

The Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum

Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation

Introduction

In many respects, culture can be regarded as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.¹ The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda have placed culture at the forefront of current debates on urbanization. Culture and cultural diversity are sources of enrichment, grounded in human rights principles and therefore provide an important contribution to the sustainable development of urban areas.² Today, the notion of culture – understood³ in its broad sense of knowledge, art, belief, capabilities, habits, morals and behaviors – plays a key role in city growth more than ever before. The cultural diversity of cities that fosters inclusivity, tolerance and participation, is therefore widely viewed as a social asset, which can be harnessed in a variety of ways. Urban areas contain the cultural diversity, creative capital, vitality, social infrastructure and career choices to help attract the skills and talent required to generate and maximize this knowledge.

With 55 per cent of the global population residing in urban areas, and with cities becoming more heterogeneous, cultural diversity has important implications for how urban areas are planned and managed to ensure that everyone living in the city can access its benefits and cultural advantages. Similarly, how cities are planned and managed will have a direct impact on the safeguarding of the world's cultural heritage and how the residents of these cities will be able to live their lives in holistic and sustainable ways.

Cities are hubs of innovation often deployed to address a wide range of challenges, for example ensuring that all residents of the city have access to adequate and affordable urban basic services including water, mobility, security, solid waste management and renewable energy. In the context of urban areas, culture and innovation are inextricably linked and engaged in a continuous process of refining each other. The city with its concentration of people, ideas, and resources serves as a catalyst to initiate and sustain innovation. The rapidly changing urban context provides the opportunity for the intersection of culture and innovation and to address persistent and emerging urban challenges.

It is against this backdrop, that the Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF10) has as its theme: “*Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation*”. This will be the first time that a country in the Middle East will host the world's most important conference on cities and human settlements.

The World Urban Forum

Organized and convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the World Urban Forum has become the premier international gathering for exchanging views and experiences on urban challenges. The inclusive nature of the Forum, combined with high-level participation, makes it a unique United Nations conference and the premier international gathering on urban issues.

The objectives of the World Urban Forum are:

- i. Raise awareness on sustainable urbanization among stakeholders and constituencies, including the general public;
- ii. Improve the collective knowledge on sustainable urban development through inclusive open debates, sharing of lessons learned and the exchange of best practices and good policies;
- iii. Increase coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders and constituencies for the advancement and implementation of sustainable urbanization.

¹ Refer to UCLG Policy Statement **Culture is the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development**, adopted the 17 November 2010, in the framework of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders - 3rd World Congress of UCLG, held in Mexico City”.

² New Urban Agenda Document

³ “Societal norms” are the rules of behaviour that are accepted by a certain community or society. It is mindful that these norms for “culture” are what drive city ordinances, new by-laws or building codes.

Thematic Objectives of the Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum

- i. To take stock of emerging approaches and practices in harnessing culture and innovation as a driver for sustainable urban development;
- ii. To provide greater insights into the linkages between urbanization, culture and innovation as a basis for achieving inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements;
- iii. To promote synergies between tradition and modernity, creating spaces for convergence in multicultural and multigenerational communities;
- iv. To promote innovative solutions and approaches to urban development, building on the value of cultural diversity to improve quality of life for all in cities and communities;
- v. To explore the role of culture and the creative industry in driving prosperity and socioeconomic opportunities for all in cities and communities;
- vi. To explore the role of culture and innovation in implementing the New Urban Agenda and achieving urban dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- vii. To build on the lessons learned of previous World Urban Forums, especially with respect to bottom-up approaches to sustainable urbanization; and
- viii. To explore the role of culture and innovation in accelerating and sustaining recovery and reconstruction efforts in post-conflict/ crisis situations.

To achieve these objectives, six dialogues as described below have been proposed

WUF10 Dialogues

Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation

Dialogue 1	Dialogue 2	Dialogue 3	Dialogue 4	Dialogue 5	Dialogue 6
Urbanization, Culture & Innovation	Driving Sustainable Urbanization through Innovation & Culture	Tradition and Modernity: A Creative Convergence for Better Cities	Frontier Technologies and Sustainable Cities	Urban Planning & Heritage Preservation/Regeneration	Partnerships & Initiatives Supporting Culture & Innovation in Cities

WUF10 Dialogues

The Dialogues are high-profile events to discuss policy recommendations with focus on policy actions and innovative means for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Dialogues intend to collect inputs on key aspects of sustainable urbanization from the debate on the main theme of WUF10, and to deepen the knowledge on the sub-themes of the Dialogues.

Dialogue 1: Urbanization, Culture and Innovation

This Dialogue will explore how urbanization affects and is affected by culture and innovation: perspectives from different parts of the world, regional specific.

The continuous flow of contemporary global population movement, including that of migrants and refugees, means that cities all over the world have become much more heterogeneous and multicultural. People from very different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds now live together. Cities such as San Francisco, Toronto, Abu Dhabi and Brussels are among the most culturally diverse in terms of language and ethnicity, with the foreign-born population accounting for 35 to 58 per cent of the population.

While cities have always been melting pots of cultural diversity, there are certain features of contemporary cultural diversity that are novel.⁴ First, cultural diversity in cities is both wider and deeper than ever before. Second, it is far more affirmative as minorities and immigrant groups demand equal rights, access to urban opportunities, and the right to participate in decisions that affect their collective life. Third, the forces of globalization, which drive new international migratory patterns, entail sustained flows of ideas, symbols and meanings, which permanently link the places of origin of culturally diverse urban populations and their current places of residence.

Dialogue 2: Driving Sustainable Change in Cities through Culture and Innovation

This Dialogue will examine the role of culture and innovation in implementing the New Urban Agenda and achieving urban targets included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and the New Urban Agenda in 2016, urbanization has emerged as a key agenda in international development policy. This is a clear indication of the role that planned urbanization can play in achieving sustainable development. Very often, we are reminded that the battle for sustainable

4 UNESCO. (2016). Culture Urban Future, Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: Paris

development will be won or lost in cities.⁵ Cities have a clear role in 'ending poverty' (Goal 1); 'reducing inequality' (Goal 10); promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, and full and productive employment (Goal 8); and taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Goal 13).

This Dialogue will explore ways in which culture and innovation will enhance the transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda – social inclusion and ending poverty; ensuring sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; and ensuring environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development, which are grounded in the integrated and indivisible dimensions of sustainable development.⁶

This Dialogue will further discuss ways in which culture and innovation can contribute to the effective implementation of New Urban Agenda, which is an accelerator for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the Goal 11.

The New Urban Agenda can be implemented through an action framework that encapsulates national urban policies; a system of institutions, regulations and governance; urban and territorial planning; the appropriate financial frameworks; and local implementation. Developing the capacity to implement urban development plans and placing housing at the centre of urban policies and at the centre of urban development are also essential for implementing the New Urban Agenda.

Dialogue 3: Tradition and Modernity: A Creative Convergence for Sustainable Cities

This Dialogue will explore the ability of cities to manage the conflicts between tradition and modernity and to maximize their convergence to bring about sustainable outcomes (economic, social and environmental).

Cultural heritage and traditional knowledge systems (TKs) are increasingly being threatened by modernization, commercialization of culture, digitization, globalization and even rapid urbanization. Supporting and harnessing the potential of traditional knowledge for local development can contribute to achieving sustainable urban development.

Fostering a convergence between traditional aspects of culture and modernization as reflected in part by forward-looking innovation is essential for sustainable cities. Modernization can lead to erosion of cultural, values and practices which guide approaches to and systems of housing, employment and land ownership. Erosion of such cultural values and practices could threaten socio-cultural cohesion. It is important that traditional knowledge systems align, where possible, with the prevailing socio-economic environment, as well as harness the benefits associated with modernization and innovation. Traditional knowledge systems must be transformed into creative goods and services that reflect the cultural value of a city. Similarly, innovation and modernization must reflect the prevailing cultural context.

Dialogue 4: Frontier Technologies and Sustainable Cities

This Dialogue will promote further debate on the increasingly pervasive role of frontier technologies in transforming urban areas and responding to urban challenges with perspectives from different regions of the world.

Urban areas are increasingly characterized by the deployment of innovation and technology and by a revolution in data to inform decision-making and propel a global movement to smart cities.⁷ Often referred to as disruptive technologies⁸, this trend signifies a move towards a knowledge-based economy that relies more on analytical capabilities than physical inputs. This Fourth Industrial Revolution⁹ is characterized by major technological breakthroughs— automation, robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, etc.¹⁰ The application of digital technology is revolutionizing the way cities are developed, mapped, planned, governed and managed, but adapting to these changes will require innovative policies and approaches.

This Dialogue will critically explore the role of innovation and technology in fostering sustainable urbanization and addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization in different settings. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is unfolding as a distinctly urban phenomenon, and as such, cities have become the source, proving ground and beneficiary of digital platforms and technological innovation.

This Dialogue will explore the mutually-reinforcing links between urbanization and innovation given that cities are investing in building technological hubs and incubators, supporting knowledge centres and universities in the belief that this will directly solve urban and environmental problems.

The Dialogue will explore the opportunities and the threats to sustainable urban development brought about by the advancement in technology such as changing labour markets, cyber security, protection of privacy and related human rights, the rapid pace of change outstripping regulatory systems and the risks associated with automated vehicles.

5 United Nations (2014) 'Battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in cities, Deputy Secretary-General Tells Mayor's Forum', Press Release, 9 June, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/dsgsm874.doc.htm>

6 United Nations (2017) The New Urban Agenda, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_256.pdf

7 UN-Habitat (2016) World Cities Report

8 A disruptive technology is one that displaces an established technology and shakes up the industry or a ground-breaking product that creates a completely new industry.

9 Schwab, K. (2016) The Fourth Industrial Revolution, Geneva: World Economic Forum.

10 Brynjolfsson, E., and A. McAfee. 2014. The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

The Dialogue will discuss the challenges reflected in the debate about smart cities. The ever-increasing application of data and technology is driving the phenomenon of smart cities, which involve the innovative application of information and technology to improve quality of life.¹¹ It is important to note that not all smart city initiatives have been successful. Besides, the technology and digital platforms that underlie smart cities are often developed and marketed by private sector actors, which in turn can lock-in or force cities to depend on certain technology, and thereby skew the long-term investment priorities of national and city governments.¹² Similarly, data ownership issues may arise between local governments and the private sector supplying technology in the context of information collected. Increased digitization of decision-making processes in cities can furthermore affect the transparency of the processes, and thus ultimately affect public oversight and accountability.

The Dialogue will suggest ways in which the deployment of frontier technologies can avoid creating a digital divide while protecting human rights and addressing inequalities.

Dialogue 5: Urban Planning and Heritage Preservation/Regeneration

This Dialogue will examine the role that urban and territorial policies can play in preserving cultural heritage, including promoting cultural infrastructure, sites, museums and assets. How can urban planning leverage cultural heritage for regenerating revitalizing urban areas?

Many cities are placing culture at the centre of urban regeneration and renewal. We should, however, make a note that there are some cities where cultural heritage is being diminished in favour of a particular narrative or to make space for profitable business. It is important, therefore, at the WUF10, to discuss the role of urban planning and capacity-building in supporting heritage preservation and rehabilitation.

These cities do not only improve the physical environment, but also the non-physical elements of urban space through creative means that advance the quality of place concept, promoting what has been termed as 'cultural infrastructure'.¹³ These cities have established a creative connection between cultural heritage, tourism and a renewed understanding of the 'soul of the place', which often translates into heterogeneous, multifunctional and diverse spaces. These cities not only create new forms of cultural locality; they also promote urban economic development.

Dialogue 6: Partnerships and Initiatives Supporting Culture and Innovation in Cities

This Dialogue will explore the nature and role of global partnership/initiatives, network, capacity building and new technologies that are supportive of culture and innovation in cities.

This Dialogue will explore the role of partnerships, alliances, collaborations and multi-stakeholder initiatives that utilize culture and innovation in the transformation of cities. It will also highlight the existing gaps and open a conversation on the necessary capacity building, training and education strategies and plans to mainstream culture and innovation into sustainable urban development practices. Lastly, the Dialogue will propose ideas and measures to spur innovative solutions that can help national and local governments, city managers, planners and entrepreneurs to leverage the latest technological advancements in the interplay of culture, citizen-led engagement and innovation.

WUF10 High-Level Roundtables

The High-Level Roundtables are the highest-level segment, featuring key decision makers and the most iconic figures, to deliberate on a set of subjects in line with the theme of the World Urban Forum 10, including high profile emerging issues and global trends. The High-Level Roundtables aim to take the debate on the linkages between sustainable urbanization and the development agenda to the next level, collecting key reflections on the status of and way forward to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Ministerial Roundtable
2. Local and Regional Governments Roundtable
3. One UN Roundtable: UN system-wide approach to culture and innovation as enabler for sustainable urban development
4. Traditional Authorities Roundtable

WUF10 Special Sessions

The Special Sessions generate debate on specific technical aspects of the urban issues with aim of in-depth discussions on specific issues on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Special Sessions also provide substantial discussions on the implementation of initiatives in each identified topic and consider the strategic delivery of the New Urban Agenda in the light of the respective topics.

¹¹ ITU (2015) 'Focus group on smart sustainable cities', <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/focusgroups/ssc/Pages/default.aspx>

¹² Pieterse, E (2019) 'Promoting sustainable infrastructure to underpin African urbanisation' <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/promoting-sustainable-infrastructure-underpin-african-urbanisation-23217>

¹³ UN-Habitat (2008), State of the World's Cities Report 2008, *Harmonious Cities*, UN-Habitat and Earthscan, London.

1. Sustainable Urban Development in the Middle East
2. Addressing inequality and exclusion through culture and innovation
3. Driving shared urban prosperity through a cultural lens
4. Urban culture and climate change action
5. Culture, the creative industry and their impact on urban reconstruction and resilience
6. Migration, culture and urban development
7. Youth, culture and urbanism

WUF10 Assemblies

The Assemblies are featured and created to provide voice to key stakeholder groups from broader segments of the society, particularly instrumental to support an inclusive and participatory decision-making process for a scaled-up implementation of the New Urban Agenda at all levels.

The Assemblies are designed and organized to mobilize a large audience at the World Urban Forum and discuss the most relevant issues for the constituency to advance on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Recommendations from the Assemblies are expected to inform the participation and contributions of the related groups across the successive programme of sessions during the World Urban Forum.

1. Women's Assembly
2. Youth Assembly
3. Local and Regional Governments Assembly
4. Grassroots Assembly
5. Business Assembly

WUF10 Stakeholders' Roundtables

The Stakeholders' Roundtables hold an array of roundtable meetings with various partner constituent groups. These roundtables have an opportunity to present key partners' projects, initiatives and research on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The roundtables also promote strong participation of stakeholders ensuring their inclusion in the identification of new issues, the sharing of lessons learned and the exchange of urban solutions and policies for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Women
2. Children and Youth
3. Business and Industries
4. Civil Society Organizations
5. Foundations and Philanthropies
6. Indigenous Peoples
7. Older Persons
8. Parliamentarians
9. Persons with Determination (Abu Dhabi reference to Persons with Disabilities)
10. Professionals
11. Research and Academia

WUF 10 Networking, Side and Training Events

Organizers will be able to present their proposals to organize networking, side and training events, connected to specific principles and provisions of the New Urban Agenda. This will also be an opportunity to contribute to and leverage the relevance of the World Urban Forum for strengthening partnerships, call for new alliances as well as launching joint initiatives on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and further strengthening the knowledge, awareness and capacity development dimensions of the World Urban Forum.

WUF10 Integrated Initiatives

WUF10 is expected to enhance the common vision on sustainable urban development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by contributing to implementation of concrete innovative solutions for the commitments made in the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Since its first session in 2002, a series of the past sessions of the Forums have laid a solid foundation for bringing together a wide range of urban actors, experts and relevant stakeholders with diverse views to gather substantive discussions.

1. Legacy Projects:

As its tenth commemoration and legacy of a series of the Forums, WUF10 will reaffirm and reinvigorate the importance of the Forum in its role and relevance and discuss future roles in providing substantive inputs to the reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as well as in connecting cities to investors and key urban actors.

- a. WUF Alumni Initiative – aims at consolidating all previous WUF declarations, together with the previous host cities, analyse implementation of the declarations and establish a follow-up and monitoring framework for WUF declarations
- b. Cities Investment Platform – a database connecting cities to investors and an interactive platform during the WUF10 that connects cities to investors, experts and other interested parties, and that will also link to the Capital Advisory Platform of UN-Habitat in cooperation with Abu Dhabi Global Markets and the Department of Urban Planning and Municipalities
- c. Culture and Urban Development Initiative – aims at harnessing culture as a driver for sustainable urban development through policy, community outreach and youth empowerment. This will also include a cultural fusion concert at the WUF 10. This initiative will be implemented with the support of UN-Habitat’s Global Goodwill Ambassador on Culture and Urban Development

2. Integrated Spaces

The integrative nature of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals across their key action areas will take into consideration national and local priorities and specificities, as well as United Nations system-wide coordination for sustainable urban development. These Integrated Spaces will allow addressing cross-cutting contexts that can be the ground for the identification of new research areas, multi-sectoral collaboration, ad-hoc evidence-based policies and urban solutions, innovative approaches and new action-oriented partnerships.

- a. Listen to Cities Room
- b. One UN Room – for integrated UN activities
- c. Urban Cinema – addressing cross-cutting contexts and showcasing innovative initiatives
- d. Urban Library
- e. Media and Communications Centre



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