

Cities for Adequate Housing: from present emergencies to a future of housing justice

Tuesday, October 11th

12:00 - 13:30pm

Context and background of the session

The COVID-19 pandemic made evident the gaps that housing systems have for protecting populations, and notably, the urgency for local and regional governments (LRGs) to foster comprehensive housing strategies that include concrete solutions for the most marginalized inhabitants: there was not enough emergency housing to shelter people living in homelessness nor populations in need of protection, like women and children suffering domestic violence, migrant populations, the elderly and tenants under insecure tenure arrangements, among others. Inadequate housing conditions too often meant overcrowding or lack of connection to public services. While discrimination, together with rent spikes driven by the finalization of housing, meant increased evictions for structurally discriminated populations and for those who lost their jobs, without appropriate protections to ensure that those evicted don't become homeless.

Yet, Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) played a decisive role in identifying adequate housing as a key element to overcome the COVID-19 emergency. **Through enacting innovative and, in some cases, unprecedented housing policy responses, LRGs were determinant in ensuring that many could safely #stayathome.** Indeed, some measures adopted also have the potential to tackle the entrenched, and aggravating, housing-related problems that our cities face – which some cities are starting to deem as housing emergencies in themselves, with many LRGs adopting housing emergency declarations to activate and adopt bold changes and measures. **These experiences show that emergency contexts open up new possibilities for public action,** and that LRGs have a distinct – and impactful – capacity and commitment to implement a rights-based approach to advance housing justice. Yet, emergency declarations also entail risks to democracies, since they allow to sidestep democratic processes and accountability mechanisms in favor of allowing for rapid responses.

This session thus proposes a conversation that is crucial for the present times, but also for the future. As the emergency housing policies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic come to an end, it is imperative that we understand what allowed for their implementation, how they could be sustained and deepened beyond the pandemic and the key elements, values and practices that should be uptaken for a future agenda of local policies committed to housing justice. Were the bold responses adopted only possible due to the expanded competences conferred to LRGs by emergency declarations? What were the roles of the enlarged senses of social solidarity and co-responsibility triggered by the emergencies? How was it important that LRGs were committed to housing rights prior to the pandemic? And most importantly: **how could these experiences be revisited, reinforced and sustained over time as a basis for a joint, local-level strategy to face a global, yet localized, housing emergency?**

Agenda

- **12:00 - 12:10: Welcome remarks and introduction to the session**
- **12:10 - 12:45: Emergency housing policies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic:** what key measures were adopted and what values underpinned them? What enabled their adoption? How could the barriers that prevent their continuity be overcome? If the pandemic highlighted the need for more housing public policies, why have these not been more central to national recovery strategies?
- **12:45 - 13:20: A joint strategy for addressing the global, yet localized, housing emergency:** what key principles and objectives should underpin it? Are housing emergency declarations necessary and sufficient to address the complex emergencies that local housing crises have become? How could these declarations be rights-based and why is it important? How can partnerships with local actors and international fora, coalitions, processes and agendas contribute to setting the basis and implementing such a strategy?
- **13:20 - 13:30: Housing and the UCLG Pact for the Future:** next steps towards a future of housing justice

Resources

- [Cities for Adequate Housing Declaration](#)
- [UCLG Live Learning Experiences: Housing responses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Housing emergency declarations that have already been adopted by some LRGs around the world](#) (Emergency Governance Initiative for Cities and Regions, Policy Brief 2).
- [The Shift Directives for addressing the financialization of housing from the local level](#)
- [UCLG Report: Rethinking housing policies](#)
- [GOLD VI Working Paper: "Housing systems and urban and territorial inequalities: Bottom-up pathways to more equality-driven housing systems"](#)
- ["Towards a post-pandemic housing policy for cities" by CIDOB](#)