



## Panel

**Title of the session 2.1.1: Innovative urban and territorial policies to tackle growing inequalities**

**Thematic line 2:** Territorial Economic models to tackle inequality in the wake of the current pandemic crisis

**Sub-axis 2.1:** Territorial responses to growing inequality in the current crisis context.

\*see also background note for reference

**Organizers:** UNDP, City of Buenos Aires (TBC)

**Date:** 27/05/2021

**Time:** 8:00 - 9:30 (UTC-3) / 13:00 - 14:30 (UTC+2)

**Platform:** Streaming

**Capacity of the session:** N/A

**Registration needed:** Yes

**Language:** english, spanish and french

### **Short summary of the session:**

The territorial level – including rural and urban settings - is where the effects of growing and diverse inequalities are perceived, and tailored innovative solutions can be promoted to offset them.

Integrated local governance and local economic development systems and policies, addressing the interconnected drivers and implications of multiple crisis factors and activating partnerships within and across communities, can open the way to transformative processes towards more cohesive, resilient and just societies and local economies.

This session is aimed at discussing the different territorial dimensions and implications of inequality and effective local policy options for countering its effects.



## 1. Conceptualization of the session

The territorial level is where the multiple dimensions of inequalities materialize and impact on the quality of life of individuals and communities, in terms of options for socio-economic mobility, access to income and employment, social services, and the surrounding physical, institutional, cultural, and relational environment.

At the same time, it is at the local/territorial level that tailored solutions can be best enacted to promote socio-economic cohesion and reduce the effects of inequalities, through a number of 'enabling' factors combining civic participation; the coordinated and collaborative action of a diversity of public and private actors; effective and accountable planning and implementation mechanisms; dedicated policy measures including on fiscal policies, employment and social protection, strategic investments and services, research and innovation, education and skills development, socio-economic empowerment of women and youth, migration and minorities' rights.

The interplay of these same factors as part of comprehensive local governance and local economic development systems, can be the basis for alternative, more equitable and sustainable economic development paths that are rooted in the capacities, the relations, but also the needs of people as they unfold in territories where they live. This can lead to adapted and innovative solutions in creating economic value whilst addressing societal needs, and a stronger 'allocative' efficiency in rewarding the value of economic activities, with a direct impact on inequalities.

These dynamics apply to rural contexts and territories but also and even more sharply in cities. City dwellers, too, interact with the place where they live and the surrounding environment, often on a much larger or more varied scale for food, water, air quality, recreation, and mental and physical health.

Cities, regions and territories have been great drivers of innovation for addressing complex development challenges and localising the SDGs. The pandemic crisis revealed once again the crucial role of LRGs in leading collective strategies of renewal that are based on a continuous process of engagement between citizens and authorities.

The growing impact of the 21st century crisis – from climate breakdown, global health pandemic and economic crisis – is placing severe, recurring stress on many of the world's cities. As they seek to manage and emerge from these interconnected crises and (re)build the basis of their wellbeing and resilience, cities can lead the transformative processes that are needed to create more just and sustainable societies. Working through the crisis in partnership with local community and business leaders, city managers are taking decisive action to support their people, engaging long-term recovery efforts as a chance to innovate and build healthy, sustainable and resilient urban communities.



A territorial perspective in tackling inequality is even more crucial as regional inequalities within countries are often larger than inequalities among countries<sup>1</sup>. Again, the *World Social Report 2020* points at the persistence of disparities between urban and rural areas, and big inequalities within cities where wealthy areas increasingly coexist with pockets of severe deprivation and multiple patterns of spatial segregation and exclusion apply based on income, sex, race, migratory status and other factors.

Innovative urban planning and governance are therefore of utmost importance to fulfil the potential of cities as catalysts for economic growth, innovation and employment. Four components are found in successful policy approaches to reduce inequality and promote inclusive cities: housing and land rights, spatial connectivity and public transportation, access to decent work and formal employment, political and administrative capacities of local governments to respond quickly to increasingly complex challenges, including those related to climate change<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Objective and key issues for discussion

This session will be organized as a panel, in which different local and cities' governments and networks representatives, other relevant actors, experts and practitioners would discuss on the relation between different territorial contexts and inequality, the variables that concur to determine its multiple expressions and effective policies and strategies to counter its consequences building more cohesive societies and territories.

This would include examples of good practices and experience from territories that have devised innovative solutions in tackling inequality and promoting more inclusive growth paths through specific governance and planning mechanisms; public policies and strategic investment decisions; the promotion and facilitation of alternative economic practices to foster recovery and build more resilient communities in ecologically-safe and socially-just cities.

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<sup>1</sup> There's interesting reflections, referred also to EU cohesion policies and a prevailing paradigm of green growth and economic competitiveness, on the redesigning of territorial cohesion through a turn towards spatial justice for territorial sustainability; this points at the need to refocus on regional capabilities and alternative development trajectories as basis for a more locally meaningful and globally sustainable development. See "The Right to Not Catch Up—Transitioning European Territorial Cohesion towards Spatial Justice for Sustainability", 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Further specific thinking on the roots and consequences of sanitary crisis in our societies confirm the existence of multiple interrelations between urban planning, health, social, and environmental policies, and the need to address them through a comprehensive, integrated approach. This entails moving from conventional, sectoral approaches based on biomedical models of health to coordinated action stemming from an ecological interpretation of health including its social determinants, as much as integrated territorial surveillance and care systems. See "Inequalities in urban areas: innovative approaches to complex issues"



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**3. Relevant documentation** *(if applicable)*