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Sustainable urban development fostering social inclusion

Report[1]
Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development
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Summary

Today, three quarters of the European population live in urban areas. This puts pressure on the available space, jobs and housing, leads to risks of upheaval and puts a burden on the environment. At the same time, such population concentration offers opportunities for resource-efficient responses to climate change and migration. To make use of these opportunities, strategic planning is required. The public sector must take an active role in setting the goals and exercise its role as planning authority. In certain circumstances, it must also assume the role of investor and landowner to counteract excessive deregulation.

Urban development requires robust public service, effective co-operation between public and private sectors and citizen participation. Governments have many tools to influence such development, from national strategies to tax incentives.

Cities that meet the needs of everyone provide the foundations of prosperous societies. In support of Goal 11 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Parliamentary Assembly should call on the Council of Europe member States to ensure that public authorities have influence over urban development, that the principles of human rights and sustainable development underpin relevant policies, and that participatory approaches are used for deciding the future of cities across Europe.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 14092, Reference 4231 of 10 October 2016.

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A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Cities and towns that meet the needs of everyone provide the foundations of prosperous and peaceful societies. The Council of Europe member States must use the political momentum created by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to promote their achievements, bridge the remaining gaps in building inclusive urban communities and thus fulfil Sustainable Development Goal 11.

2. With the rapid urbanisation of our societies, it is important to make full use of the arising opportunities and to minimise the risks. Today, almost 75% of the European population live in urban areas, and this figure is likely to edge past the 80% mark by 2050. On one hand, cities allow for economies of scale, efficient use of resources, social innovation, intercultural dialogue and solidarity. On the other hand, they generate pollution and other burdens on the environment. The influx of population puts pressure on the available space and on the job and housing market, which can and does lead to exclusion, segregation and social unrest.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly is concerned about the urban sprawl that exerts massive pressure on the environment and undermines the quality of life in urban areas. Cities are increasingly affected by global warming, to which they are also major contributors. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, cities are responsible for 75% of global CO_2 emissions. Air pollution causes hundreds of thousands of premature deaths in Europe every year.

4. Urban development often involves addressing conflicting needs and interests and requires effective mechanisms for negotiation and decision making. The goals of economic development can, but must not, conflict with environmental protection. New arrivals to cities are often perceived as a threat to the well-being of the existing population. Failure to respond promptly to such challenges and to provide viable solutions that address everyone's concerns can lead to disenchantment with democratic institutions, actions of protest and violence.

5. In this context, the Assembly notes with concern that in many countries the public sector is in retreat as a land owner, investor and regulating authority, which reduces its capacity to shape the public space. The Assembly deplores, furthermore, the lack of transparency and accountability in the existing decision making on urban development.

6. It should be the rule for all key partners to join forces and build synergies. Governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities and non-governmental organisations have complementary roles and need to work closely together.

7. Global and European commitments to sustainable development should be used by the Council of Europe member States as a guiding framework and impetus for action. The Assembly expresses its full support for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and the New Urban Agenda endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2016, which represents "a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future – one in which all people have equal rights and access to the benefits and opportunities that cities can offer". The Assembly recalls that the European Urban Charter II, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in 2008, highlights that cities are the crossroads of civilisation; they are meeting places, where differences are free to interact and find expression in a spirit of mutual respect.

8. The Council of Europe provides a unique platform for sharing good practices and setting up common standards on democratic governance at the European level through its institutions – the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations – and this platform should be further strengthened.

9. The Assembly is convinced that sustainable urban development must focus on people above all, and welcomes the emergence of "Human Rights Cities", which have adopted the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as guiding norms of governance. Sustainable development, human rights and intercultural dialogue are intrinsically connected. The city should be an incubator where these approaches are nurtured and mutually reinforce each other.

10. In light of the above, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States to:

10.1. with regard to domestic law:

10.1.1. develop and strengthen national policies and strategies for inclusive and sustainable urban development;

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2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 19 March 2019.

10.1.2. ensure that the public sector has sufficient influence and regulatory authority;

10.1.3. introduce incentives and reduce barriers for local authorities to give priority to social cohesion in their urban development projects;

10.1.4. promote human rights-based urban development to ensure that no-one is left behind, and pay attention to the specific needs of children, the elderly, women, migrants and refugees, the poor and people with disabilities;

10.1.5. develop an enabling legal and institutional environment for sustainable urban development, including grass-roots initiatives;

10.1.6. promote mixed use of urban space, combining housing, employment and recreational functions, to reduce the use of transport and improve the quality of life;

10.1.7. facilitate interaction among different groups of the population through urban development planning, for example by means of quotas for social housing within large building projects;

10.1.8. support research on sustainable, inclusive and human rights-based urban development;

10.1.9. promote solidarity – within the city limits, with surrounding areas and with partner cities abroad – by means of redistribution mechanisms, "city diplomacy" and other appropriate means;

10.1.10. promote good governance in accordance with the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance;

10.2. with regard to participation:

10.2.1. promote social dialogue and citizen participation in defining the principles of quality urban development, putting in place relevant policies, and monitoring and evaluating their implementation;

10.2.2. make full use of e-democracy tools for enabling transparent and inclusive participation of the population in local governance;

10.2.3. ensure that local elections provide an effective vehicle for representing the diverse needs of the population, including those of vulnerable groups;

10.2.4. take into consideration the Committee of Ministers Recommendations on the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making (CM(2017)83-final) and on the participation of citizens in local public life (CM/Rec(2018)4);

10.2.5. promote and use the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (Congress Recommendation 128 (2003)), the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool and the child-friendly version of the Urban Agenda "The Cities of Our Dreams", developed by the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, in co-operation with other partners;

10.3. with regard to their commitments under international law:

10.3.1. adopt and promote the European Code of Conduct for all Persons Involved in Local and Regional Governance (Congress Resolution 433 (2018));

10.4. with regard to international co-operation:

10.4.1. take part in the Council of Europe Intercultural cities programme, which supports cities in reviewing and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies;

10.4.2. make full use of the facilities for co-operation provided by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Committee for Democracy and Governance (CDDG) and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance;

10.4.3. take advantage of the opportunities for support provided by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) to its member States and their local authorities through financing, technical assistance and partnerships for sustainable and inclusive growth, climate action and the integration of refugees, displaced persons and migrants;

10.4.4. take part in the Europe Prize competition, which is the highest distinction that can be bestowed on a European town for its actions in the European domain.

11. The Assembly calls on national (and where appropriate regional) parliaments to:

11.1. support action to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, through the development of legislative frameworks, budgeting and democratic oversight;

11.2. reaffirm commitment to the human rights-based approach to urban development by systematically seeking to analyse inequalities and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power;

11.3. encourage inclusive public debate and support the development of effective and transparent decision-making mechanisms for urban development.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Sybille Benning, rapporteur

1. Introduction: Sustainable urban development – a healthy living space for an inclusive society

1. In Europe and throughout the world there is a clear trend towards urbanisation, with a conspicuous movement of population towards metropolises and other highly attractive urban settlements, such as university cities.[3] But how do we explain the magnetism of cities? Densely populated urban areas frequently offer their inhabitants the greatest economic, social and cultural opportunities, which is why there has been an observable influx of young people and migrants in particular.[4] In cities, however, this influx places heavy pressure on the available jobs and the housing market – with high risks of social upheaval and segregation.

2. There are also two sides to urbanisation from an environmental point of view. On one hand, cities create more pollution, seal more open land under built structures and impose other burdens on the environment. At the same time, densely constructed urban areas also offer numerous opportunities for resource-efficient living[5] and thus for sustainable responses to climate change and demographic challenges.[6]

3. You may ask why the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which deals with human rights, democracy and the rule of law, is considering the topic of urban development. I am convinced that a resilient democratic society, where the human rights of all people are respected, requires transparent and effective institutions, and can only prosper in healthy surroundings. People's participation in the processes that shape their towns and cities is the exercise of a civil right. The prerequisites for this participation are a high quality of life, public places where people can come together and a good social mix. If one of the greatest challenges of our time, namely climate change, is to be addressed effectively, a healthy civil society is indispensable. The Assembly can play an important role by promoting relevant policies in co-operation with other partners, such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations.

4. It is worth recalling that the Congress has outlined the key principles of local governance which need to be applied consistently in urban development, in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122), and works closely with local and regional authorities across Europe to put them into practice. The Charter, which has been ratified by all Council of Europe member States, underlines the importance of a clear definition of the competences of local authorities, the provision of adequate resources, capacity building and effective consultation procedures. The Assembly promotes the Charter through parliamentary action and monitoring activities. Its Resolution 2242 (2018) on the role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes and Resolution 1964 (2013) on good governance of large metropolises highlight respectively the role of parliaments as guarantors of successful decentralisation and the importance of promoting citizen participation at the local level.

5. This report explores exemplary urban planning around Europe: cities which are proactive and successful at creating economically, socially and environmentally sustainable communities. The following factors were considered: balanced development of dense neighbourhoods, new mobility concepts, planning concepts for affordable and high-quality urban housing, well-designed public spaces, and community participation, as well as the connection to the region around the city. The report makes recommendations on how national governments can facilitate such initiatives at regional and local levels.

6. In July 2018, Professor Joachim Schultz-Granberg, external expert, was mandated to explore these matters. His research results were presented to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 18 September 2018 in Lisbon and provided the basis for this text. A fact-finding visit to Zurich in October 2018 was an opportunity for me to explore innovative Swiss practices and approaches in urban development.

2. Sustainable urban development in the global context

7. From the outset, I would like to put special emphasis on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not least because the High-level Panel on the Sustainable Development Goals has stated that "the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in cities". The specific goal in question is SDG 11 on

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3. Almost 75% of the European population already live in urban areas, and this figure is likely to edge past the 80% mark by 2050. Source: Eurostat, Urban Europe – statistics on cities, towns and suburbs, pp. 8-9.
4. Eurostat, Urban Europe – statistics on cities, towns and suburbs, p. 14.
5. Ibid., p. 13.
6. Johnsen K.Ø., The impact of European population dynamics on migration policies, Report, 3 October 2016

making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. At the Habitat III Conference in Quito (Peru) in 2016, the United Nations adopted a global road map for sustainable urban development, the New Urban Agenda. This should also guide our endeavours in Europe: let's think globally and act locally.

8. Moreover, I see stable housing as a critical factor for positive child development and family relationships, while substandard housing has negative effects for the health of all individuals. Alarmingly, it has been calculated that 828 million individuals live in substandard housing.[7] This is why a substantial part of this report will deal with the issue of housing.

3. European cities – preserving shared heritage and responding to future challenges

9. Towns and cities must be understood in their wider geographical context. They develop within a regional, national and European space. Europe has a valuable shared heritage with respect to healthy living spaces. The traditional European town or city, with its central market squares and its mix of residential and commercial areas, is conducive to social interaction and provides its citizens with a high quality of life. One of its most important features is proximity. For centuries these urban centres have been preserved and renewed. Our task now is to find new responses to the pressure from an influx of population and to the environmental challenges.

10. In 2007, the member States of the European Union adopted the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities,[8] in which they established a common understanding of principles for a new urban development policy in Europe. The strategy of mixing housing, employment and recreational uses in urban neighbourhoods is also commended in this Charter, which comes out against one-sided ownership claims and the absolute assertion of individual interests. Interaction between policymakers, administrators, the business community, civil society and citizens is a prerequisite for the balanced development of cities. Much emphasis is also placed on preventing exclusion and isolation of individual districts in cities, and I wholeheartedly endorse that message.

11. More recently, the 2018 Davos declaration entitled "Towards a high-quality *Baukultur* for Europe",[9] noted the urgent need to upgrade the built environment in Europe and recognised a number of challenges that are currently impacting our cities, such as accelerated urbanisation, contraction of rural areas, shortage of resources and irresponsible land use.

4. The role of towns and cities in democratic processes

12. What makes people take responsibility for their surroundings, and what makes them participate actively in the life of the community? I firmly believe that a basic condition for such commitment is a healthy living space and the opportunity to take part in the shaping of that space. People appreciate buildings with landmark potential and public spaces that are conducive to social interaction. Local participatory processes are indispensable for involving citizens in the shaping of their town or city and are a good way of giving them first-hand experience of democracy in practice. Inhabitants can only fully experience their town and city when they are active and informed citizens. The absence of appropriate public spaces and of opportunities for social participation and civic engagement soon results in the emergence of social trouble spots, characterised by a lack of employment prospects and by crime.

13. However, to counter such trouble spots and instead promote active participation and the exercise of modern local democracy, it would be advisable to set up elected councils at the different levels of urban decision making. With a crisis of political representation facing many countries, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities strongly believes that such growing disaffection with politics must be tackled at the local level, as enshrined in its Urban Charter II.[10] Towns and cities must work together to establish extensive local democracy. Information and communication technologies must be used to tackle disaffection with the democratic process.

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7. UNDP 2018, www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/BAHIRA.SDG11.pdf.
8. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/themes/urban/leipzig_charter.pdf.
9. https://davosdeclaration2018.ch/.
10. Council of Europe 2009, Manifesto for a new urbanity – Urban Charter II: https://5cidade.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/urban-charter_en.pdf.

14. In Germany, there is a special national *Land* and local authority support programme designed to encourage civic participation; known as the Investment Pact for Neighbourhood Social Integration.[11] Its purpose is to make urban life attractive and vibrant and to promote the social integration of all citizens, particularly through investment in public education facilities, meeting places, community centres, commercial centres, sports facilities, playgrounds and public parks.

15. It has also become established practice to appoint neighbourhood managers for certain sensitive urban areas. In the case of my home city of Münster, the area around the main railway station is a good example of a place where neighbourhood management is helping to reconcile conflicting interests and contributing to greater safety and a higher quality of life.

16. *Betri Reykjavík* (Better Reykjavík) is an online participatory social network in Iceland. It enables citizens to voice, debate and prioritise ideas to improve their city. It does so by creating open discourse between community members and the city council. *Betri Reykjavík* also gives the voters a direct influence on decision making.[12]

17. If we want to ensure that urban development policies meet the needs of everyone, including children, women, the elderly, the poor, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, inclusive consultation processes need to be put in place. Furthermore, local elections should provide effective channels for reflecting diverse interests and concerns of the population in urban development. Taking into account the principle of subsidiarity, the municipality is the policymaker, the service provider, the employer and the custodian of public spaces and public participation. Mayors play an important role when shaping participatory urban development policies at the upper level.[13]

18. Furthermore, the sharing of good practices is essential at the European and international level. Within the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the European Committee for Democracy and Governance (CDDG) and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance provide useful working tools and platforms for co-operation. The Intercultural cities programme (ICC) supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies. The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) offers support to its member countries and their local authorities through financing, technical assistance and partnerships for sustainable and inclusive growth, climate action and the integration of refugees, displaced persons and migrants.[14]

19. International networks provide further opportunities. The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) is an initiative launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in March 2004.[15] The Human Rights Cities Network supported by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by launching their online platform. This platform creates an interactive community of human rights cities practitioners and promotes the development of human rights in Europe and beyond. Guest member cities and associate members are key actors, sharing new ideas and taking current concepts to their own cities.[16]

5. Human rights-based approach to urban development

20. I am convinced that urban development must focus on the well-being of people and pay special attention to vulnerable groups. Human rights and sustainable development are intrinsically linked and need to go hand in hand when designing and putting into practice urban development policies.

21. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines the human rights-based approach as a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is based on international human rights standards and operationally directed at protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities underlying the development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.[17]

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11. *Investitionspakt Soziale Integration im Quartier*: www.investitionspakt-integration.de/ (in German).
12. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/better-reykjavik.
13. Charaf Ahmimed, UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa, www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/UNDESA-Presentation-on-Inclusive-Cities-16-May-C.Ahmimed.pdf.
14. See: Council of Europe Development Bank (2018), Promoting inclusive growth in cities: https://coebank.org/media/documents/Technical_Brief_4_Promoting_Inclusive_Growth_in_Cities.pdf.
15. www.unesco.org/new/en/harare/social-human-sciences/inclusive-and-sustainable-cities/.
16. https://humanrightscities.net/who-we-are/.
17. www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/index_62012.html.

22. The “Gwangju Declaration on the Human Rights City”, adopted in 2011, defines a human rights city as “both a local community and a social-political process in a local context where human rights play a key role as fundamental values and guiding principles”. A human rights city places the individual in the centre. In practice, that means giving space for all voices in urban development decision making. It is an integral aspect of a human rights city to identify who is being left behind, and which voices are not being heard.[18]

23. The City of York was declared the first human rights city in the United Kingdom in 2017. York conducted surveys of people who lived in the city to find out what their human rights priorities were. It then produced a report on how it would go about improving the enjoyment of the right to equality, education, a decent standard of living, housing, and health and social care. The report follows progress, encourages debate and inspires action. The city is now on its second report, and the analysis shows how the enjoyment of rights is being affected, positively or negatively, and why.[19]

24. In Sweden, the Lund City Council decided that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should be applied in all municipal decisions and set up procedures for considering the perspectives of children when planning for roads, buildings, parks, water supply, sewage, waste management, culture, care for the elderly and infirm, business development and investments.[20]

6. Model for sustainable urban development – purpose and vision

25. Urban development requires vision and strategic planning. First, local authorities must describe their model for the development of the city or town, because no objectives can be achieved without a clear sense of purpose. Sustainable development and a human rights-based approach should be central aspects of this model.

26. The City of Vienna, for example, adopted its Smart City Wien Framework Strategy in 2014 as its urban-development model for the period up to 2050. The model sets overarching priorities, which naturally overlap in some areas. These priorities are quality of life (social inclusion, participation, health and the environment), resources (energy, mobility, infrastructure and buildings) and innovation (education, business, research and technology).[21]

27. Furthermore, it is important to consider the regional picture. My home city of Münster has 300 000 inhabitants, about 40% of whom travel by bicycle every day. This context is likely to present very different challenges from those that exist in a metropolis like London. It is also important that the urban development model is not over or under-defined, because it must remain adaptable. Urban development always needs long-term thinking, because spatial structures outlive societal trends.

28. Based on each model and its component parts, specific development plans must then be created for particular urban areas. Such specific plans should include, for example, occupation density, land use, transport connections and urban development requirements regarding public spaces and facilities.

7. New approaches to mobility

29. Travel and mobility are becoming increasingly important in today’s society of intense interactions. As such, a sustainable approach to mobility is imperative for urban areas and their periphery. This is a domain where people’s lives can be better organised and, at the same time, a great contribution can be made to protecting the environment. At this point I would like to stress that the rural surroundings of towns and cities must, of course, be included in transport and spatial planning.

30. New approaches to mobility, involving automated and connected vehicles, will give a crucial boost to the safety, efficiency and environmental compatibility of road traffic. Many cities’ public transport systems already benefit, for instance, from mobile apps that streamline the experience for riders. Using these tools to deliver real-time information about delays enables riders to change their routes on the fly, thus reducing traffic congestion. The new digital opportunities and self-driving vehicles will be of vital importance in linking and integrating all parts of cities and their rural periphery. If cities are to develop sustainably, however, mobility

18. https://rwi.lu.se/publications/human-rights-cities-and-the-sdgs/.
19. Ibid.
20. Kjaerum M., Davis M.F., Fredriksson G. and Sartori Reis I. (2018). Human rights cities and the SDGs. Lund: Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights: http://portal.research.lu.se/portal/files/53375782/HR_Cities_and_SDGs_print_updated.pdf.
21. https://smartcity.wien.gv.at/site/en/.

should not mean the predominance of private cars. The area of land used in the construction of roads and sealed under buildings and infrastructure must be limited for the sake of sustainability. Accordingly, the approach to sustainable urban development, in addition to being pedestrian-friendly, must be clearly focused on integrated approaches to mobility and on car-sharing, local public transport and cycling.

31. It is also very important to consider commercial traffic and logistics as part of the planning process, since goods transport accounts for about one third of the volume of traffic on our roads. In cities, the number of journeys made by courier and parcel services is increasing sharply, partly as a result of online shopping. This calls for new strategies in urban-development planning.

8. Mixed-use districts – a high quality of life for everyone

32. The mixed-use districts approach aims at improving access to workplaces, services, cultural sites and sports facilities. It allows the use of transport and thus pollution to be reduced, fosters community cohesion, contributes to the quality of life and enables the development of vibrant societies.

33. Hybrid districts achieve the highest quality of life if the social mix of their population is matched by mixed use of urban space, where people live near places of work in an area interspersed with cultural facilities and green spaces, all within walking distance of each other. Educational institutions, ranging from schools to higher education and opportunities for life-long learning must, of course, be included. Whenever possible, childcare facilities should be located in easily accessible locations, providing, if adequate, inter-generational meeting places for training and leisure activities, which bring together children and elderly people. This vitality makes for economic, social and environmental sustainability.

34. This is also an explicit rejection of dormitory towns, where people merely go home to sleep, and which have scarcely any community life. If new peripheral suburbs must be developed because of high pressure on housing, these should be woven wisely into existing structures, and a mix of social strata and land uses should be part of the plan.

9. Healthy spatial development – mitigating climate change

35. While infrastructure development is necessary, it should not be done at the expense of the quality of life. Safe, inclusive and appealing public spaces, especially in densely populated urban areas, are of great importance. High-quality green spaces are essential elements of urban development, because they enhance quality of life, improve air quality, help to mitigate climate change and promote biodiversity. Europe can expect more hot, dry summers, and we need strategies for adaptation to climate change, particularly in cities, where green space is at a premium.

36. The 2016 French Public Health Agency study, which concluded that pollution was killing 48 000 citizens every year, placing it among the greatest health issues, only behind tobacco and alcohol,[22] demonstrates the urgency of this problem. To ensure that air is “breathable”, efforts should be made to support heat-tolerant green spaces with optimised water supply. Enhancing vegetation and promoting sustainable transport will be necessary.

37. In urban areas with high population density, we should also focus on the greening of both vertical and horizontal surfaces, such as facades and roofs. Despite – or precisely because of – the shortage of space, such innovative forms of greening have particularly great potential.

38. According to the current national indicator report on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, under SDG 11 – Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – the proportion of recreational space in German cities amounts to 13.9%.[23] In the coming decades, however, thanks to a decline in motorised private transport, we can expect a reduction in land that is currently sealed under buildings and infrastructure. It is not unrealistic, then, that we could see a sharp increase in the proportion of recreational land in cities, which might, for example, reach 20% by 2050. This is an area where targets can be set, and sustainable urban development can be planned. Let’s not miss the opportunity to encourage systematic urban reforestation.

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22. See www.santepubliquefrance.fr/Accueil-Presse/Tous-les-communiques/Impacts-sanitaires-de-la-pollution-de-l-air-en-France-nouvelles-donnees-et-perspectives.

23. Area of recreational spaces as a percentage of the built-up area of cities, i.e. urban settlements with 100 000 or more inhabitants. Source: Federal Statistical Office, *Indikatoren der UN-Nachhaltigkeitsziele*, October 2017.

10. Energy efficiency in the built environment

39. Our built environment can and must contribute greatly to achieving the climate goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. On my mission to Zurich, I learned about the Swiss vision: "the 2000-watt society". The goal is to reduce the primary energy consumption per person down to 2000 watts and a maximum of 1 ton of CO_2 emissions per person per year by 2050-2100. For this reason, the "2000-Watt Site" certificate was developed.[24] The certificate makes it possible for the first time to evaluate large site developments in terms of building quality, density, mixed usage and mobility. The total energy consumption of a certified site is optimised to the targets of the 2000-watt society. The Lokstadt building development in Winterthur, which I visited, aims to achieve these goals and has applied for the certificate.

40. This approach to sustainability is comprehensive and orientated at the long term. Its core idea is an ongoing evaluation process of a site's sustainability, in terms of energy development, planning, implementation and operation. I strongly support this approach and encourage other member States of the Council of Europe to learn from the Swiss example.

41. Furthermore, the current vision of the sustainable city pays little attention to the ecosystems outside the city. The question of how cities will reduce the demand on extra-urban ecosystems providing resources for the city is not always addressed. How many trucks are necessary to supply cities like London or Paris every day? What percentage of energy consumption does freight transport to urban centres represent? These questions raise serious issues about possible compensation mechanisms towards agricultural and farming production areas, which tend to be neglected.

11. Affordable, quality and inclusive housing – a critical factor for building cohesive communities

11.1. Socially responsible land use

42. In many places the rapid influx into highly sought-after urban areas has led to a sharp increase in demand and hence to spiralling housing costs. This shortage of housing and the price increases then result in displacement, homogeneous residential areas and social tensions. To achieve social cohesion through socially mixed populations, affordable housing must be created and maintained. This means not only traditional social housing for people in the lowest income brackets but also, to an increasing extent, housing for those in middle income brackets in cities, with a special concern for young people who decide to form a family. Encouragement of property ownership is also conducive to a good social mix. Buying a home, moreover, is an investment for old age, which contributes to sustainable budgeting. In Europe, the ownership/ tenancy ratio differs very widely between countries. With due regard to regional circumstances, support should also be made available for the purchase of affordable housing.

43. Municipal housing associations and co-operatives can help to make affordable housing available. However, the important role played by private developers in the creation of housing stock should not be underestimated, as they often act more nimbly to expand the property market. Emphasis should also be placed on small-scale housing projects implemented by private owners, because these contribute to the diversity of urban building development. Smart co-housing solutions can also be promoted for different target groups, with common use of services and/or for intergenerational arrangements to provide support to the elder and cheaper housing for the younger.

44. Another reason for the soaring cost of housing lies in the increase of speculative deals, in which land plots are purchased, but never built on, or are repeatedly sold. This prevents the essential construction of new housing and artificially inflates land prices. Governments have several ways to combat this phenomenon. If they define affordable housing as a matter of public interest by virtue of its contribution to sustainable development, land can be made available more cheaply for housing developments. Land owned by national, regional or local public authorities should therefore be used for the construction of affordable housing. In Germany, for example, the Price Reduction Guidelines (*Verbilligungsrichtlinie*), enacted by the Institute for Federal Real Estate, provide scope for the sale of federally owned land to local authorities at a special discounted rate, if social housing is to be built on it. This is not intended to exclude private investors however, because the discounted rate still applies if private investors buy the land from the local authority and undertake to devote a certain percentage of the development to the construction of social housing.

45. Other options may include a higher tax on undeveloped building land, or the use of compulsory building notices imposing a requirement on the landowners to build certain types of dwelling on their property.

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24. www.2000watt.swiss/.

46. European cities where a large influx is only just beginning should take timely action by holding on to inner-city sites and residential properties, instead of selling them for short-term gain. Regrettably, this very mistake has been made in many German cities, and intervening price trends have made it virtually impossible to repurchase the sold properties.

11.2. Construction of social housing

47. The purpose of social housing is to create housing for people in the lowest income brackets by means of public subsidies. National and regional authorities can do this by subsidising the construction of social housing and by creating tax incentives. Setting a quota and ensuring adherence to that quota is then, of course, a matter for city administrations and can reflect local conditions. In Münster, for instance, a quota of 30% social housing is now applied to large-scale building developments.

48. However, a concentration of social housing in peripheral areas, such as the French banlieues or British council estates, is potentially a social powder keg. The aim should therefore be to distribute social housing widely across the territory of cities, although it must be re-emphasised that the key lies in achieving the right mix. Care must be taken to ensure that districts of the city are not cut off, that they do not become dead ends, with no development, no social mobility and poor transport links. In this respect, it is also important to highlight the problems associated with homogeneous social environments in suburban public schools and their consequences for social cohesion.

49. One issue that keeps surfacing in connection with social housing is that of misallocation. In Austria and Germany, the income limit for social housing is only checked on initial allocation, after which the tenant can stay in his or her dwelling forever. Given the shortage of social housing, this means that people who now earn good incomes are still living in low-rent social housing, while no homes are available for those who really need them. This could be addressed, for example, by means of a misallocation levy, which would at least provide additional revenue for the construction of more social housing.

50. It must also be emphasised that the replacement of older social housing with new construction currently poses one of the greatest threats to social housing stock, because new construction is so expensive that people earning low incomes cannot afford to rent them without massive subsidies.

51. The most striking example of vigorous support for affordable housing in Europe is the city of Vienna. The city has more than 420 000 dwellings belonging to the city council or non-profit housing associations, which accommodate a population of 1.89 million. It must also be said, however, that this high percentage of subsidised housing has historical roots and would be almost impossible to emulate elsewhere. The housing that is available on the free market in Vienna, on the other hand, is very expensive to rent. The council housing, moreover, is available only to Austrians and, since 2008, to other European Union citizens, provided they have already been living in Vienna for at least two years. For this reason, all those who move to the city or who arrive there as migrants are excluded from access to social housing, at least for a certain time.

11.3. Co-operatives as a means to promote price stability and common responsibility in housing

52. In Austria, Germany and Switzerland, co-operatives are a tested means of creating housing at stable prices in a way that can counteract speculation. Co-operatives are often non-profit bodies; even those that make a very limited profit are required to reinvest most of their earnings. There are diverse tax exemptions for these co-operatives but also special legal obligations. In Germany, non-profit housing associations were abolished in 1990, but there is still a tax exemption for housing co-operatives.[25] [26]

53. Housing co-operatives distinguish themselves from other co-operative societies in that their members do not own part of the corporate assets, but only share in communal ownership of the co-operative, which is the owner of the real estate.[27] This may comprise several buildings or even, in the case of large co-operatives, a geographically spread portfolio of buildings. Members cannot sell parts of a building, such as a flat, but only shares in the co-operative. Besides acquiring shares in the co-operative, member residents pay a rent-like contribution for the dwelling they occupy.

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25. Brockhaus Enzyklopädie Online, “Gemeinnützige Wohnungsunternehmen”, encyclopaedia entry in German on non-profit housing associations, https://brockhaus.de.

26. Hans-Jürgen Schaffland, commentary on section 1 of the German Cooperative Societies Act (in German), in Johann Lang and Ludwig Weidmüller, *Genossenschaftsgesetz*, De Gruyter, 2005, p. 77.

27. Drömer, Drexler, Schultz-Granberg (2016), *Bezahlbar.Gut.Wohnen – Strategien für erschwinglichen Wohnraum*, Jovis Publishing, p. 39.

54. A good example is the *Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zürich*, which I was able to visit on my fact-finding mission in Switzerland. The ABZ is a non-profit housing co-operative with a stock of 4 500 dwellings in Greater Zurich. It was founded in 1916. The mission statement of the ABZ is as follows: "The ABZ builds and acts in accordance with the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability. We focus on people, not on profit. We are committed to cost price rents and to preventing speculative dealing in building land. We champion co-operative ideas both within and outside the ABZ. As collective owners, our members take decisions on fundamental issues, thereby acting as joint promoters of the co-operative."[28]

55. The advantage of co-operatives therefore lies not only in their impact on price stability but also, and above all, in the participatory momentum and common responsibility that are their hallmarks.

11.4. New co-operatives promoting social mix and mixed land use

56. Besides the large traditional co-operatives with sizeable housing stocks, which often grant their residents only limited participatory rights, there is now also a trend, especially in metropolises and university cities with high housing demand, towards innovative co-operatives with entirely new approaches, in which the aims of social mix and mixed land use play a prominent part.

57. One innovative prizewinning example of a new co-operative development is *Mehr als wohnen* ("More than Living"), the development of the Hunziker Areal complex in Zurich. This project, with a surface area of 41 000 m² and 450 housing units, was launched with the aim of creating not a housing estate (*Siedlung*), but a vibrant district. In 2016 the residents moved in, and there is indeed an astonishingly diverse mix, with many family homes but also students, young couples, singles and senior citizens. Twenty percent of the complex comprises social housing, but this is well distributed across the site to prevent the formation of ghettos. A group of disabled persons is also housed there, as well as orphaned children. In addition, there are two restaurants, a hotel complex, a café, shops, several workshops and offices, a music club, an art gallery, a nursery school and more besides.

58. One new approach is to create less living space per head and bigger communal areas. These new small-scale co-operative projects are based from the outset on a high degree of participation on the part of future residents. A group is often formed which discusses residents' needs with architects and planners, and the living space is then developed accordingly. This frequently results in substantial cost savings, for example if the voluntary renunciation of private cars can result in the creation of only a few spaces for car-club or jointly owned vehicles, instead of a larger, more expensive underground garage.

59. The Kalkbreite co-operative in Zurich is an example of a co-operative with a high degree of co-determination and a high percentage of communal living space. This is evident, for instance, in the cluster units. These are exciting experimental housing situations, which I was able to visit. In these cluster units 20 people may, for example, share a large communal kitchen and lounge, each of them also having his or her own bedroom and bathroom, while families might have two private rooms adjoining the communal areas. In larger complexes several of these cluster units also share rooftop terraces and bicycle cellars, and there are catering facilities, communal sports centres and perhaps also a café. The mix can bring together pensioners, students, singles and couples in these clusters.

60. Apart from promoting a sense of community, this approach can reduce the space needed for individual living quarters and so result in a more efficient and affordable use of resources. There is nevertheless a broad spectrum of opinion as to how far participation and the use of communal spaces should go. A high level of consultation, for example when decisions are taken on the range of sports to be offered by the co-operative, is not everyone's ideal, nor is the high percentage of living space devoted to communal facilities.

61. It must be emphasised, nonetheless, that the appeal of urban life derives precisely from this diversity of options and that a city administration should therefore seek to support a wide range of initiatives that create affordable housing and provide for a good mix. Whether housing is provided by a co-operative, a municipal housing enterprise or private investors, whether it is social housing, housing for the middle classes or owner-occupied property, the right mix makes for a healthy town or city.

28. www.abz.ch/home/Ueber-uns/ABZ-in-Kürze.html.

12. Connecting research community with municipal authorities

62. National and regional governments should support research programmes in the field of sustainable urban development. Together with research establishments and local partners from the cities, they should develop new ideas for sustainable urban development, which should then be piloted in urban areas. Theories must be put to the test in the everyday life of cities.

63. In this context I would like to refer to FONA, the German Federal Government programme of research for sustainable development. In 2016, as part of that programme, the *Zukunftsstadt* ("City of the Future") innovation platform[29] was created to link the research community with municipal authorities, to contribute to the sustainable redevelopment of our cities.

13. Urban initiatives for social inclusion

64. Targeted initiatives supported by local authorities often have a broad outreach and lasting impact. Be it addressing discrimination, promoting intercultural dialogue or encouraging active participation – cities and towns across Europe develop actions to build inclusive and peaceful communities.

65. Increasingly, cities take steps to make women feel safer when moving around the city, and more than ever, women are being consulted in planning new urban development. In 2016, the Barcelona City Hall launched the communication campaign "Barcelona rejects sexist violence" to raise citizen awareness of the sexist violence experienced by women in personal, professional and community life.[30]

66. Successful integration of migrants and refugees is a priority area for many European municipalities. The Youth College is a free education, training and mentoring programme for young migrants aged between 15 and 21 in Vienna. As part of the city's broader "Start Wien" integration initiative, the aim of the Youth College is to help young migrants lead an independent life as quickly as possible by preparing them for further education, vocational training or the workplace.[31]

67. Dublin City Council aims to support community groups with their activities and projects by promoting participation and involvement in the city through the community grants scheme, which is run on an annual basis. Under the scheme, community and voluntary groups may apply for grants for activities which benefit the local community. Dublin Council Community Development Officers oversee reaching out to community members, inform and assist them, and help to build strong social networks. They work to give everyone in the community the opportunity to participate in the life of the city and have their voices heard.[32]

14. Recommendations – reinforcing the role of local authorities in the planning process

68. Sustainable urban development requires vision and strategic planning. It is essential that the well-being of society is placed at the heart of urban development, and that public authorities regain and make use of their ability to shape the way we live in our cities and towns. The public sector must take the lead role in urban planning and as an effective planning authority, it must see eye to eye with private investors. In certain circumstances, the public sector must also assume the role of investor and landowner to counteract undesirable developments resulting from excessive speculation and deregulation.

69. National authorities should provide legislative and institutional frameworks, which support and encourage cohesive and human-rights based urban development. Municipal administrations have a major role to play in the implementation of the urban-development model. Relevant players must be trained and encouraged to choose and follow the path of sustainability and to support economically, environmentally and socially sustainable projects. It is imperative that they systematically develop the courage to innovate.

70. Effective consultations and decision-making mechanisms involving the key actors need to underpin urban development at all stages, from its conception to monitoring and evaluation. Inclusion of vulnerable groups in relevant processes is essential for ensuring that everyone's needs are adequately met, thus reducing the risk of social exclusion and alleviating tensions.

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29. www.fona.de/de/innovationsplattform-zukunftsstadt-20752.html (in German).
30. http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnantimasclista/en.
31. www.uclg-cisdp.org/en/observatory/jugendcollege-training-and-education-young-migrants-vienna.
32. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/community-grants.

71. Cities in very popular areas must come to realise that they can lay down clear requirements before selling land or zoning it for development, to support inclusive community building. As pressure has grown on housing markets, alternatives to the practice of selling municipal sites to the highest bidder have developed over the past few years. In these alternative systems, sites are not sold to the developer offering the highest price, but to the developer whose outline plan offers the most sustainable approaches to the continuing development of the district. Accordingly, this method is known as *Konzeptvergabe*, or conceptually-based contracting.

72. Consultation procedures on land development before sites are sold or contracts awarded are of great importance. This public participation before the sale of land is crucial if cities are to develop in line with their citizens' needs and if building projects are to gain public acceptance. As a matter of principle, there should be round tables that bring together politicians, administrators, business representatives, investors, representatives of civil society and citizens.

73. Urban-development contracts (which are used in Austria, Germany and Switzerland), should be used as an additional means, over and above the local building plan, of achieving the aims of the local authority. This instrument offers great potential for promoting sustainable urban development. Special emphasis is placed, in this context, on specifying priorities and preconditions, because it enables local authorities to pursue objectives, such as developing a culture of high-quality built environment (*Baukultur*) or saving energy. As described above, cities can promote the goal of a good social mix by introducing a requirement whereby a certain percentage of new developments would be devoted to social housing.

74. In addition, incentives should be created to motivate developers to create more public spaces or green areas to compensate for increases in population density. For example, permission for an additional storey could be made conditional on the incorporation of a metro station into the basement of the building.

75. To sum up, sustainability, high quality of life and a good social mix should be guiding principles for cities underpinning their planning procedures. Inclusive and participatory urban planning is an essential element of a democratic society and should be supported and promoted in the Council of Europe member States.