

LETS BUILD THE INCLUSIVE CITIES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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This document draws on the conclusions of the ‘1st International Seminar on Innovative Local Policies for Social Inclusion’ (Barcelona, 27-28 September 2007)¹ and on the political reflections developed in the framework of United Cities and Local Governments through its regional sections and work committees. It sets out the main political guidelines to be followed while conceiving of, and developing, public policies for social inclusion. It also sets the stance of the UCLG regarding this issue and offers guidance for dialogue with other international organizations or agencies.

Inclusion policies as a global social policy

1. **Local governments play a key role in a globalized world** where most of the population lives in cities and metropolitan areas. This is a world facing new social, economic, political and cultural complexities, with new and diverse challenges and opportunities. Nonetheless, the current era of globalization brings inequalities into the light; in fact, poverty and social inequality have increased in all continents since the last decades of the 20th Century, thus leading to the social exclusion of many people.
2. **Social exclusion is the process by which certain people and groups find their access to basic citizens’ rights systematically blocked** (civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights). Therefore, exclusion has various dimensions: social, economic, political, cultural, relational, digital, generational and gender-based. It is also expressed in various forms: poverty, instability at the workplace, educational shortfalls; disabilities, dependency and a work overload while caring for the home; gender-based discrimination, sexual orientation, religion or ethnic origin; a weakening of community relationships and the fall of affective ties; gaps among citizens based on ethnic and cultural issues; a lack in the provision of high quality basic services; and a loss of cultural expressions.
3. From local political actions it is possible to build closely knitted and democratic societies that ensure the full exercise of rights. That is why social exclusion should be tackled from its underlying causes. In order to do this, **social inclusion policies should be a centrepiece of the political agendas of local governments in this century, together with the human and financial resources, and infrastructure necessary to make this possible.** This is especially important for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to be a reality in our cities, and thus, in the world in which we live in.

¹ This seminar was organized by the City Council of Barcelona and UCLG’s Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy Committee, with the support from the Catalan Government and scientific assessment from the DPU (Development Planning Unit) of the University College of London. At this seminar there were participants from Eldoret (Kenya), Rosario (Argentina), Diyarbakir (Turkey), London (United Kingdom), Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre (Brazil), Palmela (Portugal), Tacoma (United States of America), Cotacachi (Ecuador), Barcelona (Spain), Saint Denis (France) and Bandung (Indonesia). The representatives of these 12 cities, each with different realities, explained their different inclusion policies and at the same time had the mission to make a joint reflection on three thematic axes: (i) social justice and safeguarding rights; (ii) citizen participation and generating social networks; (iii) planning and sustainability of policies.

Inclusion policies as a guarantee to ascertain rights

4. **Social exclusion is visible in territories.** In the deteriorated historical centres and outskirts of big cities, especially in their metropolitan areas, in the proliferation of 'shanty towns', 'favelas' or 'Villas'. In the undocumented conditions many migrants find themselves in. In the unequal treatment and discrimination towards women, different sexual orientations and minority ethnic and social groups. In the total lack of policies for equal opportunities for young people in risk of social exclusion. In the lack of care for children and elderly people. In the inadequacy of public spaces and services for disabled people. In the inaccessibility to public transport, especially for those who are socially or economically disadvantaged.
5. As a consequence of all this, from the viewpoint of their conception and management criteria, **inclusion policies should guarantee universal access to basic services and the safeguard of citizens' rights**; also, they must be guided towards changing social reality based on the values of equality, solidarity and respect for differences; and finally, they must be committed to the world's future, promoting sustainable development and fighting against climate change.
6. **Inclusion policies are aimed at meeting both the material needs necessary to live a decent life, and those needs linked to social ties.** It is in these policies that we must intertwine social diversity and the right to be different, by promoting equal relationships in order to reduce economic, social and cultural gaps. Particularly, social inclusion policies should guarantee a cut-down of poverty and generate occupation and income; they must promote health, personal autonomy, care for dependant people and support to their families; they must guarantee that disabled people can live an autonomous and decent life; they must allow for people to combine time dedicated to a paid job, care and bringing up their children with time for leisure; they must protect children and vulnerable elderly people; they must render access to culture, information and ongoing training more democratic; they must develop an urban model based on relationships of proximity and an accessible and sustainable mobility through high quality public transport; and, finally, they must promote democracy and a critical, participatory and co-responsible society.
7. Exclusion can also be seen in the spatial segregation of population and in the privatisation of public spaces. For this reason, **inclusive policies must set the goal of achieving an integrating urbanism policy that is respectful for social diversity** avoiding the creation of segmented population concentrations, whether they are for ethnic and cultural reasons or social reasons. It is necessary to fight spatial segregation through actions such as: a comprehensive rehabilitation of neighbourhoods; creating high quality public spaces and facilities for the least favoured urban areas; promoting different uses for the land; promoting social cohabitation regarding housing, in order for people with different origins and social and economic standards to share one same territory; to eliminate architectural barriers that may isolate certain neighbourhoods; and, finally, to take into account gender factors in urban planning.
8. In relation to this issue, it is important to mention metropolitan areas, since they constitute urban, social and economic continuums that are vital to the current conditions of globalization. For this reason, **it is necessary to coordinate joint policies and services between different local entities in one same metropolitan area in order to achieve more efficient policies.** From this metropolitan point of view, it is important to prioritize services to citizens (with regards to health, education, social services, housing and the promotion of high quality occupation), as well as improving their mobility. Also, and since they are world economic centres, it is necessary to plan and develop infrastructures linking metropolises to the rest of the world.
9. **Insofar as possible, local governments should foresee social problems.** This means, on the one hand, that they should deal with the factors leading to situations or risks of exclusion from a structural point of view; and, on the other hand, they should base local action on a prior diagnosis of the needs. To do this, they should create tools to measure the impact of policies, such as social observatories. In addition to this, financial and political sustainability should be a fundamental criterion when designing inclusion policies, as well as providing ongoing training for all the players involved in these actions. Finally, these policies should be prepared with integral city programmes guided towards the inclusion of groups in social risk.

10. Given the different political competences at different government levels (local, metropolitan, regional, national and trans-national), **a multi-level approach is necessary in order to ensure that local inclusion policies fit in with supra-local policies.**
11. This is especially important since, generally, the local level does not have the essential inclusion mechanisms such as occupational, housing or urban mobility policies, among others. Therefore, **it is necessary to call for a greater involvement of state agents in those policies that are key to social inclusion, as well as a greater decentralisation of resources** in order for local governments to keep up these policies. The efficiency of these policies greatly depends on the level of decentralization of existing competences and resources.

Inclusion policies as promoters of diversity

12. **All social inclusion policies should lead to overcoming gender and ethnical inequalities**, as well as promoting a respectful co-existence, including all differences.
13. **Migration is a factor that explains global urbanism procedures.** It is estimated that half of the world population, 3,300 million people, live in urban environments. It is estimated that by 2030 this percentage will increase to 61%. Estimates also point out that 95% of this increase in urban population up to the year 2027 will be absorbed, mainly, by cities in the countries of origin of these migrations (migration from the countryside to the city).
14. The local level is the place for an effective management of the migratory reality. **For local governments, the challenge is how to plan their actions from a strategic, flexible and comprehensive point of view.** This planning should be constantly adaptable to new social demands and capable of innovating its actions to face the new and rich social and cultural diversity.
15. The perspective of inclusion implies promoting inter-cultural relations between culturally different communities. More specifically, **inter-cultural policies must be recognizable for their ability to both acknowledge differences and promote a cohabitation framework based on shared civic values.** This cohabitation agreement must be developed based on human rights and, particularly, on the right to the city.
16. **It is necessary to promote the role of territories – fundamentally cities, and their metropolitan areas- to act as proactive agents in international cooperation networks**, with regards to migrations. Public decentralized cooperation offers a great potential for cities issuing and receiving migrant people to work together, and it should aim at achieving human development under the conditions of globalization.

Inclusion policies as promoters of democracy

17. **The procedures of representative democracy are insufficient to fully incorporate citizens as a whole into the decision-making procedures** and to promote their critical ability. This is what participatory democracy procedures ensure: the right of citizens to permanently participate in the public arena, whether this is done in an organized way or individually. In this sense, participation should imply an act of co-responsibility, and for this it is essential to strengthen social networks and include the new players in public actions.
18. Also, to govern under conditions of social complexity means to do this from a perspective of governance. For this, **it is necessary to bring in administration changes that make it possible to create a relational government that is able to apply a global and crosscutting action.** This

means having a holistic approach to problems and to find answers to them through inter-dependant and network actions of all the different players: public administrations (from all the different levels of government), associations and community organizations, and the private sector.

19. Plurality, conflicts and diversity must be accepted as co-substantial issues to the procedures of social participation. Citizens' consensus very often is achieved from previous disagreements regarding how social challenges should be tackled, and this is why it is important to create permanent spaces for dialogue, debate and negotiation. As for the government, **citizen participation must be part of a crosscutting strategy intertwining the different municipal areas through participation plans.**
20. **Citizen participation in inclusion policies** (during the stages of design, implementation and assessment) **is a pre-condition to expressly improve the quality of life of people** facing or risking exclusion, thus ascertaining their rights. Equally, participation contributes to improving the quality of public policies in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.
21. **Participation channels must be designed following the temporal and spatial availability of people**, who must be able to combine participating on the public sphere with their private and working life. The public arena for political participation today is very diverse, since it materializes in the different spaces and times of every-day-life. This variety of participation channels for the civil society, its organizations and the association and community tissue, together with the capacity of local governments of building bridges with these players, constitute key issues to try out new spaces for political participation.
22. Fighting against situations of exclusion is a global effort that is directly linked to local contexts. It is for this reason that it is essential for local governments to supportively commit to one another, together with their civil societies. **Public decentralized co-operation is an efficient tool to promote a municipallistic, cross-border solidarity.**

Bearing all this in mind, the Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy Commission adopts the following general commitments within the United Cities and Local Governments:

- **To contribute to the promotion of a critical reflection and political debate on poverty, inequalities and social exclusion.** To define specific proposals and actions leading to the creation of local social inclusion policies.
- **To share with local governments the most relevant social inclusion policies and a stronger democracy.** To facilitate exchanging experiences and knowledge among cities across the world.
- **To keep up political dialogue with social movements** and the cross-border networks of the World Social Forum through the Forum of Local Authorities.