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WUF12 Perspectives

Voices on localization for
sustainable urban development



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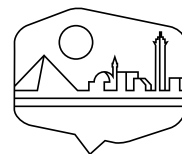
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WUF12 Perspectives

Voices on localization for
sustainable urban development

The twelfth session of
the World Urban Forum

WORLD
URBAN
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TWELFTH SESSION



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Foreword by the UN-Habitat Executive Director



Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach

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Demonstrating its convening power, WUF12 brought together leaders, experts and stakeholders from diverse regions and sectors to drive the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The World Urban Forum is fulfilling its mandates from the United Nations General Assembly to serve as a nonlegislative technical forum in which experts can exchange views and an advocacy platform for all stakeholders in the fields of human settlements and sustainable urbanization. The World Urban Forum is indeed a transformative space serving as the largest urban coalition where people gather, debate and exchange. The Forum serves as a platform to forge partnerships, foster new ideas, and showcase solutions benefiting the urban community and beyond.

The twelfth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12), held in Cairo, Egypt, was unique on many fronts. Under the theme “It All Starts at Home”, WUF12 emphasised localization as a cornerstone of sustainable development and a necessary foundation to address key global challenges of today including the global housing crisis affecting at least 2.8 billion persons. It marked a turning point in the Forum’s history, with a record-breaking attendance of over 25,000 participants from 182 countries.

Part of the Forum's legacy lies in the rich knowledge it generates, which can be leveraged beyond the participants and the duration of the five-day event. To augment WUF's impact, UN-Habitat launches the WUF Perspectives publication to amplify the substantive content of the Forum and translate discussions into knowledge that can guide urban transformation worldwide. Leveraging digital technology, UN-Habitat conducted for the first time an in-depth analysis of nearly 600 events to capture key insights and perspectives emerging from WUF.

WUF12 Perspectives hence aims to echo the voices that speak at WUF. Through this publication, UN-Habitat advances knowledge on local actions and the role of local actors to leave no one and no place behind. This echoes the Pact for the Future where world leaders note that they "... must meet the Sustainable Development Goals for all segments of society and leave no one behind, including through the localization of sustainable development".

By analysing and synthesising perspectives on localization, this publication helps inform global policies, guide stakeholders and shape UN-Habitat's strategic direction. With this publication, I wish to thank all WUF12 participants and urban stakeholders that shared a wealth of knowledge, expertise and perspectives at the Forum. Ideas expressed at WUF do matter and are key to shape our joint work towards improved access to adequate housing and sustainable urban development through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.



Introduction

The World Urban Forum (WUF) is the premier global conference on sustainable urban development. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, it is convened biannually by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The twelfth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12) took place from 4 to 8 November 2024 in Cairo, Egypt. WUF12 was the largest session held since its inception, with a record-breaking attendance of over 25,000 participants from 182 countries and more than 659 events organized.





Opening session.
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The theme “It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities” formed the central thread at the heart of WUF12, weaving together the Forum’s numerous discussions of present and future urban development, centring these conversations around the concept of localization. While in the WUF12 Background Paper UN-Habitat defined localization as “a two-way process where the local meets the national and the global and vice versa”,¹ the participants at WUF12 brought their own diverse understandings of home and distinctive interpretations of what localization means. As one presenter put it: “there [are] different definition[s] on what localization is. There isn’t any unilateral definition”.² This multiplicity of perspectives raises fundamental questions: What insights emerge when thousands of people from around the world discuss the many meanings and its place in global sustainability

agendas? How can the wealth of experiences present at the Forum contribute to a deeper understanding of localization? How did attendees and presenters debate the three pressing global challenges that WUF identified as central to cities – housing, climate and humanitarian crises? How can we reconcile the disparate valences of these debates to create a stronger framework for policy-making that addresses global challenges while reflecting local needs and priorities?

WUF12 Perspectives is the first edition of a new publication series that aims to address these questions by capturing the voices of WUF participants in order to derive substantive insights from the discussions held during the Forum. It is intended to complement the traditional WUF Report, which provides key statistics and summarizes the proceedings of the Forum.

This inaugural edition also aligns with the WUF12 declaration – the Cairo Call to Action – which outlines ten urgent actions for sustainable urbanization.³

As “a non-legislative technical forum in which experts can exchange views”,⁴ WUF is a place for discussion and reflection, where UN-Habitat and others can listen to different voices and come to understand new perspectives on sustainable urbanization. WUF, with its focus on knowledge exchange and building partnerships, functions as “a marketplace of ideas”.⁵ This document captures the wealth of perspectives emerging from discussions among the many and diverse WUF12 attendees. A participant of the Forum put it thus:

“Some of the conversations might be uncomfortable. They might be quite difficult. There might be differences of opinion; maybe there isn’t 100 per cent agreement around what the perfect policy looks like, but I think the challenge that we put to everybody in the room is [to] be in the room together and then actually focus on [asking]: What is the common point of agreement? What can you work together on?”⁶

WUF12 Perspectives was developed through an innovative AI-supported methodology, which was used to analyse the content of 587 hybrid events held at WUF12.⁷ This analysis accounted for close to 90 per cent of the total number of events held, amounting to 810 hours of discussions. This methodology leverages three key pillars of the United Nations Secretary-General’s UN 2.0 vision – data, digital transformation and innovation to modernize the United Nations. The approach was designed to identify prominent insights, recurrent themes and subthemes and the different valences of these across the Forum. An expert panel authored the publication, refining, analysing

and contextualizing the AI-driven findings to produce a balanced and evidence-driven review of perspectives shared at WUF12 (see Annex I for details on the methodology). The document also uses some findings from the pre-WUF survey that was shared with participants ahead of WUF12.⁸ The principles and frameworks related to responsible AI use and data security guided the research. Combining AI analysis and human synthesis, the methodology offers a platform to explore and amplify the discussions at WUF12, while creating new knowledge to drive sustainable urban development.

WUF12 Perspectives offers the reader an overview and analysis of the insights shared by attendees over the course of the Forum. While participant perspectives have been de-identified, they appear in the document in two forms – indirect references to discussions and verbatim quotes from attendees. In both cases, footnotes indicate specific events where the reference is drawn from, but the individual perspectives and events highlighted throughout have been selected because they reflect recurrent patterns identified across all analysed events.

Localization provided an overarching framework for WUF12, focusing the Forum’s discussions on the role of local actions in advancing global development goals. Part I of this document examines how WUF12 participants understood the concept of localization and the implications of these perspectives for global agendas. More specifically, the analysis suggests participants used this concept in three main ways: as implementation, representation and translation. Subthemes within each of these dimensions reflect specific issues participants found relevant to discussions of sustainable urban development. In Part II, the publication synthesizes how localization and its three dimensions relate to solutions for three global crises impacting cities: the housing crisis, the climate crisis and humanitarian crises. Local actors, solutions, contexts, and voices play a prominent role in the sub-

themes identified through the analysis of attendee perspectives.

An additional issue of importance for WUF is its role in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), as set forth in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/256 and included in the New Urban Agenda itself.⁹ The New Urban Agenda is a shared vision for a better and sustainable future that was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development in 2016. It is therefore worth mentioning that a quarter of the WUF12 events analysed referenced the New Urban Agenda at least once,¹⁰ whereas more than half of the events mentioned the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at least once. When examining the total frequency of these terms across all events (including multiple mentions within a single event), the SDGs are mentioned more than four times as often as the New Urban Agenda. This is striking given that the New Urban Agenda is the implementation framework of the urban component of the SDGs. The findings of this report indicate

that the New Urban Agenda was most often discussed by national governments but was less remarked upon by other partners.

The final part of the document centres on the future and on real-world applications. It focuses on how this report's findings can inform global policy, guide stakeholders and shape UN-Habitat strategic direction. This concluding section also reflects on the New Urban Agenda and how it relates to WUF.

WUF12 Perspectives synthesizes discussions and provides avenues to turn dialogues into actionable knowledge that may serve policymakers and other stakeholders in numerous ways, including the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda. It is not exhaustive of all perspectives shared during WUF12, as no document could realistically cover such a diverse array of points of view, but it captures those perspectives that were most widely voiced and puts them into conversation with each other and the wider audience of urban policy.

Exhibition opening
event at the Urban Expo
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PART I

Perspectives on localization





Special session,
the heartbeat of the city.
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The analysis of discussions carried out during WUF12 events demonstrates that over the course of five days of deliberation, participants' understandings of localization converged around three widely shared points of view. *WUF12 Perspectives* attempts to better grasp these varied, complementary positions by analysing these three main dimensions.

The first recurring dimension is that localization is about *implementing* global development goals through local action. From this viewpoint, attendees emphasized that achieving global targets at the local level means closing the local resource gaps by enabling local actors to access financial and technical resources. This is captured in the Cairo Call to Action in which participants called for "achieving global goals through local action".¹¹

The second dimension shared by participants is that localization is related to promoting adequate *representation* of various local actors at municipal, national and global levels. This dimension emphasizes the need for multilevel governance and for local actors to have a seat at the table to influence how global and national agendas are shaped and implemented. Participants also captured this valence in the Cairo Call to Action's reference to "sustaining systemic representation of local actors at all levels".

The third dimension understands localization as the *translation* of global ideas and frameworks to local context and culture. Participants with this viewpoint stressed how shared global principles and development visions must be locally adapted and tailored to on-the-ground realities to be effective and sustainable, as this helps foster local identity, enhance ownership and build trust. This dimension is echoed in the

Cairo Call to Action, which emphasizes “harnessing culture and heritage as an asset for sustainability”.

These three dimensions – implementation, representation and translation – should be understood as closely connected elements of localization that constantly shape and reinforce each other. Rather than happening separately, they unfold together, influencing one another in an ongoing way. These three dimensions are not limited to the local level: participants understood these to be

multiscalar and multilevel. Localization occurs not only from global and national levels to municipal and regional authorities, but also from municipal and regional authorities to local communities and neighbourhoods. Figure 1 shows how often the three different dimensions were discussed in relation to various stakeholder groups, from grassroots communities to international organizations. Figure 2 shows how often they were discussed in relation to geographic regions.

FIGURE 1: **Distribution of selected stakeholder groups referenced within events on the three dimensions of localization discussed at WUF12¹²**

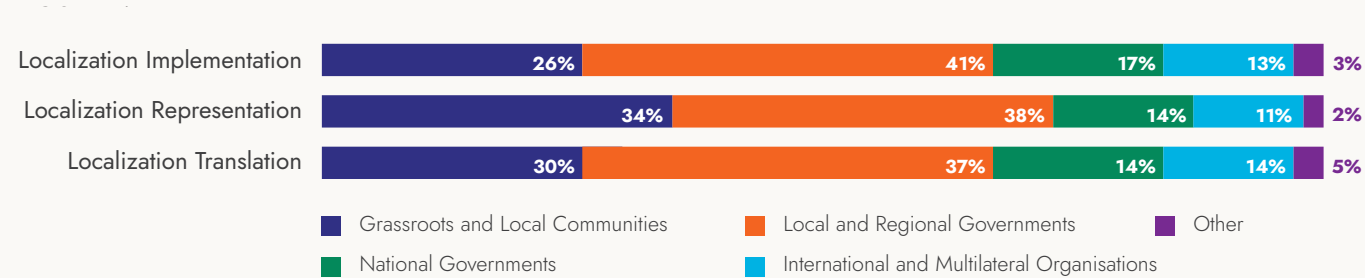
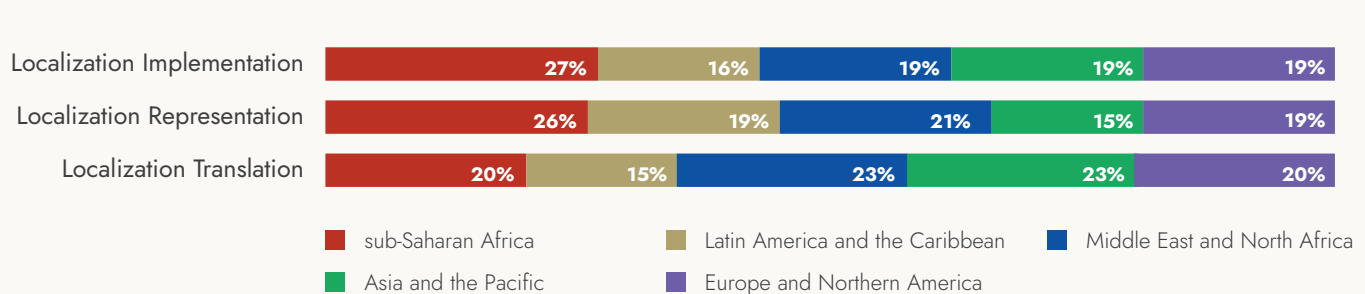


FIGURE 2: **Distribution of geographic regions referenced within events on the three dimensions of localization discussed at WUF12¹³**





Women's Assembly,
Breakout Session _ Group 3.
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Localization as implementation

The first dimension of localization relates to implementation. WUF12 participants highlighted that achieving global goals requires providing local actors with adequate means to implement actions and scale local projects to wider programmes.¹⁴ Discussions highlighted the need to close three key resource gaps at the local level: finance, data and skills.





Urban Expo events.
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Unlocking finance

One of the clearest concerns voiced during WUF12 was the struggle of local authorities, communities and organizations to access adequate funding to carry out their responsibilities and implement global goals at the local level. This long-standing challenge is exacerbated when responsibilities are transferred from national to local levels without the accompanying budgetary resources.¹⁵ While participants acknowledged that local governments could do more to mobilize local revenue, a recurring obstacle mentioned at WUF12 was that cities are not considered creditworthy for investments.¹⁶ Some also questioned whether the global financial structure needs fundamental changes to prioritize local public investments.¹⁷ As one presenter noted:

“The reality is when the money is drying up, we [local organizations] are competing with international organizations.”¹⁸

But unlocking finance goes beyond increasing resources. It also involves improving strategic coordination on how money is spent and how it is divided among stakeholders. As one attendee framed it: “We can’t complain that there is no money. There is money. But the monies are not used really strategically in a longer term plan.”¹⁹ In the development community, localization is often understood as giving local organizations greater influence over how aid is spent and making them direct beneficiaries (as implementers) of financial support.

Yet, within discussions at WUF12, “grassroots and local communities” were mentioned relatively little in relation to implementation (see Figure 1) and the least in relation to finance, suggesting that these groups may be left out of the localization of resources.

Participants at WUF12 also articulated a shift in thinking about the role of international organizations, the private sector and donors, questioning how their role could change from pure funders to true development partners.²⁰ The development world is highly fragmented, leading to competition among organizations for the same pool of funds. Part of the problem is that investors seek returns on their investment, which, as some contributors underscored, is not always feasible for local projects aimed at improving the public good.²¹ Investment is often needed most urgently for places where the situation on the ground is complex, but such contexts may not be attractive for private sector investment. This points to the need for innovative coordinating tools and an important role for both local and international public funding and finance. As such, participants highlighted the importance of maximizing local own-source revenues and accessing new revenue streams to benefit the local level.²²

Activities at the
Urban Expo.
© UN-Habitat

Accessing data

Many participants at WUF12 stressed the need for improved high-quality, accessible and disaggregated local-level data to support a wide range of thematic objectives, including the assessment and monitoring of local progress toward the SDGs.²³ For example, data was highlighted as critical to solve the issue of homelessness:

“If you can’t see homeless people – whether they’re migrants caused [by] homelessness...homelessness caused by disaster, or homeless[ness] caused by economic and social issues – if you can’t see it, then ... it is almost impossible [to address it]...Therefore, define it and count it; [otherwise,] you’re not going to solve it.”²⁴

Speakers added that geographic information system (GIS) integrated datasets are fundamental to any kind of urban planning and policy-making process.²⁵ National governments have been establishing citizen e-systems and other digital governance platforms which should help empower urban inhabitants to address local needs.²⁶





However, discussions revealed that many data sources remain inaccessible to the public, hindering local actors' ability to take effective action.²⁷ By developing national data platforms that aggregate data from various levels, governments can enhance the assessment and monitoring of SDG and New Urban Agenda implementation. Thus, counterintuitively, centralized data collection can leverage economies of scale and enable more effective responses at the local level. However, such solutions pose challenges of their own. As one expert commented: "There's such a political tension around who should own [these] centralized database[s]."²⁸ In a similar vein, participants cautioned against "data determinism" and "data narrowmindedness", in which key decisions are based on a narrow set of quantitative data points that do not capture the complexity of urban issues at the local level.²⁹

Building skills

WUF12 participants emphasized the urgent need to build local capacities given that access to finance and data has a limited impact when local governments, communities and people lack the necessary skills to fully use and leverage these resources.³⁰ Urban

planning, especially in the context of climate change and urban demographic trends,³¹ public finance management³² and digital literacy³³ were underscored as key areas for building local capacity. Participants reiterated the importance of targeting smaller and less resourced municipalities,³⁴ in addition to a wide variety of stakeholders, including people with disabilities,³⁵ youth³⁶ and government officials.³⁷ At the same time, attendees recognized that empowering through capacity-building increases the need for accountability and transparency, which must be upheld to ensure equity and justice.³⁸ Others spoke of technical shortcomings: "This is what we [local governments] lack: .. technical support on how to improve the existing workforce."³⁹

A commonly held view was that forming coalitions to share resources and expertise can enhance capacity to develop local projects that address both immediate needs and long-term sustainability goals. In crisis contexts, presenters mentioned the impact of cash-for-work programmes, where temporary income-generation opportunities for affected people are developed to provide immediate improvements, while also enhancing skills that could have longer-term benefits for livelihoods.⁴⁰

Networking events:
Feminist Cities.
Advancing Care, Climate
Justice, and Inclusive
Urban Planning.
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Localization as representation

The second dimension of localization that clearly emerged during WUF12 relates to representation. Communities and local and regional governments highlighted their limited authority to shape national and global agendas, emphasizing their exclusion from policy-making and project design processes. To enhance representation, they advocated for increased decision-making authority at the lowest level, meaningful engagement with all stakeholders to foster a whole-of-society approach and greater inclusivity in planning practices relating to urban development.





Event at the
Urban Library.
© UN-Habitat

Deciding at the lowest possible level

Cities are at the forefront of enacting sustainable urbanization, but WUF12 participants emphasized that local stakeholders should not be viewed merely as implementers of global goals and national plans. Instead, they need decision-making power in the development of such frameworks. Local actors aspire to exercise agency in shaping global agendas and in designing global and national policies that have local implications. As one local government representative explained:

“More than 65 per cent of the SDG targets [are] related to the work and mandate of local governments. For this reason, we should not be seen as mere implementers of the [2030] Agenda. We are policymakers, catalysts of change and the level of governance best placed to link the global goals with local communities.”⁴¹

In the words of another participant: “It all starts locally. So, solutions begin in our neighbourhoods with your leadership. Cities in all corners of the world are showing that they are not just passive respondents to national policies, but they are hubs for creativity and for delivery.”⁴² Such claims illustrate how local governments, because they are the closest tier to local communities, can often better understand the needs and priorities of these communities. Moreover, it was recognized that “mayors can have an enormous impact [as] they can move much faster sometimes than [it is] possible to move a federal government.”⁴³ Local government levels cannot only act faster, they can also take up roles and mandates that are insufficiently addressed at higher levels. For example, local governments can accelerate the local implementation of international treaties. As one event discussed, although not formal parties to international treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), many cities have proactively adopted CEDAW-based declarations, extending rights locally beyond national commitments.⁴⁴

These discussions of representation also recognized that local authorities and organizations do not operate in isolation. Multilevel governance, a framework to understand the way power is distributed within society, was one of the most highlighted topics in discussions linked to partnerships.⁴⁵ WUF12 participants underscored the necessity of clearly defining institutional roles and responsibilities across different levels of governments to ensure effectiveness, coherence and accountability.⁴⁶


Decentralization⁴⁷ and the principle of subsidiarity⁴⁸ – handling decisions and responsibilities at the lowest (most local) level possible – emerged as important themes within conversations about representation. Participants emphasized that this approach is essential for achieving both sustainable urban development and global goals.⁴⁹ Some

national governments, including the WUF12 host country, the Arab Republic of Egypt, mentioned their progress in strengthening decentralization.⁵⁰

While the benefits of multilevel governance were highlighted, WUF12 participants also expressed the need to improve stakeholder engagement and ensure meaningful consultations. As one expert cautioned: “You cannot continue duplicating. We cannot continue working in silos ... [Only] if you all come together and have effective coordination of our interventions, the impact [of decentralization] will be realized.”⁵¹

Engaging meaningfully

The slogan “nothing about us without us” was a recurrent refrain at WUF12 used by different stakeholder groups – including youth, persons with disabilities and slum dwellers⁵² – highlighting continued exclusion in policy-making, priority-setting and project design.⁵³ Discussions underscored the need to ensure meaningful inclusion that goes beyond tokenism by further institutionalizing associations of stakeholder groups and consultation mechanisms.⁵⁴ As one presenter posited:

 The realization has been made that the participation of the communities is tokenism... We need to make investments to ensure that [meaningful participation] happens. And investment is required in organizing. Building a network of the community organizations; that is very important to strengthen your voices, to ensure your voices are heard [through the] institutionalization of your organizations.”⁵⁵

WUF12 participants also stressed the importance of developing “whole-of-society” approaches to global challenges⁵⁶ and underscored the relevance of the local scale to do so:

“Grassroot level organizations are the best suited to help the other stakeholders – the local government or national governments – in identifying what is needed, what is a localized solution, and how to reach them and to be there in real time.”⁵⁷

Many discussions raised the question of what actions are necessary to ensure meaningful participation and inclusion. Different stakeholder groups emphasized that they want more than merely being heard – they want their concerns and priorities taken into account.⁵⁸

Civil society plays a critical role in bringing stakeholder groups together and to advocate for those who are underrepresented. Yet, participants at WUF12 were concerned with the growing constraints faced by civil society on the ground. As one expert characterized it, there is “a growing criminalization and a...weakening of the context within which civil society [actors] are trying to contest... injustices”.⁵⁹ This shared recognition of shrinking global civic space raised concerns for civil society actors about their ability to fulfil their mandate: “We are supposed to be the voice of those who have no voice and we are not doing that anymore.”⁶⁰

Sharing spaces inclusively

The most local level for inclusion lies in the shared public spaces we use every day. Participants called out the critical role of public space as a place and a mechanism for meaningful inclusion, as captured in the Cairo Call to Action’s insistence on the need for “sharing urban spaces and opportunities inclusively”.

Social mixing in public space contributes to a sense of collective identity that helps build community resilience.⁶¹ In the words of one presenter:

“Public spaces are often described as the heart of a city or the soul of a community. But can we truly claim this unless these spaces are inclusive for all?”⁶²

Stakeholders shared some solutions to the barriers to inclusion, including the need to accommodate informal street vendors⁶³ and the need to adopt universal design principles that will make public spaces accessible for persons with disabilities.⁶⁴ Furthermore, for public spaces to truly contribute to inclusion, they need to be safe, particularly for women.⁶⁵ As one attendee said: “We know that women do not use places or are afraid of going out in public spaces, specifically alone.”⁶⁶

The localization of placemaking – transitioning from placemaking being driven by outside projects or external actors to locally led processes being driven by community members, such as local artists – was signalled as vital to the long-term success and scaling of safe, vibrant and inclusive public spaces.⁶⁷ WUF12 participants also emphasized the crucial role of participatory planning to understand all stakeholder groups’ needs and achieve inclusive public spaces.

Localization as translation

The third dimension of localization that emerged from the perspectives of WUF12 participants relates to translation, which reflects the need to adapt global ideas to local realities, leverage local knowledge and embrace local culture to create solutions tailored to needs and conditions on the ground.





Indigenous people
roundtables.
© UN-Habitat

Adapting to local realities

Discussions at WUF12 framed localization as a means of translating global aspirations to local realities. As one speaker noted, it implies the “translation of the Sustainable Development Goals into the daily actions of local actors”.⁶⁸ In other words, solutions need to be tailored to local needs, priorities and capabilities, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The need for translation to local contexts was expressed by participants across a range of issue areas, including housing, mobility,⁶⁹ climate action,⁷⁰ displacement response,⁷¹ disaster risk reduction⁷² and digital technology.⁷³ In addition, translation was the dimension of localization for which geographic regions were most equally referenced (see Figure 2), emphasizing that adapting to local realities is inherently tied to place and context.

Throughout the Forum, speakers noted several reasons why translation is crucial for effective localization. Translating allows actors to address global challenges more effectively because it ensures shared goals are interpreted in ways that are aligned with and relevant to local interests and communicated through “accessible language”.⁷⁴ This translation process allows people to understand and take ownership of global goals and agendas.⁷⁵ As a result, presenters signalled that localization as translation facilitates the uptake and adoption of guidelines and policies at the local level.⁷⁶

Importantly, events also highlighted that the concept of localization itself can be interpreted in very different ways across contexts.

“So, we’re hearing a lot... about localizing... and it’s talked about in a positivist way, as if it’s an easy thing to do... You know, a lot gets lost in this translation of localization. The concept might take on a different meaning. It might no longer fit the context at all.”⁷⁷

Because localization can have different meanings, it needs to be connected to broader national and global frameworks.⁷⁸ There is a clear need for solutions that are locally relevant yet globally aligned. As such, participants emphasized the importance of adapting solutions to local contexts while maintaining strong universal foundations to ensure some coherence and consistency.⁷⁹ In this regard, participants underlined the importance of translating not only international agendas and guidelines to local contexts but also global research and science.⁸⁰ As one presenter put it: “We take this task very seriously, ... to translate the complex scientific concepts into practical, accessible knowledge that resonates with local communities and decision makers”.⁸¹

Localization also entails translating global partnerships into local settings⁸² as well as adapting technology to meet specific local conditions and needs.⁸³ At the same time, translation not only flows from global to local, but also from local to global. Participants emphasized that local policies can be adapted, translated and scaled to inform national or global frameworks.⁸⁴ In this sense, localization both influences and is shaped by global processes, ensuring that local actions contribute to global objectives while retaining local relevance.

Leveraging local knowledge

WUF12 participants underscored the need to make use of local knowledge to adapt global processes and frameworks to local realities and ensure their relevance in local contexts. The importance of generating local knowledge for the translation of global goals to local contexts was acknowledged across various policy areas, such as housing,⁸⁵ displacement,⁸⁶ disaster risk management⁸⁷ and urban planning.⁸⁸ Knowledge to solve global challenges is found at the local level, because innovation comes from local actors, as voiced by one participant:

“Cities and regions are laboratories of innovation. Cities and regions are not just implementers like back in those days. Today, we are innovators. And we address the twenty-first century complexity through initiative[s] in climate action, inclusive economy and participatory democracy.”⁸⁹

One component of this knowledge is localized data, which is essential for understanding local realities and ensuring policies and actions can be adequately adapted.⁹⁰ By developing the capacity of local communities like informal settlement dwellers to collect their own information, data accuracy can be increased due to their firsthand knowledge of the area. As presenters highlighted, this generates a higher level of trust when that data is then used for decision-making.⁹¹ In addition to the need for locally generated data, speakers also raised concerns about data access and ownership:

“Data a vehicle. Data is a tool for action, is a tool for planning, and we should understand how to carefully ensure that the data are actually locally owned... They are not owned by local actors, municipalities, and CSOs (civil society organizations)... [For example,] area-based assessments or settlement-based assessments are granular and they aim to inform localized programmes, but also planning and strategies that are tailored to the specific areas and settlement features in crisis and fragile contexts.”⁹²

In other words, local actors should not only have access to data, but they should also be responsible for producing and owning local data and using it effectively to enable localization. Discussions emphasized that leveraging local data for decision-making involves the analysis of disaggregated data to support inclusive planning.⁹³ For example, data analysis of municipal mobility services can enable the identification of gender-based patterns that can be addressed through adequate planning.⁹⁴ Collecting localized data involves collaboration on the ground⁹⁵ between local governments and grassroots organizations, such as through city labs⁹⁶ that have valuable insights into local realities needed for designing relevant actions. The Cairo Call to Action, which calls for “leveraging local and grassroots data for decision-making”, echoes these perspectives.

Embracing local culture

A survey conducted prior to WUF12 revealed that culture was the concept most associated with localization.⁹⁷ During the Forum, many participants reinforced this finding by emphasizing the essential role of culture in translating and adapting solutions to local contexts. For some, this role is so important that “localization equals culture”.⁹⁸ While local governments also play an important role, participants primarily mentioned culture in relation to grassroots and local communities.

Understanding cultural adequacy in the translation of global goals to local realities requires strong local partnerships and contextual awareness. As one speaker explained:

“It’s also a challenge to think how these universal ideas actually are grounded in local contexts. No, cultural adequacy is not the same in our rural village in sub-Saharan Africa than in like [a] metropolis in North America... and understanding how... these indicators... speak to those diverse realities requires collaboration with local actors, with local governments, with organized civil society, with local research institutions.”⁹⁹

Participants highlighted the need to work with local communities to be able to understand local culture and identity, which is essential for the translation process.¹⁰⁰ Adapting to the local culture also involves integrating local practices and indigenous knowledge in solutions.¹⁰¹ These promote sustainable and context-specific approaches that are often more effective and culturally appropriate, drawing on generations of wisdom and enhancing community ownership.

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Event at the Urban Library.
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Part I Perspectives on localization

The three dimensions on localization explored throughout Part I — Implementation, representation and translation — collectively offer a multidimensional framework for understanding how global goals can be effectively realized at the local level. Implementation highlights the critical need to close resource gaps in finance, data, and skills that local actors face when trying to advance sustainable urban development. Representation underscores the importance of ensuring local voices have meaningful authority in shaping policies at all levels, from neighbourhood planning to global frameworks. Translation emphasizes the necessity of adapting global ideas to local contexts by leveraging local knowledge and embracing cultural specificities, recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Together, these dimensions reinforce the Cairo Call to Action's emphasis on "achieving global goals through local action", "sustaining systemic representation of local actors", and "harnessing culture and heritage as an asset for sustainability".

Looking ahead, the challenge will be to operationalize these dimensions in complementary ways rather than treating them as separate approaches to sustainable urbanization. This integrated approach points to the need for partnerships that transcend traditional institutional boundaries, innovative financing mechanisms that reach the local level, data systems that capture local realities and governance structures that formalize meaningful participation of local actors.





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PART II

Perspectives on localizing solutions to global crises





Dialogue 2, Cities and the Climate Crisis.
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This section explores how the three dimensions of localization relate to the three global issues most prominently discussed at WUF12: the housing crisis, the climate crisis and humanitarian crises. While not an exhaustive application of localization to global issues, this analysis uses these crises as case studies to illustrate the relevance of localization to current global challenges.

As one presenter underscored, “none of the 17 SDGs are on track to be achieved by 2030”.¹⁰² Participants at WUF12 expressed the urgency of addressing these crises, highlighting their impact on the achievement of global development goals and the need to tackle the crises through local action. Local and regional governments as well as grassroots and local communities were the most frequently referenced stakeholder

groups across discussions on all three crises (see Figure 3).

There were also important differences in the ways WUF12 attendees addressed the three crisis areas. Climate and housing emerged as the most frequently referenced thematic areas, mentioned at least once in the vast majority of events. In contrast, humanitarian crisis was the least referenced thematic area, compared to climate and housing. This makes sense, since the housing and climate crises affect everyone, irrespective of place, while crises resulting from displacement and conflict affect specific contexts. To echo the Cairo Call to Action, “tackling the global housing crisis is a prerequisite to accelerate the 2030 Agenda and achieve poverty eradication, climate action and crisis response and recovery”.

In addition, there was notable geographic variation in the frequency of references to these three thematic areas, (see Figure 4). The theme of humanitarian crisis was discussed most frequently in reference to the Middle East and North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa, which reflects ongoing

conflicts in those regions. Housing was discussed most extensively in relation to sub-Saharan Africa, which echoes the enormity of the housing gap in that region. Climate action was discussed almost equally in all regions, in accordance with the universal impact of climate change.

FIGURE 3: **Distribution of selected stakeholder groups referenced within WUF12 events on the housing, climate and humanitarian crises**¹⁰³

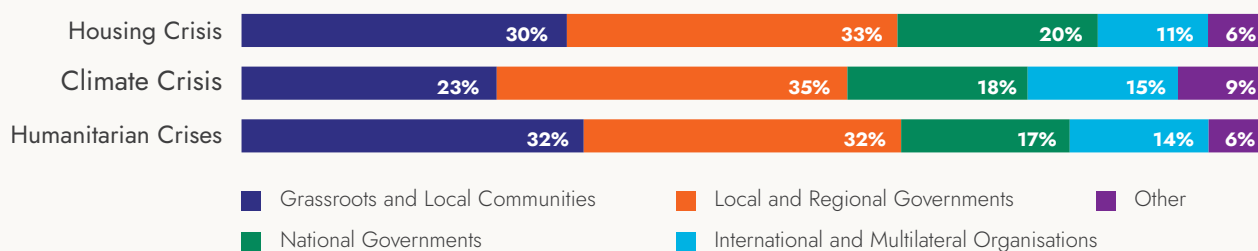
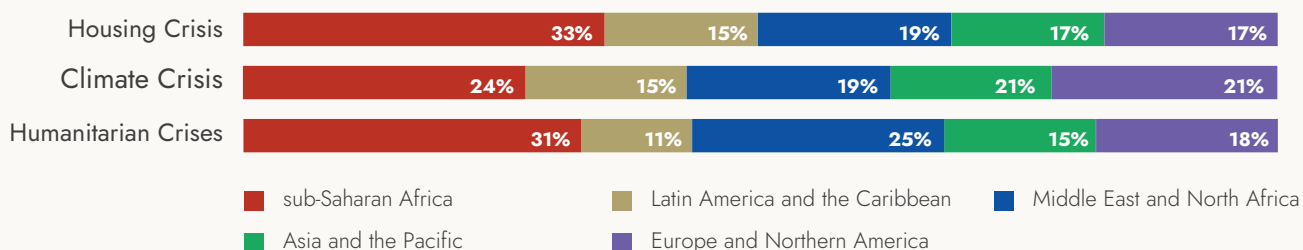
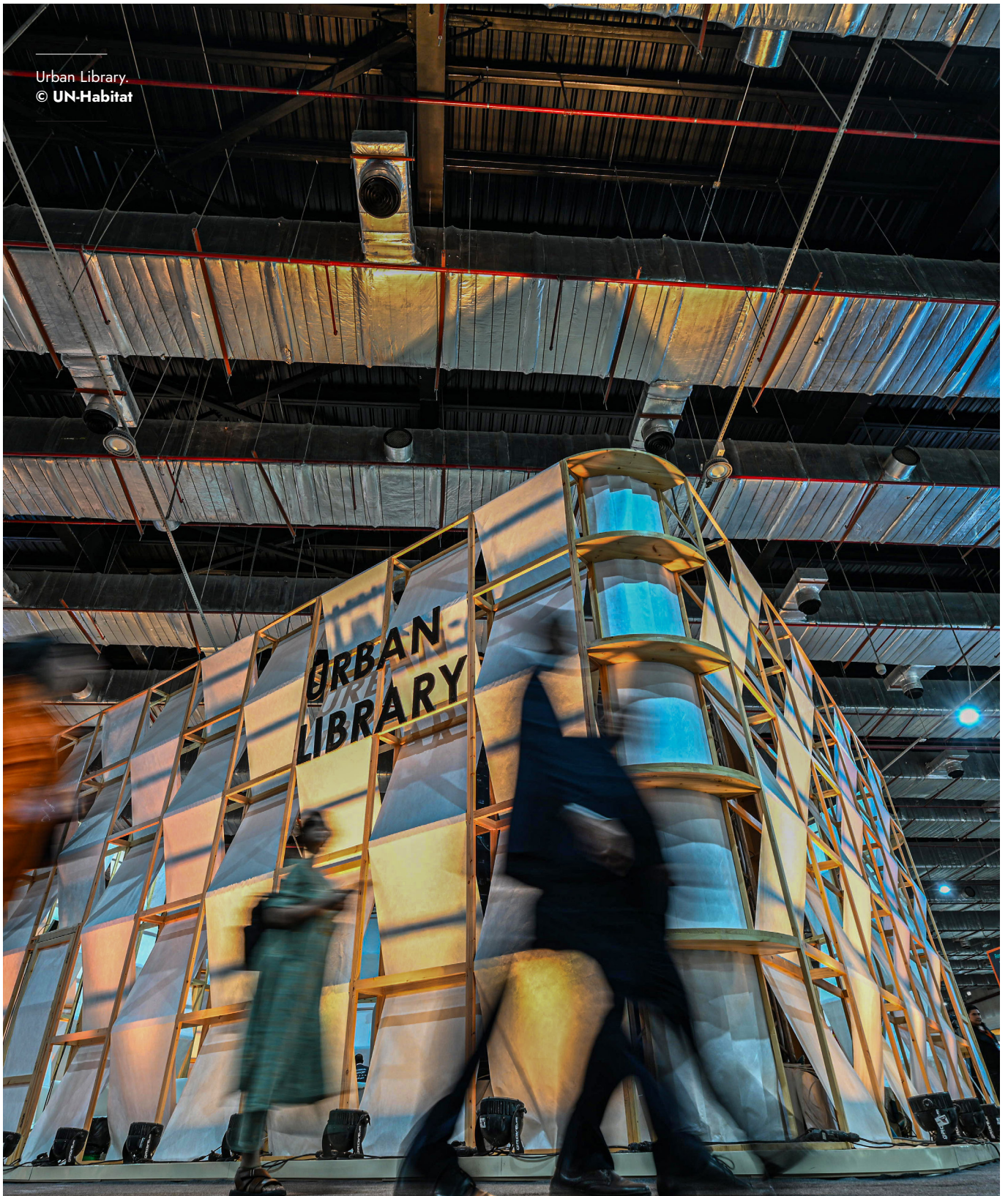


FIGURE 4: **Distribution of geographic regions referenced within WUF12 events on the housing, climate and humanitarian crises**¹⁰⁴





Housing crisis





Dialogue 1,
Housing our future.
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WUF12 discussions emphasized the key role of housing in achieving the SDGs and the significance of localization to ensure adequate housing for all. Three critical dimensions emerged as central to addressing the housing crisis: the *implementation* of policies that uphold the social function of land, the need for greater *representation* of those most affected by housing insecurity to restore dignity, and the *translation* of housing solutions to align with the local context and ensure cultural adequacy.

The social function of land

While there are many issues inhibiting the local *implementation* of adequate housing, a recurring theme at WUF12 revolved around the role of land. Participants stressed that recognizing the social function of land is critical for local housing policies, to ensure that land serves the public interest and enables equitable access to adequate housing. Another factor that hinders

housing development is access to land. As one participant noted: “The state, for the past 20 to 30 years, has not had a policy for creating land reserves. Therefore, with the skyrocketing land prices around cities, people are having difficulties accessing land to build.”¹⁰⁵ According to another:

“It has been a mistake by many policy creators to think about housing as a market good [because] housing cannot be moved and... there is... a shortage of buildable land.”¹⁰⁶

Indeed, there was widespread concern about the increased privatization and financialization of housing and land, and how this exacerbates inequality and spatial segregation.¹⁰⁷ As one presenter put it: “Okay, you own the land, perfectly fine, but it does not mean that you own the right for any unfettered development on that land.”¹⁰⁸

Discussions emphasized that land not only has financial value, but also a social value, suggesting that the implementation of land-use regulations needs to ensure development truly benefits local communities. The question of who should therefore own and benefit from the value of land was a highly contested debate at WUF12.¹⁰⁹ Solutions such as housing cooperatives were highlighted as mechanisms for bridging financial obstacles to land access and ensuring increases in land value benefit the community.¹¹⁰

Discussions about land also reflected the tension between building new cities (including housing) and building new housing through redevelopment and regeneration of land in existing cities. Of course, the venue for WUF12 itself was located between new cities that have fused together to form the Greater Cairo region.¹¹¹ For some, building new cities is a “silver bullet strategy”¹¹² that does not live up to its potential, but others argued that “we simply aren’t able to do it all through densification... and new city projects can step past this public sector weakness and prepare large amounts of land [for housing]”.¹¹³ Those critical of new cities noted that greenfield

housing development has often been built in a car-oriented manner,¹¹⁴ without adequate access to jobs¹¹⁵ or amenities like healthcare facilities, schools and shops.¹¹⁶ Discussions about housing at WUF12 thus hinged in part on the question of how cities can be built to ensure places of work and home are in close proximity, with easy access to essential amenities.¹¹⁷ It is therefore critical to preserve the social function of land but also its ecological dimension, in alignment with the New Urban Agenda.

Housing to restore dignity

There was a widespread view at WUF12 that the housing crisis extends beyond securing physical shelter.¹¹⁸ In the words of one expert: “Secure housing is more than just providing shelter; it is about restoring dignity, cultivating resilience, and fostering inclusivity.”¹¹⁹ Adequate *representation* of people impacted by the housing crisis emerged as a recurring theme, particularly in relation to people who are homeless, the more than 1.1 billion people living in slum conditions and those living in informally built housing.

Dialogue 1,
Housing our future.
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Participants recounted egregious violations of dignity resulting from ongoing displacements and the impact of disasters. For vulnerable communities impacted by displacements, these include the demolition of informal settlements and the loss of homes, belongings, livelihoods and lives.¹²⁰ As one testimonial starkly illustrated: “We are here doing amazing things, but it can also go down by a bulldozer in one second.”¹²¹ Experts affirmed that “forced eviction is a gross violation of human rights, and in particular, the human right to adequate housing”.¹²²

Discussions during the Forum illustrated how restoring dignity requires challenging our perceptions of who best represents the building and housing sectors. Speakers highlighted the under-recognized importance of incremental housing, noting that, “in the global South... 70 per cent of the housing production is incremental and family-led or household-led building,”¹²³ and that “incremental housing, often informal, represents over 50 per cent of all housing construction”.¹²⁴ Others pointed out the overlooked role of women:

“It’s simply not true that the biggest investors in housing are the World Bank or the commercial banks, etc. The biggest investors in housing are women who save money in savings groups and invest in their family homes.”¹²⁵

Without representation of those 50 per cent of people at municipal and country levels, how can cities make policy and building regulations for those who actually do the construction? In the words of one participant: “How do we create the enabling environment for that to happen better and at scale?”¹²⁶ If incremental self-built housing is so prevalent, “what is the role of the city in there? Does the city pick up our initiatives, and then scale them up? And put a budget into it?”¹²⁷

The overlooked role of cultural adequacy

Reducing the housing shortage is an important global goal, but how are such efforts *translated* to the local level? Discussions at WUF12 emphasized that efforts to address the housing crisis often ignore cultural adequacy, even though the right to take part in cultural life is enshrined in core international human rights treaties. As one speaker put it, there has been a tendency to “focus on civil and political rights more than economic, social, cultural rights”.¹²⁸ One consequence of this focus, as another signalled, is that “the cultural adequacy of housing [is a] very neglected element in the right to adequate housing but is critical for outcomes”.¹²⁹

Grassroots Assembly.
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This issue was particularly emphasized by representatives of indigenous groups,¹³⁰ who voiced concern over top-down approaches that disregard their cultural practices. One attendee framed it in the following manner: “What the government tries to do is... remove all of [our] settlements and... convince people to move into these [high-rise] apartments, [which is] really... a sanitization of our culture.”¹³¹ Top-down planning often disregards the diversity of local knowledge of housing and land management. Some speakers emphasized the importance of culturally adequate design, noting, for example, that “if a house is not culturally appropriate, it doesn’t have the rooms that people need for their families; if it doesn’t have the space for the economic activity they want”,¹³² people will not use it. Others foregrounded the environmental benefits of local cultural practices, such as the lessons that can be learned from vernacular design in arid cities on how to cope with heat.¹³³ Attendees raised important questions that linked the concept of home to understandings of culture:

“How can we define home in such an environment?... Can we define home physically? What is your actual building where you live? Can we define the home communally, as where the community exists?”¹³⁴

Participants at WUF12 made it clear that for them, culture is not limited to monuments or heritage sites but also involves social spaces and relationships.¹³⁵ In terms of geography, the topic was mentioned most often in relation to the Middle East and North Africa and the least in relation to sub-Saharan Africa.¹³⁶ One participant summed up the state of affairs in Africa:

“Our African cities do not have character; they are losing their character. I mean, where is the heritage and culture, you know, in our African cities? I mean, look around. Look in all our cities, where we have been copying architectural designs or gated areas, or copied places from the world, and we are quickly losing the character of our city.”¹³⁷



Climate crisis





Special session,
Zero Waste World.
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The climate crisis was a central theme at WUF12, with discussions focussing on its impact on cities – particularly through heatwaves, floods and sea-level rise – and the crucial role of local actors in driving adaptation and mitigation solutions. Here as well, the three dimensions of localization were prominent in participant perspectives, with conversations underscoring the need for increased resources to *implement* the climate agenda locally, greater *representation* of local communities in climate policy-making and planning, and the effective *translation* of climate action to adapt to local contexts.

Local climate action

The Paris Agreement serves as the primary framework to *implement* global climate action, obligating countries to share their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). NDCs capture countries' commitments to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change.

To boost the local implementation of NDCs, participants stressed the importance of integrating them into local development plans¹³⁸ and defining local targets.¹³⁹ They noted that in most cases, NDCs do not include urban targets and commitments made by local governments, many of which are more ambitious than those of their national governments.¹⁴⁰ The current NDC revision process was highlighted as an opportunity to address this gap:

“For the NDCs 3.0, there is a lot of room for improvement in terms of the urban content. There is a very clear commitment, and demand by many countries, by cities and local governments, but also commitments by Member States, to include ... sustainable urban development dimensions into the NDCs.”¹⁴¹

WUF12 showcased the diverse and innovative ways climate actions are being implemented at the local level. Circularity was highlighted as key to urban transformations that improve resilience while ensuring resource consumption does not exceed planetary boundaries.¹⁴² Green public spaces were also frequently cited as fundamental to buffering climate shocks, reducing water scarcity and regenerating biodiversity corridors in cities.¹⁴³ Innovative housing solutions focussed on self-sufficiency were also shown to have played an important role in local climate efforts.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, cities have often taken the lead in meeting climate targets through local climate action plans that commit to net zero emissions or carbon neutrality. Throughout the Forum, participants stressed that enhancing the global visibility of these local initiatives is essential for scaling their impact.

Discussions consistently highlighted a critical lack of resources for local implementation of climate initiatives,¹⁴⁵ especially for community-based adaptation measures.¹⁴⁶ As one participant noted:

“Almost all of the NDCs make a reference to the need of climate finance to [be] implement[ed]... Almost none of them make a reference to the need of climate finance at the urban level in order to get climate action at the urban level going. This is a massive disconnect if we see the types of infrastructure projects that are happening in cities.”¹⁴⁷

According to a number of presenters, the prevailing global financial architecture poorly serves local actors seeking funding for climate action.¹⁴⁸ However, some speakers highlighted emerging financial instruments that are adapting to the needs of local actors. For example, municipal green or sustainability bonds, which are increasingly

common and often paired with capacity-building programmes, have successfully funded local infrastructure projects addressing both mitigation and adaptation goals.¹⁴⁹ Representatives from pioneering cities shared experiences exploring extensions of these financial tools to support biodiversity restoration.¹⁵⁰

Communities for resilient cities

Though grassroots actors and local communities were relatively underrepresented in climate discussions compared to other crisis areas (see Figure 3), inclusive participatory processes to ensure community *representation* were seen as key to climate action. As one contributor stated:

“It takes money to [get] people to participate. But at the long term, it is sustainable. There is no sustainable cit[y] without people who live there making it together.”¹⁵¹

Based on the statements of WUF12 participants, the involvement and support of local actors serves two critical functions in climate response.

First, local ownership ensures climate actions fit the communities' needs and maximize co-benefits such as improved health, economic opportunities and social inclusion.¹⁵² Several events highlighted how transitions to soft mobility and public transportation systems enhance urban accessibility for marginalized communities.¹⁵³

Second, meaningful climate action involves behavioural changes involving lifestyles, relationships to nature and emergency response. Forum discussions noted that these changes can only take place when local communities are included in the design and implementation of solutions. As one speaker put it, enacting such behavioural change

involves reconciling “what the data tells us, with what the community believes [in order to create] one shared understanding of vulnerability”.¹⁵⁴ Others emphasized proactive measures, such as training communities on early warning systems to facilitate faster reactions to climate shocks and reduce casualties.¹⁵⁵

The climate crisis was covered prominently in youth-related events, with speakers highlighting its impact on future generations and suggesting mechanisms like urban youth climate councils to ensure the intergenerational equity and long-term effectiveness of climate policies and actions.¹⁵⁶

Contextual climate adaptation

A general agreement emerged at the Forum that effective climate action must be deeply rooted in local contexts. For this to happen, participants stressed the necessity of *translating* climate agendas to ensure they connect with local cultural practices.¹⁵⁷ Multiple speakers called for leveraging the first-hand knowledge local communities have of their environment into policies and actions, especially for adaptation solutions.¹⁵⁸ This point is illustrated by an attendee’s contribution:

“Ensuring that indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems are fully acknowledged because the knowledge systems of indigenous people which go back hundreds or thousands of years can be really useful in terms of teaching the world how to adapt to climate change.”¹⁵⁹

One way this cultural translation manifests, as evident from case studies presented at WUF12, is in the context of construction practices and building materials. Participants shared that there are many local, indigenous

and traditional housing construction practices that embody sustainable principles but have not been incorporated into local policy frameworks. There is a need to update building codes to include and support local materials.¹⁶⁰ Practitioners shared how building codes that are well-adapted to the local context can simultaneously enhance communities’ climate resilience¹⁶¹ and reduce emissions.¹⁶²

“What can we learn from Makoko that the engineers can mainstream into formal construction processes? ... I think that’s really what we need to be doing when we’re thinking about indigenous materials when we’re thinking about leveraging the research that is going on in the city.”¹⁶³

WUF12 participants warned about the impact of climate change on cultural heritage and acknowledged the cultural loss generated by climate change.¹⁶⁴ Some called for the recognition of cultural loss within reparations frameworks for addressing the unequal impacts of climate.¹⁶⁵ Forum discussions also showcased the role of culture in raising awareness about the climate threat and local environmental degradation. Presenters shared how festivals,¹⁶⁶ traditional songs¹⁶⁷ and exhibitions¹⁶⁸ have been used around the world to enhance climate advocacy and environmental education, and familiarize communities with actions they can implement. As one speaker related: “A festival at the Clang River [was established], at the river banks, and combines this arts festival with environmental issues [to explain]... that you should not throw your waste into the river, and he builds awareness.”¹⁶⁹

In these perspectives on localization, culture is seen as a tool to translate global climate goals into local action.

Humanitarian crises





Dialogue 06,
The loss of home.
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Basic safety and protection of human lives are fundamental prerequisites for humanitarian crisis response and sustainable urban development. WUF12 took place in Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt, in a region heavily affected by multiple crises and critical humanitarian situations. Indeed, in terms of geographic coverage, humanitarian crisis was most discussed in relation to the Middle-East and Africa (see Figure 4). Throughout the Forum, attendees examined the severity and impact of armed conflicts and displacements that are happening across the globe. In these deliberations, participants emphasized three key aspects of localization in crisis response: the role of local actors in *implementing* responses, the necessity of their *representation* in decision-making processes that shape these responses, and the importance of *translating* crisis response to local contexts to meet the priorities of impacted populations.

Local actors on the front line

Although crisis response has often been seen as an area to be led by international organizations, with local actors frequently overlooked, Forum discussions emphasized how the shifting humanitarian landscape demonstrates the increasing need for localization. As one speaker noted, the “first line of response is always at the local level”.¹⁷⁰ Local actors are not only the first to experience the immediate impacts of crises but also the ones *implementing* solutions on the ground in regions around the globe.¹⁷¹ One attendee spoke to the leadership that emerges from local governance structures in crisis situations:



Activities at
the Urban Expo.
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“The champions for solutions invariably come from the local level. They don’t come from the national level that we have seen. It’s the governors in Nigeria. It’s the mayors in Colombia. It’s the regional presidents in Ethiopia that are really the champions for this... [i]t’s only really local leaders, mayors, regional presidents that are willing to put their political capital behind these choices. It’s very hard to find those champions at the national level.”¹⁷²

The role of local and regional governments is particularly important in post-crisis rehabilitation and recovery.¹⁷³ While many participants at WUF12 recognized the role of international organizations in crisis response — particularly in coordination¹⁷⁴ and the deployment of early warning systems¹⁷⁵ — they also pointed to inherent limitations in terms of transitioning out of crises and ensuring sustainable responses:

“When a crisis hits, you see all the international organizations coming with their international staff ready to settle in and start doing easy operations, but then when the money start[s] drying up, they just move to another disaster area.”¹⁷⁶

Another speaker observed: “After 10 years of responding to the refugee portfolio, there is very little resilient result of that investment.”¹⁷⁷

Forum attendees emphasized that past efforts to respond to humanitarian crises often prioritized temporary measures without sufficient consideration for their long-term effects at the local level.¹⁷⁸ To implement effective long-term humanitarian crisis prevention and response, participants advocated for “innovative partnerships connecting the local to the global”.¹⁷⁹ Several sessions highlighted the role of digital technologies¹⁸⁰ and disaggregated data for effective localized responses¹⁸¹ to crises and displacements,¹⁸² as well as the need to “co-produce data with the key actors on the ground”.¹⁸³

In terms of access to resources, the importance of directly funding local actors was identified in multiple sessions as particularly crucial for rapid crisis response.¹⁸⁴ As one speaker framed it:

“If we cannot have the kind of flexible funding that we have under the mayor’s programme, we could not have helped, I think, more than 69 municipalities, more than 200,000 individuals, and the 11,000 internally displaced persons... It shows as a value of quick response, because this requires quick response... The traditional development model is changing.”¹⁸⁵

Local voices in humanitarian aid

A consistent perspective voiced throughout WUF12 was the need for greater *representation* of local stakeholders in discussions of humanitarian crises. According to Forum contributors, local actors should be deeply involved in the decision-making processes related to crisis prevention, response and recovery – and whenever possible, leading these efforts. One presenter described the disconnect often experienced at the local level:

“I’ve been in places where the response is immediate from the local level, but at the national level, they are still arguing and discussing, and even worse, the international level comes in response to the national level request and works straight with the ministries. And I’ve been in places where the mayors were completely alone in their office, while the other parallel thing is happening in the response.”¹⁸⁶

This disconnect also extends to financial decisions, as local governments have limited control over resources with national authorities making key decisions regarding funds from international partners.¹⁸⁷ In contrast, national governments were referenced far less than local and regional governments, as well as grassroots and local communities in discussions related to humanitarian crises (see Figure 3).

According to WUF12 participants, involving local communities is essential for effective disaster preparedness and response, recovery during crisis situations and post-conflict reconstruction.¹⁸⁸ Without community involvement, efforts risk becoming disconnected from the reality on the ground and may fail to address the true needs and priorities of affected populations, especially the most vulnerable.¹⁸⁹



As some experts pointed out, this requires a perspective that recognizes internally displaced persons and other displaced people as city residents.¹⁹⁰ Overall, Forum discussions emphasized that crisis response must be a shared responsibility among all stakeholders across governance levels. As one participant explained, this collaborative approach is particularly critical in the context of displacement response:

“Forced displacement must be viewed from a development perspective ... that addresses the root causes and the long-term impacts of displacement, but also that contributes to medium and long-term sustainability. Doing that also requires a tailoring approach, a proactive shift from reactive crisis response to preventive action, a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach at all levels – local, regional, national and of course global through the global mechanisms.”¹⁹¹

Activities at
the Urban Expo.
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Tailored crisis response

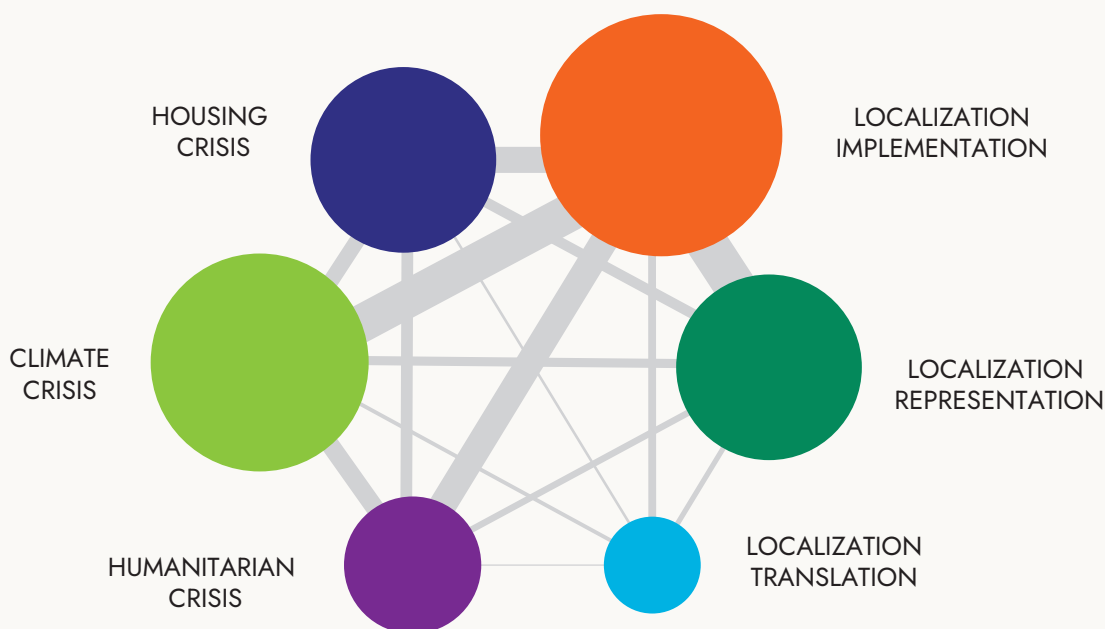
In the context of humanitarian crises, Forum participants highlighted the importance of tailoring disaster management and recovery strategies to local contexts.¹⁹² This *translation* process ensures that localized approaches to crisis responses meet the priorities of affected populations, and take into account the impact of crises on neighbourhoods and cities.¹⁹³ Speakers at multiple events noted that many tools used in crisis prevention and response — such as local needs assessment and community mapping in post-crisis areas — already serve as effective translation instruments.¹⁹⁴

As part of this translation process, participants also underscored the need to integrate heritage preservation and culture into crisis response and disaster risk management. This includes integrating both tangible and intangible cultural aspects to build social cohesion in times of crisis.¹⁹⁵ In the words of one attendee:

“Culture is the X factor for building back better. A city cannot be consider[ed] full[y] resilient if it does not integrate its cultural heritage components within its urban and risk management plans. Culture is about people. It means identity and shared values. It enhances social cohesion and integrity. Culture has a particular relevance in disaster situations and crisis [settings]. But despite all of this, we still look at culture as a luxury.”¹⁹⁶

Case studies discussed at the Forum demonstrated the value of using local practices and knowledge in crisis prevention and response. These approaches provide contextualized solutions that leverage local capabilities:

“We have actually developed early warning systems. They have a local way of doing it. When it's rainy, they ... just put [an empty water bottle] under the rain, and then they measure the level [at] the top of the hills... Then, we inform those at the bottom [of the hills], and we have ways of spreading the information... Communities have actually structured themselves, and they have what we call ... disaster management committees.”¹⁹⁷

FIGURE 5: **Prevalence and interconnections of the key topics discussed at WUF12¹⁹⁸**

Part II

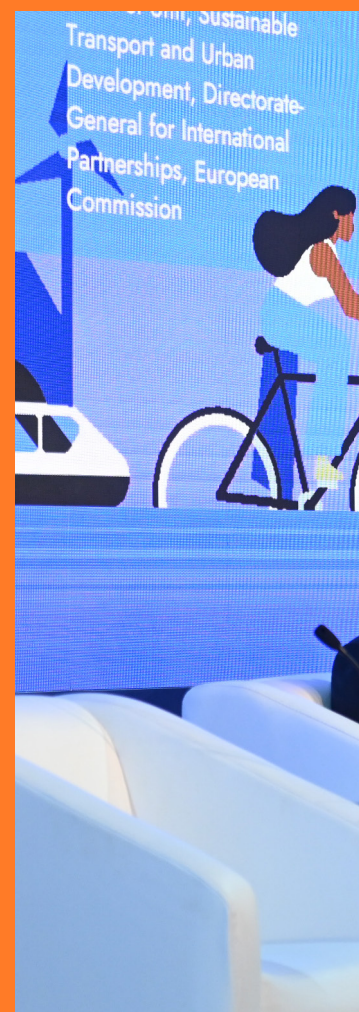
Perspectives
on localizing
solutions to
global crises

The analysis of Forum discussions indicates that housing, climate and humanitarian crises are all strongly interconnected. Figure 5 above shows the relative importance and interconnections between the three dimensions of localization – implementation, representation and translation – and the three crises. The size of each circle is proportional to how frequently that topic was identified within the event and the thickness of each connecting line is proportional to how frequently the two topics were referenced within the same events. The figure shows how the implementation dimension is already widely considered in thematic domains, and which aspects of localization could be strengthened in the future to better localize specific thematic domains.

The discussions at WUF12 clearly demonstrated that localizing solutions is essential to effectively address global crises related to housing, climate and humanitarian emergencies. The Forum highlighted innovative local practices – from community-led incremental housing and culturally adequate designs to municipal sustainability bonds and grassroots disaster management committees – that exemplify how locally driven initiatives can effectively respond to global challenges. Participants also underscored the interconnectedness of these challenges, emphasizing that achieving the SDGs hinges on recognizing the front-line role of local governments, integrating community-driven knowledge into policies and frameworks, and tailoring global approaches to shared crises to diverse urban settings. Integrating the three dimensions of localization – implementation, representation and translation – into global responses can help cities and communities effectively mitigate risks, manage ongoing crises and build resilience for future challenges.



Future perspectives on localization





Dialogue 5 -
Putting People First in
the Digital Era.
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WUF is a unique platform for generating knowledge, exchanging ideas and shaping solutions to address urban challenges and implement the New Urban Agenda. *WUF12 Perspectives* offers a first-of-its-kind analysis of insights shared across 587 events by leveraging AI tools. It provides a comprehensive overview of stakeholder perspectives on WUF12's central theme of localization, showing how local actions can address the housing, climate and humanitarian crises.

From the analysis, it emerged that three dimensions of localization were critical throughout WUF12: implementation, representation and translation. The first dimension refers to achieving global goals through local action and closing local

resource gaps. The second dimension relates to the inclusion of local actors in decision-making at all levels, enabling them to meaningfully participate in shaping global and national agendas. The third dimension refers to adapting global ideas and frameworks to local contexts to tailor solutions to local realities. The examination of participant perspectives demonstrates the need to integrate these three dimensions into policy and practice to leave no one and no place behind.

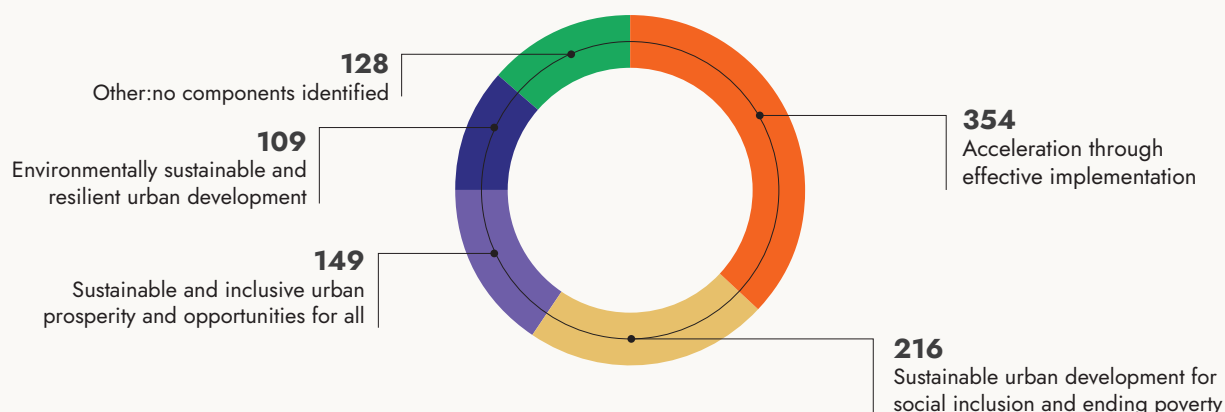
Informing global policy

Localization has been increasingly mainstreamed in the United Nations system and the work of multilateral organizations. This is evidenced by the emergence and

strategic positioning of the Local2030 Coalition — a system-wide platform and network for accelerating the localization of the SDGs and supporting local stakeholders. However, non-governmental organizations continue to call for a clearer definition of localization and its meaning for different stakeholders.¹⁹⁹ *WUF12 Perspectives* offers the multilateral system concrete and tangible perspectives on how stakeholders engaged in urban development understand localization, which may differ from the concept's application in other contexts. Just prior to WUF12, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with UN-Habitat and other United Nations agencies, released the

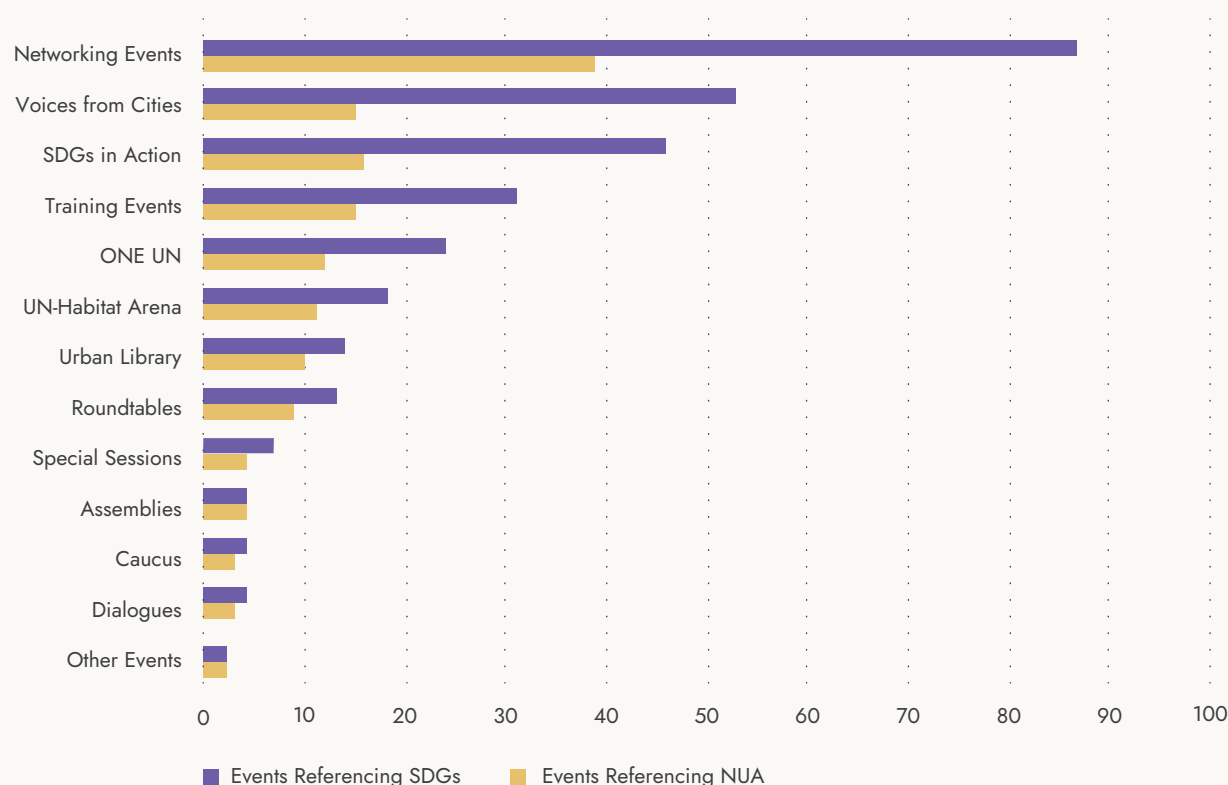
Inter-agency policy briefs on accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda from local to global levels: The critical importance of SDG localization,²⁰⁰ capturing the United Nations system's perspectives on localization. *WUF12 Perspectives* complements this work by offering perspectives from a broad range of other stakeholders. The document reaffirms several aspects of the United Nations understanding of localization, such as the importance of unlocking finance and ensuring access to data, but also offers new perspectives that the United Nations system should consider, such as the role of culture and the role of public space in effective and meaningful localization.

FIGURE 6: Distribution of the three transformative commitments and means of implementation of the New Urban Agenda across WUF12 events²⁰¹



In addition, the insights coming from WUF12 should be leveraged to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as other global frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. *WUF12 Perspectives* reinforces the New Urban Agenda's role in driving the localization of the 2030 Agenda²⁰² by highlighting practical interpretations of localization

— implementation, representation and translation. In light of the upcoming mid-term review of the New Urban Agenda in 2026, *WUF12 Perspectives* can help localize its implementation through a better understanding of how localization takes place. While mentioned in a quarter of all events, the New Urban Agenda featured primarily at events with attendance by national governments, demonstrating the need for better translation to local contexts to enhance its relevance.

FIGURE 7: **Number of events referencing the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda across event categories**²⁰³

Localization has been underscored in the Pact for the Future as a means to end poverty and meet the SDGs and, as such, the three dimensions emerging from WUF12 also hold relevance to understand how to concretely deliver on this global aspiration. Additionally, Action 55e requests the Secretary-General to “provide recommendations on how engagement with local and regional authorities could advance the 2030 Agenda, particularly the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, by the end of the seventy-ninth session for Member States’ consideration”.²⁰⁴

WUF12 Perspectives can also be leveraged to shape upcoming global discussions, including the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025 and the next

SDG Summit in 2027, where localization can play an important role in policy debate.

Guiding stakeholders

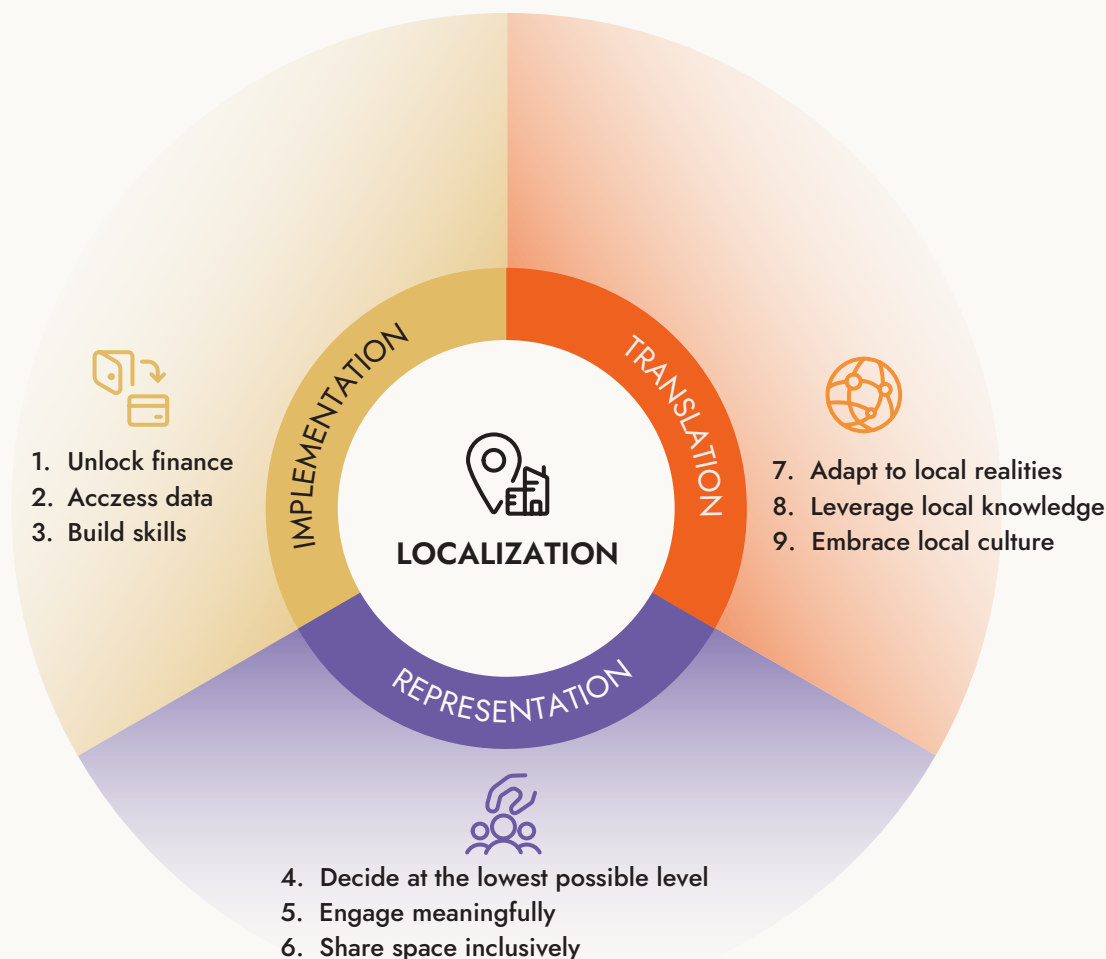
Beyond informing policy discourse, this publication provides practical guidance for all stakeholders seeking to embed localization in their sustainable urban development efforts. By synthesizing the diverse perspectives shared directly by Forum participants, this document offers a concrete distillation of the complex discussions of localization that transpired at WUF12 and illustrates the relevance of localization to addressing the three interlocking challenges of housing, climate and humanitarian crises.

In particular, *WUF12 Perspectives* unpacks the concept of localization, identifying nine tangible elements that emerged from Forum discussions that stakeholders can use to drive global action through localizing their own work (see Figure 8 below).

Taken together, these three dimensions – implementation, representation and translation – provide an actionable framework for enacting sustainable urban

development and meaningful change in communities worldwide. All stakeholders – including national governments, local and regional governments, women, older persons, children and youth, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, professionals, grassroots organizations, businesses and foundations, and academia – have a role to play in advancing localization, just as localization has the potential to empower and benefit each in return.

FIGURE 8: **The three dimensions and nine elements of localization**



Shaping UN-Habitat's strategic direction

WUF12 Perspectives represents a watershed in UN-Habitat's digital transformation journey. Building on the novel methodological approach employed in the production of this publication, UN-Habitat intends to pursue artificial intelligence-driven analysis relevant to its mandate, cultivating a culture of innovation, creativity and continuous learning as promoted by the Secretary General's *UN 2.0* initiative.

The World Urban Forum is a place for UN-Habitat to listen to and learn from diverse voices, and the findings of this publication will help ensure these voices guide future initiatives. The perspectives emerging from WUF12 serve as valuable insights for UN-Habitat's new Strategic Plan (2026-2029), reinforcing its proposed focus areas: housing, land and basic services to enhance equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication; preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction; and environment and climate action. Tackling the global housing crisis will require local implementation within the broader framework of multi-level governance, representation of local actors and translation of global best practices to local priorities.

In this sense, this publication can inform UN-Habitat's continued work to advance and support participatory multi-level governance and localization, through SDG Cities and the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs, as key elements to accelerate progress toward achieving the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

WUF12 Perspectives can also help inform UN-Habitat's efforts to refine and expand its methodological frameworks and guidance on SDG localization, introducing the three-dimensional understanding of localization and its relevance across different thematic areas, such as housing, climate and humanitarian crises. UN-Habitat intends to continue using this multidimensional understanding of localization in its work, while also approaching localization through different thematic lenses. Building on the connection between localization and culture highlighted in this publication, UN-Habitat will work to further strengthen this link and explore new synergies to enhance their integration. Using the three dimensions of localization outlined in this publication, UN-Habitat can also inform United Nations-wide initiatives on localization, particularly through the Local2030 Coalition, to ensure that localization is promoted through implementation, representation and translation.

Annex: Methodology

WUF12 Perspectives methodology summary

The *WUF12 Perspectives* publication was developed using an innovative, artificial intelligence (AI)-supported methodology to analyse content from 587 events held at the WUF12. The approach was designed to identify prominent and underlying insights from across the forum, connecting core themes, sub-themes, stakeholders and geographic regions.

Guided by the United Nations Secretary-General's *UN 2.0* vision to modernize the United Nations, this approach focused on three of the vision's key pillars – data, digital and innovation – to enhance data accessibility and accelerate the adoption of new technologies. Combining AI analysis and human synthesis, the methodology offers a platform to explore and amplify the discussions at WUF12.

Integrating Azure-hosted OpenAI Large Language Models, the approach provides a scalable solution with full control over model parameters and moderation, in strict alignment with United Nations responsible AI and data security standards. An expert panel authored the publication, refining, analysing and contextualizing the AI-driven findings to produce a balanced and evidence-driven review of *WUF12 perspectives*. A more detailed methodology document has been produced to ensure transparency and facilitate the transfer of best practises within the United Nations system.

Methodology principles and frameworks: responsible AI and data security

The methodology was designed in accordance with the Framework for a Model Policy on the Responsible Use of AI in UN System Organizations²⁰⁵ and the Report on the Operational Use of AI in the UN System,²⁰⁶ both produced by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination High-Level Committee on Management Task Force on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System. In addition, the methodology aligns with the Secretary-General's *UN 2.0* Policy Brief, directly addressing three of the five focal areas within the “Quintet of Change” – data, digital and innovation. The methodology directly reflects UN-Habitat's commitment to “enhance data visualization capabilities to help all users to deepen their insights and achieve greater impact” and “shift to cloud-based platforms to enhance accessibility, collaboration and sharing”, to “prioritize digital approaches in all programmatic and operational areas” and to “nurture innovation capabilities... and leverage new technologies to support all steps in the innovation process, including... artificial intelligence”.²⁰⁷

In line with these principles and frameworks, the methodology processed all data and subsequent analysis in a secure cloud environment with strict data security standards. It also employed responsible AI practices, such as preventing the use of data for model training and implementing strict

safeguards to eliminate AI hallucinations.²⁰⁸ Crucially, human oversight was retained as an integral component of the methodology throughout the process, minimizing the potential impacts of AI algorithmic and training-data biases²⁰⁹ and preserving data integrity.

Methodology stage 1: Data collection and standardization

Digital data was compiled from WUF12 events, creating a standardized dataset that served as the foundation for subsequent analysis. Events in the following categories were not analyzed because they were held in conference rooms that did not support requirements: Urban Expo, Urban Cinema and Press Conference.

Methodology stage 2: Thematic extraction and classification

The seven predefined core themes from the WUF12 Background Paper were initially selected for thematic analysis, reflecting WUF12's central focus on localization alongside six principal dialogue themes: housing, climate, humanitarian crises, digital technology, finance and partnership. Each theme was defined by an expert panel to serve as the input for subsequent AI-driven analysis.

An AI-driven review was then conducted to detect three additional themes that emerged beyond these predefined core themes: local capacity building, inclusion and culture. This resulted in a final set of 10 core themes.

Next, an AI-driven extraction process produced a data set of thematic extracts, with strict referencing back to the original text to preserve data integrity.

Each of the 10 core themes were then further divided into sub-themes, selected and defined by an expert panel. Following the same process used for core themes, an AI-driven review was conducted to identify additional sub-themes. Next, an AI-driven classification assigned the new sub-themes to each extract within the thematic data set.

Methodology stage 3: Stakeholder and geographic region classification

With the thematic and sub-thematic database established, an AI-driven classification was conducted to identify any stakeholder groups and geographic regions referenced within each extract. This additional classification was to enable a more nuanced understanding of how different stakeholders and geographic regions intersect across different thematic areas.

Methodology stage 4: Interactive dashboard and data exploration

An interactive dashboard was developed to allow comprehensive exploration of the data set. This platform included summary, intersection and correlation statistics, as well as targeted extract search and review functionality. These features supported the sourcing of a wide range of relevant extracts and facilitated trend/topic prevalence analysis, ensuring that all findings and recommendations remained grounded in the full data set – accurately reflecting WUF12's discussions and key messages.

Methodology stage 5: Report development

The final publication was developed through a human-led approach that leveraged the AI-based analysis carried out within stages 1-4.

The 10 core themes were first arranged into a three-tier structure comprising a focal lens (localization), three thematic focuses (housing crisis, climate crisis, humanitarian crisis), and two sets of cross-cutting drivers – primary (partnerships, financing, digital technology) and secondary (local capacity building, inclusion, culture).

To shape Part I of the publication, localization was divided into three key components identified by the analysis – implementation, representation, and translation – to act as the core section headings. To shape Part II of the publication, the three thematic focuses were leveraged to act as the core section headings. The three components of localization were directly applied to the three thematic focuses.

From here, both sets of cross-cutting drivers were leveraged to drive the development of sub-section headings. In addition, the cross-cutting drivers were used to guide the sourcing of pertinent quotes from the dashboard.

This human-led approach to structuring the publication, supported by AI-based analysis, resulted in a publication that accurately captures the breadth and key messaging of WUF12's discussions.

Endnotes

- 1 For more details about the definition of localization, see: UN-Habitat. (2024) *WUF12 Background Paper*. <https://wuf.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/pdf/wuf12-background-paper.pdf>.
- 2 Quote from: Voices from Cities_Cities learning together creating the conditions for the successful integration of displaced people into their host community_0711.
- 3 See: World Urban Forum. (2024) *Cairo Call to Action*. <https://wuf.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/files/cairo-call-to-action-wuf12.pdf>.
- 4 United Nations. (2002). A/RES/56/206. <https://habnet.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Resolution-adopted-by-the-General-Assembly-ARES56206.pdf>.
- 5 Quote from: ONE UN_The new urban agenda where are we how to get there_0611.
- 6 Quote from: Networking Events_Youth visions for sustainable urban futures_0811.
- 7 These include all main sessions, UN-Habitat Arena events, and Partner-led events, excluding Caucus meetings, Urban Cinema and Press conference events.
- 8 Prior to WUF12, a survey was conducted to understand WUF12 participants' expectations about the forum and their understanding of the WUF12 theme. In total, 3,082 people responded to the survey.
- 9 Paragraph 149 of the New Urban Agenda.
- 10 143 out of 587 events.
- 11 See Cairo Call to Action, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2024/11/cairo_call_to_action_wuf12.pdf.
- 12 Figure 1 highlights the three dimensions of localization and their stakeholder group distribution. The size (percentage) of each segment is proportional to how frequently the dimension and stakeholder group were referenced together within the same extracts.
- 13 Figure 2 highlights three dimensions of localization and their geographic distribution. The size of each percentage segment is proportional to how frequently the theme and geographic region were referenced together within the same extracts.
- 14 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room A_Scaling up local solutions to global challenges through multilevel governance_0711.
- 15 As discussed in: Networking Events_Financing localization and localizing finance at the 12th urban forum_0511
- 16 As discussed in: Networking Events_Financial sustainability - key to unlocking subnational finance for sustainable urban development_0511; Networking Events_Cooling the climate crisis turning the global cooling pledge into urban impact_0711.
- 17 As discussed in: Assemblies_World assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 18 Quote from: Networking Events_Financing refugee leadership and agency_0611
- 19 Quote from: Assemblies_World assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 20 As discussed in: Assemblies_World assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 21 As discussed in: Networking Events_How to greenwash a city, and how to prevent it_0711.
- 22 As discussed in: Dialogues_Dialogue 4 financing localization and localising finance_0611.
- 23 As discussed in: Networking Events_Leveraging the power of earth observations in building climate resilience in cities_0511; SDGs in Action - room A_Scaling up local solutions to global challenges through multilevel_0711.
- 24 As discussed in: Voices from Cities_Addressing homelessness is key to housing our future_0611.
- 25 As discussed in: Networking Events_Inclusive data and digital tools for informal settlements_0511; Networking Events_The urban performance index - data, evidence and insights to guide urban policy and investments_0711.
- 26 As discussed in: Urban Library_Report launching on digital urban governance_0511.
- 27 As discussed in: Networking Events_Empowering Local Climate Action - Governance, Data, and Contextual Insights from Cities in Asia and Africa_0711.
- 28 Quote from: Networking Events_Empowering local climate action - governance, data, and contextual insights from cities in Asia and Africa_0711.
- 29 As discussed in: Networking Events_Observatorios de ciudades_0511.
- 30 As discussed in: Dialogues_Dialogue 4 financing localization and localising finance_0611; Networking Events_Bridging the gap - unlocking finance for local climate projects_0511.
- 31 As discussed in: Assemblies_Women's assembly_0411; Caucus_African ministerial caucus_0711; Networking Events_Housing 4 all - Green, resilient, inclusive and affordable_0511.

- 32 As discussed in Causus_African ministerial caucus_0711; Dialogues_Dialogue 4 financing localization and localising finance_0611; Networking Events_Stronger communities, better cities the power of planning together (experiences and practical tools to deliver inclusive plang)_0611.
- 33 As discussed in: Dialogues_Dialogue 5 putting people first in a digital era_0711; Networking Events_Digital solutions for reconstruction in ukraine_0711; Voices from Cities_Empowering cities for the digital age - lessons from a data-driven resilience approach in southern african cities and towns_0711.
- 34 As discussed in: Dialogues_Dialogue 4 financing localization and localising finance_0611; Networking Events_Bridging the gap - unlocking finance for local climate projects_0511.
- 35 As discussed in: Roundtables_Persons with disabilities roundtable_0611.
- 36 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room D_Youth decision-making for healthy and sustainable cities and communities case studies from egypt and the united kingdom_0711.
- 37 As discussed in: Roundtables_Local and regional governments roundtable_0511.
- 38 As discussed in: Assemblies_World assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 39 Quote from: Networking Events_Managing urban recovery through a people-centered digitized and multisectoral response during crisis in Lebanon_0811.
- 40 As discussed in: Networking Events_Managing urban recovery through a people-centered digitized and multisectoral response during crisis in Lebanon_0811; SDGs in Action - room C_The winning formula – partnering with and transforming communities through locally-led actions for sustainable human settlement development_0711; Networking Events_Urban recovery efforts in ukraine for a more inclusive, green and resilient urban future_0511.
- 41 Quote from: The world assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 42 Quote from: The world assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 43 Quote from: Networking Events_It all starts in partnership high-impact coalitions localizing the global development agendas in the era of urbanization_0511.
- 44 Quote from: SDGs in Action - room C_Localizing human rights for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities that leave no one and no place behind_0511.
- 45 Eighty per cent of extracts that covered partnerships also covered multi-level governance.
- 46 As discussed in: Roundtables_Local and regional governments roundtable_0511; Voices from Cities_Connective theo-practical approach for a better urban future_0611; Networking Events_Spotlight on the 100 million plus forcibly internally displaced people_0711.
- 47 As discussed in: World assembly of local and regional governments_0411; ONE UN_Investing in the nexus of climate and biodiversity at the urban scale_0511; African ministerial caucus_0511.
- 48 As discussed in: World assembly of local and regional governments_0411; Networking Events_Spotlight on the 100 million plus forcibly internally displaced people_0711.
- 49 As discussed in: ONE UN_Investing in the nexus of climate and biodiversity at the urban scale_0511; UN-Habitat Arena_Status of global housing indicators and partner contributions to roll-out at the local level_0611; Voices from Cities_Connective theo-practical approach for a better urban future_0611.
- 50 As discussed in: World assembly of local and regional governments_0411; Voices from Cities_Connective theo-practical approach for a better urban future_0611.
- 51 Quote from: the World assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 52 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room D_Putting people first-Inclusive cities for all_0511; Networking Events_Universal access and the right to the city planning with people with disabilities_0511; Training Events_Sensing the city new ways of understanding public space through photography, mapping, soundscapes, attachment, and feeling_0711; Dialogue 1_Housing our future_0511.
- 53 As discussed in: Voices from Cities_Local actions through inclusive urban planning practices for sustainable development of cities_0711; ONE UN_Making cities right for young people - youth at the centre of a human rights-based approach to urban digitalization_0511; Youth and children assembly_0411; Networking Events_Universal access and the right to the city planning with people with disabilities_0511.
- 54 As discussed in: Voices from Cities_Local actions through inclusive urban planning practices for sustainable development of cities_0711; SDG in Action_ Urban fragility- is international development fit for purpose_0611; Roundtables_Persons with disabilities roundtable_0611; Special Session_A space for all_0511.
- 55 Quote from: Voices from Cities_Local actions through inclusive urban planning practices for sustainable development of cities_0711.
- 56 Quote from: Networking Events_Localization to close the global accessibility gap – Amplifying voices and stocktaking of innovations, approaches, and local practices to leave no one and no place behind_0611.

- 57 Quote from: Assembly_Grassroot assembly_0411.
- 58 Quote from: Networking Events_ Universal access and the right to the city planning with people with disabilities_0511.
- 59 Quote from: Networking Events_Hub for housing justice – Strengthening alliances for just housing futures_0711.
- 60 Quote from: ONE UN_Grassroots assembly_0411.
- 61 As discussed in: Networking Events_A global public space network - Mainstreaming the role of public space through partnerships_0711; Networking Events_Bridging divides - Residential segregation in Asia and Africa_0611; Networking Events_Celebrating WUF12 public space revitalization for impact initiative_0511.
- 62 Quote from: ONE UN_Culture-powered public spaces for inclusivity, growth and resilience_0711.
- 63 As discussed in: Networking Events_Digital technology for local and inclusive development - potentials and challenges_0511.
- 64 As discussed in: Networking Events_Inclusive and equitable public space, a policy framework_0511; Networking Events_Autism-friendly park ready to take part in the city_0711.
- 65 As discussed in: Networking Events_Digital technology for local and inclusive development - potentials and challenges_0511.
- 66 Quote from: Networking Events_Digital technology for local and inclusive development - potentials and challenges_0511.
- 67 As discussed in: Special Session_A space for all_0511.
- 68 Quote from: Networking Events_The eco-district initiative_0511.
- 69 As discussed in: ONE UN_The future is people powered - Active mobility in the United Nations agenda_0611.
- 70 As discussed in: Training Events_Green urban renewal strategies – mapping, planning, implementing, financing and digitalizing_0811.
- 71 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room A_Supporting the integration of refugees in cities_0711.
- 72 As discussed in: ONE UN_Riding the resilience wave all-hands-on-deck for urban resilience in small island developing states and coastal cities_0511.
- 73 As discussed in: Voices from Cities_Cities as agents of change peer-to-peer exchange on people-centred smart cities for an open, secure and inclusive digital future_0811.
- 74 Quote from: UN-Habitat Arena_Our collective efforts on new urban agenda_0511.
- 75 As discussed in: Networking Events_Towards an international landscape convention - rethinking land use_0511.
- 76 As discussed in: Training Events_Incremental housing as an opportunity to build green and resilient communities, the experience of latinamerica and the caribbean_0511.
- 77 Quote from: Urban Library_Everyday urban practices in africa disrupting global norms – universities linking local realities and global policies_0511.
- 78 As discussed in: Networking Events_Stronger communities, better cities the power of planning together (experiences and practical tools to deliver inclusive planning)_0611.
- 79 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room B_Habitats on the edge – securing climate resilient homes for informal settlements_0611.
- 80 As discussed in: Networking Events_Youth visions for sustainable urban futures_0811; Urban Library_Sure solutions, knowledge transfer for sustainable development of urban regions_0611.
- 81 Quote from: Urban Library_Sure solutions, knowledge transfer for sustainable development of urban regions_0611.
- 82 As discussed in: Networking Events_SDG cities global community harnessing the power of cooperation for the sustainable development of cities and territories_0711.
- 83 As discussed in: ONE UN_Co-designing human-centric digital innovations for improved basic service delivery_0511.
- 84 As discussed in: Networking Events_Leveraging the transformative potential of finance for climate action in cities learning from brazil_0511.
- 85 As discussed in: Roundtables_Academia roundtable_0811.
- 86 As discussed in: Networking Events_Bridging divides - Residential segregation in asia and africa_0611; SDGs in Action - room A_Supporting the integration of refugees in cities_0711.
- 87 As discussed in: Training Events_Global covenant of mayors understanding climate risks & vulnerabilities to plan for climate change adaptation_0611; Urban Library_Policy support for urban climate change adaptation a deep dive assessment of the knowledge centre on earth observation_0711.
- 88 As discussed in: UN-Habitat Arena_Status of global housing indicators and partner contributions to roll-out at the local level_0611.
- 89 Quote from: World assembly of local and regional governments_0411.
- 90 As discussed in: Urban Library_Launching the state of urbanization 2024 report, better cities in digital age_0811; SDGs in Action - room C_Evidence-based policy to localize the SDGs_0611.

- 91 As discussed in: Networking Events_ Applying emerging technologies to localize sustainable development and empower informal settlement communities across sub-saharan africa_0811.
- 92 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room A_Supporting the integration of refugees in cities_0711.
- 93 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room D_Technology and digitalization as tools to accelerate a just transition to a sustainable future for cities_0511; Networking Events_Autism-friendly park ready to take part in the city_0711.
- 94 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room D_Technology and digitalization as tools to accelerate a just transition to a sustainable future for cities_0511.
- 95 As discussed in: UN-Habitat Arena_ Our collective efforts on new urban agenda_0511.
- 96 As discussed in: See for example: Networking Events_City labs bridging to local and global actions for inclusive digital urban transformation_0711.
- 97 Prior to WUF12, a survey was conducted to understand WUF12 participants expectations about the Forum and their understanding of WUF12 theme. 3,082 people responded to the survey.
- 98 Quote from: Networking Events_ Empowering park cities-Harnessing NBS, parks, & urban forestry for climate intelligence and socio-economic growth_0511.
- 99 Quote from: UN-Habitat Arena_Status of global housing indicators and partner contributions to roll-out at the local level_0611.
- 100 As discussed in: Networking Events_Home away from home, in displacement and beyond. Governance, housing patterns and the loss of identity and sense of belonging_0711.
- 101 As discussed in: Networking Events_ From local action to global impact insights from local2030 hubs_0711; Special Sessions_The wisdom of civilizations_0711; Networking Events_Urban heritage and traditional building skills in southern mediterranean countries_0611.
- 102 Quote from: Networking Events_ Governance and institutional frameworks for SDG11 localization and new urban agenda in ASEAN cities_0511.
- 103 Figure 3 highlights three key themes and their stakeholder group distribution. The size (percentage) of each segment is proportional to how frequently the theme and stakeholder group were referenced together within the same extracts.
- 104 Figure 4 highlights three key themes, and their geographic distribution. The size of each percentage segment is proportional to how frequently the theme and geographic region were referenced together within the same extracts.
- 105 Quote from: Networking Events_ Sustainable solutions to the housing crisis what actions and what innovations_0711.
- 106 Quote from: Other Events_Future global action plan on housing and infrastructure finance roundtable_0711.
- 107 As discussed in: Roundtables_Civil society roundtable_0811; UN-Habitat Arena_Flagship 4 shaping solutions to forced displacement_0511; UN-Habitat Arena_Housing in Europe-truly leaving no-one behind_0511.
- 108 Quote from: Dialogues_Dialogue 4 Financing localization and localising finance_0611.
- 109 As discussed in: Dialogues_Dialogue 4 Financing localization and localising finance_0611.
- 110 As discussed in: Networking Events_Hub for housing justice – Strengthening alliances for just housing futures_0711; Roundtables_Academia roundtable_0811; SDGs in Action - room D_40 years of the world habitat awards – Innovation and impact in housing_0611.
- 111 As discussed in: New Networking Events_Building sustainable urban futures metropolitan governance and antifragility_0611.
- 112 Quote from: SDGs in Action - room B_New cities – Challenges, risks, opportunities, and outcomes of new urban development projects_0811.
- 113 Quote from: Networking Events_Greenfield visions - Charter cities and new cities for urban prosperity in africa_0611.
- 114 As discussed in: Networking Events_ How to greenwash a city, and how to prevent it_0711.
- 115 As discussed in: Dialogue 4 Financing localization and localizing finance_0611.
- 116 As discussed in: Networking Events_Rational allocation of housing through cooperation_0511.
- 117 As discussed in: Networking Events_Global approach to urban governance model in South Africa - Implementing lessons from the gauteng revitalization strategy across city regions_0711.
- 118 As discussed in: SDGs in Action_ Inclusive territories and sustainable development home for all, the right to a decent, affordable and healthy habitat. What tools should be used examples of governance strategies_0711; SDGs in Action _In Barcelona, Bogota and elsewhere, the best climate activist is a good urban planner._0711; ONE UN_Grassroots assembly_0411.
- 119 Quote from: ONE UN_Grassroots assembly_0411.
- 120 As discussed in: Networking Events_Pearls 2. Climate justice and the value of people-led urban river regeneration_0611; Networking Events_Applying emerging technologies to localize sustainable development and empower informal settlement communities across sub-Saharan Africa_0811.

- 121 Quote from: Networking Events_ Applying emerging technologies to localize sustainable development and empower informal settlement communities across sub-Saharan Africa_0811.
- 122 Quote from: Networking Events_Housing, land & property solutions for displaced persons & communities – Habitat international coalition_0611.
- 123 Quote from: Networking Events_It all starts in partnership high-impact coalitions localizing the global development agendas in the era of urbanization_0511.
- 124 Quote from: Training Events_Incremental housing as an opportunity to build green and resilient communities, the experience of Latin America and the Caribbean_0511.
- 125 Quote from: Networking Events_Learning to collaborate embracing the role of international donors and investors in delivering a step-change in the supply and demand of gender-sensitive green affordable housing_0511.
- 126 Quote from: Networking Events_It all starts in partnership high-impact coalitions localizing the global development agendas in the era of urbanization_0511.
- 127 Quote from: ONE UN_Grassroots assembly_0411.
- 128 Quote from: ONE UN_Culture-powered public spaces for inclusivity, growth and resilience_0711.
- 129 Quote from: SDGs in Action - room D_40 years of the world habitat awards – Innovation and impact in housing_0611.
- 130 As discussed in: Networking Events_Home away from home, in displacement and beyond. Governance, housing patterns, and the loss of identity and sense of belonging._0711; Roundtables_Indigenous peoples roundtable_0611.
- 131 Quote from: Roundtables_Indigenous peoples roundtable_0611.
- 132 Quote from: SDGs in Action - room D_40 years of the world habitat awards – Innovation and impact in housing_0611.
- 133 As discussed in: Networking Events_Arid cities, climate change, sustainability and resilience challenges and needs_0511; Networking Events_Bridging divides on peripheral and border urbanism in the middle east_0711.
- 134 Quote from: Networking Events_Building sustainable urban futures metropolitan governance and antifragility_0611.
- 135 As discussed in: Dialogues_Dialogue 6 The loss of home_0711.
- 136 Within extracts focused on culture, Middle East and North Africa were referenced the most, and three time more than sub-Saharan Africa which was referenced the least.
- 137 Quote from: Causus_African ministerial caucus_0511.
- 138 As discussed in: Training Events_Global covenant of mayors understanding climate risks & vulnerabilities to plan for climate change adaptation_0611.
- 139 As discussed in: SDGs in Action - room C_Global ABC regional roadmap for buildings and construction in the Arab Region 2020-2050_0711; Roundtables_Local and regional governments roundtable_0511.
- 140 As discussed in SDGs in Action - room C_Global ABC regional roadmap for buildings and construction in the Arab Region 2020-2050_0711; Roundtables_Local and regional governments roundtable_0511.
- 141 Quote from: Voices from Cities_Brics+ urban climate agenda report - Flagship initiative for a more sustainable world_0511.
- 142 As discussed in: Voices from cities_Bridging the emissions gap showcasing successful climate action from leading cities in WWFs One Planet City Challenge_ 0611; Training Event_Creating circular settlements - Closing loops to close gaps_0711; SDGs in Action _Circular economy in action rethinking urban growth and development_0811; Voices from Cities_Building better lives through sustainable and inclusive social infrastructure_0611.
- 143 As discussed in: SDG in action_Navigating the polycrisis evidence-based policy for resilient cities_ 0511; SDG in action_Generation restoration from brownfields and concrete jungles to sustainable and green urban landscape_ 0511; Voices from Cities_Building better lives through sustainable and inclusive social infrastructure_ 0611; SDGs in Action - room C_SUDG and the formulation of NUDP. Establishing relationships with the location of the SDGs, with the NAU and other international agendas in Brazilian cities_0711.
- 144 As discussed in: Training Events_Circular construction & housing in Sub-Saharan Africa case studies and replicability in the region_ 0811; SDGs in Action _Scaling up affordable and sustainable housing supply. Planning-Led solutions and leveraging existing housing stock_ 0611.
- 145 As discussed in: SDGs in Action_Global ABC regional roadmap for buildings and construction in the arab region 2020-2050_ 0711; Training Events_Global covenant of mayors understanding climate risks & vulnerabilities to plan for climate change adaptation_ 0611; Voices from Cities_Brics+ urban climate agenda report - Flagship initiative for a more sustainable world_ 0511; ONE UN_Scaling-up financing for an urban shift towards nature-positive and climate-resilient cities_ 0611.

- 146 As discussed in: Networking Events_ How to bring local innovation to a territorial scale the value of regional government action_0611.
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- 200 *Inter-agency policy briefs on accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda from local to global levels: The critical importance of SDG localization* <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/inter-agency-policy-briefs-accelerating-progress-2030-agenda-local-global-levels>.
- 201 Figure 6 highlights the four key components of the New Urban Agenda and their distribution across different kinds of events. The size of each percentage segment is proportional to how frequently the component was referenced within extracts focused on the New Urban Agenda.
- 202 Paragraph 9 of the New Urban Agenda.
- 203 Figure 7 highlights the prevalence of SDGs and New Urban Agenda references. The size of each bar is proportional to the frequency of events that mention each term at least once.
- 204 Action 6 of the Pact for the Future.
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- 208 Hallucinations: Responses generated by Generative AI models that contain misleading or false information which is presented as a fact.
- 209 Algorithmic and Data-Training Bias: Systematic errors in AI algorithms or training data which produce unfair or discriminatory responses.

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