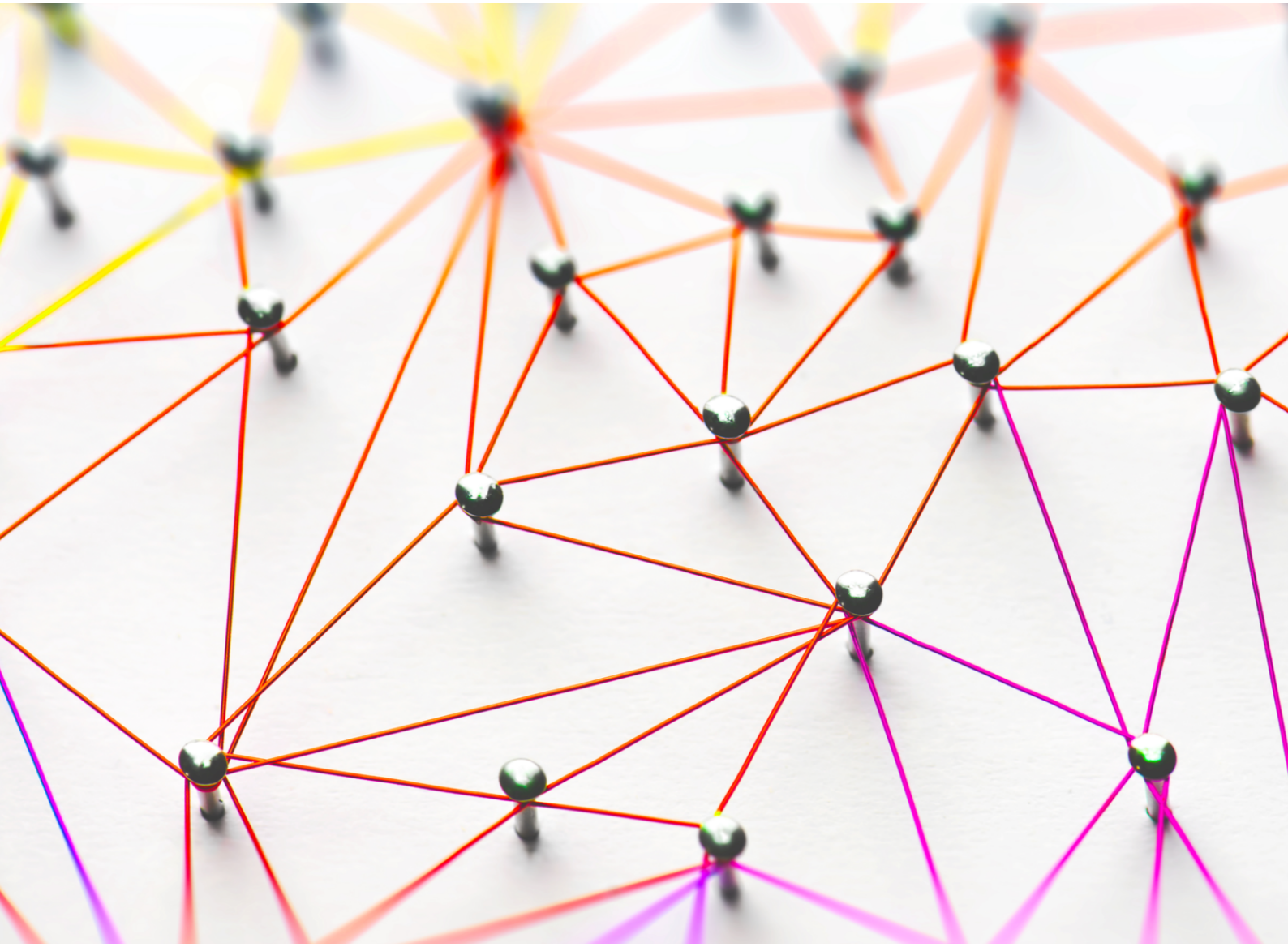
Event Report

COMMUNITY-CENTRED URBAN DEVELOPMENT: A PARADIGM OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH



30 OCTOBER | 2020
WORLD CITIES DAY

UNESCO CITIES PLATFORM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNESCO's celebration of the World Cities Day 2020 has been made possible thanks to the collective and intersectoral work led by Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO.

The UNESCO Cities Platform (UCP) would first like to thank all the participants for their strong involvement and the support given to this online event.

We also would like to express our gratitude to colleagues from the eight Networks and Programmes of the Platform, for their close collaboration in the preparation of this event, as well as their essential contributions made during the discussions.

Finally, we would like to convey our thanks to the organization team, for their time and efforts, in particular to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network team, which coordinates the work of the Platform, and the “Communication, Cities and Events” unit of the UNESCO Culture Sector.

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- Welcome speech by the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO
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CONCEPT NOTE

Community-centred urban development: A paradigm of inclusive growth

By 2050, nearly 7 out of 10 people in the world will live in cities. Cities have become the point of confluence where, economic, social, cultural and environmental factors converge and interact not just to tread the path of urban development, but also support the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 11, 'Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.

While discussing about the paradigm of inclusive urban growth, the main debate focuses on how to make cities better to create better lives for inhabitants. The key actors and beneficiaries of this particular debate are communities - the drivers of city development, providers of economic, social, cultural and environmental values, but also benefactors of innovative and creative actions, amongst others. The 2020 World Cities Day themed '**Valuing our communities and cities**' continues to underline the importance of communities who are at the heart of building sustainable cities.

Cities are the resource bank for innovative, creative, and resilient solutions, knowledge bearers, promoters of inclusivity and participation, preservers and restorers of the environment and the backbone of economy for many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has further solidified the core importance of communities in the city's action response, recovery and beyond. While the pandemic has transformed the global and local economies substantially, local communities have continued to support this transition thereby sustaining local lives. Community engagement has become an integral part of this continuous and re-interactive cycle and should further be strengthened using participatory policy frameworks and action plans. This ushers in collective generation of ideas and solutions for people-centered and place-based urban development. Indeed, people are what sustainable development is all about.

The ***UN-Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an Urban World***[1] also calls upon for ensuring the involvement and participation of communities and individuals in leadership roles for immediate response, design and planning efforts for COVID-19 response, as well as in the broader framework of building sustainable, resilient and future-proof cities. Through its Cities Platform, UNESCO concurs with the central role of communities in urban development and aims to utilize its various city networks and programmes in supporting communities via education, culture, social and natural science, communication and information to enhance their capacities to be able to better engage in deploying important socio-economic capital for multifaceted transformations of our urban spaces, while maintaining access to crucial basic services.

[1]The UN Secretary-General launched the UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 to save lives, protect societies, and recover better. As part of this response, the UN Secretary-General is issuing policy briefs to provide ideas to governments on how to address the consequences of this crisis. You can read the full policy brief dedicated on cities here: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid_urban_world_july_2020.pdf

On the occasion of the World Cities Day 2020, the UNESCO Cities Platform aims to continue this reflection by organizing an online 'Urban Dialogue' bringing together speakers from academia, the public and private sectors, and civil society to discuss and consolidate the integral components of community participation as well as how UNESCO's work with cities could support in furthering sustainable urban development through community centered approaches. This dialogue will be accompanied by video messages from city representatives, communities and stakeholders to bring forth key ideas and expectations of communities and how by supporting them, we would be able to develop better cities that, in turn, would provide better lives to their inhabitants.

UNESCO will also use the opportunity of World Cities Day to showcase the Organization's full range of activities in the urban context, contributing to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda, and notably SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. Various flagship publications of the city Networks and Programmes[2] on the Platform will be launched on this occasion.

The UNESCO Cities Platform covers more than 1500 cities across the globe. To raise further awareness of the importance of the local dimension in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development amongst the Member States and other stakeholders, a research project on Mexico City across these UNESCO city Networks and Programmes concerned has been initiated. Mexico City is uniquely positioned thanks to its membership to or its close collaboration with six of the Networks and Programmes on the Platform. The celebration will provide an opportunity to further demonstrate the objectives of the Platform through such a pilot research project as well as the comparative advantage of a city membership with multiple UNESCO city networks and programmes. As in the previous years, on World Cities Day, UNESCO will further advocate the importance of people-centered approaches for urban development to ***build better cities for better lives***.

[2]UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), UNESCO/Netexplo Observatory, Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), World Heritage Cities Programme, Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable cities (ICCAR), and the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Cities.

Welcome speech by the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO

3:55 - 8:52[1]

Mr Xing Qu, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO, opened the celebration of the World Cities Day 2020 by emphasizing the importance of cities as laboratories of ideas for current and future issues. In connection with this year's global theme, "Valuing our communities and our cities", he also affirmed the key role played by local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as more generally within the scope of sustainable urban development.

The Deputy Director-General also underlined that UNESCO with its long-standing experience with communities, is working via its city Networks and Programmes on the transformation of urban spaces and lifestyles, as well as on contemporary global issues, including responses to the pandemic.

Presentation by the Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO

Events and activities of the UNESCO Cities Platform

9:20 – 12:50

Mr Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture briefly presented the UNESCO Cities Platform, which coordinated the organization of this event. Covering all areas of the Organization's expertise, from education, culture, natural and human sciences to communication and information, the Platform brings together nearly 1,500 member cities, with a view to promoting sustainable development at the cities level.

The Assistant Director-General also highlighted the major events and activities developed by the UNESCO Cities Platform in order to best support local governments and all other stakeholders, including countries and cities around the world, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Objective 11 devoted to "Sustainable cities and communities".

[1]The timing indicated throughout this document refers to the recording of the event, available on YouTube: https://youtu.be/QF8n53KlGHQ

Presentation by members of the UNESCO Cities Platform

Major activities and / or publications

13:00 – 1:00:50

The **UNESCO Creative Cities Network**, composed of 246 cities from over 80 countries, aims to promote cooperation among cities that have identified culture and creativity as strategic factors in sustainable urban development. Among the Network's recent accomplishments, **Ms Denise Bax**, Coordinator of both the UNESCO Cities Platform and the Creative Cities Network, launched the Spanish version of the publication "**UNESCO Creative Cities' Responses to COVID-19**", following the versions already available in English, French and Chinese. This publication brings together innovative initiatives from more than 90 cities around the world in response to the pandemic, which mobilize the power of culture and creativity. In September, the Network also co-organized, with Beijing, the third edition of the UNESCO Creative Cities Beijing Summit. This year the Summit focused on the synergies between culture, creativity, technologies and innovation, and their growing importance for cities in the current and post COVID-19 context. Finally, a video was broadcasted for the first time to illustrate the various solidarity measures carried out by Creative Cities, in support of Beirut, a Creative City of Literature, and its inhabitants, following the two tragic explosions that occurred last August.

Ms **Angela Melo**, Director of Social and Human Sciences Policies and Programs, then presented the **International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities** (ICCAR), whose primary goal is to fight against all forms of discrimination. Since April 2020, ICCAR has organized around fifteen webinars on the topic of racism, discrimination and exclusion in the context of COVID-19. More recently, the Coalition participated in the 10th World Forum of Cities for Human Rights, organized, for the first time, jointly by UNESCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to reflect on the future of human rights in sustainable cities.

The discussion continued with the intervention of **Mr Raúl Valdés Cotera**, Team Leader, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning within the **UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities** (GNLC). In August, the Network launched a publication on the education sector's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, proposing ways to build contingency plans for learning in crisis situations. Several video tutorials have also been developed to support cities on certain themes. For example, a video on gender equality in urban areas has been developed, in partnership with UNESCO's Education Sector and was broadcasted during the event.

Ms Jyoti Hosagrahar, Deputy Director of the World Heritage Center presented the recent achievements of the **World Heritage Cities Programme**, which aims to help cities to better preserve their heritage, and respond to the challenges of urban sustainable development. In June 2020, the “World Heritage City Lab” was organized, running over several sessions, with talks by many experts to analyze and organize development strategies for the protection of world heritage in urban areas. Another important initiative that the programme launched this year was the "Urban Notebook" of the World Heritage Cities initiative. Focused on the sustainable management of World Heritage properties, especially in times of crisis, this monthly newsletter is based on different practices carried out by several cities of the programme.

Mr Alexandros K. Makarigakis, Programme Specialist in the Science Sector then spoke about the **Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate** that aims to provide a platform for international cooperation for dialogue on water to help megacities adapt to and mitigate climate change. Owing to the current pandemic, the second edition of the international conference "Water, Megacities and Global Change" will be held in December 2021. A pre-conference is being foreseen in the meantime that encourages youth participation as well as welcomes new call for papers to capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on water services. At the same time, the launch of a dedicated city platform is planned soon to enable the networking of megacities, in particular to facilitate the presentation of data and plans related to climate and water security as well as the development of the Strategic Global framework for the Network.

With regards to **Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience**, **Mr Soichiro Yasukawa**, Programme Specialist, highlighted the work of the Network’s project group, which focuses on the establishment of an action plan comprising several objectives, including those of sustainable development and of the Paris Agreement (COP21) aimed at reducing disaster risks in urban areas. Various projects have been recently launched, notably in East Africa, with the aim of improving communication with citizens on the subject of natural risks, through the creation of mobile applications.

Mr Davide Storti, Programme Specialist, closed this session by presenting the two city programmes from the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO. Firstly, the **Media and Information Literate Cities Network**, aims to enable as many people as possible to acquire ICT skills, while establishing links with other cities around the world. From 24 to 31 October, the Network organized the Global Media and Information Literacy Week, calling for local events around the world to promote the links between media and information literacy and all disciplines and professions.

Secondly, in the framework the **UNESCO-Netexplo Observatory cooperation project** that aims to take a unique and innovative approach to study the digital society, organized an Innovation Forum in September 2020. The aim of the meeting was to explore new uses of digital technology, by presenting to the general public ten revolutionary digital innovations selected by the Netexplo university network, which is made up of universities recognized worldwide in the field of technology. On this occasion, the NETEXPLO 2020 Innovation Grand Prize was also awarded.

Joint pilot research project on Mexico City

1:00:55 – 1:07:40

In order to illustrate the transversal and intersectoral approach of the Platform, a pilot research project was recently initiated on Mexico City, which occupies a very special place within the Platform, as it is the only city of the Platform to be a member, or to cooperate closely with 6 of its Networks and Programmes.

The primary objective of this pilot project is to raise awareness of the importance of the local dimension in the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whilst as the same time illustrating the interdisciplinary and synergistic value of the work of UNESCO, in the urban context.. Other cities of the Platform in different global regions could then be the subject of similar case studies, in order to allow relevant lessons to be drawn, to create new synergies between the different Networks and Programmes of the Platform, thus strengthening urban development in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

During the presentation, **Ms Rosaura Ruiz Gutiérrez**, Secretary for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Mexico City expressed the Municipality's support for this ambitious joint research project, and stressed the importance of sharing knowledge and inter-city and international cooperation, to address the various challenges that cities are facing today.

Video Messages

Message from Ms Justine Simons, OBE, Deputy Mayor of London for the Cultural and Creative Industries

1:07:58 – 1:10:14

The discussion continued with a message from **Ms Justine Simons** OBE, Deputy Mayor of London for Culture and Creative Industries, and President of the World Cities Culture Forum. She recalled that this year has been difficult for the cultural sector, with a lot of events having to be canceled and its grave impact on employment. Furthermore, she affirmed the key role of cities as centers of culture and creativity. In this context, she emphasized the need for cities to continue sharing their good practices as well as strengthen cooperation at the international level. As the DNA of our cities, culture is capable of transforming and changing society. She concluded that cities are the laboratories of creativity, which also teaches and makes us realize the importance of culture in cities.

Message from Mr Jincheng Wu, Chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization

1:10:35 – 1:14:47

The second video message was delivered by **Mr Jincheng Wu**, Chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization (Representative of the Vice Mayor of Shanghai). He presented Shanghai's latest innovations and projects which have made it more creative and innovative for the well-being of all its inhabitants, particularly thanks to the city's continuous and growing international cooperation. Great progress has been made in Shanghai with regards to urban infrastructure, including new construction to make it a greener city. As a UNESCO Creative City of Design, Shanghai aims to be a greener and more inclusive city in the future.

Urban Dialogue

1:15:00 – 2:05:45

Moderated by **Ms Valériane Gauthier**, Journalist at France 24, the session brought together the following participants: **Mr Carlos Moreno**, Scientific Director of the eTi Chair (Entrepreneurship - Territory - Innovation), University Panthéon Sorbonne – IAE; **Mr Seok-Jin Mun**, Mayor of Seodaemun-Gu, Republic of Korea; **Ms Adrian Parr**, Dean of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs, University of Texas; and **Ms Adeline Grattard**, Chef.

Following an innovative and interactive format, 6 short videos, related to different urban themes, and covering all areas of UNESCO's work, were screened throughout the Urban Dialogue in order to feed the discussion among the participants.

After the first video, dedicated to **learning cities** and **participatory approaches**, the moderator asked participants to express their views on the role of communities in promoting lifelong learning, and on how to ensure inclusive participation.

According to Mr. Seok-Jin Mun, Mayor of Seodaemun-Gu, cities need to have a long-term learning system that integrates communities. Citing the example of his city, Mr. Seok-Jin Mun described how several training centers, funded by local authorities, organize small group-classes in apartment blocks. He believes that this type of structure is essential to guarantee the participation of all, irrespective of their social background, and to combat social exclusion.

Ms Adrian Parr recalled that by 2050, more than 85% of the world's population will live in cities. Given the amount of unsuitable urban housing, this increase could be accompanied by an increase in urban poverty, as evidenced today by the dire situation of the slums already existing in contemporary cities. Faced with these challenges, the implementation of macro-projects can provide appropriate solutions, particularly as they make it possible to establish links between actors in the field and external experts.

The second video produced in the framework of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, highlighted **the role of culture, creativity and innovation** in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. By mobilizing innovation and creativity, how can the cultural capital of cities be strengthened?

According to Mr Carlos Moreno, the two main issues threatening cities are: climate change and the pandemic. Faced with these threats, the objective is to find local centered life, with the idea of "the 15-minute city", which consists of residents reconnecting with the local life of their district, and to have, within a 15-minute radius, everything at their disposal - housing, work, shops, health facilities, education, culture and development, in order words, focusing a city built around communities.

In the creative sector of gastronomy, which has particularly felt the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Ms Adeline Grattard, Michelin-starred chef, shared her views on the key role of gastronomy for city dwellers, being a universal example. According to her, cooking is, above all, a cultural action in which each chef or person who cooks tells a story to others. Moreover, sustainable food allows us to feed the population in a healthy way, while keeping in mind responsible use of resources, for example by avoiding waste. In this context, Ms Grattard underlined the responsibility of restaurateurs, and each of us, to invest in short supply chains, and have direct access to producers.

The third video on the perception of urban happiness in the city of Iwami Ginzan, Japan, led the participants to share **their conception of happiness and fulfillment in the city.**

In the opinion of Ms Adrian Parr, urban happiness can be achieved when urban life is built with common processes, involving young people in decision-making, ensuring inclusiveness and promoting concerted, collective thinking about cities. The key role of youth, and their integration in decision-making processes and urban projects, was reiterated by Mr Seok-Jin Mun.

For Ms Adeline Grattard, harmony and proximity between where one lives and where one works are essential for urban development. While for Mr Moreno re-emphasized the idea of the 15-minute city, a happy city being one where the inhabitants have all aspects of life in close proximity.

The debate then continued on **issues related to water in cities**, and more broadly, on the role of communities in **the fight against climate change**, as illustrated by a short video on the challenges of access to water in slums.

Ms Adrian Parr believed that communities play a crucial role in the fight against climate change. She emphasized the essential need to encourage communities to participate in environmental measures to ensure their implementation and effectiveness.

For Mr Moreno, including citizens in environmental issues must be done immediately, in particular by educating young people about the issues surrounding climate change. This is, for example, the vision of the city of Paris that envisions to establish a climate forum, as a place for youth mobilization, with the respect for the environment as a priority.

Based on a short video exploring the historic city of Yazd in Iran, participants were invited to reflect on how communities can contribute to **the preservation of urban cultural heritage** sites, drawing on the narratives and associated local traditions.

Offering the example of his city and its various museums, Mr Seok-Jin Mun, stressed the importance of sensitizing communities to cultural places. Citizens must know their history and heritage to better understand the present.

To conclude this Urban Dialogue, the participants were invited to summarize, in a few key points, on **how to participate in building better cities**, so as to guarantee better lives for its inhabitants.

According to Mr Parr, ecological collapse, climate change and social inequalities are among the biggest challenges. Cities are part of the problem, but also part of the solution.

For Mr Moreno, ecology, proximity, solidarity and participation are the key elements for building a resilient city.

According to Mr Seok-Jin Mun, the existing models of urban development must be rethought to adopt a more humane and sustainable approach.

Finally, for Ms Adeline Grattard, each individual must feel responsible, must make an ecological and civic commitment and demonstrate tolerance and open-mindedness.

Conclusions by the Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO

2:05:55 – 2:09:21

Mr Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture closed this dynamic and informative event by insisting that the theme - “Community-centred urban development: a paradigm of inclusive growth”, perfectly reflects the actions being currently undertaken in response to the global pandemic. With COVID-19 impacting every aspect of life, we see how essential it is to harness ingenuity at the local level. The human centric response and recovery actions being carried out by cities and their communities, are an essential part of the response to the global challenges of our time. The UNESCO Cities Platform will continue to explore and strengthen new and existing collaborations between its member Networks and Programmes, as well as with countries and cities around the world.

KEY POINTS

TWITTER:VIEWS

13 598

7 GIFS
2 VIDEOS

Number of times the video or GIF has been viewed by users.

FACEBOOK:PEOPLE REACHED

96 220

9 POSTS

Number of people who have either seen a specific post or other content posted on the UNESCO page.

LINKEDIN:IMPRESSIONS

41 235

3 POSTES

Number of times the post has been shown or viewed by users.

COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS

The content on social media was disseminated from 29 to 31 October, 2020.The content was shared via Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Twitter

A total of 9 tweets were posted on the English and French platforms regarding the UNESCO Cities Platform online event, including visuals, GIFs and videos. The average engagement rate was 1.2% for tweets. Twitter's average engagement rate is between 0.5% and 1%.

* Engagement rate: the number of engagement (clicks, retweets, replies, subscriptions, and favorites) divided by the total number of impressions.

Facebook

A total of 9 messages were posted on the social media platform in English and French, for the UNESCO Cities Platform online event, including visuals, a video and a GIF. Total Facebook engagement was 2,879.

*Engagement: The total number of responses to posts from the public. This may include actions such as reacting, commenting or sharing a post, viewing a photo or video, or clicking on a link.

LinkedIn

3 messages, including a visual and two videos were published regarding the UNESCO Cities Platform online event. UNESCO's LinkedIn account is only available in English. The average engagement rate on LinkedIn was 2.34%, above the LinkedIn average of 0.054%.

* Engagement rate: The number of interactions divided by impressions.

UNESCO CITIES PLATFORM ONLINE POLL

By 2045, cities will be home to 6 billion people, meaning almost 70% of the world's population will live in urban landscapes. In order to strengthen cities and provide them with the necessary global support to become sustainable and resilient, UNESCO has launched the Cities Platform, bringing together 8 City Networks and Programmes, from the fields of education, culture, natural and social sciences, and communication and information. On the occasion of UNESCO's celebration of the World Cities Day 2020, an online poll was launched by the Platform to collect various points of view on the importance of cities, and with an emphasis on prioritizing urban issues so as to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Urban Context. The poll is open until **23 November, 2020**, in 4 languages (English, French, Spanish and Chinese).

As of November 13, 2020, **450+ responses** from over **90 countries** have been received in the various languages in which the poll is offered (39% from Europe, 20% from Asia and the Pacific, 16% from Latin America and the Caribbean, 15% from Africa and 8% from Arab States). The majority of responses come from **the public sector** (54%), followed by **universities** (13%) and **civil society** (11%).

Regarding the urban issues that the respondents consider to be the most important, **"Resilience and sustainability"**, **"Climate action" and "Urban mobility"** received the most votes. Regarding the tools that cities should prioritize the usage of in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the respondents considered that **"Local initiatives and actions"**, **"Partnerships, collaboration and networking"**, and **"Policy development"** were the most important. A full analysis of the poll will be undertaken after the closure date, and will be shared with all stakeholders, through UNESCO's communication channels.

Disclaimer:

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7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this document are those of the panelists of the urban dialogue; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

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