup>

An important face of housing inequality relates to the growing number of residents experiencing evictions and displacement. While UN Habitat acknowledges that global data on forced evictions are not systematically collected, they estimate that around 2 million people are forcibly evicted each year.<sup>101</sup> Most of these are slum dwellers or residents living in the most deprived areas of urban and territorial areas, such as refugee camps. However, forced eviction are also an important phenomenon in the ‘formal’ housing sector through mechanisms such as compulsory purchases or mortgage related evictions. In this regard, the correlation of the spatial distribution of evictions with the poorest parts of the city is illustrated by examples from Spain.<sup>102</sup> Research focusing on the spatial concentration of second-hand dwellings owned by banks in two medium-size cities (Tarragona and Terrassa), revealed “a strong autocorrelation of evictions distribution in determinate neighborhoods (...) a spatial correlation with immigrant population distribution in the same urban areas (...) [and] a clear tendency towards the clustering of evictions in the deprived neighborhoods.”<sup>103</sup> According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, in Spain alone, more than half a million foreclosures between 2008 and 2013 resulted in over 300,000 evictions. Similarly, there were almost 1 million foreclosures between 2009 and 2012 in Hungary.<sup>104</sup>

88. M Aalbers and B Christophers, “Centring Housing in Political Economy,” *Housing, Theory and Society* 31, no. 4 (2014): 380.

89. A Cocola-Gant, “Gentrification and Displacement: Urban Inequality in Cities of Late Capitalism,” in *Handbook of Urban Geography*, ed. T Schwaben and R van Kempen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).

90. Neil Smith, “New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy,” *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 427–50.

91. D Judd, “The Rise of the New Walled Cities,” in *Spatial Practices: Critical Explorations in Social/ Spatial Theory*, ed. Helen Liggett and David C Perry (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 144–66; F Sabatini and R Salcedo, “Gated Communities and the Poor in Santiago, Chile: Functional and Symbolic Integration in a Context of Aggressive Capitalist Colonization of Lower-Class Areas,” *Housing Policy Debate* 18, no. 3 (2007): 477–606.

92. L Wacquant, “Urban Outcasts: Stigma and Division in the Black American Ghetto and the French Urban Periphery,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17, no. 3 (1993): 366–83.

93. M Davis, *City of Quartz. Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London & New York: Verso, 1990).

94. Keith R Ihlanfeldt and Benjamin P Scafidi, “The Neighbourhood Contact Hypothesis: Evidence from the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality,” *Urban Studies* 39, no. 4 (2002): 619–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098022011949>.

95. Keith R. Ihlanfeldt and Benjamin Scafidi, “Whites’ Neighbourhood Racial Preferences and Neighbourhood Racial Composition in the United States: Evidence from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality,” *Housing Studies* 19, no. 3 (2004): 325–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267303042000204278>.

96. M J Bockarie, A A Gbakima, and G Barnish, “It All Began with Ronald Ross: 100 Years of Malaria Research and Control in Sierra Leone (1899–1999),” *Annals of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology* 93, no. 3 (1999): 213–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00034983.1999.11813416>; A J Njoh, “Urban Space and Racial French Colonial Africa,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 4 (2008): 579–99; L Beckmans, “Editing the African City: Reading Colonial Planning in Africa from a Comparative Perspective,” *Planning Perspectives* 28, no. 4 (2013): 615–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2013.828447>; K. Lynch, E. Nel, and T Binns, “Transforming Freetown: Dilemmas of Planning and Development in a West African City,” *Cities* 101 (2020): 102694.

97. J Seekings, “Race, Class, and Inequality in the South African City,” in *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*, ed. G Bridge and S Watson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 532–46.

98. Emily Skop et al., “Chain Migration and Residential Segregation of Internal Migrants in the Metropolitan Area of São Paulo, Brazil,” *Urban Geography* 27, no. 5 (2006): 397–421, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.27.5.397>.

99. C O N Moser and L Peake, *Women, Human Settlements and Housing* (London & New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987); L Brydon and S Chant, *Women in the Third World: Gender Issues in Rural and Urban Areas* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1989); C Rakodi, “Expanding Women’s Access to Land and Housing in Urban Areas,” *Women’s Voice and Agency Research Series* (Washington DC, 2014); UN-Habitat, “Women and Housing: Towards Inclusive Cities” (Nairobi, 2014).

100. J Walker, AA Frediani, and JF Trani, “Gender, Difference and Urban Change: Implications for the Promotion of Well-Being?,” *Environment and Urbanization* 25, no. 5 (2013): 111–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247812468996>.

101. UN-Habitat and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “The Right to Adequate Housing, Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev.1” (New York, 2009).

102. Aaron Gutiérrez and Xavier Delclòs, “The Uneven Distribution of Evictions as New Evidence of Urban Inequality: A Spatial Analysis Approach in Two Catalan Cities,” *Cities* 56 (2016): 101–8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.04.007>.

103. Aaron Gutiérrez and Xavier Delclòs, “The Uneven Distribution of Evictions as New Evidence of Urban Inequality: A Spatial Analysis Approach in Two Catalan Cities,” *Cities* 56 (2016): 101, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.04.007>.

104. UN General Assembly, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context.”



The implications of evictions are devastating, often both during evictions which can be accompanied with violence, resulting in death, injury and sexual violence, and in the aftermath because of the inability to meet the basic needs of all family members. This results in the infringement of other human rights as access to housing, water and sanitation, livelihoods, schooling for children and other basic necessities are compromised.<sup>105</sup> This propels household members into deeper poverty, with disproportionately negative impacts on women and children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, evictions have continued, despite many governments putting a moratorium on forced evictions during this time. Eight countries were reported by the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, to have affected forced eviction during the pandemic in 2020.<sup>106</sup> For example, in Kenya, a country with no moratorium, approximately 20,000 families were evicted in the Kariobangi, Ruai and Kisumu areas, 150 homes, informal schools and water distribution points were demolished in Dago, Kisumu County and approximately 8,000 long terms rent paying residents of the Kariobangi informal settlement on government land in Nairobi were left homeless (despite court orders). In the United States, although the Federal Government issued a temporary eviction and foreclosure moratorium, both formal and informal evictions have

persisted with corporate landlords responsible for a disproportionate share. The Special Rapporteur notes that at least 20 per cent of the 110 million renters in the United States are particularly at risk in 2021 given an expected “cascading wave of foreclosures (...) as many homeowners who pay mortgages depend on rent payments to service their debt.”<sup>107</sup>

UN Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (UNAGFE) identified five main causes of forced evictions: urban development; large scale development projects; natural disasters and climate change; mega-events; and, evictions that are economic related, including because of the global financial crisis.<sup>108</sup> Local governments have an important role to play in relation to each of these causes, either through direct action or in interaction with other government entities. A good example of the efforts in this direction is the “**Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing**”, which was endorsed by 38 cities and 3 metropolitan areas. The declaration includes 5 points: more powers to better regulate the real estate market; more funds to improve our public housing stocks; more tools to co-produce public-private community-driven alternative housing; an urban planning that combines adequate housing with quality, inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods; and a municipalist cooperation in residential strategies.<sup>109</sup>

## 3.4 Health

Urban research across different contexts contributes to the understanding of health inequalities as a product of diverse of social, political, and economic factors.<sup>111</sup> This includes the ways that communicable and non-communicable diseases, as well as health risks related to housing and livelihood conditions, are unequally distributed across urban and territorial areas and are experienced differently by different groups.

Recognising the relationship between socio-economic status and health outcomes, research highlights the relationships between health inequalities and multi-dimensional urban deprivations.<sup>112</sup> For example, evidence from South Africa suggests that urban inhabitants with higher levels of deprivation are more likely to die

from potentially preventative infectious diseases and are more likely to die at a younger age than more affluent inhabitants.<sup>113</sup> Another clear example of these inequalities can be observed in the exposure to outdoor air pollution – which is mainly an urban problem – and which, according to Our World in Data, “is responsible for 3.4 million early deaths each year,”<sup>114</sup> representing 6 per cent of global deaths. Inequalities in terms of illness as a consequence of exposure to outdoor air pollution not only vary across cities in different countries (Figure 5), but also within cities. For example, research in London has shown that, “[a]reas with the highest proportions of under-fives and young adults, and poorer households, have the highest concentrations of traffic-related pollution.”<sup>115</sup>

105. UCLG, “GOLD IV: Co-Creating the Urban Future the Agenda of Metropolises, Cities and Territories” (Barcelona, 2016).

106. UN General Assembly, “COVID-19 and the Right to Adequate Housing: Impacts and the Way Forward: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context” (New York, 2020).

107. UN General Assembly, 13.

108. UN-Habitat, “Forced Evictions. Global Crisis, Global Solutions: A Review Of the Status of Forced Evictions Globally Through the Work of the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions” (Nairobi, 2011)

109. Cities for Adequate Housing, “Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing and the Right to the City,” 2018, <https://citiesforhousing.org/%0A>.

110. Ilona Blue, “Urban Inequalities in Mental Health: The Case of São Paulo, Brazil,” *Environment and Urbanization* 8, no. 2 (1996): 91–99, <https://doi.org/10.1630/095624796101287283>; G. Garza, “Social and Economic Imbalances in the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey,” *Environment and Urbanization* 8, no. 2 (1996): 31–41, <https://doi.org/10.1630/095624796101287256>; Megan Landon, “Intra-Urban Health Differentials in London - Urban Health Indicators and Policy Implications,” *Environment and Urbanization* 8, no. 2 (1996): 119–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624789600800210>.

111. Caroline Hunt, “Child Waste Pickers in India: The Occupation and Its Health Risks,” *Environment and Urbanization* 8, no. 2 (1996): 111–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624789600800209>.

112. Carolyn Stephens et al., “Urban Equity and Urban Health: Using Existing Data to Understand Inequalities in Health and Environment in Accra, Ghana and São Paulo, Brazil,” *Environment and Urbanization* 9, no. 1 (1997): 181–202, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624789700900115>.

113. Di McIntyre et al., “Geographic Patterns of Deprivation and Health Inequities in South Africa: Informing Public Resource Allocation Strategies,” *Health Policy and Planning* 17, no. Suppl 1 (2000): 30–39.

114. Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, “Outdoor Air Pollution,” *Our World in Data*, 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/outdoor-air-pollution>.

115. J. Barnes, T. Chatterton, and J. Longhurst, “Emissions vs Exposure: Increasing Injustice from Road Traffic-Related Air Pollution in the United Kingdom,” *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment* 73 (2019): 56–66.

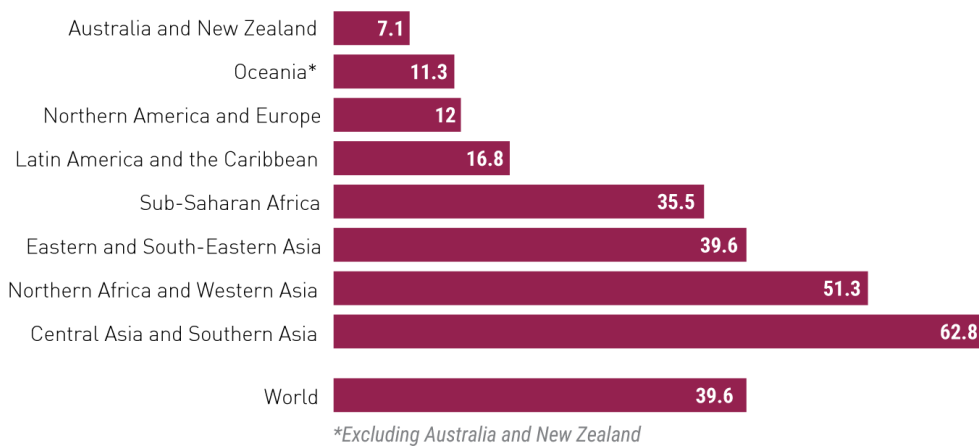


Figure 5: Concentration of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in urban areas, 2016.  
Source: World Cities Report 2020, p. 80, based on EHO Global Health Observatory data repository, 2018.

The relationship between informality and health inequalities has been a persistent focus of research. This includes the long-held recognition by health scholars that lack of access to utilities and basic services in cities of the Global South are a major cause of urban inequity and ill health.<sup>116</sup> The inequalities experienced refer firstly to the prevalence and unequal distribution of health-related issues, from sudden workplace injuries to chronic health conditions, both mental and physical across an urban territory. Secondly, health inequalities also concern the likelihood that a health condition will lead to significant further impacts on an individual or household, or what has been referred to as “health shocks” which are unequally distributed and which disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, particularly those in informal urban settlements.

Health shocks have been identified as a key driver of downward mobility through lost labour, increased dependency ratios, and costs of seeking treatment.<sup>117</sup> Ill-health and poverty are mutually reinforcing: “the poor are more vulnerable and less resilient to illness and injury, and the sick and injured are more likely to become poor.”<sup>118</sup> This can be especially problematic in urban areas where “[t]he high costs and poor quality of food and water mean that low-income urban residents have relatively poor health and are therefore likely to be more susceptible to other shocks and stresses.”<sup>119</sup> There is also a strong link between health shocks and intergenerational poverty as families dealing with chronic illness are more likely to sell off assets.<sup>120</sup>

As part of the discussion of health in urban informal settlements, there has been a growing acknowledgement of the importance of community engagement to address issues of urban health. In the context of the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, for example, researchers found that “Community engagement was pivotal to ending the epidemic and will be to post-Ebola recovery, health system strengthening and future epidemic preparedness and response”, calling public health institutions “to reorientate their conceptualization of ‘the community’ and develop ways of working which take complex social and political relationships into account.”<sup>121</sup>

These lessons have also been key in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic through a better understanding of vulnerabilities, and can be grouped as “1) epidemiological vulnerability (e.g., fatality rates based on underlying health conditions and age); 2) transmission vulnerability (e.g., social mixing, hygiene infrastructure); 3) health system vulnerability (e.g., availability of intensive care); and 4) vulnerability to control measures, including social protection failures.”<sup>122</sup> These lessons highlight the role of local action and the need to support it. In the case of Freetown, Sierra Leone, the role of local community action as a crucial component of a healthy city has been recognised by several actors, including the Freetown City Council (FCC).<sup>123</sup> This has translated into collective efforts between FCC, NGOs and the Sierra Leone Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP) to collectively plan responses and humanitarian support for vulnerable residents during the lockdown.<sup>124</sup>

116. E Werna, R Keivani, and D Murphy, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Development in the Cities of the South* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

117. Harry Jones, “Equity in Development: Why It Is Important and How To Achieve It,” ODI Working Papers, *ODI Working Papers* (London, 2011); K Alam and A Mahal, “Economic Impacts of Health Shocks on Households in Low and Middle Income Countries: A Review of the Literature,” *Globalization and Health* 10, no. 1 (2014): 1–18.

118. Hulme, Shepherd, and Spray, “The Chronic Poverty Report 2004-05,” 45.

119. David Dodman et al., “African Urbanisation and Urbanism: Implications for Risk Accumulation and Reduction,” *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 26 (2017): 11.

120. Jones, “Equity in Development: Why It Is Important and How To Achieve It.”

121. A Wilkinson et al., “Engaging ‘Communities’: Anthropological Insights from the West African Ebola Epidemic,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 372 (2017): 1.

122. Wilkinson et al., “Engaging ‘Communities’: Anthropological Insights from the West African Ebola Epidemic.”

123. City Learning Platform, “Urban Health: From Local Community Action to a Healthy Freetown,” KNOW Practitioner Briefs (London-Freetown, 2020).

124. E Osuteye et al., “Fighting COVID-19 in Freetown, Sierra Leone: The Critical Role of Community Organisations in a Growing Pandemic,” *Open Health* 1, no. 1 (2020): 51–63.

Also, in the context of COVID-19, scholars have drawn attention to the urban inequalities that underpin differential experiences of the pandemic within and across cities, emphasising that 95 per cent of COVID cases have occurred in urban contexts. For example, a recent study has shown that socioeconomic status determines COVID-19 incidence and related mortality in Santiago, Chile, with clear differentiated impact in municipalities of high and low socioeconomic status: "Our analyses show a strong association between socioeconomic status and both COVID-19 outcomes and public health capacity. People living in municipalities with low socioeconomic status did not reduce their mobility during lockdowns as much as those in more affluent municipalities."<sup>125</sup> In a highly unequal and fragmented city like Santiago, "these results highlight the critical consequences of socioeconomic inequalities on health outcomes,"<sup>126</sup> which can be clearly read in territorial terms. Experiences also emphasise the critical role of city networks - "not just of people, viruses and goods, but also of solidarity, policymaking, knowledge and dependency"<sup>127</sup> - for developing responses to the crisis.

While cities have distinct trajectories with regards to the distribution of communicable diseases across urban population groups, there is some convergence between cities around the world in terms of the association

of heart disease and violence (as an "epidemic") with levels of deprivation and poverty.<sup>128</sup> Some researchers have criticised policy responses that target one population group, such as "slum-dwellers" or "vulnerable children" at the expense of addressing the structural and political factors that generate health inequalities.<sup>129</sup> While others have argued for an interrelated set of urban health equity indicators that capture the social determinants of health as well as the cumulative impacts of health, environmental, and economic "stressors", noting that while there is increasing recognition in policy discourse for measurement of urban health equity, specific indicators are lacking.<sup>130</sup>

Finally, the issue of inequality has emerged forcefully in food security debates, which have shifted away from a focus on the availability of food, towards issues of access. In many instances food insecurity correlates with household income. However, there are a number of other factors that influence how food insecurity is distributed throughout a territory. In cities across the Global North, researchers and local governments have recognised the existence of 'food deserts' within urban contexts; neighbourhoods that due to poor public transport and lack of amenities, do not have access to affordable healthy food. One study found that up to a million people in the United Kingdom live in food deserts, which disproportionately

125. G E Mena et al., "Socioeconomic Status Determines COVID-19 Incidence and Related Mortality in Santiago, Chile," *Science* 372, no. 6545 (2021).

126. Mena et al.

127. Michele Acuto et al., "Seeing COVID-19 through an Urban Lens," *Nature Sustainability* 3, no. 12 (2020): 977-78, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-020-00620-3>.

128. Carolyn Stephens, "Healthy Cities or Unhealthy Islands? The Health and Social Implications of Urban Inequality," *Environment and Urbanization* 8, no. 2 (1996): 9-30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624789600800211>.

129. Carolyn Stephens, "Urban Inequities; Urban Rights: A Conceptual Analysis and Review of Impacts on Children, and Policies to Address Them," *Journal of Urban Health* 89, no. 3 (2012): 464-85, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-011-9655-5>.

130. Jason Corburn and Alison K. Cohen, "Why We Need Urban Health Equity Indicators: Integrating Science, Policy, and Community," *PLoS Medicine* 9, no. 8 (2012): 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001285>.

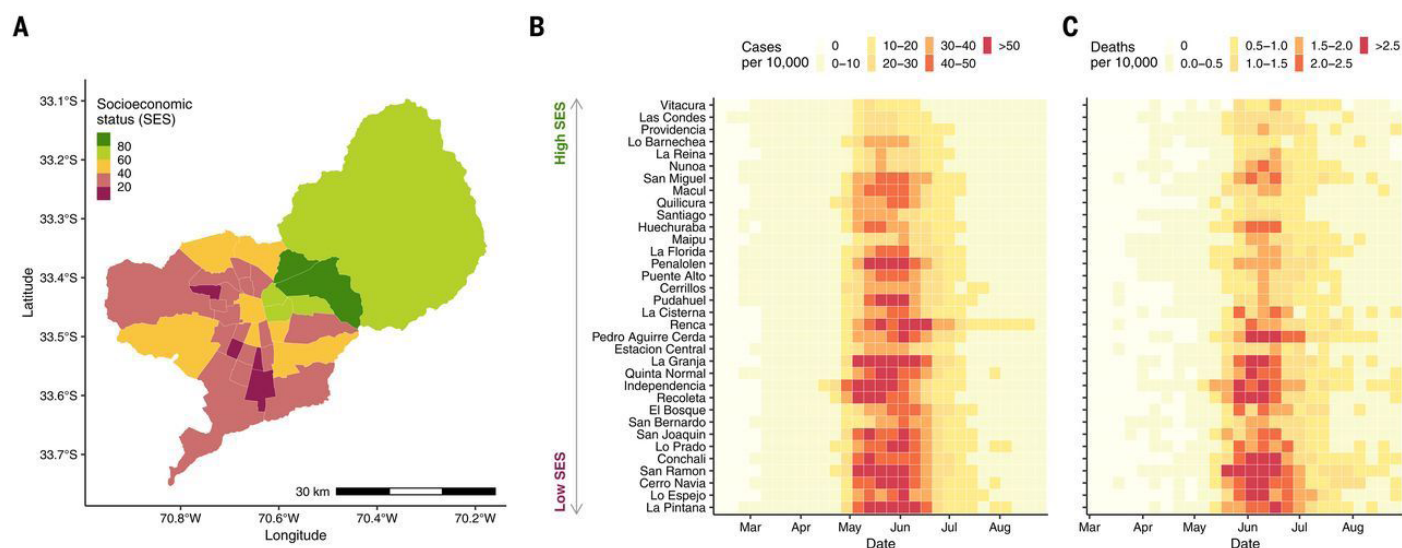


Figure 6: Socioeconomic status, COVID-19 cases and deaths, and mobility data in Greater Santiago. Source: Mena et al, 2021 (under Creative Commons License)  
**A)** Municipalities that are part of the Greater Santiago are coloured according to their socioeconomic status (SES), where a lower score is indicative of a lower SES.  
**B)** COVID-19 cases normalized by population size per municipality. Municipalities are sorted by SES starting with the one that has the highest SES at the top.  
**C)** COVID-19 attributed deaths normalized by population size per municipality.

impacts poorer households and older people, and has wider impacts on public health.<sup>131</sup> In low-income nations greater attention has been paid to issues of malnutrition in urban contexts, specifically the ways that food insecurity corresponds with socio-economic factors such as household size and level of education. For this reason, urban food insecurity frequently reflects and amplifies other forms of inequality. However, numerous studies have found that low-income urban households that practice urban

agriculture in low- and middle-income countries, either for income or subsistence, are more food secure than those that do not.<sup>132</sup> Studies in East Africa have also shown that female headed households are more food secure, and specifically that children are better nourished in female headed households.<sup>133</sup> This suggests policies and interventions by local governments to support practices such as urban food production can contribute towards reducing urban and territorial health inequalities.

### 3.5 Basic and social services

Inequalities in basic services refer to the unequal distribution of reliable, affordable and accessible infrastructures such as water, sanitation, energy, waste collection and urban service, that sustain urban life, including the health of all household members and the ability of women and men to perform productive and reproductive activities. While the equitable provision of basic services is a universal challenge, in urban contexts this challenge takes on specific forms and is frequently concentrated in urban informal settlements.

Research from 15 cities in the Global South (Santiago de Cali, Caracas, Cochabamba, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Lagos, Mzuzu, Kampala, Nairobi, Maputo, Karachi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Colombo, Dhaka), as part of the “WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities’ Water and Sanitation 15-City Study”, states that inadequate access to urban sanitation services: “negatively affects public health outcomes (...); impedes economic growth and productivity and imposes costs on households; (...) degrades the natural environment, particularly open spaces and water sources.”<sup>134</sup> The same study shows that across those 15 cities, 62 per cent of faecal sludge is unsafely managed, and that 49 per cent households rely on on-site collection, 46 per cent on sewer systems, and 5 per cent on open defecation. The unequal provision of sanitation infrastructure disproportionately impacts low-income groups, and especially those living in informal settlements. In Dar es Salaam, for example, the formal sewerage system reaches only 10 per cent of the

urban population; 83 per cent of the population relies upon onsite sanitation services, such as pit latrines, which in 2012 received only 0.9 per cent of public funding for sanitation.<sup>135</sup>

Focusing on lack of access to affordable clean drinking water, inequalities frequently concern access to physical water infrastructure, but they also concern issues of quality and affordability. Low-income groups can be forced to pay up to 52 times as much as residents with a piped water supply to purchase clean water from private tanker trucks.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, while “it is widely recommended that households not spend more than 3–5 per cent of their average household income on both water and sanitation services per month,”<sup>137</sup> studies have shown that piped water is more affordable than informal access to water, and that “the service gap is widening between the provision of piped water and growing urban populations”<sup>138</sup> (see Figures 7 and 8).

131. S Corfe, “What Are the Barriers to Eating Healthily in the UK” (London, 2018).

132. R Sebastian et al., “The Association between Household Food Security and Urban Farming in Kampala,” in *Healthy City Harvests*, ed. D C Cole, D Lee-Smith, and G W Nasinyama (Lima, Peru: CIP/Urban Harvest and Makerere University Press, 2008), 69–88.

133. J Csete, C Levin, and D Maxwell, “Does Urban Agriculture Help Prevent Malnutrition? Evidence from Kampala” (Washington DC, 1998).

134. D Satterthwaite et al., “Untreated and Unsafe: Solving the Urban Sanitation Crisis in the Global South” (Washington DC, 2019).

135. Christopher Yap and Joanna Esteves Mills, “Water and Sanitation Action Research in the City of Dar Es Salaam: Community Mapping towards Inclusive Development” (London, 2013).

136. D Mitlin et al., “Unaffordable and Undrinkable: Rethinking Urban Water Access in the Global South” (Washington DC, 2019).

137. Mitlin et al.

138. D Mitlin et al., “Unaffordable and Undrinkable: Rethinking Urban Water Access in the Global South” (Washington DC, 2019), 14.

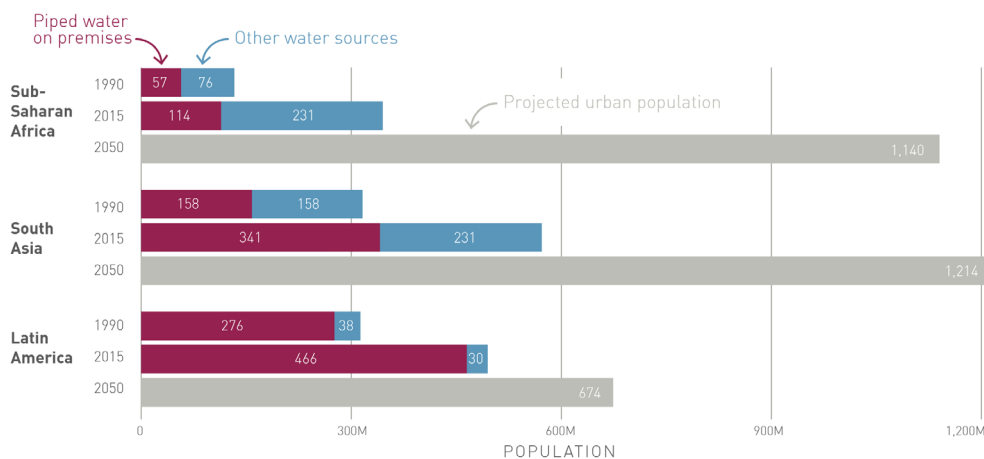
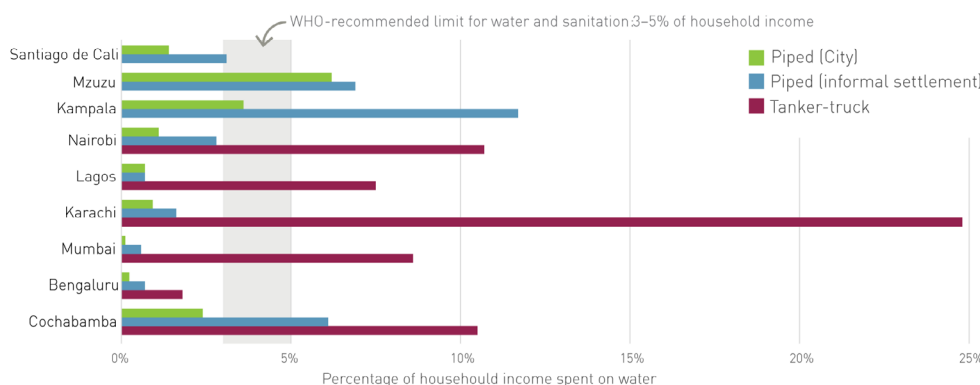


Figure 7: "The service gap is widening between the provision of piped water and growing urban populations".  
Source: Mitlin et al, 2019, based on WHO and UNICEF, 2015; UN DESA, 2017.



Note: a. In Dhaka, water is available at all times, but pressure is intermittent; residents use hand or electric pumps to obtain water from the piped network.  
b. In Lagos, water availability varies significantly depending on household location in the city.

Figure 8: Piped water is often the most affordable water".  
Source: Mitlin et al, 2019, based on the WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities' Water and Sanitation 15-City Study, 2018

Access to energy also represents a fundamental inequality in urban contexts which reflects and drives other forms of inequality. In 2012, an average of 58 per cent of urban populations in low-income countries had access to electricity; but even where populations do have access, unreliability and inefficiency remain key challenges.<sup>139</sup> Where clean energy sources are inaccessible, low-income groups often rely upon solid fuels and open fires for cooking which contribute to urban pollution and health problems, particularly among women. Poor households across the Global South often spend as much as 14-22 per cent of their income on energy,<sup>140</sup> compared with an average household energy expenditure of 4.2 per cent in 2019 in the United Kingdom. In urban contexts, these inequalities are frequently distributed in ways that reflect the spatial distribution of inequalities in housing and other basic services.

Spatial inequalities are also evident with regards to urban waste collection and services. Research has shown

that the amount of waste produced by individuals is influenced by a range of socio-economic factors. However, across all regions, the amount of waste produced by each individual is closely related to population density and also to disposable income: as levels of disposable income increase per capita household waste first declines, then increases substantially, then declines again.<sup>141</sup> In practice this means that the amount of waste produced per household varies significantly across regions, ranging from 0.11 kg per person per day in Lesotho to 4.54 kg in Bermuda; the 16 per cent of the world's population living in high-income countries produces around 34 per cent of the total waste.<sup>142</sup>

There are significant inequalities in the ways that this household waste is collected and managed. Privatisation of waste collection services in several Sub-Saharan African cities, such as Abuja and Kampala, has increased waste inequalities, for example, by under-serving communities living in informal or unplanned settlements,

139. M I Westphal et al., "Powering Cities in the Global South: How Energy Access for All Benefits the Economy and the Environment" (Washington DC, 2017), [www.citiesforall.org](http://www.citiesforall.org).

140. Westphal et al., 13.

141. C C Chen, "Spatial Inequality in Municipal Solid Waste Disposal across Regions in Developing Countries," *International Journal of Environmental Science & Technology* 7, no. 3 (2010): 447-56.

142. World Bank, "What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050," World Bank Data Topics, 2021, [https://datatopics.worldbank.org/what-a-waste/trends\\_in\\_solid\\_waste\\_management.html](https://datatopics.worldbank.org/what-a-waste/trends_in_solid_waste_management.html).



contributing directly to waste build-up which can have significant health implications for residents. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that only 52 per cent of municipal waste was collected from 2010-2018, compared with 99 per cent in Australia and New Zealand (see Figure 9).

Informal waste collection plays a key role dealing with these disparities, as “waste pickers perform 50-100 per cent of ongoing waste collection in most cities in developing countries,”<sup>143</sup> while also providing livelihoods opportunities to many urban residents. WIEGO recognises seven categories of waste pickers: dump/landfill waste pickers; street waste pickers; doorstep waste picker; on route/truck waste pickers; itinerant buyers; sorters; and handlers/processors.<sup>144</sup> Broadly speaking, they can be categorised in at least three wider groups: First, informal waste collectors that co-exist with and complement systems of urban waste collection performed by the private sector or public administrations. A well-known example of this group is the Zabbaleen (literally, ‘garbage people’) in Cairo, Egypt, which were historically in charge of waste collection in the city and since a 2003 city administration reform, share responsibility with private companies in a co-existence that is not free from tensions.<sup>145</sup> Nowadays, they make a living “collecting, sorting, salvaging, and recycling around a third of the waste of the city’s nearly 20 million residents”, recycling up to 80% of the waste collected.<sup>146</sup> The second group is constituted by those working on activities of reusing, recovering, recycling, and selling materials, particularly in informal settlements poorly served by waste collection services. These circular practices are particularly relevant in large informal areas such as Dharavi, India, in which the informal recycling industry had an estimated yearly output of £700m by 2007.<sup>147</sup> Finally, the third group includes waste pickers working informally on dumps and landfills. According to data from WIEGO, waste pickers represent less than 1 per cent of the urban workforce; in Brazil (the only country that systematically reports official statistical data on waste pickers), this translates into 229,000 people who did this work in 2008.<sup>148</sup>

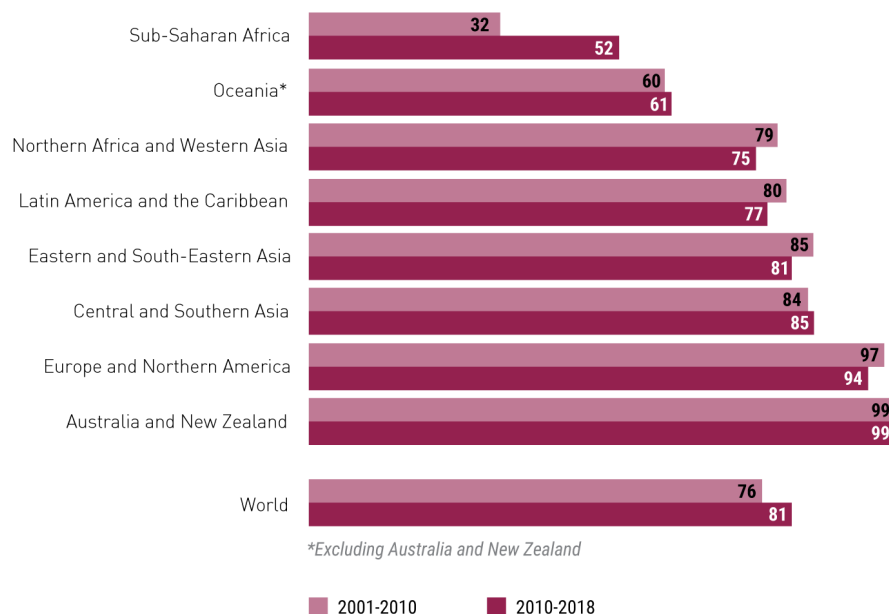


Figure 9: Share of municipal solid waste collected, 2001-2010 and 2010-2018 (percentage). Source: World Cities Report 2020, p.80, based on United Nations, 2019.

Finally, inequalities related to distribution of urban facilities, such as schools, childcare, libraries and medical facilities, are directly related to issues of segregation and fragmentation, and also bring together issues of service provision, policy and planning with the question of access, and entitlements. In an influential paper of the 1970s, Lineberry outlined four issues for understanding and measuring inequality in urban services in the United States: “the problem of choosing the appropriate [spatial] units of analysis, the issue of the permissible range of variation, the necessity for trade-offs between equality and other socially valued criteria, and the confusion of input with output equality.”<sup>149</sup> Or as he succinctly puts it elsewhere: “what is worth equalizing?, equal to whom? and how equal?”<sup>150</sup> Building on this work, various scholars attempted to develop practical principles for more equal distribution of urban services, such as enacting minimum levels (quantity and quality) of service,<sup>151</sup> and examined the role of zoning laws in addressing or exacerbating urban inequalities.<sup>152</sup> Elsewhere, scholars have emphasised the challenge of equal service provision within dynamic and rapidly urbanising contexts, such as Iran.<sup>153</sup>

143. WIEGO, “Waste Pickers,” accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/waste-pickers>.

144. WIEGO, “Basic Categories of Waste Pickers,” accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.wiego.org/basic-categories-waste-pickers>.

145. M Didero, “Cairo’s Informal Waste Collectors: A Multi-Scale and Conflict Sensitive Perspective on Sustainable Livelihoods,” *Erdkunde* 66, no. 1 (2010): 27–44.

146. B Simpson, “Cairo Practice: The Changing Role of the Informal Sector in Waste,” *Isonomia*, 2018, <https://www.isonomia.co.uk/cairo-practice-the-changing-role-of-the-informal-sector-in-waste/>.

147. D McDougall, “Waste Not, Want Not in the £700m Slum,” *The Observer*, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2007/mar/04/india.recycling>.

148. WIEGO, “Waste Pickers.”

149. Robert L Lineberry, “Mandating Urban Equality: The Distribution of Municipal Public Services,” *Texas Law Review* 26, no. 1 (1974): 43, <https://doi.org/10.3366/ajicl.2011.0005>.

150. Robert L. Lineberry, “Equality, Public Policy and Public Services: The Underclass Hypothesis and the Limits to Equality,” *Policy & Politics* 4, no. 2 (1975): 80, <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557376783186650>.

151. William H Lucy, Dennis Gilbert, and Guthrie S Birkhead, “Equity in Local Service Distribution,” *Public Administration Review* 37, no. 6 (1977): 687–97.

152. William C Baer, “Just What Is an Urban Service, Anyway?,” *Source: The Journal of Politics* 47, no. 3 (1985): 881–98, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131215>.

153. Nader Zali et al., “The Distribution of Public Services from the Perspective of Sustainable Spatial Equality in the Tabriz Metropolitan in Iran,” *Tema. Journal of Land Use, Mobility and Environment* 9, no. 3 (2016): 287–304, <https://doi.org/10.6092/1970-9870/3976>.



## 3.6 Transport, mobility and public space

Transport and mobility-related inequalities are focused on the question of accessibility, a central factor in the two ways relationship between the spatial distribution of land uses and the spatial distribution of transport infrastructure and services within urban and territorial areas. Transport is an important factor in social and spatial segregation and exclusion in cities, and in the rate and nature of urban sprawl and the fast-changing peri-urban interface in cities. Specifically with respect to metropolitan areas in both developed and developing countries, congestion and inadequate transport (along with low productivity) were seen by city leaders to have a two-way relationship between urban sprawl, social fragmentation, economic challenges and environmental threats, “exacerbated by limited options to finance new infrastructure.”<sup>154</sup> Along with ICT, transport is also critical to the web of population, socio-cultural and economic resource flows between small towns, large cities and territories at regional, national and global scales.<sup>155</sup> Thus, transport is also an important factor in the ‘underdevelopment’ and marginalisation of towns and territories in different countries and continental regions.

As an intermediate good that enables accessibility to urban and territorial activities that make up a decent life, transport inequalities impact and reinforce other socio-economic, environmental and political inequalities at all scales. At the level of policy and planning, transport inequalities are often focused on “mechanisms and measures of inequality such as social disadvantage, accessibility, poverty, and social exclusion.”<sup>156</sup> In this complex set of inter-relationship, inequalities in accessibility as a result of the transport system are measured through variables like distance to transport and time spent traveling (and by implication distance to transport); access to transport modes, in particular public transport; affordability of transport; freedom from forced evictions from transport infrastructure and safety.

Distance and time spent travelling are primarily a function of the distribution

of the transport system in the context of distribution of population and land uses in urban and territorial spaces. Thus, the location of low-income settlements on the periphery of many cities, combined with poor transport provision and congestion, results in the lowest-income households having disproportionate journey times.<sup>157</sup> As an indicator of social exclusion and inequality, travel time and distance is particularly pertinent to well-being when it comes to access to employment. For example, in a comparative study of Johannesburg and Mexico City that uses “access to jobs as a proxy for access to opportunities more broadly” estimates that “42 per cent and 56 per cent of urbanites in Johannesburg and Mexico City, respectively, are under-served in terms of their ability to reach job locations.”<sup>158</sup> Four groups of residents were identified and mapped: mobile under-served, well-located commuters, stranded under-served and well-located urbanites.

Focusing on transport modes, inequalities in convenient access to public transport are reflected between regions, for example, 33 per cent of the population with convenient access to public transport in Northern, Western and Sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 83 per cent in Australia and New Zealand (see Figure 10 for global comparisons). A closer examination of the social identities of public transport users is important to a deeper understanding of inequalities. For example, in the United Kingdom, “(t)hose who depend more on the bus network to participate in the labour market tend to be lower paid, live in areas of deprivation, and are more likely to turn down employment due to transport limitations.”<sup>159</sup>

154. UCLG, “GOLD IV: Co-Creating the Urban Future” (Barcelona, 2016), 46.

155. UCLG, “GOLD IV: Co-Creating the Urban Future.”

156. S Gates et al., “Transport and Inequality: An Evidence Review for the Department for Transport” (London, 2019), 9.

157. Luis A. Guzman and Juan P. Bocarejo, “Urban Form and Spatial Urban Equity in Bogota, Colombia,” *Transportation Research Procedia* 25 (2017): 4495–4510, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trpro.2017.05.345>.

158. C Venter, A Mahendra, and D Hidalgo, “From Mobility to Access for All: Expanding Urban Transportation Choices in the Global South,” 2019, 2.

159. Gates et al., “Transport and Inequality: An Evidence Review for the Department for Transport,” 19.

Affordability is a critical indicator of transport inequality, particularly in relation to the cost of public transport, not only within cities, but also between cities and rural areas or small villages. Public transport fares are a politically sensitive issue in most urban and territorial areas, as witnessed in the public protests triggered by rising fares in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in Brazil between 2013 and 2018, and in Santiago, Chile, in 2019. The cost of public transport varies significantly across cities, from a fare of \$5.66 USD in London to \$0.11 USD in Cairo.<sup>160</sup>

It is important to look at transport affordability relative to social identity. Figure 11 illustrates the application of an 'affordability index' that showed that in cities like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, "relatively high fares mean that public transport is beyond the reach of the 20% at the bottom of the income pyramid and that public transport cannot meet its social objectives."<sup>161</sup> Public transport costs were also relatively unaffordable for the bottom quintile in cities like Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Mumbai, Mexico City and Manila.

Safety in relation to transport highlights inequalities related to the public-space character of transport hubs, channels and modes. In this context, mobility can be defined as "the freedom and right of all citizens to move in public space with safety and security – and without censure and social control."<sup>162</sup>

The importance of disaggregating statistics on safety in public space is increasingly recognised, as different citizen identity groups mobilise around claims of safety, and transport policy makers and planners recognise the importance of the intersectional social identities in the experience of safety in the public spaces of urban spaces, particularly for women. Even if women's experiences vary depending of the context, the experience of women's insecurity in public spaces cuts across low- and high-income countries: in El Alto, Bolivia, a recent study shows that 69 per cent of women have had experiences of street harassment, and 88 per cent of them feel fear in public spaces;<sup>163</sup> likewise, in the United Kingdom, a recent survey by UN Women shows that 71% of women across all ages said they had experienced sexual harassment in public space.<sup>164</sup>

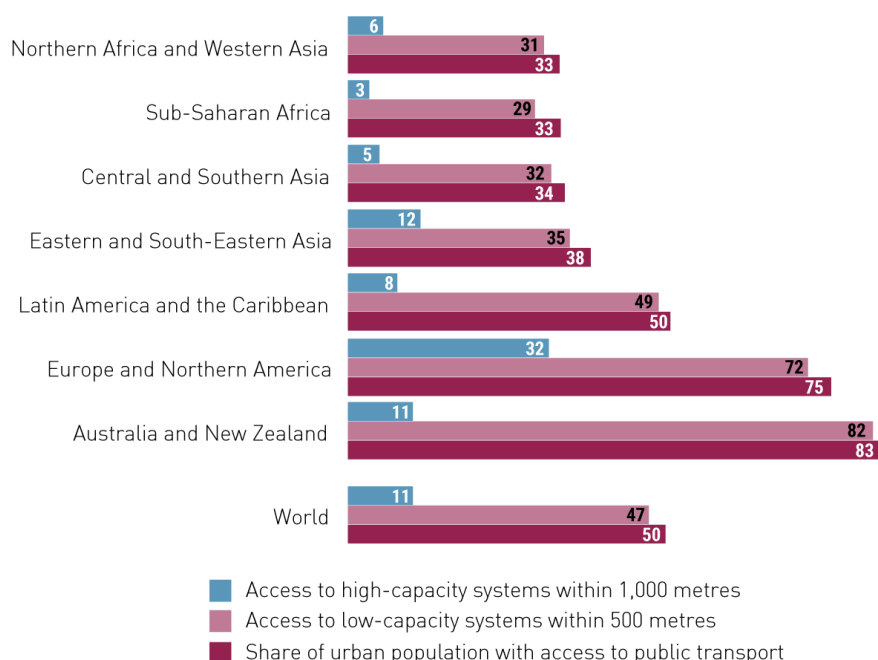


Figure 10: Share of the population with convenient access to public transport, 2019. Source: World Cities Report 2020, p.79, based on United Nations, 2020.

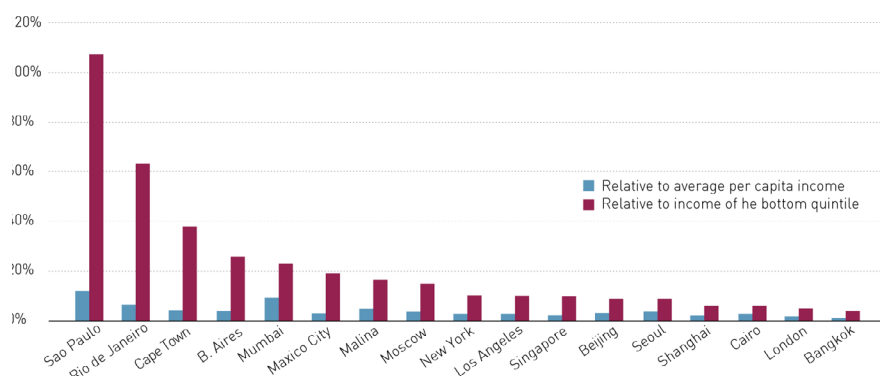


Figure 11: The Affordability Index: public transport fare for a 10km-commute relative to per capita income. Source: Babinard, 2014, based on Carruthers, Dick and Saurkar, 2005.

"Safe cities and public spaces for women and girls" (Ciudades y Espacios Públicos Seguros para Mujeres y Niñas – Ciudades Seguras) is a recent programme led by UN Women in Latin America, with the participation of local governments and other actors in the region. The programme has allowed the generation of new data, the building of alliances, the development of integral responses and investments, and the transformation of social norms.<sup>165</sup> The programme supported initiatives for the documentation of gender violence in public spaces through innovative methodologies in Ciudad de Guatemala, Cuenca and Quito (Ecuador), Monterrey (Mexico), and El Alto (Bolivia).<sup>166</sup>

More broadly, public space has been increasingly implicated in the competition between globalised and local public spaces, which disproportionately impacts inhabitants

160. Statista, "Average Cost for Public Transport (Bus, Tram or Metro) in Selected Cities around the World in 2018," Statista, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/275438/public-transport-cost-cities/>.

161. J Babinard, "Is Public Transport Affordable?," World Bank Blogs, 2014, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/transport/public-transport-affordable>.

162. Caren Levy, "Travel Choice Reframed: 'Deep Distribution' and Gender in Urban Transport," *Environment and Urbanization* 25, no. 1 (2013): 26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813477810>.

163. ONU Mujeres, "Programa Ciudades y Espacios Públicos Seguros Para Mujeres y Niñas En América Latina: Informe de Resultados" (Panama, 2020).

164. UN Women UK, *Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces. A report by the APPG for UN Women* (London, 2021).

165. ONU Mujeres.

166. ONU Mujeres.

in low-income neighbourhoods who are unable to access public spaces such as parks.<sup>167</sup> “Commodification of space has led to different patterns of access to space and hence a differential spatial organization and townscape,”<sup>168</sup> consolidating socio-spatial manifestations of exclusion patterns in the economic, political and cultural

arena. In the context of Colombia, for example, it has been argued that control of public space has become a way for authorities to promote a particular social order and that “that the notion of equality articulated in Bogota actually works to endorse the exclusion of particular populations from public space.”<sup>169</sup>

### 3.7 Vulnerability, risk, and climate change

The production and distribution of vulnerability and risk in urban contexts has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention. As Wratten writes:

Vulnerability is not synonymous with poverty, but means defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress. It is linked with assets, such as human investment in health and education, productive assets including houses and domestic equipment, access to community infrastructure, stores of money, jewellery and gold, and claims on other households, patrons, the government and the international community for resources in times of need.<sup>170</sup>

Vulnerability is commonly produced through trends that are specifically urban, some of which are associated with processes of structural adjustment, such as the deregulation and casualisation of labour markets,<sup>171</sup> and the commercialisation, or commodification, of urban land and housing markets.<sup>172</sup> Assets are a key determinant of vulnerability.<sup>173</sup> Assets can be understood not only in terms of liquid assets, such as cash or valuables, which can be sold or exchanged in order to help a household ‘weather’ a shock, but also in terms of command of resources and entitlements, including resources available through social networks or other means, like investment in educational attainment.<sup>174</sup> This suggests that an individual or household is not necessarily vulnerable to sudden events, such as flooding, simply because they have a low income or non-convertible assets, but rather because they do not have sufficient capabilities or cannot sufficiently realise their entitlements. For this reason, the relationship between assets, vulnerability, and deprivation are complex.<sup>175</sup> Vulnerability, in this sense, is both a reflection and a driver of other inequalities of outcome in urban contexts.

Scholarship on urban poverty has emphasised the ways that low-income groups disproportionately experience vulnerable arising from commercial exchange,<sup>176</sup> for example, research in Lima has shown that urban inhabitants without piped water in their homes can pay up to ten times as much per litre as those with piped water.<sup>177</sup> Households with lower incomes are less likely to be able to accumulate assets that are crucial for responding to socio-economic shocks, such as a member of the household falling ill.<sup>178</sup>

This reading of assets, and their role in mitigating vulnerability, points to a dynamic asset poverty threshold, defined by social, political, and economic relations.<sup>179</sup> A key determinant of vulnerability, then, is the capacity of a household to reaccumulate assets in the event of a sudden shock.<sup>180</sup> Of these assets, research suggests that dwellings are the most significant asset; houses not only provide shelter but are frequently critical for a range of productive and reproductive activities.<sup>181</sup>

One of the key approaches to understanding the distribution of vulnerability within an urban territory has been through the spatialisation of risk. Questions about how risk is spatialized and unequally distributed in urban areas have been a key theme when looking at the relationship between the distribution of disaster risk and urban development. In this regard, research in cities such as Lima has called for the recognition of what has been termed “urban ‘risk traps’, which are accumulation cycles of everyday risks and small-scale disasters with highly localized impacts, particularly on impoverished urban dwellers.”<sup>182</sup> This change of scale calls for renewed ways of documenting and mapping risk. As part of these efforts, an interesting example is a digital tool called “ReMapRisk” developed by researchers

167. Francisco Lara-Valencia and Hilda García-Pérez, “Space for Equity: Socioeconomic Variations in the Provision of Public Parks in Hermosillo, Mexico,” *Local Environment* 20, no. 3 (2015): 350–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2013.857647>.

168. A Madanipour, “Social Exclusion and Space,” in *The City Reader*, ed. F Stout and R T LeGates (London: Routledge, 2007), 163.

169. Juan P Galvis, “Planning for Urban Life: Equality, Order, and Exclusion in Bogotá’s Lively Public Spaces,” *Journal of Latin American Geography* 16, no. 3 (2017): 1459, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lag.2017.0046>.

170. Wratten, “Conceptualizing Urban Poverty,” 17.

171. Alan Gilbert, “Third World Cities: Poverty, Employment, Gender Roles and the Environment during a Time of Restructuring,” *Urban Studies* 31, no. 4/5 (1994): 605–33.

172. Amis, “Making Sense of Urban Poverty,” 149.

173. Marcio Cruz et al., “Ending Extreme Poverty and Sharing Prosperity: Progress and Policies,” *World Bank Group: Policy Research Note*, Policy Research Notes, 2015.

174. David Hulme and Andrew Shepherd, “Conceptualizing Chronic Poverty,” *World Development* 31, no. 3 (2003): 409, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(02\)00222-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(02)00222-X).

175. Caroline O.N. Moser, “The Asset Vulnerability Framework: Reassessing Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies,” *World Development* 26, no. 1 (1998): 2, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(97\)10015-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(97)10015-8).

176. Wratten, “Conceptualizing Urban Poverty.”

177. Oxfam, “Inequality in Peru: Reality and Risks,” Working Paper Peru (Lima, 2015), [https://peru.oxfam.org/sites/peru.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/inequality\\_in\\_Peru\\_Reality\\_and\\_Risks.pdf](https://peru.oxfam.org/sites/peru.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/inequality_in_Peru_Reality_and_Risks.pdf).

178. Satterthwaite, “Reducing Urban Poverty: Constraints on the Effectiveness of Aid Agencies and Development Banks and Some Suggestions for Change.”

179. T J Lybbert et al., “Stochastic Wealth Dynamics and Risk Management among a Poor Population,” *Economic Journal* 114 (2004): 750–77.

180. Michael R. Carter and Christopher B. Barrett, “The Economics of Poverty Traps and Persistent Poverty: An Asset-Based Approach,” *Journal of Development Studies* 42, no. 2 (2006): 195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380500405261>.

181. Carole Rakodi, “Addressing Gendered Inequalities in Access to Land and Housing,” in *Gender Asset Accumulation and Just Cities: Pathways for Transformation*, ed. Caroline O.N. Moser (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 82.

182. Adriana Allen, Linda Zilbert Soto, and Julia Wesely, “From State Agencies to Ordinary Citizens: Reframing Risk-Mitigation Investments and Their Impact to Disrupt Urban Risk Traps in Lima, Peru,” *Environment & Urbanization* 29, no. 2 (2017): 477.

in collaboration with community-based organisations. This digital platform has been used for local surveys in Latin American and African cities, and “allows users to document and monitor how and where risk accumulation cycles or “urban risk traps” materialize over time, feeding spatial and temporal details into an interactive online database about specific hazards, who is affected, where, how and why.”<sup>183</sup>

The distribution of risk has received increasing attention in the context of the climate emergency, the impacts of which are not distributed or experienced equally across urban contexts. On one hand, climate change-related risk and natural disasters disproportionately impact on vulnerable and often low-income

urban populations.<sup>184</sup> For example, in Dar es Salaam, informal settlements are likely to be located on land that is liable to flooding.<sup>185</sup> On the other hand, efforts to adapt to climate change and to mitigate its impacts can exacerbate socio-spatial inequalities, for example through the ways that vulnerable urban populations are displaced through or omitted from climate change adaptation strategies.<sup>186</sup> For this reason Archer and Dodman call attention to both the procedural and distributional dimensions of justice in capacity building processes for climate change adaptation.<sup>187</sup> Others caution against creating more environmentally sustainable cities at the expense of equitable economic development and environmental justice.<sup>188</sup>

## 4. Structural inequalities in urban processes

Having reviewed several inequalities in urban contexts in Section 3, this section will focus on the structural inequalities driven by institutional, political, economic and social interests that determine the ways that some groups are marginalised within, or excluded from, urban processes. Urban processes refer here to processes that take place and impact urban contexts, but which are embedded in local, regional, national and global dynamics, inextricably linked to urban systems.

Although unequal processes and outcomes are mutually reinforced and intertwined, establishing this analytical distinction supports engagement with structurally unequal processes as forms of inequality in their own right, through the lens of recognition and participation. Structural inequalities in urban processes are not just a form of inequality, but they actually drive, reproduce, and reflect the distributional and spatial inequalities outlined above. Political, economic and social inequalities are closely interrelated and reinforce one another.<sup>189</sup> As Susan Fainstein explains, questions of cities and justice (or equality), relate to both just outcomes and just processes in city production. In her words, while the first one understands that in producing a good city “ultimate condition matters more than how it is achieved,”<sup>190</sup> the

second one will see the good city as one that “allows the retention of group identities and the explicit recognition of difference.”<sup>191</sup>

The mechanisms, relations, and structures through which inequalities are produced and experienced have been the subject of significant scholarship. In the past forty years, research on structural inequalities in urban processes has demonstrated how they have been exacerbated by global neoliberal trends, which have transformed both the global economy and processes of urban governance. Global restructuring and increasing mobility of capital, and the reconfiguration of the state, have had dramatic implications on the way that cities are governed and managed; “governance ... is being rescaled, policy is being reoriented away from redistribution and toward competition.”<sup>192</sup> These global governance trends translate into and intersect with the shift to contemporary dominance of the ‘competitive city’ and the policy and planning that follows from this. This included a changing role of local government and national states, in which cities are characterised by the increased involvement of private actors in what was formerly public provision, engaging with debates related to the apparent benefits of the

183. Allen, Zilbert Soto, and Wesely, 488.

184. Diana Reckien et al., “Climate Change, Equity and the Sustainable Development Goals: An Urban Perspective,” *Environment and Urbanization* 29, no. 1 [2017]: 159–82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247816677778>.

185. T Sakijege, “Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Housing Development: The Case of Keko Machungwa Informal Settlement, Dar Es Salaam,” *Urban Africa Risk Knowledge Working Papers* (London, 2017).

186. Isabelle Anguelovski et al., “Equity Impacts of Urban Land Use Planning for Climate Adaptation: Critical Perspectives from the Global North and South,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 36, no. 3 [2016]: 333–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X16645166>.

187. Diane Archer and David Dodman, “Making Capacity Building Critical: Power and Justice in Building Urban Climate Resilience in Indonesia and Thailand,” *Urban Climate* 14 [2015]: 68–78, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2015.06.007>.

188. Donovan Finn and Lynn McCormick, “Urban Climate Change Plans: How Holistic?,” *Local Environment* 16, no. 4 [2011]: 397–416, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.579091>; Andrew Pattison and Chandra Russo, “Climate Action Planning: An Intersectional Approach to the Urban Equity Dilemma,” in *Systemic Crises of Global Climate Change: Intersections of Race, Class and Gender*, ed. Phoebe Godfrey and Denise Torres (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 250–62.

189. Anmol Chaddha and William Julius Wilson, “Way Down in the Hole: Systemic Urban Inequality and The Wire,” *Critical Inquiry* 38 [2011]: 164, <https://doi.org/10.1086/661647>.

190. S Fainstein, “Can We Make the Cities We Want?,” in *The Urban Moment: Cosmopolitan Essays on the Late-20th-Century City*, ed. R A Beauregard and S Body-Gendrot (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 252.

191. Fainstein, 260.

192. Mark Purcell, “Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant,” *GeoJournal* 58, no. 2/3 [2002]: 100,

housing, land, employment, and other social services. There are unequal ways in which individuals and groups access and engage with markets and other economic flows in urban contexts, which necessarily brings together issues of production, consumption and distribution – with implications for the remuneration of labour, exchange of goods and services, access to housing,

and ultimately asset accumulation and structural inequality.

In the next two sections, two key entry points to addressing structural inequalities are discussed in more detail, that is, the importance of *reciprocal recognition and parity political participation* in policy, planning and management.

## 4.1 Reciprocal recognition

The notion of *recognition* in addressing inequalities focuses on the way that diverse identities are conceptualised, (in)visibilised, respected, and ultimately institutionalised in the design and decision making of policy, planning and management, as well as in official data collection. Adding to it the notion of being reciprocal, implies “the two-way relationships between the recognition of difference in institutions, policies and daily urban practices, and the recognition by oppressed women and men themselves of their own rights,”<sup>193</sup> introducing the importance of civil society claims for recognition in the quest for more equitable cities.

The principle of reciprocal recognition is an active acknowledgment of the significance of intersecting relations of power that underpin social identities and drive structural inequalities. This includes intersecting ideologies linked to class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, migration status and sexuality, and their material implications for the way resources are distributed and needs are met in different urban and territorial contexts. The idea of reciprocal recognition also concerns the relationship between universal human rights commitments and entitlements and the specific claims, needs, and values of individuals and identity groups in particular places. In this sense, the idea of reciprocal recognition goes to the heart of what it means to be marginalised, excluded or in some cases, even criminalised within urban processes and is therefore crucial for understanding and addressing the politics and practices of inequality in urban processes.

The everyday experience of urban dwellers is noticeably affected by the way identities are respected and protected within society, in relation

to race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, migration status, age, and the intersectional ways in which these identities manifest. This is shaped by structural conditions of (mis) recognition, which translates into unequal exposure to, for instance, hate crimes and institutional violence towards certain groups.

Violence against women is a widely shared concern, with the WHO estimating that about “1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.”<sup>194</sup> These forms of violence have an important urban dimension, not only because of the aforementioned gendered violence and sexual harassment in public spaces, but also because of the relationship between adequate housing and gender-based violence. According to the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “vulnerability of women and girls to acts of domestic violence and sexual abuse” increases in particular “when alternative safe housing is not available or when living in homelessness.”<sup>195</sup>

Structural violence against LGBTQI+ people is another manifestation of the relation between recognition struggles and inequalities. In the United States, research has shown that LGBTQI+ people “are nearly four times more likely than non-LGBT people to experience violent victimisation, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault.”<sup>196</sup> Globally, 71 jurisdictions “criminalise private, consensual, same-sex sexual activity”, and 11 of them can impose death penalties for it. Racialised violence has a particularly dramatic manifestation in relation to police violence. In the United States, for

193. Caren Levy, “Routes to the Just City: Towards Gender Equality in Transport Planning,” in *Gender, Asset Accumulation and Just Cities: Pathways to Transformation*, ed. Caroline O N Moser (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

194. WHO, *Violence against women* (2021) <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

195. UNCHR, *Women and the right to adequate housing* (n.d) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/housing/pages/womenandhousing.aspx>

196. Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, *LGBT people nearly four times more likely than non-LGBT people to be victims of violent crime*. (Los Angeles, 2020). <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/nvcs-lgbt-violence-press-release/>



instance, research has shown that “1 in every 1,000 black men can expect to be killed by police”, and that “Black women and men and American Indian and Alaska Native women and men are significantly more likely than white women and men to be killed by police.”<sup>197</sup>

With respect to residents of informal settlements, criminalisation narratives and practices are widespread across the globe, as attested to by the scale of forced evictions. Likewise, criminalisation and narratives of ‘war’ and ‘pacification’ of informal settlements have allowed the targeted use of police violence in certain areas of cities, such as the case of certain favelas in Brazilian cities.<sup>198</sup> In an effort to contest these narratives and advance on official recognition, an interesting experience is the ‘Know Your City’ campaign – a collaboration between SDI and Cities Alliance. The campaign seeks to collect ‘hard data and rich stories’ through community-driven data on slums, which is available online with 7,712 slums and 224 cities profiled in Africa and Asia. The information mapped by organised slum dwellers includes “prioritised development needs, percentage of land ownership, current eviction threat levels, legal status, estimated population and area, sanitation and water infrastructure, the organised community, and health

access and facilities.”<sup>199</sup> In words of the organisers of the campaign:

Around the world, slum dwellers collect city-wide data and information on informal settlements. This work creates alternative systems of knowledge that are owned by the communities and have become the basis of a unique social and political argument that supports an informed and united voice of the urban poor. SDI’s databases are becoming the largest repositories of informal settlement data in the world and the first port of call for researchers, policy makers, local governments and national governments.<sup>200</sup>

Another essential feature of reciprocal recognition is the relational focus of intersecting social identities. Historically from a class perspective a focus on poverty rather than inequality in policy and planning was often judged as more politically acceptable by central and local governments as well as international agencies like the World Bank – see Box 3<sup>201</sup>. Similarly, Gender and Development policy and planning often focuses on women rather than gender equality, and ethnic and religious inequalities often exclude consideration of dominant host cultures. This shift away from the relational focus in all social identities, results in the reproduction of inequalities rather than, as intended, their specific targeting.

197. Frank Edwards, Hedwig Lee, and Michael Esposito. Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race-ethnicity, and sex. *PNAS* 116, no. 34 (2019), 16793-16798.

198. Márcia Pereira Leite, Da “metáfora da guerra” ao projeto de “pacificação”: favelas e políticas de segurança pública no Rio de Janeiro”, *Revista Brasileira de Segurança Pública*, 2, no. 11 (2012).

199. Camila Cociña et al., “Knowledge Translation in Global Urban Agendas: A History of Research-Practice Encounters in the Habitat Conferences,” *World Development* 122 (2019): 139, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.05.014>.

200. Slum/Shack Dwellers International, “Know Your City,” SDI, 2016, <https://sdinet.org/explore-our-data/>.

201. M Alacevich and A Soci, *A Short History of Inequality* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Agenda Publishing Limited, 2018).

202. Mitlin and Satterthwaite, *Urban Poverty in the Global South: Scale and Nature*.

203. Caren Levy, Colin Marx, and David Satterthwaite, “Urbanisation and Urban Poverty Reduction in Low- and Middle-Income Countries,” in *Thinking Beyond Sectors for Sustainable Development*, ed. Jeff Waage and Christopher Yap (London: Ubiquity Press, 2015), 22.

204. Wratten, “Conceptualizing Urban Poverty.”

205. Satterthwaite, “Reducing Urban Poverty: Constraints on the Effectiveness of Aid Agencies and Development Banks and Some Suggestions for Change.”

### BOX 3. Urban inequality and urban poverty

Global development frameworks frequently utilise income-based definitions of poverty. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, for example, aim to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, defined as people living on less than \$1.90 USD per day. However, such approaches do not account for disparities in the cost of living between urban and rural areas and do not reflect the multiple dimensions of poverty in urban contexts.<sup>202</sup> At worst, poverty lines can hide as much as they reveal: In applying the \$1.25 USD poverty line [adjusted to \$1.90 USD in 2015], there appears to be virtually no urban poverty in China, the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, and very little in Latin America.<sup>203</sup>

Multidimensional approaches to understanding and measuring urban inequality owe much to discourses on urban poverty that emerged in the mid-1990s, which sought to emphasise, firstly, the multidimensional and distinctly urban character of poverty in cities, and secondly, that alleviating urban poverty required distinctly urban strategies.

Wratten’s pivotal article was one of the first to present a distinct conceptualization of urban poverty, arguing that four characteristics distinguish it from other forms of poverty: urban environmental and health risks; vulnerability arising from commercial exchange; social diversity, fragmentation and crime; and vulnerability arising from the intervention of the state and police.<sup>204</sup>

Satterthwaite, amongst others, built upon Wratten’s conceptualization, setting out eight dimensions of urban poverty: inadequate income; inadequate, unstable or risky asset base; inadequate shelter; inadequate provision of public infrastructure; inadequate provision for basic services; limited or no safety net; inadequate protection of poor groups’ rights through the operation of law; and poorer groups’ voicelessness and powerlessness. These dimensions also represent key domains in which inequalities manifest in urban contexts, specifically how inequalities manifest for the most vulnerable groups.<sup>205</sup>



There is growing evidence of the ways in which the mal-recognition of social identities in urban policy and planning procedures reinforces exclusionary processes. At the heart of such mal-recognition are deeply held stereotype assumptions about how people with different social identities live, which are often at odds with the reality of people's lives on the ground. There are three stereotypes in particular for women that carry a great deal of exclusionary power and drive inequalities, that is, assumptions relating to the structure of households, the gender division of labour within households and society, and the control of resources in decision making in households.<sup>206</sup> These are elaborated in Box 4.

When these stereotype assumptions influence how data is collected, and how policy and planning is designed, they can distort the activities and

needs of different groups, as well as render them invisible, as examples related distributional questions and women and men's differential to access to housing, employment, and basic services in Section 3 illustrated. In so doing, policy and planning reinforced inequalities, marginalising groups from policymaking, planning and management based on different identities and structural disparities. For example, housing policy that targets the male head of household or proof of formal employment in its criteria, will exclude women and low-income informal sector workers respectively.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, stereotype assumptions about political participation and about access to resources such as time, social networks, and finance, impact on political voice and representation, excluding some groups from formal political arenas and jeopardising parity political participation.

#### **BOX 4. Stereotypes about social identities and urban and territorial inequalities<sup>207</sup>**

Three stereotypes about the lives of women and men in urban and territorial areas in particular carry a great deal of power in the beliefs and values of different ideologies that underpin the intersection of social relations and can be identified as structural drivers of inequalities.

First, based on Western notions of the household, households are often assumed to be nuclear, whereas the empirical reality in most urban and territorial areas reflect a variety of household structures, of which female-headed and extended households are the most common, with child-headed households growing in regions where the impact of HIV-Aids has been most experienced. For example, de facto women headed households have always been high in rural hinterlands where men have migrated for work, as well as in refugee camps, while in some cities there are more than 50 per cent women headed households. Thus, different household structures intersect with class, with particular household structures more experiencing poverty and related conditions of environmental risk. They also intersect with ethnicity, where in some contexts joint households, rather than a nuclear household, are predominant.

Second, the gender division of labour

in which men are considered the breadwinner, working outside the home, and by extension, the head of household, and women are considered the housewife with responsibility for domestic work within the household, is also at odds with the reality of many working women's lives, either because they choose to work or because they have to work. Assumptions also extend to political roles, where men are considered active in the public sphere and linked to formal political processes, while women's more local political activities often go unrecognised. This gender division of labour is reinforced by values and beliefs linked to religion and ethnicity, and in reality, also intersects with class and age, for example, through the practices of child labour in many places.

Third, it is the stereotype that resources are equally distributed within the household and therefore it is possible for policy and planning to target the household as a unit, represented by the head of household, on the assumption that everyone in the household will benefit. Studies show that in practice, this stereotype is problematic, with household members shown to have different access to income, food, education and other services on the basis of intersecting relations of class, gender, age, ethnicity and religion.

206. C O N Moser, "Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs," *World Development* 17, no. 2 (1989): 1799-1825.

207. Caren Levy, "Gender Justice in a Diversity Approach to Development? The Challenges for Development Planning," *International Development Planning Review* 31, no. 4 (2009): i-ix; C O N Moser, "Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs," *World Development* 17, no. 2 (1989): 1799-1825.

208. Moser and Peake, *Women, Human Settlements and Housing*.

## 4.2 Parity political participation

Parity political participation refers to the active and equal engagement by diverse women and men in local and regional governance processes that shape and influence how urban and territorial areas are produced and collectively managed. Here governance refers not only to political leadership, elected local bodies, and political elections and other issues of franchisement in urban and territorial governance, but also to the broader processes of decision making related to policy, planning, management, and the production of knowledge and data that supported the political process. One of the most evident ways in which structural inequalities in urban processes manifest, is in the distribution and concentration of power in relation to urban and territorial governance processes, with implications for the distribution of material goods, services and conditions discussed in the previous section. Who is included in these governance processes, in what capacity and how, brings the principles of reciprocal recognition and parity of political participation into close relation.

For example, with respect to political leadership at urban level, in 2017, only 25 (8.3 per cent) of the world's largest 300 cities were governed by women.<sup>209</sup>

Within different countries, mayors also do not necessarily reflect the diversity of urban populations. For example, in the United States, according to the City Mayors Foundation currently less than one-third of America's 100 largest cities are led by an African American, which includes several female mayors.<sup>210</sup> Also in the United States, currently only two of the 50 states are led by someone who self-identifies as not white, and there are no African American governors.<sup>211</sup> Similar gender and racial inequalities are apparent at regional level. In Europe in 2017, the proportion of women leading regional assemblies increased to 21.5 per cent according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).<sup>212</sup>

Looking at the evidence on gender inequality in locally elected bodies, data based on 133 countries show that women constituted 36 per cent of elected members in local

deliberative bodies, in which "(o)nlly two countries have reached 50 per cent, and an additional 18 countries have more than 40 per cent women in local government."<sup>213</sup> Across the Commonwealth, in 2018 there were on average 22.3 per cent women councillors, with the highest proportion found in Lesotho (49 per cent), with seven other countries having more than 40 per cent of representation (Antigua & Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Namibia, South Africa, Barbados, Rwanda).<sup>214</sup> In January 2020, this range of gender inequality was also reflected at a regional level: Central and Southern Asia, 41 per cent; Europe and Northern America, 35 per cent; Oceania, 32 per cent; Sub-Saharan Africa, 29 per cent; Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 25 per cent; Latin America and the Caribbean, 25 per cent; Western Asia and Northern Africa, 18 per cent.<sup>215</sup> At a European level in 2017, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the proportion of women in regional assemblies was one-third (33.3 per cent), with regional assemblies having at least 40 per cent of women in five Member States (Belgium, Spain, France, Finland and Sweden), but only 20 per cent of women in four Member States (Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary).<sup>216</sup>

Inequalities related to other social identities are also prevalent in locally elected bodies in most contexts. For example, in the United Kingdom, the 2018 Census of Local Councillors revealed that 36 per cent of local authority councillors in England were women, 4 per cent came from a minority ethnic group and 96 per cent were white – while it is estimated that in 2019 about 14 per cent of the national population came from a minority ethnic background.<sup>217</sup> It also showed that the average age of councillors was 59 years in 2018, with 15 per cent aged under 45 year and 43 per cent aged 65 year or over.<sup>218</sup>

Disenfranchisement also reflects identity inequalities in most contexts. Also in the United Kingdom, young people and people from ethnic minorities are less likely to register to vote; while "unskilled workers and the long-term unemployed were more

209. City Mayors, "Largest Cities in the World and Their Mayors: Largest Cities with Women Mayors," n.d.

210. D Kurt, "Government Leadership by Race," Investopedia, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/government-leadership-by-race-5113457>.

211. Kurt, "Government Leadership by Race."

212. V Marfaras, "Women in Local and Regional Government," European Parliamentary Research Service, 2019, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635549/EPRS\\_ATAG20191635549\\_EN.pdf%0A](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635549/EPRS_ATAG20191635549_EN.pdf%0A).

213. UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Women's Leadership and Political Participation" (New York, 2021), [https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#\\_edn15](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn15).

214. CLGF, "Commonwealth Local Government Handbook 2017/2018" Available At, "Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018, <https://www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/clgf-publications/country-profiles/>.

215. UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Women's Leadership and Political Participation." New York, 2021.

216. Marfaras, "Women in Local and Regional Government."

217. E Uberoi and N Johnston, "Political Disengagement in the UK: Who Is Disengaged?" (London, 2021), 22, 33.

218. Uberoi and Johnston, 17.

politically disengaged than people from other occupational backgrounds.”<sup>219</sup> The same study also found that women and older people tend to have more negative attitudes to politics than men and younger adults respectively, and women are less likely to participate in political activities.

There is a wide range of collective initiatives working to promote parity political participation and claims for voice to address structural inequalities that will enable individuals and groups with intersecting social identities, vulnerabilities and capabilities, to promote diversity in government structures. Focusing on gender parity in political participation, these include the global partnership “**Strengthening Women’s Public Leadership: Providing Sustained Support to Formal and Informal Women Leaders for Improved Local Governance**”, between UN Women, UN-Habitat, the Huairou Commission and UCLG; and the promotion of the Feminist Municipal Movement within the framework of the All-UCLG Gender Equality Strategy and

the UCLG Women and the Standing Committee on Gender Equality.<sup>220</sup>

In the growing body of evidence about participation in policy and planning, particular attention has been focused on how planning processes can reinforce disparities, despite the use of participatory instruments. Exclusions can arise through simplistic understandings of communities as homogenous entities;<sup>221</sup> by the differentiated capacities of local representations bodies, such as neighbourhood councils,<sup>222</sup> as well as the coordination capacities among municipalities and local entities;<sup>223</sup> by the lack of recognition of local knowledges and learning processes;<sup>224</sup> by limited understanding of where city-making processes take place outside planning frameworks;<sup>225</sup> or directly through the active exclusion as a means of social control of certain groups from planning processes due to different citizen status and ethnic origins.<sup>226</sup>

219. Uberoi and Johnston, “Political Disengagement in the UK: Who Is Disengaged?”

220. See New global partnership to foster gender responsive local governance <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/new-global-partnership-foster-gender-responsive-local-governance>

221. B Cooke and U Kothari, *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

222. For an example from the United States see Yonn Dierwechter and Brian Coffey, “Assessing the Effects of Neighborhood Councils on Urban Policy and Development: The Example of Tacoma, Washington,” *Social Science Journal* 47 (2010): 471–91, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2010.01.007>.

223. For an example from Greece see L Tsoulouvis, “Urban Planning, Social Policy and New Forms of Urban Inequality and Social Exclusion in Greek Cities,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 20, no. 4 (1996): 718–32.

224. Lucy Natarajan, “Socio-Spatial Learning: A Case Study of Community Knowledge in Participatory Spatial Planning,” *Progress in Planning* 111 (2017): 1–23.

225. C Legacy, “Is There a Crisis of Participatory Planning?,” *Planning Theory* 16, no. 4 (2017): 425–42; A Thorpe, “Rethinking Participation, Rethinking Planning,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 18, no. 4 (2017): 566–82; A A Frediani and C Cociña, “Participation as Planning’: Strategies from the South to Challenge the Limits of Planning,” *Built Environment* 45, no. 2 (2019): 143–61; F MirafTAB, “Insurgent Planning: Situating Radical Planning in the Global South,” *Planning Theory* 8, no. 1 (2009): 32–50.

226. O Yiftachel, “Planning and Social Control: Exploring the ‘dark Side’,” *Journal of Planning Literature* 12, no. 2 (1998): 395–406; H Yacobi, “Borders, Boundaries and Frontiers: Notes on Jerusalem’s Present Geopolitics,” *Eurasia Border Review* 3, no. 2 (2012): 55–69.

## 5. Concluding remarks

This paper has argued that urban and territorial inequalities are reproduced through the interaction of social, economic, political, and ecological processes, and therefore should be approached and addressed as a multidimensional, multisectoral set of issues. Importantly, this implies engaging both with the distributional manifestations of inequality as well as the underlying structural forces driving them. The latter includes two dimensions: the way intersectional identities of groups and individuals are recognised, both as collective claims and by policy makers and wider society – or what is termed here as *reciprocal recognition*; and the way political processes which shape policy are equally inclusive of all voices in urban and territorial areas – or what is termed here as *parity political participation*. Linking reciprocal recognition and parity political participation is the way that the collective agency of diverse groups and individuals contribute towards building mutual support and solidarity within and between places in the context of distributional inequalities.

*Solidarity and mutual care*, as a principle of urban equality, is rooted in the idea that inequalities are the product of unequal relations between groups, organisations, cities, and region. As questions about the historical invisibility of care activities and the ‘crisis of care’ gain centrality – led mainly by the work of feminist movements, but also due to the visibility of these preoccupations during the COVID-19 crisis – guaranteeing the provision of care for all (as well as for those that historically have ‘taken care’ of others) becomes a dimension of inequality in its own right. Not only the burden of unrecognised caring activities has historically been disproportionately on women’s shoulders,<sup>227</sup> but also it has been accentuated by the withdrawing of social safety nets, following both austerity policies and structural adjustment programmes. The deficit of care and solidarity infrastructures becomes therefore an aspect of inequality that, even if it is more difficult to define and quantify than the other dimensions discussed, has important implications for urban and territorial life.

Enhancing the connections and interactions within and between diverse groups across the public sector, private sector, and civil society represents a critical step towards dismantling structural inequalities and addressing inequalities of outcome in cities and their territories. This implies recognising the ‘complementarity’ across and ‘embeddedness’ of different sectors and groups.<sup>228</sup> The complementary relations between local government and civil society are often framed in terms of co-production, both in terms of knowledge and urban services. However, the principles of solidarity and care go beyond co-production, emphasising the intrinsic value of heterogeneous networks, connections, and spaces of interaction that exist outside of shared initiatives, and which are critical for reducing urban inequalities. As discussed in this paper, local governments have a key role to play in addressing most of the manifestations of inequalities presented, and it is important to recognise that such a role can be negotiated and enhanced by building solidarity practices with other groups. Solidarity implies that groups can retain an identity whilst supporting or collaborating with others; it does not require ‘same-ness’. Strategic associations across local government and civil society must continuously be reimagined and reconstituted, forming alliances to support specific initiatives, and also creating spaces of collective imagination and commoning. Solidarity can exist across inter-urban as well as intra-urban contexts, as a means for exchanging knowledge, strategies and experiences across diverse contexts, both between and across civil society groups, as between municipal governments, amplifying urban and territorial issues at a global level.

There are several experiences in which initiatives based on solidarity and mutual care have managed to address some of the issues discussed in this paper, many of which have emerged as responses to alienation, individualism, and inequality. These include experiences led by civil society groups linked to self-organisation, *autogestion*, or cooperatives, operating through practices of collaboration and

<sup>227</sup>. María Nieves Rico and Olga Segovia (Eds) *¿Quién cuida en la ciudad? Aportes para políticas urbanas de igualdad* (Santiago: CEPAL, 2017).

<sup>228</sup>. Peter Evans, “Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy,” *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 1119–32.

insurgence; and also, initiatives led by local governments under notions such as municipalism and the commons.

For example, “The Indian Alliance” formed in Mumbai 35 years ago by the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC), The National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), and Mahila Milan—Women Together, is a well-documented experience in which NGOs and organisations of slum and pavements dwellers work together to improve their housing and urban conditions. Under guiding principles such as “Start with the poorest of the poor”, “Participation of women is central”, and “The poor must be partners, not beneficiaries”, the Alliance has managed to negotiate and work together with different public entities, providing solutions at scale that include more than 6,800 housing units constructed, and 33,300 families relocated. Solidarity to address urban inequality can be also found in insurgent practices, such as the Platform for Mortgage-affected People in Spain (PAH - Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca).<sup>229</sup> Through practices that include the blocking of evictions and the occupation of empty bank-owned housing, PAH has advanced on housing rights while creating the “seeds of new social relations”, manifested for example in “some cases (of) successfully negotiated water and electricity connections with local government and with service providers in 2014 for people who could not pay.”<sup>230</sup>

As mentioned, many of the solidarity and care ideas are brought together by local governments themselves, for example through the New Municipalist movement – which was most notably articulated in the Barcelona-led ‘Fearless Cities summit’ in 2017. The movement emerged in recent years as an response to neoliberal approaches to governance in cities, mobilising three fundamental principles: the feminisation of politics; its focus on concrete actions; and its international commitment, even if prioritising local organisation and action.<sup>231</sup> New municipalism foregrounds feminist values and ethics of care in municipal politics, not only in terms of enhancing gender representation in local government, but reimagining the role and responsibilities of local government: to manage cities as places of cooperation rather than competition and actively contest systems of oppression. A

recent “Global municipalist map and directory of organisations” identifies 50 municipalist organisations across all continents,<sup>232</sup> being one of the most well-known of which is the experience led by Mayor Ada Colau in Barcelona, which emphasises the role of public institutions in contributing to more just and equal urban outcomes, for example through reversing the casualisation of labour in public institutions.

These cases illustrate that solidarity and mutual care is not only a central dimension of inequality, but also have the potential as a principle or ideal to galvanise collective responses to distributional inequalities, to promote recognition and celebrate diversity across different groups, and to support as well as defend parity political participation in local and territorial governance. In a global context in which urbanization is the living condition of an increasing majority of the world population, collective action by local and regional governments with civil society and the private sector that builds on these re-enforcing principles is increasingly urgent for the realization of urban and territorial equalities that offer the diversity of citizens a decent life.

229. M García-Lamarca, “From Occupying Plazas to Recuperating Housing: Insurgent Practices in Spain,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41, no. 1 (2017): 37–53.

230. García-Lamarca, 49.

231. G Pisarello, “Introduction,” in *Fearless Cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, ed. Barcelona en Comú (London: Verso, 2019), 7–11.

232. Barcelona en Comú, *Fearless Cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement* (London: Verso, 2019).

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