



Summary

# INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1<sup>st</sup> february 2022



# Editorial

This high level gathering on sustainable development was organized during the French Presidency of the European Union by the French Ministry of the Ecological Transition and the Ministry Territorial Solidarity together with the French Partnership for Cities and Territories (PFVT). It brought together a broad variety of actors involved with developing cities and territorial strategies.

This event was an opportunity to share the respective progress we've made to implement the New Leipzig Charter. It comes in line with the goals of the World Urban Forum, set to take place in Katowice in Poland.

We need to keep on cooperating, more and more. Today more than ever, urban challenges are of European and global scales, because the climatic, ecologic and urban transitions have global impact. In this context, the goals that we set for national, urban, global and European agendas have to connect around local, regional, national and global crossing points, so we can build a desirable future for all.

This event was an opportunity for France to reassert and emphasize its commitment to supporting sustainable urban development.

Stéphanie Dupuy Lyon  
Hubert Julien Laferrière

## Focus

### DGALN

The General Direction of Nature and Housing Development (Aménagement du Logement et de la Nature) is a ministerial organization combining the joint forces of the French Ministry of the Ecological Transition and the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion, to lead national housing and urban development policy, and to protect nature.

### PFVT

The French Partnership for Cities and Territories (PFVT) is a multi-actor platform made of State actors, local authorities, companies, NGOs, experts and researchers. It was created more than 10 years ago to support the action and participation of French actors to the World Urban Agenda. It also promotes French savoir-faires and international exchanges.



# The ecological transition: nature in the city and biodiversity for more resilient cities

## Introduction

**Bérangère Abba, State Secretary at the Ministry of the Ecological Transition, responsible for Biodiversity**

Today, urbanization must adapt to the new challenges that the environmental transition, climate change and biodiversity erosion trigger. Europe has set ambitious climatic and environmental goals which call for us to transform our urban environments, make our cities more sustainable and develop solidarities between urban areas and rural areas. The issues that Europe cities face are diverse and but they all require action and adaptation to climate crisis and to planetary boundaries.

During this gathering, we looked back at efforts made to implement the New Leipzig Charter and the European urban Agenda, with the perspective in mind of the upcoming World Urban Forum. The French program called "Inhabit France of tomorrow" and the "French biodiversity capitals" challenge are testimonies of the ambitions we have in terms of sustainability.

Transforming our cities is crucial to ensure our societies' sustainability. We need tools and methods to push in that direction. Territories are full of actions and initiatives. We have to overcome uncertainties and lead the way to promote increased levels of expertise, aligning on a shared agenda.

In the times of Antique Rome, cities were trying to protect themselves from nature, by keeping it away, outside of their limits. Cities were built first and foremost for humans to live in. In the 19th century, hygienist urban planning still promoted a clear separation between living ecosystems and social ecosystems. Since then, the city has become sanitized to an extreme point. There's very little contact between human and non-human systems. This resulted in some kind of environmental amnesia, and to a decreasing interest in nature protection.

## Focus

The city of Orleans and the department of Seine Saint-Denis chose for nature-based solutions when deciding to grow vegetation to prevent floods.



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Frederick Law Olmsted a développé le principe d'urbanisme par les sols aux USA les principes des park systems, des corridors de circulation plutôt piétons, dans la continuité. Le biologiste Richard Forman a ensuite eu l'idée de créer des corridors écologiques aux USA, qui a été reprise en Europe.

Yet today, we're witnessing growing levels of awareness on the matter, which helps highlight crisis amplification and biodiversity extinction, because biodiversity is indeed in a critical situation.

Here our analysis relies on three main lines of thought: nature for nature, nature for society, nature for culture. Not all cities face the same issues, but the ecological transition should benefit Europe as a whole. We need to come up with policies that suit all cities and all urban situations, and make sure that all cities benefit from the transition equally. We cannot oppose rural and urban environments because they are co-dependent. We also need to provide all our citizens with a new vision for a sustainable future.

## Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner responsible for Cohesion and Reforms

Cities have to step into a transition that will lead to a smart, digital and modern economy, and to a circular and climate-neutral economy. We need new instruments to innovate and invest. In new programs for European cohesion, 75% of investments go to the double transition. All in all, about 100 billion euros will go to environmental projects and 80 billion euros will go to innovation, high speed internet and digitalization.

Today, remote work and the digital economy are massive game changers to help limit traffic jams and develop smaller cities. To use this opportunity to our advantage, we need to fund more infrastructure, especially digital infrastructure, as well as green mobility. Public services like education and health have to adjust to this situation as well.

## Debate

**Henri Bava, President of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA)**

**Ronan Dantec, Senator, Loire-Atlantique department, President of Climate Chance**

**Brice Huet, delegate to the General Director for Development, Housing and Nature, Ministry of the Ecological Transition and Ministry of Territorial Cohesion and of Relations with Local Authorities**

**Maud Lelièvre, French representative for the international union of nature conservatories (IUCN), General Delegate of the "Eco-maires" association**

Making nature and biodiversity a part of our urban environments is very important for societies because nature and biodiversity support physical and mental health - as shown by the COVID-19 crisis. Cities must come up with solutions to stop biodiversity loss. To work on our cities' physical transformation today, we need to work with the living: humans, fauna and flora.

The first task for us is to limit ground artificialization, produce more compact urban designs, preserve nature areas in the city, rehabilitate polluted urban wastelands, grow vegetation on buildings, protect wet areas, etc. Biodiversity fosters urban resilience. Restoring permeable areas can also help limit flood risks.

The second task is to draw inspiration from nature when developing cities to find nature-based solutions, a concept dating back to 2015. These solutions are cheaper than high tech technologies to transform urban and suburban areas. They rely on preserving healthy eco-systems and improving how such ecosystems are managed and restored. The third task has to connect climate issues with biodiversity issues, to improve urban resilience. Not enough local action plans target biodiversity, but such policies need to be taken in line with actions to face climate challenges.

The fourth and last task relates to nutritious cities. Cities have to provide answers to food needs. The process invol-

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The TER Agency led some projects in Strasbourg and in Barcelona using landscape as the main basis of urban planning. In the Deux Rives neighborhood in Strasbourg, former polluted alluvial grounds were unearthed on an area of about 80 hectares. One to two years were needed to reoxygenate them and reuse them. In the heart of Barcelona, the TER Agency used the local biodiversity to implement the principles promoted by Forman, creating ecological patches directly in the city – on the Square of Catalan Glory.

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The city of Nantes uncovered a water stream in the city center. Today, it hosts a population of northern crested newt, which is a particularly rare species.



ved to do so gives a good reason to bring more nature back in the city and to promote biodiversity while fostering social cohesion.

The living ground is a new way to design and conceive an open kind of infrastructure that would stop water, feed vegetation and support biodiversity. The living ground is an infrastructure in itself, of which the action impacts the climate and helps limit rising levels of temperature. We can use soils to support biodiversity and to fight climate change at city scale.

Four main directions for local authorities to target by 2030.

The first point will be to use nature not solely for its aesthetic purpose, but to go beyond that and consider instead nature's many functionalities and intrinsic values.

One of the main challenges for biodiversity is to be able to nest and live in dense urban environments. Limiting city housing helps prevent urban spread, but this has great negative impact on biodiversity. This is why we should want to densify cities, to preserve European and global ecosystems. A city that would be ideal for biodiversity would be a very compact city, but it wouldn't be attractive to a lot of inhabitants. This is why we need to develop nature in the city, to make cities denser. This can seem like a paradox: bringing more nature into the city, to make the city more livable and more compact. Yet this is the equation.

We obviously need to increase nature in the city, but we also need to keep people living in the cities, relying on mid and small size cities, because their densification capacities are greater than many bigger cities. We should also pay attention to social cohesion and make sure that biodiversity doesn't become the privilege of higher income populations.





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## Françoise Schaetzel, vice-President of Strasbourg Metropole, President of the urban planning agency of the agglomeration of Strasbourg

Global health and well-being are still not talked about enough. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that human health, animal health and environmental health are connected. 75% of infectious diseases emerging today are zoonotic.

Health should be a reference point for public action, because it orientates public policies and allow for a shared language. This requires developing quantitative and qualitative knowledge on how policies impact health.

Furthermore, health calls to merge various topics: health and mobility, urban planning, agriculture, alimentation, etc. Health should be a sector that combines and connects various actors and competences. It also

comes with democratic and participatory challenges.

The third proposition has to do with promoting territorial scales, because they are all involved in the process, from global to local levels. Our planetary food systems are sick: we throw 30% of what we produce. We need to better articulate the various territorial levels involved, and better articulate centers and peripheries. This is a matter of solidarity.

The fourth and last recommendation relates to the importance of supporting inspiring initiatives through contractualization and funding. We don't use existing networks and instruments enough.

### LA REVOLUTION DE L'ÉVOLUTION URBAINE EST DE DENSIFIER L'URBAIN QUI RESPECTE UN ÉQUILIBRE





# Rebuilding the city on the city: affordable housing and usage quality to serve reasoned land use

## Introduction

**Emmanuelle Wargon, Minister delegated to the Minister of the Ecologic Transition, responsible for Housing**

The whole issue of sustainable cities relies on shifting our perspective on the city, to make cities more desirable and more able to link intensity with quality. This preoccupation is in line with the conversations of the French Citizens' Convention on Climate which formulated the following recommendation: "Raise awareness about the importance and value of more compact cities and develop a new culture of collective housing."

I ran the "Inhabit France of tomorrow" in a logic of mutual listening, and with conversations to move forward collectively, find action tools to help overcome conflicts and connect public policies with citizens' wishes. This program now ends with a guideline articulated around 3 directions that echo with policies of other European countries: make quality a reward in return of density, make housing more affordable, provide adaptive housing that follow the evolutions of inhabitants' ways of life. If we work on these three points, we will be able to answer our citizens' wishes whilst tackling ecological and social challenges. Nature areas can support social and functional diversity in becoming value factors.

We've been leading an ambitious eco-neighborhood policy for more than a decade now. The Ministry defined a set of common goals with all parties involved. It structured city networks for cities to share their experiences between them. It also set up project quality labels at all stages of a process, from conception to implementation.

Housing should be affordable, but it has become more and more expensive and inaccessible for many inhabitants of big cities. This is why we must support social and

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### Reasoned land use and zero artificialization goal

Reasoned land use stands at the heart of our urban policies and goals. The European goal is to reach the zero ground artificialization objective (ZAN – zero artificialization nette) by 2050, with a first step set for 2030 to divide our consumption of farming and forest nature areas by two. This goal is very ambitious and calls to be applied at all territorial scales and be a part of all urban planning and development documents. It needs to be enabled by specific funding, especially with the recovery plan. Fonds Friches (funds for wastelands), for instance, allocates money to reclaim urban and industrial wastelands.

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### Action logement

Action Logement is a public organization headed by social actors, employers and employees. It is funded thanks to the participation of companies. It funds social housing development and facilitates access to housing meant in priority for employees. The funding provided equals to about 3 billion euros per year, giving the organization significant leeway to take action.

affordable housing, to allow for everyone to build their own housing path.

We also need to work on housing units' intrinsic quality, to answer people's needs. A housing quality standard was created to define common criteria and enable objective quality assessment. We invite all local authorities to set up such local quality charters to help implement productive conversations with project operators.

Lastly, being convinced that granting citizens more room in public decision will foster more sustainable projects, we started consultation with to solve the conflicts there may be between public policies and citizens' expectations, and to build a collective vision of what the cities, neighborhoods and housing of tomorrow should be.



## Debate

**Bruno Arcadipane, President of Action Logement**

**Sorcha Edwards, General Secretary of Housing Europe, European federation of public, cooperative and social housing**

**Margit Noll, Executive Board President, Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe program**

**Jean Rottner, President of the Greater East Region, Delegate to the mayor of Mulhouse, President of the French national network of urban planning agencies (FNAU)**

The cost of housing has greatly increased throughout Europe and it has become an increasingly big part of people's budget, especially low-income populations. This is why affordable housing has become such an important topic for most European cities, to guarantee everyone with good life conditions. Housing Europe connects actors of the social and cooperative housing field. It emphasizes the importance of investing in operation modes and funding tools that suit the needs of affordable and quality housing.

"Driving Urban transition to a sustainable and livable urban future" is a research and urban innovation program part of Horizon Europe. The goal is to guarantee we fulfill the needs while respecting planetary boundaries. It supports experimentation and knowledge exchange on circular regenerative economies, on neighborhoods that work on positive energies, and on the 15-minute city.

Sitting all involved actors at the same table and getting them to work together at different scales is particularly important to implement sustainable projects in the regions, especially in regions that support and lead cohesion policies, in inter-cities organizations, and in cities or towns. To do so we need instruments: contractualization, urban agencies. The Green deal is an accelerator and transformation opportunity. In this context, France's role should be emphasized in the European Union just like that of Strasbourg, being the European capital.

## Focus

### Territorial engineering

Organizing and structuring urban project management and urban engineering is needed to transform housing development practices. Urban planning agencies do a lot for territorial projects and urban planning on their territory. Other public engineering tools like public land companies or public development companies support local authorities' operations.



### FOCUS – Urban planning management

The ecological transition isn't a question anymore, it is a condition to accept and deal with when taking action. Local authorities have the great responsibility to operate and orchestrate the transformation of urban policy making.

5 compulsory steps for urban project management

- Draw collective, territorial and contextualized diagnosis
- Make choices and set priorities
- Plan ahead
- Implement
- Assess and monitor

Several issues to overcome

- Too much fragmentation between technical organizations
- Too much dichotomy between big cities, cities and rural areas

- Bureaucracy slowing down decisions
- Economic priorities overruling actual needs

We must transform our funding models so we can turn them into tools to serve sustainable urban projects. Urban planning should be less normalized, more open, holistic and context-based.

This calls for several evolutions: strengthen political action, reinforce the legitimacy of elected representatives so they can weight more on the decisions that orientate city development. The political narrative should be shared among and by all actors, right from the first conversations about the development of a new territorial project. Good practice exchanges between peers and training opportunities are also important instruments.



© a'urba - Le quartier des Bassins à flot à Bordeaux

# From inhabitants to Europe and beyond! Getting all territorial actors involved

## Introduction

Jacqueline Gourault, former Minister of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Authorities

We cannot face the great ecological, demographic, economical challenges ahead without getting all territorial actors involved. This Leipzig Charter made multilevel governance one of its key principles, for good reasons. Four main directions lead our national urban policies: contractualization, planning, knowledge exchange, and citizens and inhabitants' participation.

Contracts have to do with various willpowers coming together. They imply doing compromises and working together in a shared direction. Elected representative set territorial action strategies to be the basis of contractual projects articulated around concrete programs, such as Action Coeur de Ville (heart of the city action) or Petites villes de demain (small towns of tomorrow). Urban planning remains essential to organize the various territorial scales, and its importance will grow even bigger during the upcoming decade given the great challenges and stakes that the ecological transition triggers: in the upcoming years, we will have to plan for decarbonation to happen in our territories; we will have to anticipate rarity, for instance of land resources. Supporting engineering and knowledge exchange has emerged as essential tools to push everyone forward.

One of the keys of a governance model that would be solidarity-driven is also to get actors and inhabitants to participate more. This is a mandatory condition to achieve cohesion in a world where more and more people are drawn to isolation. The European and French urban model is a legitimate one and we should want to advocate for it around the world.

## Focus

### Sustainable cities manifesto

The French manifesto for sustainable cities relies on 4 main pillars: resilience, reasoned use of energy and land, inclusion, creativity. It was set up by some actors involved with the France Ville Durable "do thank", made of employees of the State, local authorities, companies, and of experts.

Wallis Vanderbrock-Goelen, Expert to the delegate Director of DG REGIO, European Commission

How to facilitate local democratic life to increase citizens' participation when implementing development strategies? European cohesion policies must provide territories and local authorities with tools, investments resources, collaborative work processes and opportunities for change and innovation.

The Leipzig Charter emphasizes the importance of the common good to improve life conditions and improve social and territorial cohesion. It advocates for green, fair and productive cities. One of Europe's new strategic goals, "Europe closer to citizens",

was defined to allocate investments based on territorial needs, to operate fair and ecological transitions. The European Commission wants to foster cooperation between urban and rural areas and reinforce the role of small and mid-size cities. The Urban Agenda of the European Union puts all level of governance at the same level with topic-based cooperation projects that bring together cities, member States, commission departments and other involved parties.





## Débat

**Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director NU-Habitat (video intervention)**

**Patrice Vergriete, Mayor and President of the urban community of Dunkirk, President of France Ville Durable, President Delegate of Fnau**

**Gérard Wolf, President of the Sustainable Cities Task Force, Medef International**

Inclusion isn't a word to be taken lightly when we talk about sustainable cities. It calls to fight all kinds of exclusion and to advocate for social cohesion. The word acquires an added democratic meaning in the context of sustainable European cities. Only if we get populations to share and follow this vision can we create and develop sustainable cities. We need to tell people what this process is about and make them willing to be a part of it. This starts with education, of and by the people, and with including citizens daily. Getting actors and inhabitants to participate is a cornerstone of cohesion, especially in a world where people may get more and more tempted to live isolated.

Acquiring the proper tools and methodologies is an important point for companies and local authorities to be able to work together in a smart way. Companies are indeed meant to answer political demand, and this demand today has to do with promoting inclusion, ensuring better access to basic services, and ensuring more reasoned use of land and energy. Good will, knowledge exchange and dialogue are great factors to facilitate this process. Educating people is very important as well, to make sure especially that the ones who find this objective quite drastic don't end up hurt or marginalized. Subsidiarity applies here, to come up with the most suited local solutions. National frameworks are needed, but they go together with territoriality because the context of each territory is specific.

To Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, urban governance has to be inclusive and should enable actors to take action locally depending on their specific territorial challenges and opportunities. This is why the youth and women should be encouraged and supported to be a part of project conception and strate-



gies. European policies are inspiring in this regard, in the context of the World Urban Agenda, like for instance the New Bauhaus initiative which aims to activate culture and inspire actors to create more beautiful and sustainable cities.

This World Urban Forum set to happen in Katowice in Poland will be an opportunity to assess how the World Urban Agenda has been implemented, 5 years after it was adopted. On the international stage, world urban forums facilitate this kind of exchange. This year, in Katowice, France will be the voice of Europe, as part of the French Presidency of the European Union.



Katowice, Pologne - FUM XI



## Elise PEREIRA NUNES, Delegate to the mayor of Tours

The topic of women in cities is more and more present in public policies and it is at the heart of various open calls for projects. But action is being taken too slowly. Discriminations and gender inequalities remain very present.

The first recommendation is to push for more and quicker actions and acculturation to raise awareness, targeting elected representatives, citizens and urban planners, entrepreneurs, architects. We need to embrace local specificities and make sure that the urban space doesn't become the exclusive property of a few people only.

Local authorities, states and networks are responsible for embracing gender-related issues and include them to public policies, especially to mobility policies or to policies relating to public space development. Women and men have to be able to use and

share that space equally, urban furniture has to suit everyone's needs. In terms of urban planning, the idea could be for instance to organize services to suit children's needs better and thereby facilitate women's work, or to transform neighborhoods and housing units' design.

We should use and provide dedicated funds to make territories more equal in regard to gender issues. To do so we need tools. Some organization are already working on the topic and can help local authorities move forward more quickly.

Gender equality is a global goal to aim for. It also has to do with women's political representation. France still needs a lot of laws to reach gender equality, which remains difficult to implement like we see in municipal authorities' executive positions for instance.

## Christian DUPESSEY, mayor of Annemasse, President of the Cross-Border Operational Mission

Four propositions came out of the workshop, first relying on the observation made that the word « border » wasn't used in the morning conversations. The first recommendation calls to include challenges and cross-border areas to the European Urban Agenda.

The second one is about officially acknowledging the idea of cross-border living areas because cross-border situations come with real specificities. European public services for instance could be understood as cross-border services.

The third recommendation invites us to develop already existing cross-border groupments. They could be equipped with suitable competences and even aim for democratic legitimacy – of which the shape still needs to be defined.

Lastly, why not envision the management of European and national structural funds through contractualization? This would play in favor of win-win partnerships.



## Conclusive debate

**Stéphanie Dupuy** General Director, responsible for Development, Housing and nature, Ministry of the Ecological Transition, Ministry of Territorial Transition and of Relations with Local Authorities

**Luc Gnacadja**, former Minister in Benin, Founder of the GPS-Dev think tank

**Marlène Siméon**, Director of Platforma and Operation Director of Council of European Cities and Regions (CCRE-CEMR)

**Gérard Wolf**, Sustainable cities federator, for the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

France is committed to making the transition of its cities happen, as shown by its “Inhabiting France of tomorrow” program. This program is headed by the French state and aims to provide local authorities with instruments to implement real transitions, and to develop more sustainable cities and territories. We supplemented it with instruments that can be used in various fields, housing, urban planning, wasteland reclaim, and that actors can use locally. We also strongly believe in the importance of working with citizens to shift representations, and we work more specifically with a broad range of citizens on the modalities to transform ways of life.

The exponential and very fast growth of the African population and of African cities emphasizes climate challenges ahead, and the importance of social development. One strong specificity of African cities is their informality – informal housing, informal economy. The problem cannot be solved with the same instruments and methods we would use in the Western world. We should find a specific African path to achieve sustainable urban development.

Today, any kind of urban action should target sustainability, considered as the new “smart”. There is a lot of interest and value in trying to envision and create development



models for cities from the South that would include the informality factor. Working with the “urban poor” generation is a challenge to undertake if we want to create solutions that can truly change people’s life.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is a European organization of local authorities which holds conversation with European authorities to speak in the name of local authorities, especially within frameworks like the Green Deal or the European Urban Agenda. This Council works in connection to Platforma, an organization with the goal to create a pan-European network of local authorities in order to organize decentralized cooperation between the South and the North, and peer-to-peer exchanges.

During the Spring of 2022, the member states will come together to assess the current implementation of the New Urban Agenda, 5 years after it was adopted in Quito. UN-Habitat is expecting a lot from European territorial policies in this context, and during the World Urban Forum.

### PERSPECTIVE

**Hubert Julien Laferrière**

European and French urban policies can be the spearheads to implement the New World Urban Agenda and to implement the urban policies that serve our people-focused European values of freedom, inclusion and democracy. Now preparing for the Katowice World Urban Forum, we need to embrace a prospective approach, to imagine a world that we will happily make our own by 2050, and to start the necessary actions and programs to make our cities carbon-free and enjoyable to live in.

The philosophy behind the French Partnership for Cities and Territories (PFVT), just like the one lying being many other French frameworks, is to sit all different actors around the same table for them to talk, share, co-design, create solutions, implement tools, face common challenges. We need such space for dialogue at all levels, to build and develop projects with inhabitants locally, but also to build common European and international value sand goods – and thereby achieve a successful implementation of our urban agendas.





Summary

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Cover : © Agence TER-2019 / Atelier des territoires -A 35 Strasbourg

ISBN : 979-10-90777-27-9

Realisation :

