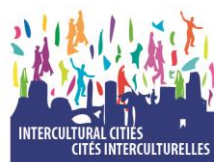




Sustainable cities: how to make them more inclusive? An eco-intercultural transition

Concept note



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Sustainable development is a concept that has been evolving over time. Usually defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need”, sustainable development was initially intimately linked to environmental sustainability concerns, referring to a commitment to achieve progress and economic welfare in a way which is compatible with the preservation of natural resources and of the services ecosystems provide.

Yet, “people” and the “society” have been gaining a central role in the scope of sustainable development until the latter became the foundation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is a worldwide commitment to sustainability for everyone which builds on the Millennium Development Goals and tries to address their gaps.

In its preamble, the Agenda 2030 defines itself as a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”, bridging the economic, social and environmental agenda around the pledge to leave no one behind. The Sustainable Development goals therefore address global challenges linked but going beyond biodiversity conservation and climate change.

However, while there is extensive guidance, scientific knowledge, legally binding instruments, and relatively big funding for speeding up programmes, initiatives and actions aimed at biodiversity conservation, ecosystems restoration, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and fostering the ecological transition to more sustainable models both nationally and locally, there is a gap in dealing with sustainability in a way which is really inclusive.

Taking the core principles of the intercultural approach into account, sustainable development policies and actions should ensure equal rights and opportunities to all, build on the diversity advantage, and enable meaningful intercultural interaction, active participation, co-creation, co-development and co-evaluation.

So, how do we make this happen?

Why should cities work on inclusive sustainability?

Cities wishing to achieve the intercultural transformation of their cities have many reasons to try and bridge their environmental and inclusion agenda.

- The **SDGs** address many fields in which intercultural cities are attempting to intervene with dedicated policies at local level such as well-being (SDG3), access to quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), inclusive sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8), reducing inequalities (SDG10), promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16). Further, SDG 11 targeting specifically urban environments by aiming to create sustainable cities and communities.
- Climate change, and more generally the environmental and health related crisis, have disproportioned negative impacts on socially disadvantaged groups, including migrants and minorities, who are further exposed to environmental stress factors because of urban segregation, unsatisfactory housing conditions, and job precarity. Left unchecked, these inequalities will grow, and there is a risk for already disadvantaged populations to not get access to an even share of the benefits produced by sustainable processes. The involvement of people with diverse background, including migrants, into the sustainable transformation of their city is indeed urgent and a matter of **equality and social justice**.





- **Engaging with diverse groups** could benefit and speed up the ecological transition in cities, in particular in those sectors that are experiencing a shift towards more responsible production and consumption (such as agriculture, construction, fisheries), where migrants are still overrepresented. Research shows that diversity boosts creativity as it confronts different opinions, know-how, approaches, and methods.
- **Acknowledging diversity** also means recognising the value of traditional knowledge on the basis of reciprocity among cultures. Applied to environmental planning and management, this approach allows to make the best possible use of traditional knowledge, migrants skills and know-how, in particular in the context of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.
- The participation of migrants and refugees in activities related to the sustainable development of their cities could have bi-directional effects by promoting social trust, positive interaction, ownership, and sense of belonging, thus **enhancing their integration**.
- The recent Covid-19 crisis has brought evidence that public authorities who managed to involve their migrant populations at the earliest stages of the pandemic have achieved faster recovery. The diverse demography of our territories nowadays makes it indispensable to involve everyone in **crisis management**, as well as disaster risk prevention, reduction, and mitigation.
- The contribution of indigenous and local communities is already recognised by art. 8(j) of the convention on biological diversity which acknowledges the potential of traditional knowledge for the development of innovative solutions.

Finally, in terms of **opportunities** for city departments, the services working on environmental issues and greening policies have much in common with those working on intercultural policies. Both are striving to mainstream their principles into holistic policies, strategies, programmes, and projects that will potentially change habits, power relations, and structures within the society. Both require adaptation to a changed world and promote the restructuring of society based on a fairer share of resources and opportunities. There are also examples of potential reciprocal benefits that the two domains can bring to each other. For instance, the development of public transports and cycling Infrastructure which is thriving in many European cities because it is proved to drastically decrease CO2 emissions, can reduce segregation and promote social inclusion if planned in a way to connect segregated neighbourhoods to the rest of the city, thus increasing the opportunities for intercultural interaction.

There is scope for aligning the respective agenda and join forces towards common objectives.

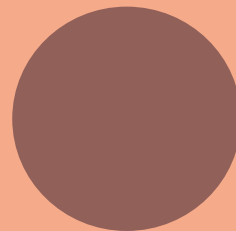
Which focus for the programme in 2021 and 2022?


- This topic is very broad and cannot be meaningfully addressed with a one-off event conceived in general terms. Based on the assessment of member cities needs' and priorities, as well as on the results of the ICC Index, it is proposed to start exploring two main areas:
- Including migrants and diversity in circular and inclusive economic models: how to support diverse local business achieving the economic transition towards new economy models and access to the relevant technology? How can they diversify their offer? Which advantage they could bring to the society? How to build literacy and capacity in this field? How to ensure public measures taken under the local, national, and international strategic plans to boost green businesses and the green job market are intercultural?
- Green infrastructures for inclusive territories: which policies to ensure the greening of our cities becomes a factor to reduce segregation and increase intercultural interaction? This angle of work could partly build also on the research carried out by the ICC programme on Gentrification in 2020.

Which methodology? Policy advice and support, knowledge, and good practice sharing

The ICC programme will follow its usual methodology consisting in cooperating with independent experts to gather knowledge and develop policy guidelines based on inspirational practices at the local level. It is expected that the guidelines will help build capacity and orient future work in member cities.

The topic of **circular and inclusive economic models** will be addressed in 2021, while the topic of **green infrastructures for inclusive territories** will be dealt with in 2022.





The presentation of the Policy Brief on circular and inclusive economic models, followed by the presentation of inspirational practices from ICC members.

Existing knowledge will be gathered through desk research and surveys to collect member cities' experiences, practices, and policies.

Each topic will be the focus of two dedicated events during which the Policy briefs will be presented and outstanding practices from member cities will be showcased.

The first event of this kind is scheduled to take place on 16 September 2021 in the form of a webinar. The webinar will consist of two parts:

- A round table with Mayors and Deputy Mayors from the ICC network with outstanding experience in this field;
- The presentation of the Policy Brief on circular and inclusive economic models, followed by the presentation of inspirational practices from ICC members.

The target group will be city officials with responsibility in environmental, economic, sustainable, and inclusive policies as well as the ICC Coordinators.

The working languages will be **English** and **French**.