

CITIES FORUM MENTORSHIP KNOWLEDGE SERIES

Sharing the Future

A Generational Fairness Agenda for Regenerative Planning

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Frank J. D'hondt (LEAD AUTHOR)

Luisa Alcocer · Olivanta Mwenda · Evelin Raico · Nada Soliman · Ricky Wijaya Umar

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Cover photo: Youth gathering at Pasig River Esplanade/Fort Santiago Riverwalk, Manila, Philippines.

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Cyclists on the riverbank of De Waal in Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Summary



Afternoon stroll in Youth Avenue in Seoul, South Korea

This collaborative article examines how urban and territorial planning can serve as a governance instrument for generational equity – fairness among all generations alive today, and between them and those who will come after. It argues that the long-standing planning paradigm of Shaping the Future – by masterplanners – should give way to one of **Sharing the Future**: planning conducted not only *for*, but *with*, every living generation (intragenerational equity), and with active regard for the generations not yet born (intergenerational equity), whose options today's decisions about land, infrastructure and resources must not foreclose. Addressed to policymakers in local and national government, and drawing on the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, the New Urban Agenda and the 2024 Declaration on Future Generations, it translates this principle into planning practice and shows how it can advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Six findings emerge. No single instrument holds systems reform, generational framing and territorial content together. The corrective for the present – whose subjects can speak – is representation: participation, subsidiarity and enfranchisement. The corrective for the future – whose subjects are absent – can only be proxy and restraint: institutions that stand in for the generations yet unborn, and rules that keep the living from foreclosing their options. Statutory reform is where fairness becomes enforceable rather than ceremonial. Capacity without a capacity return reproduces the dependency it claims to relieve. And the instruments to protect the future exist while the instruments to verify what we have left do not – the measurement gap this article addresses in its recommendations.

The argument unfolds through five questions, one for each of the boxes in the article, testing the goal and the three instruments in turn. It concludes by pairing generational fairness with the Regenerative Development Goals proposed as the successor to the SDGs, on the argument that the dependency runs both ways: regeneration supplies the measures, generational fairness supplies the institutions. Ten spatial hooks, dozens of inspiring cases from the Global South and North, and a set of recommendations for governments, the profession and the international community follow.



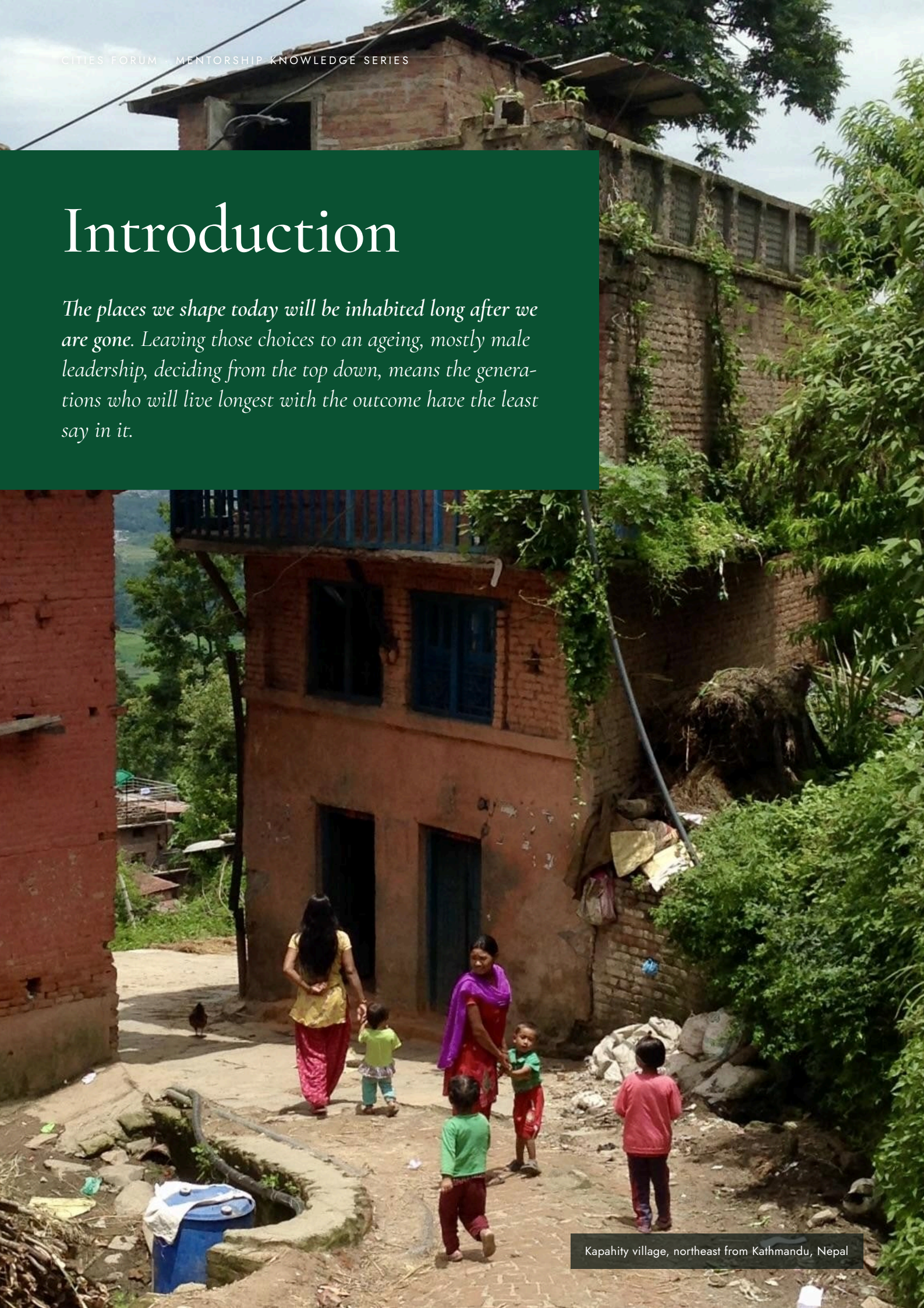
FIGURE 1 | From Shaping to Sharing the Future: the same territory seen twice – once from above, *masterplanned* and decided by few; once from the ground, planned and decided by multi-generational communities and their political representatives through collaborative placemaking

Abbreviations

AAPS	Association of African Planning Schools
AESOP	Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
APSA	Asian Planning Schools Association
CAP	Commonwealth Association of Planners
CEPA	United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration
EC	European Commission
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
EGTC	European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observatory Network
EU	European Union
GPEAN	Global Planning Education Association Network
HLPF	UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HPF	Habitat Professionals Forum
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IG-UTP	International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning
ISOCARP	International Society of City and Regional Planners
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NUA	New Urban Agenda
NUP	National Urban Policy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RDG(s)	Regenerative Development Goal(s)
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UN-Habitat	United Nations Center for Human Settlements
UNU CPR	United Nations University Centre for Policy Research

Introduction

The places we shape today will be inhabited long after we are gone. *Leaving those choices to an ageing, mostly male leadership, deciding from the top down, means the generations who will live longest with the outcome have the least say in it.*



Kapahity village, northeast from Kathmandu, Nepal

This thought-piece scrutinises contemporary city and regional planning (variously termed spatial, territorial or urban planning) through the lens of **generational equity** (or generational fairness). It builds on a Strategy Guidance Note on long-term territorial planning and spatial development by the same lead author, published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA, 2021). The article complements *Local Planners and Global Goals: Accepted but not Absorbed* – examining the profession's relationship with the global agendas; this piece asks what those agendas owe to the generations who will inherit their outcomes (Cities Forum Knowledge Series & International Society of City and Regional Planners, 2026).

Generational equity traces to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration (UN, 1972), whose first principle set out "a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations" – the earliest international statement that the present generation holds the environment in trust for those who follow. The concept was given its normative definition by the Brundtland Commission fifteen years later (UN, 1987), and its legal architecture by Edith Brown Weiss in 1989 (Brown Weiss, 1989), through the planetary trust and three duties of conservation.

At its core, generational equity holds that individuals of all generations – younger, older and in between – are treated fairly in opportunities, resources, recognition and decision-making, balancing the needs and contributions of each generation without favouritism, discrimination or systemic bias based on age. It is a coin with two sides, and in territorial planning both are spatial, because every decision about land, infrastructure and resources distributes benefits among the living and options among the unborn.

Intragenerational equity

holds that all people alive at the same time – across age, gender, income, ability and across the divide between Global North and South – have an equal claim on resources, opportunities, risks and decision-making power, and that no group's position should be secured at the expense of another's. This working definition includes and extends the notion of 'age-responsive' decision-making.

Intergenerational equity

holds that no generation should be advantaged or disadvantaged relative to others: each cohort has a fair claim on resources, opportunities and decision-making power, against those who came before and those who will come after. Generations are bound in a chain of mutual obligation. Those alive today inherited a world from their predecessors and will hand one on to their successors; equity therefore means neither borrowing recklessly against the future nor hoarding on behalf of the past.

The definitions used here are working formulations adopted for this article, broader than any single source and drawing on the Brundtland framing rather than restating it.

The pairing is not new. It is the structure of the Brundtland Commission's definition of **sustainable development** itself (UN, 1987). "Development that meets the needs of the present" is a statement of intragenerational equity – one the report sharpened

by giving "overriding priority" to the essential needs of the world's poor. "Without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" is a statement of intergenerational equity. The asymmetry in the wording is instructive. The present is owed the satisfaction of its needs, which it can voice; the future is owed the preservation of its ability, which it cannot. The first therefore calls for **representation** – not least across the North–South divide; the second for **proxy and restraint**.


Global Change and
OUR COMMON FUTURE

Gro Harlem Brundtland, prime minister of Norway, delivered the sixth annual Benjamin Franklin Lecture on 2 May 1989 as the keynote address at the Forum on Global Change and Our Common Future, held in Washington, D.C. The text of her speech appears here. The forum was sponsored by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences; the Smithsonian Institution in cooperation with the U.S. Man and the Biosphere Program; the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Sigma Xi, the scientific research society; and the National Science Foundation. The forum featured scientists and policymakers from around the world who discussed the implications of environmental issues for public policy, while focusing in particular on global change and its impact on the Americas.

Brundtland's background comprises both science and public policy. She holds a medical degree from the University of Oslo and a master's degree in public health from Harvard University. She became Norway's minister of the environment in 1974 and held the post through 1979, at which time she left to take a seat in the Norwegian parliament, to which she had been elected in 1977. Her contribution to environmental issues was recognized internationally in 1983, when she became chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, a post she still holds. She has been prime minister since 1986.

FIGURE 2 | Gro Harlem Brundtland and the Publication of Our Common Future, Mother of Sustainable Development (Source: Sustainism)

The generational chain is under strain. As political leadership remains overwhelmingly male and ages – the median head of government is now 63, against a median citizen of about 30 – younger generations, and girls and young women in particular, are increasingly absent from the decisions that will shape their lives and those of the generations after them. This is a democratic deficit in its own right; left uncorrected, it risks compounding into lasting generational inequity (Box 1).

BOX 1

Whose horizon governs the long term?

Generational inequity is a systematic and durable pattern in which power, resources, risk or opportunity are distributed across birth cohorts such that one cohort's position is secured at the expense of another's – rather than reflecting differences in effort, merit or choice. One increasingly visible driver of this pattern is the age profile of political leadership.

A June 2026 Pew Research Center analysis of 186 UN member states puts the median age of national leaders at 63, with roughly two-thirds in their forties, fifties or sixties (Pew Research Center, 2026). The range is wide – from Cameroon's Paul Biya at 93 to leaders in their mid-thirties, such as Burkina Faso's Ibrahim Traoré, 36 in 2024 – but the trend is unambiguous: over five decades the average leader's age has risen from 55 to 62, driven largely by autocracies, where leaders rarely relinquish power voluntarily and now aver-

age 64, some twelve years older than in 1975 (The Economist, 2024). Democracies are not immune. Recent US administrations have included some of the oldest presidents in the country's history, and the median age of US senators, at around 64–65, makes the Senate one of the oldest legislatures in the world.

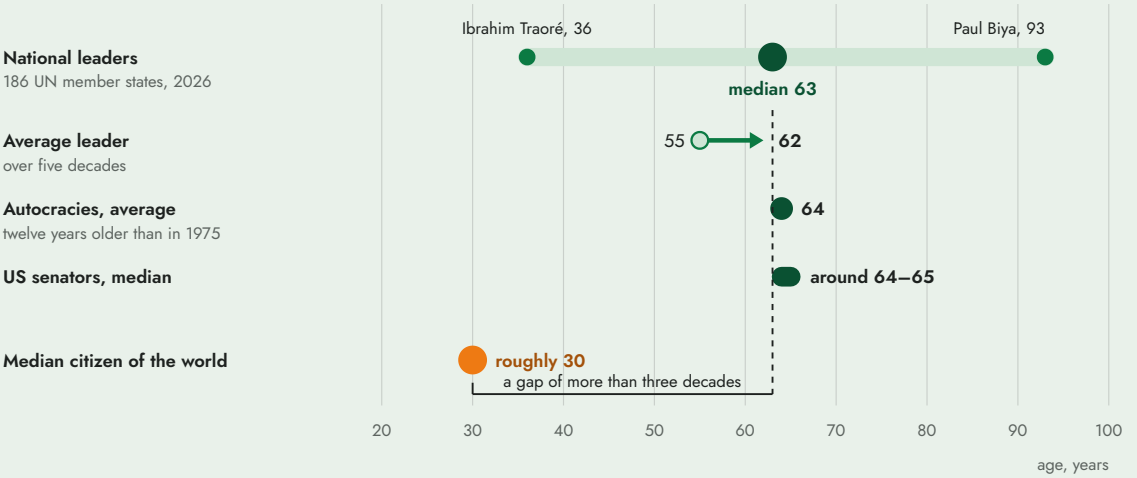


FIGURE 3 | Leaders are old compared with the people they govern: the ages cited in the text for national leaders, autocracies and the US Senate, against the median citizen of the world (Sources: Pew Research Center, 2026; The Economist, 2024; DW, 2026)

The larger point is relative, not absolute: leaders are old compared with the people they govern. The average national leader is 63; the median citizen of the world is roughly 30 – a gap of more than three decades that has widened as both populations and leaders have aged from very different starting points (DW, 2026). Political science describes the underlying norm as a "taste gerontocracy": a near-universal preference for awarding top office to the most senior politicians, reinforced by seniority rules, party gatekeeping, the capital and networks needed to stand for election, and term structures that reward incumbency (Stockemer D. & Kolodziejczyk K., 2025).

A leader's time horizon matters because governance has intergenerational externalities – climate commitments, public debt, pension design, infrastructure, land use. When decision-makers are drawn overwhelmingly from cohorts whose remaining lifespan is short relative to a policy's impact, the incentive to discount the long term is built into the structure of the decision, not the character of the individual. The 2024 Declaration on Future Generations acknowledges this directly, noting the "intergenerational multiplier effect" of present decisions (UN, 2024). Age skew becomes inequity, rather than mere demographic difference, when the under-represented cohort has no effective counterweight. This is the "politically powerless" problem the UN has named with respect to future generations (Spijkers O., 2018), and it applies equally to today's young: they cannot yet hold senior office, in some jurisdictions cannot vote at ages at which they are nonetheless governed, and their interests depend on the vicarious concern of older cohorts who have no direct stake in the horizon that long-term decisions reach into.

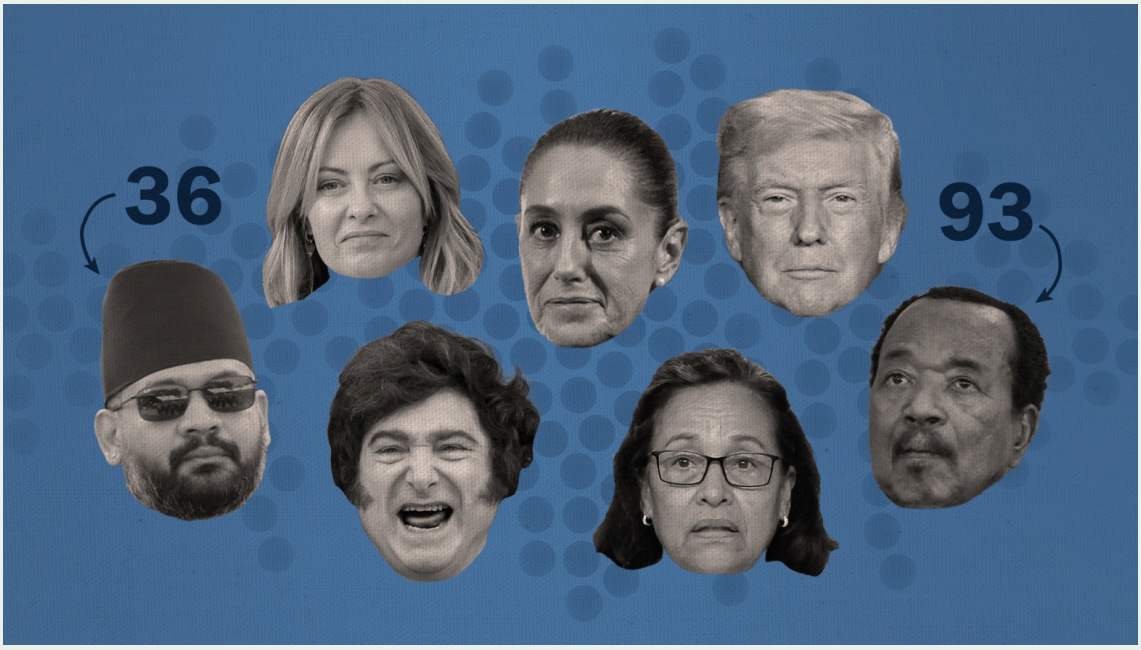


FIGURE 4 | Pew Research Center illustration showing (from left) Nepal Prime Minister Balen Shah, Italy Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Argentina President Javier Milei, Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum, Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine, U.S. President Donald Trump and Cameroon President Paul Biya (Source: Pew Research Center, 2026)

Three cautions. First, the inequity lies in the structural incentive, not in any individual's age: an older leader can be intensely future-oriented – a legacy project, a grandchild, a climate conviction – and a younger one reckless and short-termist. Nor is a younger cohort of leaders the remedy: the incentive to discount the long term is built into the cycle, not into the generation that happens to be in office. Framing the issue as "old leaders are bad for the young" would be both empirically wrong and ageist. Second, the clearest cases of inequity involve a self-serving mechanism, such as pension or debt policy that shifts costs onto younger cohorts while protecting the incumbents who designed it; the ageing trend alone raises the risk, and becomes inequity only when the skew is used to allocate burdens downward. Third, democracy complicates blame: electorates themselves skew older in turnout, so older leaders partly mirror older voters. That relocates the inequity from leadership to participation structures, and calls for a different remedy – enfranchisement mechanics and youth civic infrastructure rather than term limits or age quotas.

In sum, age-skewed generational inequity or fairness is the condition in which the structural over-representation of older cohorts in decision-making systematically tilts long-horizon burdens – debt, environmental degradation, land and resource commitments, opportunity structures – away from the cohorts that set them and toward younger and future cohorts who bear the consequences without a comparable voice. The ageing of leadership is not itself the inequity; it is the mechanism that makes it more likely. The SDGs, the NUA and the IG-UTP all name future generations as beneficiaries, yet none supplies an instrument to represent them. The ageing-leader trend is the empirical sign that senior-skewed decision-making remains the path of least resistance, and that nothing in the current framework materially offsets it.

The deficit is not confined to who governs. It is written into the places those governments shape, because territorial planning is where equity principles meet the ground. Territories and spaces encompass the full diversity of places on Earth, inhabited or not, and their quality depends overwhelmingly on how humans plan, develop, use and manage them – including the places we choose to leave untouched. Long-term territorial planning and ecosystem management are therefore among the most powerful means available to promote prosperity and quality of life for people and the ecosystems they depend on, and to give generational equity a concrete, place-based expression.

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda places institutions at the centre of this task. The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals treat strong institutions as a cross-cutting concern and name them explicitly in SDG 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions; governments are responsible for the essential services their populations depend on and must coordinate policy across the full span of the Goals. That places national and local governments, and the public bodies that serve them, at the centre of long-term territorial planning, spatial development and the safeguarding of generational equity. But it also sets a precondition those same institutions frequently fail to meet. Delivering on the Goals presupposes peace, justice and institutional strength – and these remain elusive in many if not most countries, arguably more so today than when the Goals were adopted more than a decade ago.

This article focuses on long-term territorial planning and spatial development in relation to SDG 11, "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (see Box 2). It deliberately takes in the broader territorial spectrum – urbanised and non-urbanised areas alike, addressed by a multitude of interrelated Goals – in order to underscore the place-based dimension of both generational equity and sustainable development.

Seen through the territorial planning lens, the two sides of the generational equity coin can be restated as follows.

Intragenerational territorial equity

means that every living generation and community – young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, North and South – receives a fair share of the benefits and burdens of how places are developed, and has a real voice in planning and deciding.

Intergenerational territorial equity

means that today's decisions about land, infrastructure and resources leave future generations a fair share of the benefits of place, no unfair share of its burdens, and the freedom to make the choices that will be theirs to make.

In territorial planning, where every decision about land, infrastructure and resources distributes benefits among the living and options among the unborn, sustainable development and generational equity turn out to be the same principle seen from the two ends of the chain.

Throughout, generational equity and generational fairness are used interchangeably as umbrella terms covering present and future generations; much of the literature that uses the more common 'intergenerational (in)equity' implicitly covers both angles.

The article's core argument for generation-fair territorial policies is tested through five questions, one for each of the boxes in this piece. The first asked whose horizon governs the long term – a question about the structure of decision-making rather than the age of any individual decision-maker. The next

four test the goal and the three instruments in turn, asking in each case whether they reach as far as they claim: whether SDG 11 is generation-blind; whether a Future Generations Declaration can be place-blind; whether global planning guidelines can change national planning systems; and whether the New Urban Agenda delivers the systems it promises. Each answers in the same register – naming what the instrument does, and then what it leaves undone. Together they map **the four gaps this article identifies: the goal's silence on generations, the Declaration's on territory, the Guidelines' on the systems they would reform, and the Agenda's on the delivery it promises.**

CHAPTER 1

01 Generational *Fairness*

> *I will spend my working life implementing decisions I did not make, inside a system whose enabling acts predate my birth. That makes me a subject of the intergenerational trust this article describes, and I hope, one of its agents. What I want to help build is a profession that plans with the generations who will inherit its work. Not only for them.*

OLIVANTA MWENDA, CO-AUTHOR



Pastry vendor in Boulevard Sour Jdid, Casablanca, Morocco

The questions this chapter asks. Future generations will bear the consequences of today's decisions for decades to come, yet they are largely absent and voiceless in the processes that shape the quality of their lives and the places in which they will be able to thrive. What concerns do younger generations hold about the social, environmental and economic legacy they stand to inherit? What do they expect from policies whose consequences outlast electoral cycles many times over – particularly amid a deepening 'polycrisis'? How can different generations, and their evolving interests, be brought into policy-making? And how can mono-generational Shaping the Future (masterplanning) be turned into a multigenerational Sharing the Future (collaborative planning)?



FIGURE 5 | Living and unborn generations from different parts of the world gathered around a shared territorial plan, with the landscape itself stretching from a Global South setting to a Global North one, and the 'chain of generations' made visible by who holds the plan, with an empty, reserved place at the table – present in the room, absent from the decision, and looked at with care by the living

Anchoring in public administration. This article approaches these questions through the lens of long-term territorial planning and spatial development, and anchors them in the principles of effective governance for sustainable development endorsed by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA). Generational equity belongs to the CEPA cluster on **inclusiveness**, alongside two interrelated principles: **participation**, which holds that all significant political groups should be actively involved in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy; and **subsidiarity**, which holds that central authorities should perform only those tasks that cannot be performed effectively at a more intermediate or local level.

CEPA defines intergenerational equity as the requirement that institutions "balance the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations" – a direct descendant of Brundtland's clause, and one of four strategies CEPA sets out for putting the principle into practice: long-term territorial planning and spatial development; ecosystem management; sustainable

development impact assessment; and long-term public debt management. The first of these is the subject of this article.

The strategies CEPA attaches to these principles read, in effect, as a toolkit for participatory planning and place-making: regulatory processes of public participation that extend beyond consultation; multi-stakeholder forums; participatory budgeting; community-driven development; strengthening urban governance and municipal finance; enhancing local capacity for prevention, adaptation and mitigation of external shocks; and multilevel governance as the synthesis of bottom-up and top-down decision-making – see also *Local Planners and Global Goals* (Cities Forum & ISOCARP, 2026).

These principles extend into the CEPA cluster on 'effectiveness', and in particular into 'sound policy-making': the requirement that public policies be coherent with one another and founded on well-established grounds. Two of its strategies are directly relevant here – **strategic planning and foresight**, which develops collaborative visions and scenarios of future development and pre-assesses possible system shocks; and the **promotion of coherent policy-making**, which ensures integrated policy decisions.

Coherence as the requirement. Alongside strategic planning and foresight, this article therefore draws heavily on the notion of **coherent policy-making** – a cornerstone of effective governance that has attracted markedly greater attention since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 (UN, 2015). Because the Sustainable Development Goals are deeply interconnected, the debate on their implementation has produced a renewed drive for policy coherence and integrated approaches. Long-term territorial planning can only be effective as part of such coherence: applying a place-based lens to all relevant, interrelated policies and looking beyond the urban/non-urban dichotomy.

Adapting CEPA's definition, **territorial planning policy** can be understood as policy-making that systematically considers the place-based aspects and impacts of multiple policy goals in a coordinated way. It minimises trade-offs and contradictions, maximises synergies, and aims at better places for people and the ecosystems they depend on. Coherence can be pursued – and assessed – at every stage of the policy cycle, from agenda-setting and goal formulation through instrument design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation. Its absence produces two families of problems. The first is governance-wide: compartmentalisation, fragmentation, competing objectives, and inconsistent policy mixes. The second is place-based: dysfunctional urban spaces, degraded ecosystems, spatial inequalities, and heightened exposure to climate, biodiversity and economic shocks.

What the evidence shows. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an influential voice on policy coherence, has shown in *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice* (2020) that the implicit promise that each generation will fare better than the last rests on increasingly shaky ground. The report compares the policies, laws, institutional capacities and governance tools deployed by 42 national governments and the European Union to promote youth empowerment and intergenerational justice. Despite notable innovations – particularly in anticipating the distributional effects of policies and budgets across age cohorts – it finds that systemic risks persist. Above all, the OECD argues, public institutions lack the structures and incentives that would encourage long-term thinking. Remedying this requires a fair assessment of the benefits and costs of today's decisions across current and future generations, and the consolidation of scattered initiatives into a coherent strategy. The pathways it identifies include age-disaggregated evidence, strategic foresight, well-resourced and independent oversight institutions, and greater age diversity in decision-making.

These findings were carried into commitments through the OECD's *Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People* (2022), whose provision VI on generational justice is the operative text, and into practice through the *Youth Policy Toolkit* (2024), a 173-page implementation guide whose fourth and fifth pillars deal specifically with public governance and intergenerational justice. The OECD's work on youth and generational justice has, however, developed largely in parallel with its equally substantial territorial strand; the two have yet to be joined. In *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals* (2020), the OECD argues that cities and regions must embrace the full potential of the Goals as a policy tool, estimating that at least 105 of the 169 SDG targets cannot be met without the proper engagement of subnational governments. It proposes a localised indicator framework measuring the distance to the Goals for more than 600 regions and cities, and closes with a Checklist for Public Action. The complementary *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024*, jointly developed by the OECD and UN-Habitat covers 78 countries and classifies national urban policies according to their thematic scope and implementation frameworks. Both report progress on the integration of social and environmental objectives, evidence-based monitoring, and the mainstreaming of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement – and the persistent obstacles: policy silos, data and information gaps, and weak capacity that continue to prevent national and subnational governments alike from realising the full potential of NUPs. Its key recommendations are taken up in Chapter 4. Neither report treats future generations as a distinct constituency of territorial policy – the gap this article seeks to address.



FIGURE 6 | At least 105 of the 169 SDG targets cannot be met without the proper engagement of subnational governments – the planning tier (Source: OECD, 2020)

Ten years in. More than a decade has passed since the SDGs were adopted. These frameworks have established shared international reference points for sustainable urban development, improved the availability of comparable information, and supplied indicators against which progress can be monitored. Ten years in, the institutions that adopted them owe themselves a candid review – and so does the international community of planners and designers that has been asked to deliver on them.

The 2026 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), held in July, conducted in-depth reviews of SDG 11, together with SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 17, under the arrangements set by ECOSOC for the current review cycle. The SDG 11 review drew on the Secretary-General's annual progress report, the statistical assessment prepared by the UN Statistics Division, UN-Habitat's SDG 11 Global Report 2026, and the independent global assessment published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. It was further informed by the key messages of the SDG 11 Expert Group Meeting convened by UN DESA and UN-Habitat in January 2026. Our article *Local Planners*

and Global Goals presents a more comprehensive review. Box 2 complements it by reading SDG 11 itself through the lens of generational fairness.

BOX 2

Is SDG 11 generation-blind?

The world's population continues to grow, and accommodating everyone requires sustainable cities, towns and villages. If all are to survive and prosper, urban and territorial planning must become more intelligent, producing safe, affordable and resilient settlements with green and culturally inspiring living conditions. To "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", SDG 11 sets ten targets for 2030 – summarised here, with the full wording at the UN's own indicator framework:

11.1 *Adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all; upgrading slums.*

11.2 *Safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport for all, with special attention to those in vulnerable situations.*

11.3 *Inclusive and sustainable urbanisation, and capacity for participatory, integrated planning and management in all countries.*

11.4 *Protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.*

11.5 *Reduce deaths, people affected and direct economic losses from disasters, protecting the poor above all.*

11.6 *Reduce the adverse per-capita environmental impact of cities, especially air quality and waste management.*

11.7 *Universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible, green and public spaces.*

11.a *Positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, through national and regional development planning.*

11.b *Integrated policies and plans for inclusion, resource efficiency, climate mitigation and adaptation and disaster resilience, with holistic risk management in line with the Sendai Framework.*

11.c *Support least developed countries in building sustainable and resilient buildings using local materials.*

The SDGs as a whole treat generational equity implicitly through "sustainability", but the term "generational equity" appears nowhere in the 17 goals, and the framework's equity language applies almost exclusively *intra*-generationally. "Generational fairness" is inherited from the Brundtland definition and carried mainly by the environmental goals (12, 13, 14, 15) – as a premise, not as a target.

SDG 11 is the goal where generational equity is most materially at stake and least explicitly named. Its targets on land (11.3), heritage (11.4), public space (11.7) and resilience (11.b) are inherently about what one generation leaves the next, and the land-efficiency indicator is arguably the single most intergenerational metric in the entire SDG framework. **But every one of them is written as a present-day condition to be improved by 2030**. That horizon is shorter than the assets it governs: a street grid, a housing stock, a sealed hectare or a depleted aquifer will still be there in 2100, while the target that shaped it expires in four years. The goal disaggregates almost nothing

by age, and offers no way to weigh today's housing emergency against tomorrow's inheritance.



FIGURE 7 | The 17 SDGs (bottom) and the 'SDG wedding cake' (top) illustrating a desirable 'hierarchy' of goals (Adapted from, respectively, UN, 2015 and Stockholm Resilience, 2018)

Read together with the 2015 IG-UTP's "current and future societies" (Box 4), the 2016 New Urban Agenda (Box 5) and the 2024 Declaration on Future Generations (Box 3), **SDG 11 supplies the measurable content the generational-equity agenda otherwise lacks – but it needs those three texts to supply the framing it never adopted itself.**



FIGURE 8 | SDG 11 sets ten targets for 2030; the assets they govern outlast them by generations. Highlighted: the four targets on land (11.3), heritage (11.4), public space (11.7) and resilience (11.b) that are about what one generation leaves the next (Source: UN, 2015)

Read from a planning perspective, the review carries a set of messages, summarised in our article *Local Planners and Global Goals* (Cities Forum & ISOCARP, 2026). They converge on an implementation gap that is not primarily technical but political and institutional: housing delivery remains far behind need; local government capacity, not national ambition, is the binding constraint; integrated spatial planning is still the exception rather than the rule; finance and data systems are inadequate to the task; climate mitigation has yet to be built into the urban development model; and implementation at scale, rather than piloting, is where progress now depends. The frameworks are sound; the constraint is not planners' know-how but the absence of political will, institutional continuity, and financial resources to act on what is already agreed.

The Political Declaration adopted at the General Assembly's high-level meeting on the mid-term review of the New Urban Agenda (16–17 July 2026) therefore sets the direction of travel toward 2036 and Habitat IV, rather than opening a fundamentally new agenda. Read alongside the HLPF's in-depth review of SDG 11 the same month, the message is consistent: the underlying vision remains sound, but it is not being delivered fast enough. The coming decade calls for fewer new commitments and far more attention to housing, local government capacity, integrated spatial planning, finance, data and implementation at scale. At HLPF 2026, local and regional governments declared through the Global Taskforce that they are not simply implementing global agendas – they are actively shaping them, emphasising the integration of the SDGs into planning at all stages and the inclusion of youth and disengaged constituencies in their reporting.



FIGURE 9 | Convened by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, the 2026 Local and Regional Governments Day brought together mayors, governors, international organizations, UN agencies and civil society to discuss how local action can accelerate implementation while informing the debates that are starting to shape the international agenda beyond 2030, reaffirming that achieving sustainable development will depend on empowering territories as spaces where global commitments become everyday realities (Source: Global Taskforce, 2026)

This strengthens rather than weakens the case for planners and placemakers. The review and the declaration between them name precisely the terrain on which the profession works – spatial planning, housing, land, infrastructure, public space, metropolitan coordination and local governance – as the terrain on which the global agenda will either be localised into durable, regenerative outcomes or stall.

Our previous article addressed what continues to prevent the narrowing of an implementation gap that is substantial and, in places, still widening. This article explores what can prevent the further widening of the generational equity gap in many if not most places, in both Global South and North. That gap cannot be pinned on a single factor or actor. It is produced by the interaction of several: fragmented governance, uneven institutional capa-

city, limited data systems, sharply differing geographic and economic contexts, weak cross-sectoral coordination, the difficulty of building meaningful participation across divergent societal ideologies – not to mention the big question marks around 'big tech' and Artificial Intelligence. Taken together – and taken with their respective actors – these dimensions show how demanding it is to translate a global sustainability agenda into multi-generational planning processes that are locally relevant, implementable, and capable of delivering what the frameworks promise for living and future generations.

The challenge, in short, is no longer to shape a vision for sustainable cities and communities; it is to build the institutional, technical and collaborative machinery that connects global aspiration to local reality.

We read the 2026 political review of SDG 11 and the NUA as both sobering and encouraging – conspicuously silent on the generational equity challenge and on how professional planners and designers should act upon it.

One framework adopted in 2024 does address that challenge directly, and it is the only UN text to do so. Box 3 examines the Declaration on Future Generations – what it commits its signatories to, where it is silent, and what it asks of the planning profession. In our previous article we cast those professionals as the flippers at the table rather than the pinballs on it: the levers that aim the ball – SDG 11 and the NUA – toward regenerative, place-positive and intergenerational outcomes, provided they can reach more and better resources, above all in the Global South.

BOX 3

Can a Future Generations Declaration be place-blind?

Adopted on 22 September 2024 as Annex II to the Pact for the Future (UN, 2024-2), the Declaration is the first-ever standalone UN text on future generations – a pledge to act today "with responsibility toward those who will inherit the planet tomorrow," with "intergenerational solidarity, justice and equity" set out as guiding principles. It has a preamble, guiding principles, commitments, and a set of implementation actions. After the SDGs, the NUA and the IG-UTP all reached generational equity only through "sustainability," this text says the words.

The actions read like a planner's toolkit: strategic foresight for "long-term thinking and planning" and "anticipatory, adaptive"governance; "forward-looking, evidence-based impact assessments" and measures of progress "beyond gross domestic product"; evidence-based planning against future shocks "while ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable do not bear disproportionate costs"; a whole-of-government approach "including at the national and local levels"; and advising on "the likely intergenerational or future impacts of policies and programmes." Member States "took note" of the Secretary-General's proposal for a Special Envoy for Future Generations and committed

to a high-level General Assembly review of implementation during the 83rd session. A Member-State Group of Friends of Future Generations, co-chaired by Jamaica and the Netherlands, is intended to drive implementation alongside the UN Futures Lab Network (UNU CPR, 2024).

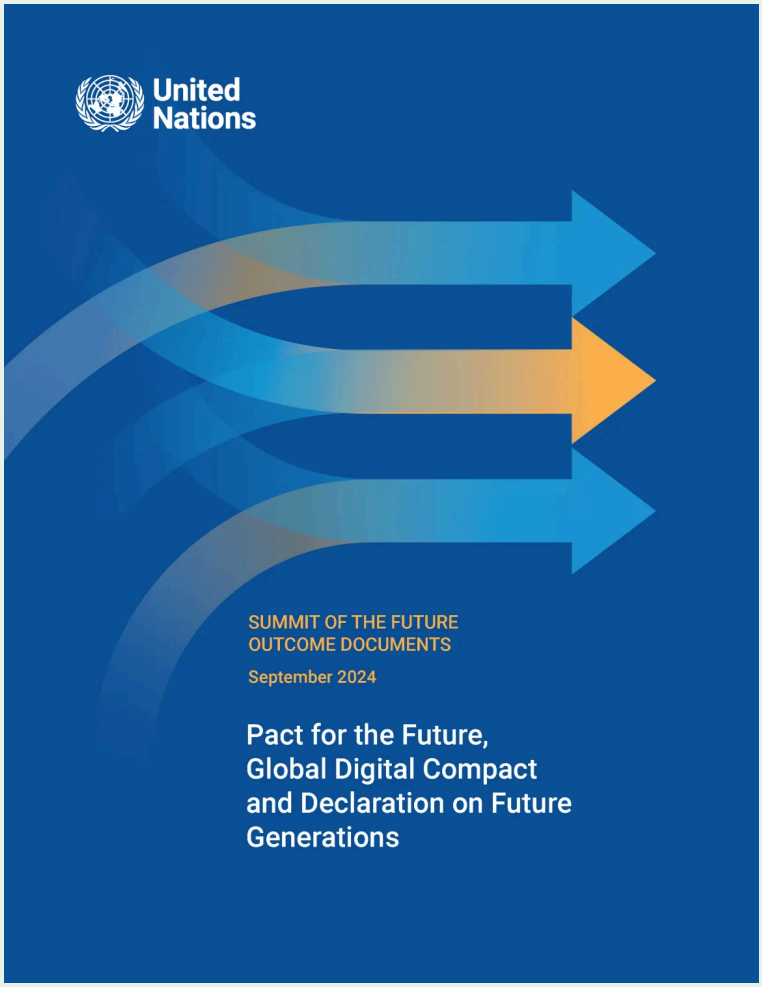


FIGURE 10 | Cover of Pact for the Future, Global Digital; Compact and Declaration on Future Generations (Source: UN, 2024)

The spatial silence is the decisive feature. The Declaration speaks of the environment, climate, natural resources and Indigenous Peoples' "territories, lands and ecosystems," but the word "planning" appears only in the governance and foresight sense, never as spatial planning. There is no reference to urbanisation, land use, housing, infrastructure or the built environment – even though these are the most irreversible commitments any generation makes. For a text built around an "intergenerational multiplier effect," omitting the medium through which that effect is most literally transmitted is a real gap. Its companion annex is still blinder: the Global Digital Compact, which intends to shape AI-standards, data regimes and platform rules for decades to come, contains no spatial nor intergenerational provision at all.

The Declaration supplies the mandate the IG-UTP and the NUA lacked; those instruments supply the spatial content the Declaration lacks. City and regional planners sit at the

seam. They are, in fact, the profession the Declaration describes without naming: long-horizon thinking, anticipatory impact assessment, local coordination, advising on future impacts – every action item is something planning already claims as its core method, and no other profession routinely works on a 30–100 year horizon. The Declaration therefore elevates the planner's ordinary craft into an international commitment, which gives planning departments a legitimacy argument they did not previously have when pushing back against short-term political or market pressure.

Planners are the structural counterweight to the aging-leader problem. If the elected tier is skewed old and its horizon is short, the mid-level technical tier is where long-term interests can be institutionalized regardless of who holds office. Binding spatial designations, urban growth boundaries, long-range infrastructure plans and mandatory future-impact assessments survive electoral turnover in a way that a leader's personal commitment does not. The Declaration's "whole-of-government… including at the local level" language points squarely at this tier as an implementation site.

Planners hold advisory power, not decision power. The plan is proposed by planners and adopted by politicians; land is owned by others; budgets are set elsewhere. Planners can carry the future's interest into the room, but they cannot vote for it. The Declaration does nothing to change that hierarchy – it asks governments to *consult* foresight, not to be bound by it. So the honest position is that planners are the Declaration's natural agents and its least empowered ones at the same time.

Planners are also exposed to the rhetoric's misuse. "Protecting future generations" can be – and routinely is – deployed to block housing, transit and densification that today's young need most. A planner armed with the Declaration therefore has an obligation the text itself only gestures at: to apply an *irreversibility* test and the "no disproportionate burden on the vulnerable" clause together, so that intergenerational language is not captured by present incumbents defending their amenity. That, incidentally, is the exact place where the aging of both leaders *and* the most active participants in plan consultations bites hardest.

The Declaration's overall weaknesses are the familiar ones, sharpened. It is non-binding; a UN commentator notes that in such processes "accountability is often one of the most important missing pieces." It does not define "future generations," does not make them rights-holders, and sets no indicators. And its answer to the aging-leader problem is *procedural* (foresight, assessments, an Envoy), not *structural* – it corrects the horizon of decisions, not the composition of decision-makers.

CHAPTER 2

02 Inherited *Systems*

I am particularly interested in how urban planning can build upon local identity, support community well-being, and create lasting value, recognizing that successful urban transformation is measured not only by what we build, but by the conditions we create for people and places to thrive.

LUISA ALCOCER RUBIO, CO-AUTHOR



Boy calling a sibling for a wrap in the outskirts of Gaza city (in 2015)

What this chapter does, and why it precedes the hooks. Planning systems are not designed from scratch; they are inherited, and their inheritance explains much of what they can and cannot now do. This chapter sets out where the modern planning system came from, what it was diagnosed as failing to do, and how it responded by reinventing itself. It establishes the terms for everything that follows.

Origins and vocabulary. While public urban planning and design can be traced back to ancient urban civilisations, nation-state-based 'country and town planning' is rooted in the urban health crises of the first wave of industrialisation – and therefore mainly in the Western world, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Hesitantly, the public sector established regulatory planning systems, mechanisms and instruments to regulate the use of public and private land, to prevent and mitigate the negative environmental and social externalities of economic investment, to regulate housing markets, and to provide basic legal consultation procedures.

Gradually, 'town and country planning', 'city planning', 'urban planning', 'regional planning', 'spatial planning' and more recently 'territorial planning' and 'placemaking' (as a branch of 'urban design') became the more common denominations across much of the world, with a creative local language mix from country to country – including *'urbanism'*, *'spatial ordening'*, '*city-building*' and even *'planology'*. The vocabulary varies; the object does not.



FIGURE 11 | Denominations of planning, by approximate count of countries where the term is the official or standard name for the system or profession

Performance and colonial genealogy. Countries with a more performant public sector overall also tend to perform more explicitly and better on urban and territorial planning. And planning systems of developed countries were often replicated in developing countries, mostly instrumental to the act of colonisation (K. Van Assche et al., 2020). This matters for the argument that follows: it explains why so many Southern planning systems are legacies rather than designs, and why reform requires confronting inherited instruments rather than merely improving them.

Once planning systems are established and enshrined within a country's legal system, societal megatrends and disruptions typically have a greater impact on the implementation and enforcement of the system than on its substance. Where

planning systems are rigid or outdated, neoliberal governance approaches have substantially eroded or bypassed legal planning procedures rather than reforming them – an evasion of the system rather than a redesign of it (Swyngedouw E., 2011).

Strategic spatial planning as a response. Acknowledging the limitations and rigidity of outdated planning systems – often single-focused on building rights through land zoning – concerned professional planners, practitioners and scholars alike gradually established and applied a new paradigm: strategic spatial planning, aiming to combine long-term visioning, including strategic foresight, with short-term spatial interventions through stakeholder and community involvement.

Strategic foresight emerged as a field of study and practice following the Second World War, initially in industrial and military sectors. Many national governments have since established dedicated units and capabilities to ensure longer-term thinking – for example in Canada, Finland, Singapore and the United Kingdom (UN DESA, 2021).

The 2009 diagnosis: systems declared unfit. The authoritative global source on the status of planning systems worldwide remains UN-Habitat's 2009 *Global Report on Human Settlements: Planning for Sustainable Cities* (UN-Habitat, 2009). This is where UN-Habitat first made 'planning systems' its analytical object – and it did so by declaring them unfit. The summary version states the verdict bluntly:

> *"Current urban planning systems are not equipped to deal with the major urban challenges of the 21st century, including effects of climate change, resource depletion and economic instability, plus continued rapid urbanization with its negative consequences such as poverty, slums and urban informality."*

Two distinct failures are identified. The first is substantive: traditional approaches "have largely failed to promote equitable, efficient and sustainable human settlements." The second is procedural: planning systems "have also, to a large extent, failed to meaningfully involve and accommodate the ways of life of communities and other stakeholders in the planning of urban areas, thus contributing to the problems of spatial marginalization and exclusion."

That second failure ties system design directly to spatial exclusion – including the exclusion of vulnerable age groups. It is the point at which UN-Habitat accepted that planning systems are distributive instruments, which is the premise generational equity requires.

The diagnosis explicitly blames the still-prevalent masterplanning approach, noting that "in some parts of the world it has been replaced by processes and plans that are more participatory, flexible, strategic and action oriented." The report also gives many planning systems a colonial genealogy, identifying colonialism as "a very direct vehicle for diffusing planning systems."

From diagnosis to framework. UN-Habitat's flagship policy document – the *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning* (IG-UTP), approved in 2015 – leans heavily on the 2009 Global Report. The one point to carry forward from this chapter is the shape of the problem. **A planning system inherited from another century, diagnosed as unfit in 2009, and reformed through non-binding guidance by 2015 is the instrument on which the global agenda now depends.** Whether such instruments can carry a generational commitment is the question the next two chapters take up, while chapter 5 will draw upon inspiring planning practices since the 2009 Global Report.

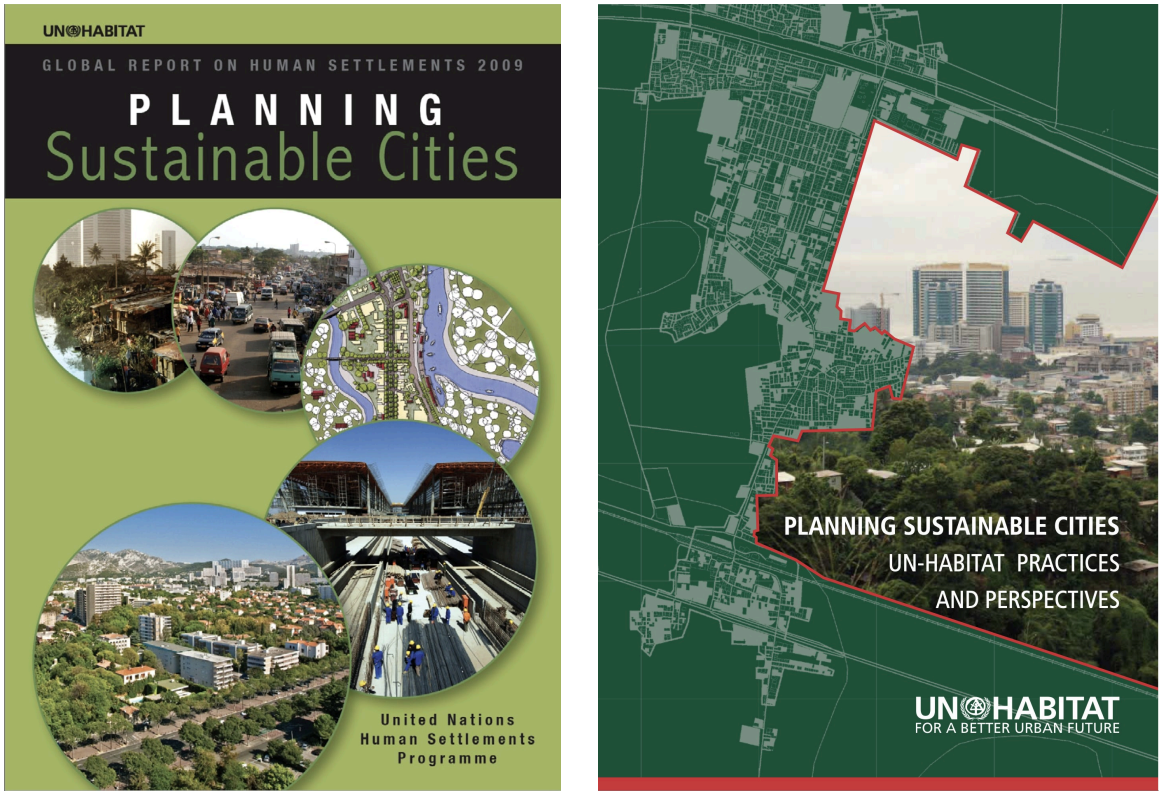


FIGURE 12 | Covers of UN-Habitat's 2009 Global Report on Human Settlements (left) and a 2010 complementary booklet showcasing UN-Habitat's practices and perspectives to implement the 2009 principles of integrated strategic spatial planning (right) (Sources: UN-Habitat 2009 and 2010)

CHAPTER 3

03 Planning *Tools*

Through my work with Cities Forum and our From Urban Loneliness to Urban Soul publication, I became increasingly interested in how planning, mobility and public space can create opportunities for different generations to connect and belong.

NADA SOLIMAN, CO-AUTHOR



Metropolitan police officer inspecting the Square of Independence in Quito, Ecuador

What this chapter adds. Chapter 2 showed that planning systems are inherited and were declared unfit. This chapter shows what happens next: how governments and communities work with those systems, around them, and increasingly without them. It ends by comparing the two instruments that actually engage planning systems – the IG-UTP and the NUA – and asking what each does for the generations who inherit the result.

Tools multiply where systems falter. The complex, adaptive framework underlying the SDGs is more compatible with a strategic territorial planning approach than the linear framework of the earlier Millennium Development Goals, and the use of the SDGs as a framework for national strategic planning has helped establish strategic spatial planning as a critical element of the process in an increasing number of developing countries, such as Costa Rica and Rwanda (UN DESA, 2021). Mainstreaming the SDGs into all policy sectors at all governance scales is the most qualifying trend in sustainable development, and the clearest evidence of it is the growing number of countries establishing a National Urban Policy. The OECD and UN-Habitat's *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024*, covering 78 countries and classifying national urban policies by their thematic scope and implementation frameworks, finds that social and environmental objectives are increasingly integrated and that the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and other global agendas are being systematically mainstreamed into NUP design and implementation. It also finds the persistent obstacles: policy silos, data and information gaps, and weak capacity, which continue to prevent national and subnational governments alike from realising the full potential of NUPs. Most tellingly for this article, socio-spatial inequalities and divides in cities – urban–rural connectivity, spatial segregation – remain sparsely addressed in the policies surveyed, and no framework reviewed here asks a generational question of its own land-use decisions. But outdated or rigid regulatory planning systems are slowing – in places obstructing – that mainstreaming. Where reform stalls, governments, entrepreneurs, planning professionals and civil society bypass dysfunctional systems with an incremental range of formal and informal tools.

Formal instruments. Spatial plans and urban designs remain the staple of any territorial toolkit. Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans have emerged as a more policy-coherent and explicitly forward-looking sectoral planning method, with a people-centred approach to current and future mobility for people and goods. Placemaking – a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing and managing public space – is equally at home as a formal instrument and as a community-led one, since it capitalises on a community's own assets, inspiration and potential, and can be government-led or grassroots.

Evasion instruments. Two are worth naming, because both illustrate the bypassing dynamic directly. *Lex specialis* holds that where two laws govern the same factual situation, a law governing a specific subject matter overrides one governing general matters – a doctrine routinely applied in urban and territorial planning to complex megaprojects driven by private investors (see e.g. Perić, A. & D'hondt, F., 2022). *Public–Private Partnerships* are formal agreements by which a public body and one or more private entities cooperate to build assets or deliver services; UN-Habitat's *Public-Private Partnership in Housing and Urban Development* (UN-Habitat, 2011) examines how the model can promote and finance sustainable housing, infrastructure and services, while noting that the parties' financial interests are by definition not fully aligned.

Community-led instruments. *Neighbourhood contracts* assign public funds for neighbourhood quality improvement through a programme limited in space, time and budget – a form of participatory budgeting at local scale (see e.g. Romańczyk, M., 2015). *Slum-upgrading* is an integrated approach that reverses downward legal, physical and social trends in areas of informal housing, providing basic services and often education and health care,

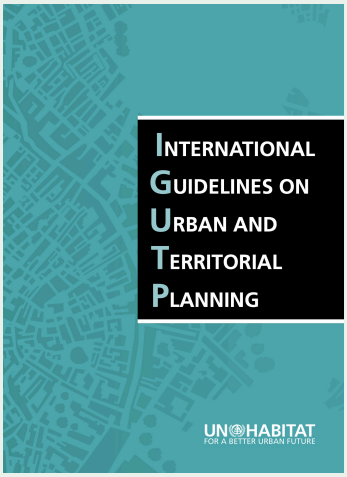
and ideally adjusting the planning system itself (see e.g. Cities Alliance). *Tactical urbanism* refers to low-cost, temporary interventions – small-scale and short-term, meant to inspire long-term change (Pfeifer, L., 2013). *Soft urbanism* complements hard regulatory powers with non-regulatory ones to shape better-designed places, and typically applies placemaking and tactical urbanism to that end (see e.g. EU-project Urban Maestro).

Plan-making as a means, not a goal. While spatial plans and urban designs will always remain a staple of any territorial policy toolkit, many countries and communities are rightfully reinventing plan-making as a means rather than a goal in its own right. Where traditional masterplanning remains top-down and expert-centred, strategic participatory plan-making is bottom-up and community-driven, using techniques such as community-based visioning workshops – as demonstrated in Kosovo, Curaçao and Somaliland (D'hondt, 2019).

Two instruments compared. The NUA was adopted in 2016, published in early 2017 (UN, 2017), and followed in 2020 by an Illustrated Handbook (adapted from UN-Habitat, 2020) – arguably the most important tool for aligning local, regional, national and transnational planning practices with the IG-UTP of 2015. What the two flagship instruments say about planning system reform and about generational equity is examined in the two boxes that follow, starting with the IG-UPT.

BOX 4

Can global planning guidelines change national planning systems?



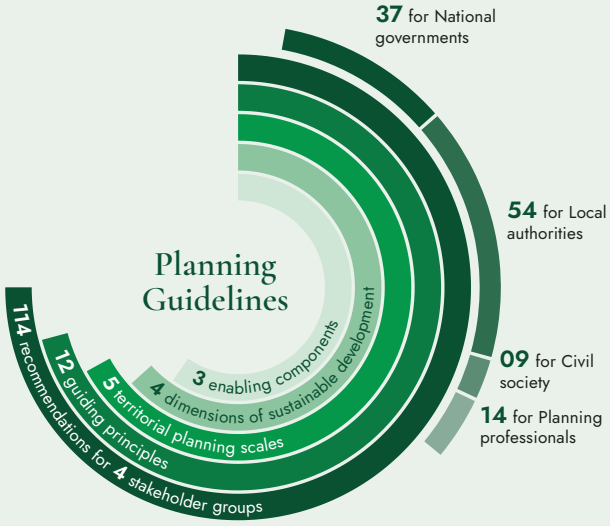


FIGURE 13 | Cover of the IG-UTP and complementary infographic from a promotional leaflet (Source: UN-Habitat, 2015-2; infographic adapted from UN-Habitat, 2018)

Based on strong evidence and lessons learned from various regions and contexts, the IG-UTP consist of 12 key principles and 114 action-oriented recommendations targeted to four stakeholder groups: national governments, local authorities, planning profession-

als and their associations and civil society and its organizations. The Planning Guidelines emphasize the need for an integrated approach to planning and cover areas of urban policy and governance, sustainable urban development, planning components, and implementation and monitoring mechanisms. They enable the integration of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of planning systems by opening thematic entry points for its improvement, while taking into account the potential for interventions to occur at different levels. Moreover, the Guidelines bring forth a territorial perspective to planning as their application is not constrained to the problematic taking place within the urban boundary, but instead, takes into consideration the processes, actors, and issues taking place throughout the spatial planning continuum, meaning, all the way from urban to rural.

The output was non-binding, and that was the settlement. Resolution 25/6 approved the Guidelines as "a non-binding universal urban and territorial planning framework." Given that planning and land-use regulation are core sovereign competences, a binding instrument was never realistically on the table – the resolution's implementation clause instead calls upon international financial institutions, development agencies and UN-Habitat "to assist interested member States in using and adapting the Guidelines," which is the soft-law formula.

In the 2015 Guidelines, 'planning system' is the stated object of reform: the document's own tagline describes the IG-UTP as "a source of inspiration and a compass for decision makers and urban professionals when reviewing urban and territorial planning systems." However, a definition of planning systems was only formulated in the 2018 IG-UTP Handbook (UN-Habitat, 2018), published together with the first review of implementing the Guidelines (2015–2017). The Handbook is explicit that it is supplying the concept:

> *"The planning system is defined as the localized multi-tier and multi-partner governance framework for formulating, developing and/or improving urban and territorial policies, plans, designs and implementation processes."*

That definition makes the Handbook's conceptual contribution clear: it takes the Guidelines' loose usage and turns it into a defined term with a scope (multi-tier, multi-partner) and a purpose (producing policies, plans, designs, implementation). The Handbook also carries the instruments built on it – the planning system self-assessment tool and a methodology for assessment "to be done in partnership by all four key stakeholder groups."

The IG-UTP is the only one of the frameworks we've discussed this far that writes future generations into its *operative* text rather than its preamble – but it does so in a single clause. It addresses intergenerational equity structurally, through the *kind* of planning it prescribes, more than explicitly. The IG-UTP addresses intergenerational equity better than the SDGs (including SDG 11) in one crucial respect: it names future societies as beneficiaries of planning and ties that to an equitable distribution of costs and benefits. And its core method – long-horizon, iterative, legally grounded, participatory planning aimed at compact and resilient places – is structurally intergenerational even where the text is silent. What it lacks – apart from treating age as one inclusion category among many – is exactly what the 2024 Declaration on Future Generations later supplied in the abstract: an

explicit principle, a procedural device to represent people who cannot attend, and a monitoring frame that asks what each generation leaves behind. The two documents are complementary to the point of fitting together – the Guidelines have the spatial method and the Declaration the generational mandate – and neither has yet been read across to the other.

BOX 5

Does the New Urban Agenda deliver the system it promises?

The New Urban Agenda (UN-Habitat, 2016) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016. The NUA represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future. If well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries. Rethinking the Urban Agenda is about **embracing urbanization** at all levels of human settlements, **integrating equity to the development agenda, fostering national urban planning** and **aligning and strengthening institutional arrangements** with the substantive outcomes of Habitat III, so as to ensure effective delivery of the NUA.

Implementing the New Urban Agenda means: **Urban Rules and Regulations** (proper urbanization requires the rule of law), **Urban Planning and Design** (establishing the adequate provision of common goods) and **Urban Finance** (local fiscal systems should redistribute parts of the urban value generated).

The NUA treats planning as the implementation mechanism – the 'how' of the whole agenda – but it says far less about reforming planning systems than the 2009 report or the IG-UTP. However, by 'acknowledging' the 2015 IG-UTP (NUA para. 93), there is an implicit endorsement of the call for fundamental planning system change. Sadly, the NUA takes a step back by explicitly naming 'masterplans' as one planning instrument among others – with no echo of the 2009 report's critique (NUA para. 124).

The 2020 Illustrated Handbook of the NUA (UN-Habitat, 2020) includes a section dedicated to 'age-responsive planning' - thus mainly addressing *intragenerational* equity. The figure below illustrates some key figures, the main principles and suggested actions for age-responsive planning and urban development.

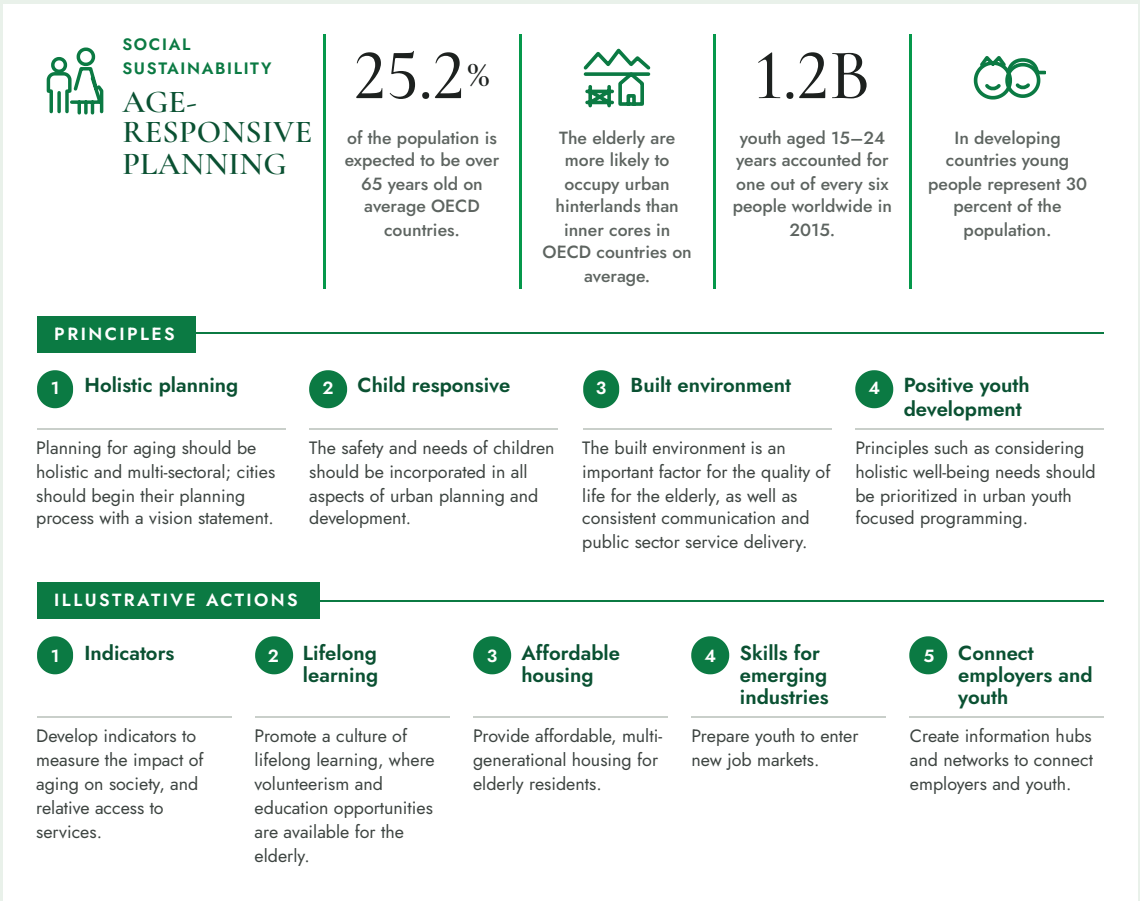


FIGURE 14 | Infographic on Age-responsive planning in the New Urban Agenda Illustrated Handbook (UN-Habitat, 2020)

The NUA treats planning as the implementation mechanism – the "how" of the whole agenda – but it never uses the term 'planning system', and it says far less about reforming planning systems than the aforementioned 2009 Global Report on Human Settlements or the IG-UTP. Planning appears in roughly three roles: as a paradigm shift, as a named section of the agenda, and as a set of instruments. The 2009 critique is not carried over. Nothing in the NUA says prevailing planning systems have failed, that *masterplanning* is defective, or that planning needs reconstituting. The 2009 report's central argument – systems "not up to the task" – has no counterpart in the 2016 text.

On generational equity, the NUA goes one step further than the SDGs and, in one respect, further than the IG-UTP: it writes "present and future generations" directly into its shared vision (NUA para. 11), and it makes "age-responsive" a standing qualifier that recurs through the operative text. But the "future generations" clause stands alone – it is a vision statement, not a commitment – and the age-responsive language addresses generations *alive today*. **The NUA is therefore strong on generational (intra-cohort) equity and thin on intergenerational (cross-time) equity, and it has no time horizon, indicator or mechanism for the latter.**

Comparing the two. Read side by side, the IG-UTP and the NUA occupy different positions. The IG-UTP is where planning systems became the stated object of reform – its own tagline describes it as "a source of inspiration and a compass for decision makers and urban professionals when reviewing urban and territorial planning systems" – and it is the only framework to write future generations into its operative text, if only in a single clause. The NUA carries the stronger generational vision, writing "present and future generations" into its shared vision at paragraph 11, and the more thorough treatment of living cohorts through age-responsive mainstreaming. But it drops the systems language entirely and, by naming masterplans as one instrument among others, takes a step back from the 2009 critique.

What neither supplies. The IG-UTP has the spatial method and one generational clause; the NUA has the generational vision and no systems reform. Neither turns "present and future generations" from a vision into a planning obligation with a horizon, a test and a measure. That is the gap the 2024 Declaration on Future Generations fills on the procedural side – and, as of the 2026 mid-term review, the two have still not been formally read across to each other.

CHAPTER 4

04 Spatial *Hooks*

> *Even when a neighbourhood shares the produce of its community chicken farm with elderly residents and children, that is already an impact. It strengthens care, circulates local resources and gives regeneration a human scale. Regeneration also means sustaining what a community has today so that future generations can inherit something better.*
>
> RICKY WIJAYA UMAR, CO-AUTHOR



Tokyo resident in traditional kimono at the Edo-Tokyo city museum in Tokyo, Japan

Ten hooks for next-generation planning systems

What this chapter does. The previous three chapters set out the principles, the inherited systems and the tools. This chapter turns to the prescription: what has to be done for planning to serve the generations who inherit its results. It opens with the finding that makes the case – that no existing instrument holds systems reform, generational framing and territorial content together – and then sets out ten hooks as the working answer.

Guidelines · Goals · Agenda · Handbook – the sequence in which the territorial and urban framework was assembled

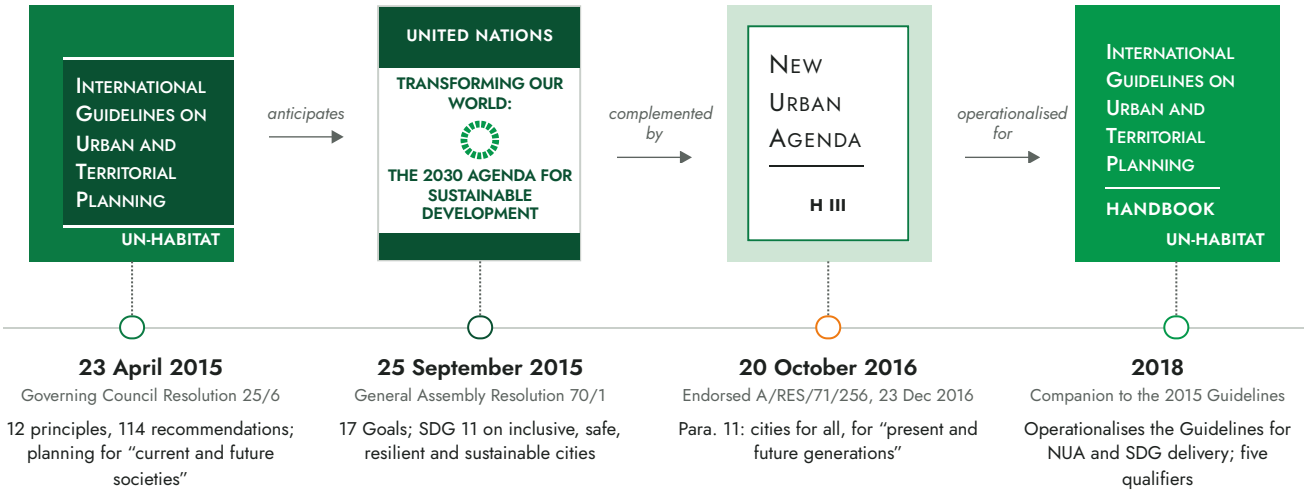


FIGURE 15 | Timeline of key urban policy frameworks

Each instrument holds one piece. Within a span of eighteen months, a comprehensive body of global normative frameworks was established (see timeline figure). The pattern is revealing: the 2009 Global Report on Human Settlements has the systems diagnosis without the generational frame; the 2015 IG-UTP has both the systems framing and one generational clause; the 2016 NUA has the generational vision and the delivery mandate but drops the systems language; the 2018 IG-UTP Handbook is heavy on planning system reform and thin on generational equity.

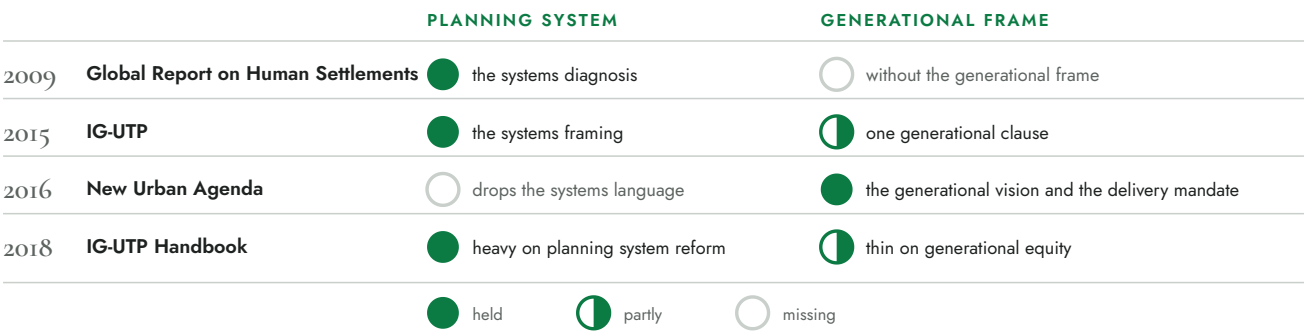


FIGURE 16 | Each instrument holds one piece: planning-system framing and generational framing in four global frameworks, 2009–2018, in the words of the text (Source: Cities Forum, based on UN-Habitat, 2009, 2015 and 2018 and UN, 2017)

No single document holds all three together – which is the gap this article addresses, and the reason the 2024 Declaration on Future Generations, which names intergenerational equity but not territory, closes only one corner of it.

What the frameworks prescribe. UN-Habitat's *Leading Change* (2018) starts from the position that planning systems must adjust to a context their authors never anticipated: "traditional forms of planning were formulated before concerns such as climate change, inclusion, metropolitanisation, spatial justice, gender, or resilience were considered." Its prescription is that new forms of planning be "simpler, faster and more cost effective, focused on implementation" – proactive rather than regulatory, and oriented less toward land-use regulation than toward initiating and guiding infrastructure provision. Alongside this it argues that planning must embrace informality where it is the dominant form of growth, link plans to budgets, take on a regional dimension, and adopt a pro-poor, human-rights-based approach.

The OECD's territorial work points the same way but frames the problem differently. Where planning appears in *A Territorial Approach to the SDGs and Place-Based Policies for the Future* (2020), it is administrative rather than spatial. The fourth pillar of place-based policy – reinforcing multi-level governance – calls for "enhancing planning and coordination mechanisms, subnational institutional and fiscal capacity, place-based leadership, experimental governance and inclusive engagement." That is planning as strategy-making and inter-governmental coordination: not plan-making, zoning, development control or land designation. Without naming it, these reports address planning systems without spatial content and without a generational perspective.



FIGURE 17 | Imaginary cabinet with ten hooks for gender-fair territorial planning. The top layer is about multi-scalar planning and governance, while the bottom layer is more planning-issue based

Turning hooks into reformed systems. The ten spatial hooks summarise what needs to be done, how it can be done and by whom, aligned with the SDGs, the NUA and the IG-UTP. They are a navigation tool for implementing the normative frameworks through reformed planning systems, and they should be read through the lens of the global challenge to restore biodiversity, halt climate disruption, eradicate poverty and realise human rights for all current and future generations. The numbering is not a priority ranking: holistic planning systems must address all ten, prioritised by place.

HOOK

1 Get the planning right at neighborhood level

A. FOUR DIMENSIONS HELD TOGETHER

A neighbourhood is sustainable only when all four hold at once – strength in one cannot offset failure in another.

Social	Environmental	Economic	Governance
Mixed tenure and income, shared space, services within walking distance, belonging and safety.	Land efficiency, green and blue networks, climate resilience, low-carbon mobility and buildings.	Local livelihoods and services, affordable premises, viable mixed uses, long-term upkeep.	Residents with real say, phased delivery, active management after handover, monitoring and adaptation.

B. TWELVE PRINCIPLES

01 Compact and land-efficient form Contain the footprint; reuse brownfield and underused land before greenfield; densify around existing services and transit.	**02 Walkable, mixed-use grain** Everyday needs – food, school, health, play, work – within a short walk; ground floors active, uses mixed not zoned apart.	**03 Housing choice and affordability** A range of types, tenures and sizes for different households, incomes and life stages, permanently affordable rather than at first sale.	**04 Green and blue infrastructure** Multifunctional green space, street trees and water systems that manage rainfall, cool the air and provide habitat – as infrastructure.
05 Low-carbon mobility by default The walkable and cyclable route is the direct one; transit accessible before occupancy; parking and road capacity managed, not supplied to peak.	**06 Climate resilience built in** Shade and cooling, flood-safe siting and drainage, resilient materials and redundant systems – sited for the climate of 2050, not of today.	**07 Local services and livelihoods** Schools, health, retail and workspace provided as infrastructure, phased to arrive with residents; support for local enterprise.	**08 Social mix and inclusion** Tenure and income mixed at building and street scale; no enclave or residual zone; places designed for encounter, not separation.
09 Public space as the spine A connected network of streets, squares and green rooms that carries daily life, hosts the community, and is safe, overlooked and maintained.	**10 Identity, heritage and continuity** Respond to landscape, local character and existing fabric; retain what carries meaning; let the neighbourhood belong to its place.	**11 Participation throughout** Residents and future occupants involved in vision, design, delivery and stewardship – not consulted once at the statutory minimum.	**12 Phasing, stewardship and adaptation** Delivered in stages with infrastructure ahead of or alongside dwellings; managed and monitored after completion; able to adapt.

FIGURE 18 | Twelve principles for sustainable neighborhood planning

People enjoy well-designed and maintained parks, squares and walkable streets as the prime common spaces of healthy cities. While policies are needed to ensure quality places for all people and their ecosystems, implementable spatial and community-based local planning is the cornerstone of any sustainable development at any time and in any place. Municipal and city-wide spatial plans remain essential, but most critical are plans and projects developed at neighbourhood and street level, complemented by bottom-up, pro-poor and generational placemaking, tactical urbanism and slum-upgrading.

Neighbourhoods are also the scale at which circular and regenerative cities become real, and where climate disruption and air pollution are fought or tolerated. Local governments bear the largest burden in facilitating local planning and housing, but it can only work with the involvement of all other place-based stakeholders – local civil society, academia, the business community, planning professionals and local media.

Neighbourhood planning and placemaking are also the most adequate scale at which to apply the IG-UTP's five spatial quality qualifiers: compact, inclusive, connected, resilient and vibrant neighbourhoods and cities.



FIGURE 19 | Madrid (Spain) is a metropolitan capital city with well-planned and lively neighborhoods

HOOK

2 Reinvent city-regional planning

A. THE MIDDLE TIER

NATIONAL	REGIONAL	LOCAL
Framework, law, fiscal rules, national infrastructure priorities	Functional territory: catchments, commuting, ecosystems, corridors	Statutory plans, permits, services, neighbourhood design

Regional planning is not a bigger local plan nor a smaller national one — it is the tier that matches the geography the other two cannot see.

B. KEY FEATURES — WHAT A REGIONAL PLAN DOES

01 A functional territory, not an administrative one
Delimited by how the place actually works — commuting basin, river catchment, coastal zone, ecosystem — then reconciled with the units that adopt it.

02 Region-wide survey and evidence base
Geddes' survey at regional scale: water, soil, climate, biodiversity, land use, labour market, flows — shared facts no single municipality can produce alone.

03 Structural and strategic, not site-specific
Sets settlement structure, growth direction, green and blue networks, corridors and centres above the plot; detail is left to the local tier.

04 Cross-sectoral integration
Land use, transport, water, energy, economy and housing resolved together — what sectoral national policy and fragmented local plans both fail to deliver.

05 Protection of the resource base
Safeguards aquifers, prime farmland, forest, floodplain and biodiversity from incremental loss — resources crossing many jurisdictions and belonging to none.

06 Coordination across many authorities
Aligns municipalities, provinces, agencies and utilities to one spatial framework, resolving conflicts upstream instead of project by project.

07 Common infrastructure and service catchments
Sites and protects major transport, water, waste, energy and health facilities whose catchments serve several local authorities at once.

08 Redistribution between core and periphery
The tier at which spatial justice can be addressed across a territory — connecting peripheral and shrinking areas to the growth of the core.

09 Long horizon, maintained across political cycles
Plans typically run 20–30 years with regular review, giving a continuity that electoral local and national cycles cannot.

10 Intergovernmental and negotiated
Assembled through negotiation between tiers, with a statutory duty for local plans to conform — the region sets the frame, the locality fills it in.

C. BENEFITS — WHAT IT DELIVERS

Spatial coherence
Settlements, networks and resources read as one territory rather than adjacent decisions.

Evidence at scale
Decisions founded on data that matches the geography of the problem being solved.

Less conflict, less delay
Conflicts resolved in the frame upstream instead of appeal by appeal at project stage.

Protected resources
Farmland, water and biodiversity defended against the cumulative effect of many local decisions.

Better infrastructure value
Major facilities sited and timed to the catchment that will use them, not to municipal borders.

Spatial justice
Growth and services shared between core and periphery within one policy frame.

Continuity of horizon
A 20–30 year frame that survives changes of local and national government.

Resilience and equity across generations
Long-lived resources and options kept open for those who will inherit the region.

FIGURE 20 | Key features and benefits of regional and metropolitan planning

Sir Patrick Geddes argued in *Cities in Evolution* (1915) that city and region are one organism, and that the region – a valley, a watershed, a coalfield, a coastline – is the scale at which settlement actually functions. Yet the regional tier, sitting between national and municipal government, remains the least developed of the planning scales, and the one whose horizon most closely matches the timescale of the problems it must solve.



FIGURE 21 | Patrick Geddes's Valley Section is a foundational 1909 longitudinal diagram that maps the natural and economic relationship between a geographic region and its human settlements, stretching from the mountains to the sea (Source: metagraphies.org/Sir-Patrick-Geddes)

City mayors know that planning cannot stop at municipal boundaries. Where mayors and city administrations engage in well-established city-regional institutions, they increase their chances of generational sustainable urban development – especially when those institutions are enshrined within national urban policies.

Local and national players will need to step up and scale investment in new or improved city-regional institutions and services, with particular attention to large metropolitan areas and to future megalopolitan collaboration beyond them. The regional scale is also gaining importance for rural and natural areas – coastal zones, river basins, eco-districts and agricultural specialisation areas.



FIGURE 22 | The city-region of Nijmegen (The Netherlands) provides regional recreation along the river Waal from and to the city center

HOOK

3 Develop and use national urban and territorial policy frameworks

01 Coherence across sectors

Aligns housing, transport, land use, energy and climate under one national frame – countering the fragmentation of 3+ ministries dealing with housing in over half of OECD countries.

02 Vertical alignment of government

Connects national goals to regional and municipal plans, clarifying who does what and reducing the mismatch between national ambition and local delivery capacity.

03 A delivery vehicle for the SDGs & NUA

The main national instrument for localising SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda; increasingly used for NUA reporting and National Urban Forum processes.

04 Climate action & resilience at scale

Embeds adaptation, disaster risk reduction and low-carbon development in the spatial pattern of urbanisation rather than project by project.

05 Housing supply and affordability

Provides the spatial planning framework that aligns national, regional and local housing goals – the framework many countries are found to lack.

06 Inclusion and equity

Targets vulnerable groups and narrows gender and generational gaps; channels participation via children's, youth, seniors' and migrants' councils and participatory budgeting.

07 Long-term certainty

Sets a horizon beyond the electoral cycle, giving investors, municipalities and communities a stable frame for decisions that outlast the government that made them.

08 Evidence, monitoring and learning

Creates a national baseline for urban data and evaluation; 78 countries now tracked by the OECD/UN-Habitat Global State of National Urban Policy.

FIGURE 23 | Eight benefits of establishing National Urban & Territorial Policy frameworks

Boosted by the NUA, National Urban Policies have gained traction. In their absence, cities and urban areas typically suffer from fragmented and place-blind national policies that were hardly integrated or coordinated. The NUP is designed to coordinate horizontally and integrate all national policies with a potential impact on urban areas and all human settlements. While a growing number of countries establish them, there is still a long way to go on quality.

The future-generation challenge is to integrate NUPs into **National Territorial Policies**, so that urban area policies are balanced with rural and natural area policies as part of wholesale sustainable territorial development, and carry a carbon-neutral, pro-poor, generational-justice and urban-health lens. National or federal planning still matters because the powers that determine whether a plan can bind future generations sit almost entirely at that tier, and no amount of local good practice can substitute for them. Generational equity in territorial planning is therefore not achievable through local practice alone – it requires the national framework to make the long term a legal obligation rather than a matter of local good judgement.



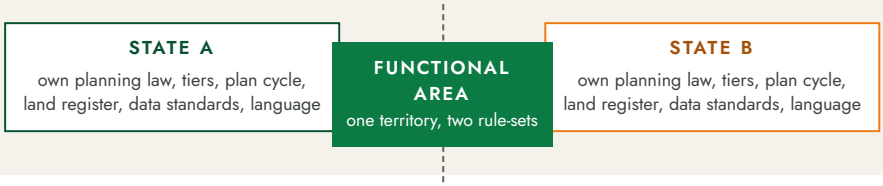
FIGURE 24 | The French highspeed railway network was conceptualized in a 1991 national territorial plan

HOOK

4 Think and plan beyond borders

A. THE DEFINING CONDITION

The functional territory – labour market, catchment, ecosystem, transport corridor – does not stop at the border.
The legal authority to plan it does.



B. EIGHT KEY FEATURES

01 A legal basis for co-operation

A treaty, convention or EU instrument (EGTC, Interreg, Madrid Outline Convention) letting authorities act jointly. Without it the plan is advisory only – the most common reason cross-border plans fail to bind.

02 A joint institution with a mandate

A standing cross-border body – Euroregion, commission, EGTC, river-basin authority – with named members, a secretariat, a budget and decision rules, rather than a rotating meeting of officials.

03 A functional, not administrative, perimeter

The plan area is drawn from commuting flows, catchments, ecosystems and corridors – then reconciled with the administrative units on each side that must adopt it.

04 Harmonised evidence and a shared map

One geodata base across the border: matched classifications, reconciled land-use categories, comparable indicators, shared projections. Different zoning vocabularies are the first practical obstacle.

05 A shared spatial vision and strategy

A common long-term image of the territory – settlement structure, green and blue network, corridors, centres – agreed before sectoral detail, so each side's own plans can be aligned to it.

06 Thematic priorities that cross the line

Mobility and interoperable public transport; labour-market and service catchments; water, flood risk and ecological networks; energy grids; heritage and landscape; civil protection and joint emergency response.

07 Bilingual, two-sided participation

Consultation run in every official language, on both sides, with equivalent legal standing for objectors – plus asymmetry checks so the larger or wealthier side does not set the agenda by default.

08 Implementation, funding and monitoring

Each state translates the joint plan into its own binding instruments; a shared project pipeline and funding route (Interreg, joint fund); common indicators and a review cycle synchronised across both plan systems.

C. THE TEST OF A REAL CROSS-BORDER PLAN

Not whether the two sides produced a shared document, but whether each side changed its own binding plan because of it – and whether a decision on one side can now be stopped by the other.

Cross-border planning is generational by construction: the instrument outlives the administrations that sign it.

FIGURE 25 | Eight key features of transnational and cross-border planning

Hooks 2 and 3 have already pointed at the challenge of administrative boundaries. National borders cause spatial disparities in contiguous urbanised areas and in eco-districts such as coastal zones and river basins, while municipal and regional boundaries are often harder still to overcome. Few spatial issues are neatly confined within an administrative planning boundary, so cross-border planning should be less of an afterthought and more an integrated component of any planning process from the outset – hence, think beyond borders.

This requires enhanced cross-border planning capacity and specialised institutions to carry it. Where borderline cities have invested in institutional cross-border collaboration, urban areas on both sides thrive better. Local collaboration is most effective, but regional and national governments are essential enablers, as are transnational institutions where they exist – the European Union being the most advanced. Transnational planning is not limited to urban areas; it matters at least as much in rural, natural and wildlife areas, as the transfrontier conservation areas of Southern Africa demonstrate (see Chapter 5).

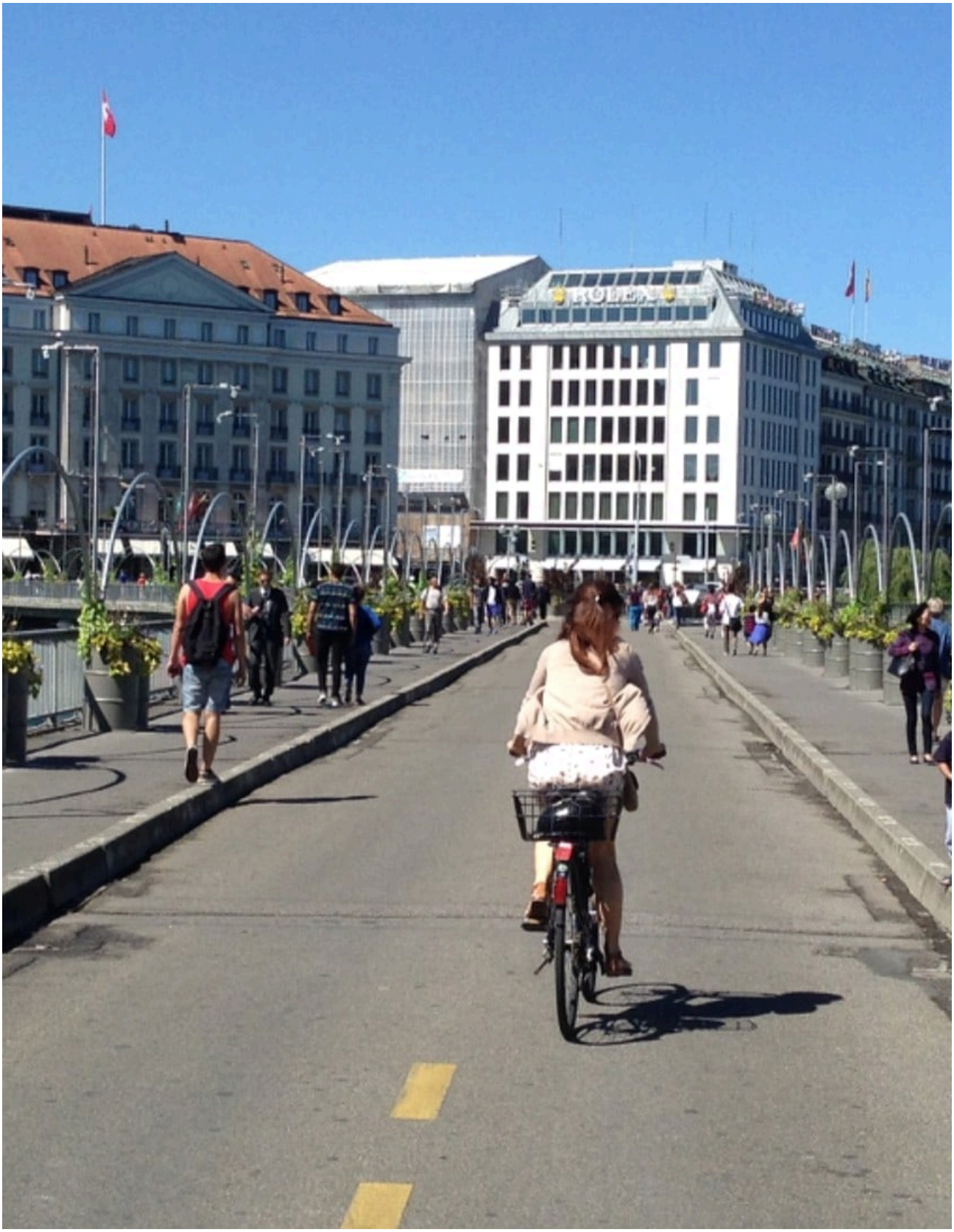


FIGURE 26 | From downtown Geneva in Switzerland to the French border it is less than half an hour cycling in this truly transnational metropolis

HOOK

5 Embrace multi-level place-based governance

A. WHAT IT IS

"Multi-level governance refers to the system that supports policy and decision-making among national, regional and local governments. When these levels work well together, policies are more likely to succeed, fostering development in all places."

– OECD

THREE DIMENSIONS OF DECENTRALISATION

Transfer of powers, responsibilities and resources from central to elected subnational authorities.

POLITICAL · ADMINISTRATIVE · FISCAL — powers, responsibilities and resources moved together

B. THE TIERS AND WHAT EACH BRINGS

NATIONAL
Legal and fiscal frame; standards and statistics; sets the sequencing of decentralisation

REGIONAL
Functional territory; city-region and metro coordination; bridges the national–local gap

LOCAL
Delivery, services and permits; local knowledge; the tier closest to residents

INTER-MUNICIPAL
Upscaling where scale demands it: cooperation, metropolitan authorities, joint services

Place-based policy works when each tier does what only it can – and when the scale of the decision matches the geography of the problem.

C. KEY FEATURES

01 Vertical coordination
Formal mechanisms aligning national, regional and local action: strategic frameworks for public investment, inter-ministerial committees, joint investment funds and harmonised programme rules.

02 Horizontal and cross-sectoral
Breaking silos within each tier – housing, transport, land, climate and health resolved together rather than by separate departments optimising separately.

03 Place-based policy design
Interventions tailored to each territory's assets, industries, labour mobility and connections – not uniform national templates applied everywhere.

04 Fiscal capacity matched to responsibility
Adequate funding and financing at subnational level, aligned to assigned functions; subnational governments deliver a majority of public investment in most OECD countries.

05 Administrative and strategic capacity
Strengthening administrative, fiscal and strategic capacities at subnational level, with new capacities for foresight and data-driven decision-making to support long-term outcomes.

06 Upscaling through cooperation
Inter-municipal cooperation, metropolitan governance and regionalisation – moving competences to the scale at which the problem actually sits.

07 Strategic planning and performance measurement
Regional policies planned, implemented and measured across levels, with evaluation mechanisms identified before delivery rather than after.

08 Cross-jurisdictional platforms and dialogue
Designed platforms and incentives for cooperation across borders between jurisdictions – including cross-border mechanisms where the territory demands them.

09 Accountability and place-based appraisal
Transparent roles, oversight and place-based business cases assessing a package of interrelated investments in an area rather than appraising each project alone.

D. WHEN IT WORKS – AND WHEN IT FAILS

It works when powers, responsibilities and resources move together, and when each tier has the capacity to use what it is given.
It fails when responsibilities are decentralised without the fiscal or administrative means to deliver them – the mismatch that turns a mandate into an unfunded obligation.

FIGURE 27 | Nine key features of place-positive multi-level governance

It is no longer either/or but and/and when it comes to the level of planning governance. The future-generation approach is multi-level governance: any given planning challenge or opportunity must be addressed collaboratively by all relevant levels within a country. Planning at street and neighbourhood level benefits from regional cooperation and national guidance; conversely, national infrastruc-

ture or corridor planning needs regional and local tiers to ensure sustainability beyond short-term sectoral benefit.

The valid concern about overly bureaucratic procedure – that it might jeopardise the competitiveness of the government in charge – is addressed by establishing simple and clear rules of engagement and decision-making. Experience points to the advantage of multi-level place-based governance in preventing lengthy legal challenges from actors who were otherwise not involved or consulted. While consultation in early stages is mandatory, true involvement evolves toward co-decision, and generally delivers a stronger basis for implementation.



FIGURE 28 | First-ever Kabul metropolitan urban forum (in December 2015), bringing together national, regional (provincial) and local governments, as well other stakeholders relevant for metropolitan planning and governance

HOOK

6 Multigenerational planning for shared futures

A. FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR ALL AGES

The shared floor: what a city must do before any age group is considered separately.

1 Design for the extremes, not the average
A street that works for a 3-year-old and an 85-year-old works for everyone in between.

2 Proximity and the short trip
Daily needs within walking distance — the young and old travel shortest and slowest.

3 Safe, continuous pedestrian networks
Level surfaces, crossing times set for slow walkers, shade, seating, lighting, no gaps.

4 Public space as shared ground
Space that mixes ages rather than zoning each into its own enclosure.

5 Voice at every age
Participation methods matched to capability — play, drawing, walking interviews, councils.

Children & young people
The 95 cm perspective — 0–17

Least able to negotiate traffic, heat and distance; will live longest with the plan.

- **Independent mobility** Routes to school a child can walk or cycle alone; filtered streets, school zones, low speeds.
- **Play beyond playgrounds** Play integrated into streets, verges and squares — not fenced into a single enclosure.
- **Eye-level design** Caregiver seating, shade, toilets, water, prams and buggies accommodated as standard.
- **Nature and cooling** Daily contact with green space; tree canopy on routes children actually use.
- **Co-design that fits** Drawing, modelling, mapping and play-based methods; school and youth councils in plan-making.

Working-age & carers
The connective tier — 18–64

Carries the daily logistics of both other groups — the trip chain, not the commute.

- **Plan the trip chain** School drop-off, work, shopping, care visit — one linked journey, not separate trips.
- **Housing across life stages** Stock and tenure that let households grow, shrink and stay in the same neighbourhood.
- **Care infrastructure** Childcare, health and eldercare sited within the walkable catchment, not at the edge.
- **Time as a planning unit** Opening hours, service timetables and transport frequency matched to caring schedules.
- **Participation that is possible** Evening, online and crèche-supported sessions so attendance is not a privilege.

Older people
Ageing in place — 65+

Most exposed to falls, heat and isolation; least able to relocate when a place fails.

- **Walkable and rest-able** Benches at regular intervals, even paving, dropped kerbs, generous crossing times.
- **Ageing in place** Adaptable and accessible housing, retrofit support, and downsizing options nearby.
- **Accessible mobility** Low-floor transit, legible wayfinding, door-to-door options where fixed routes fail.
- **Against isolation** Third places, community facilities and intergenerational programmes within walking range.
- **Safety and climate comfort** Lighting, shade and cooled public buildings — heat and falls are the two big urban risks.

B. THE INTERGENERATIONAL TEST

Age-responsive is not the same as intergenerational. Responsiveness asks whether each age group living today is served; the intergenerational question asks who will still be living with this decision in fifty years — and whether they had any say in it.

FIGURE 29 | Guidelines for planning & placemaking for all age-groups and future generations

Involving children and youth in complex planning processes beyond traditional tokenism is one of the greatest challenges in planning and human development. The trend toward planning child-friendly cities needs to evolve toward children-planned cities. Where children and youth have been involved in community-based vision workshops, they turn planning challenges into opportunities – very often more creatively and pragmatically than adults alone. In many Global South countries this is also a way to involve girls and young women as the future generation of planners in places traditionally planned and governed by men.

Involving children and youth also raises awareness of all age groups and their differing place-based needs, including elderly people and others less or

differently abled. Day-care centres combined with elderly housing are a typical outcome of more inclusive civic involvement. Cities planned and managed so that eight- and eighty-eight-year-olds can thrive are liveable for every age group – and a people-centred, human-rights-based approach is also the best pathway toward healthier cities, including pandemic resilience.



FIGURE 30 | Visioning workshop with youth representatives for a new Urban Plan for Hargeisa in Somaliland

HOOK

7 Carbon-neutral place-based planning

A. WHY IT CARRIES THE GENERATIONAL EQUITY AGENDA

Irreversible and cumulative
Built form locks in emissions and exposure for 30–100 years; builders gain the amenity, heirs absorb the cost.

Voice–consequence asymmetry
Those who live longest with the outcome have the least say in it – and decision horizons are shortening, not lengthening.

The one common metric
Carbon and pollution have agreed units and targets, so a generational obligation can be written as a number and audited.

B. KEY FEATURES OF CARBON-NEUTRAL URBAN GROWTH

01 Compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented
Density, mixed uses and walkable grain are the strongest mitigation levers – and the same decisions deliver access.

02 Decarbonised buildings and energy
Efficient envelope and retrofit first, then electrified heat and renewables; embodied carbon counted alongside operational.

03 Modal shift, not just cleaner vehicles
Walking, cycling and public transport made the obvious choice; parking and road capacity managed, not supplied to peak.

04 Place-positive mitigation
The low-carbon option designed as the better place: shade, quiet, safety and sociability built into the same move.

05 Adaptation on the same footprint
Green and blue infrastructure that cools, absorbs rainfall and stores carbon; flood-safe siting – no extra land take.

06 Circular land, materials and waste
Brownfield before greenfield; existing fabric retained and adapted; demolition material recovered; loops closed locally.

07 Measurement, targets and monitoring
A city-wide inventory, science-aligned interim targets and published progress; consumption emissions disclosed.

08 Just transition and affordability
Costs and benefits distributed deliberately: retrofit support, protection against green gentrification, no pricing the poorest out.

C. THREE POLLUTION FRONTS – WHERE BOTH EQUITY DIMENSIONS MEET

AIR	WATER	SOIL
PAID NOW Borne immediately by children, older people and those living along corridors and beside industry.	**PAID NOW** Contaminated supply and unsafe bathing water hit present households first, and the poorest hardest.	**PAID NOW** Contaminated sites concentrate harm in the neighbourhoods least able to resist or relocate.
EXPORTED FORWARD The health burden and the exposure recur in the next generation; the emissions are already banked.	**EXPORTED FORWARD** Aquifers and rivers recover slowly: a contaminated source removes options from every later generation.	**EXPORTED FORWARD** Effectively permanent – land locked out of food, housing and ecology, remediation charged to heirs.

D. THE TEST OF A PLACE-POSITIVE CARBON PLAN

Does it cut emissions without exporting the harm beyond the boundary or onto the present poor? Does it adapt the place for the climate that is coming, at the same footprint? And will the person who inherits this district be better off – in air, water, soil and options – than if nothing had been built?

FIGURE 31 | Eight key features of carbon-neutral planning and urban growth

Carbon-neutral city and regional planning matters to generational equity because it is the domain where the transfer from the future to the present is both largest and most measurable. Disrupted climate mitigation and adaptation designed as place-positive – compact but liveable, green infrastructure that cools and absorbs, transport that protects health while cutting emissions – deliver the future's interest and the present's simultaneously.

The fight against air, water and soil pollution is where the two equity dimensions meet: the harmful exposures are borne first by today's most vulnerable cohorts, while the contaminated aquifer and the sealed soil are permanent deductions from the options open to those who come next. A planning system that is serious about generational

equity is, in practice, a system that is serious about carbon – and about the pollution that makes the same generation and its successors pay twice.



FIGURE 32 | Where once were cars is now a recreational linear landmark with a dike to protect the city against flooding by the tidal river 'Scheldt' in Antwerp, Belgium

HOOK

8 Land-neutral planning

A. THE TASK – TWO FRONTS, NOT ONE

The greatest future-generation challenge is to reduce the anthropocentric impact on a distorted ecosystem. Carbon is only half of it.

Carbon emissions
The zero-carbon growth paradigm – now broadly accepted, if not yet delivered.

Loss of biodiversity
Land take and habitat fragmentation; the loss that hardening and greenfield lock in.

B. THE PARADIGM SHIFT

The zero-carbon growth paradigm must be matched with a zero-land growth paradigm.

(Bio-)technology will help, to a very large extent – but it will not remove the need to reduce our overall consumption of land.

C. KEY FEATURES OF LAND-NEUTRAL GROWTH

01 The green shift must not be land-hungry
Renewable energy should not be planned at the expense of unbuilt rural and natural areas; land take is part of the design brief.

02 Brownfield before greenfield
Prevent greenfield development by prioritising brownfield redevelopment – the first and cheapest form of land neutrality.

03 Softening and deconstructing
Where cities expand or new cities are built, governments compensate by softening and deconstructing brownfield sites.

04 Land banks for trade-offs
Land banks let take in one place be traded against release elsewhere, making land accounting a deliberate instrument.

05 Multi-scale land-use monitoring
Local, regional, national and even global monitoring of land use – the evidence base without which limits cannot be enforced.

06 Growth and degrowth mapped honestly
Zero or limited land growth where populations grow; active degrowth of the footprint where they decline. A spatial rule, not an average.

D. THE LAND-RECYCLING BALANCE



E. THE TEST

Has the total built footprint of the territory fallen, held, or risen – measured across the whole functional area, not just within one municipality? And can the next generation still walk out of the city into land that was never built on at all?

FIGURE 33 | Six key features of land-neutral planning and urban (de)growth

Referring to the need for transnational wildlife parks (Hook 4), arguably the biggest future-generation challenge is to reduce the anthropocentric impact on a distorted ecosystem, in carbon emissions and biodiversity loss alike. While biotechnology can help to a very large extent, it will not remove the need to reduce overall consumption of land. The zero-carbon growth paradigm must be matched with a zero-land growth paradigm.

In practical terms: the green shift toward renewable energy should not be planned and developed at the expense of unbuilt rural and natural areas. Where cities expand, or new cities are built, governments at every level must compensate for the hardening and construction of greenfield sites by softening and deconstructing brownfield sites – or prevent greenfield development altogether by prioritising brownfield redevelopment. This requires local, regional, national and even global monitoring of land use, and the establishment of land banks for trade-offs, with the aim of zero or limited land growth where populations grow and degrowth where they decline.



FIGURE 34 | Land-neutral brownfield redevelopment in the urban continuum from Gdansk to Gdynia, Poland

HOOK

9 Nature-based planning

A. WHAT NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS ARE

The green shift needs to be more than planting trees. It is about restoring ecosystems and biodiversity.

> *"actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits"*
>
> – IUCN

B. THE PRINCIPLES NbS EMBRACE

- Nature conservation norms and principles
- Determined by site-specific context
- Biological and cultural diversity maintained
- Trade-offs recognised and addressed
- Standalone or integrated with other solutions
- Fair and equitable societal benefits
- Applied at landscape scale
- Integral to the design of policies and measures

C. APPLYING NbS IN SPATIAL PLANNING AND PLACEMAKING

Plan with ecosystem boundaries
Catchments, corridors and habitat networks as the frame – not administrative lines.

Design green infrastructure as infrastructure
Cooling, flood storage, water cleansing and habitat at the same footprint as grey systems.

Sequence for restoration
Protect first, then restore, then compensate – never compensate before protecting.

Govern for the long term
Stewardship, monitoring and adaptation over decades, with communities in the decision.

D. THE GENERATIONAL CHALLENGE

Applying these principles in spatial planning and placemaking is a generational challenge that needs to be embraced now to address both the climate and the biodiversity crises. Restoration runs on ecological time, not electoral time: what is not protected this decade cannot be restored by the next.

FIGURE 35 | Restoring ecosystems and biodiversity as the substance of the green shift

The green shift needs to be more than planting trees; it is about restoring ecosystems and biodiversity. Nature-based Solutions are defined by the IUCN as "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits." They embrace nature conservation norms; can be implemented alone or integrated with technological and engineering solutions; are determined by site-specific natural and cultural contexts including traditional, local and scientific knowledge; produce societal benefits fairly and equitably, promoting transparency and broad participation; maintain biological and cultural diversity and the ability of ecosystems to evolve over time; are applied at landscape scale; recognise and address the trade-offs between immediate economic benefit and future options for the full range of ecosystem services; and form an integral part of policy design. Applying these principles in spatial planning and placemaking is a generational challenge that must be embraced now to address both the climate and biodiversity crises.

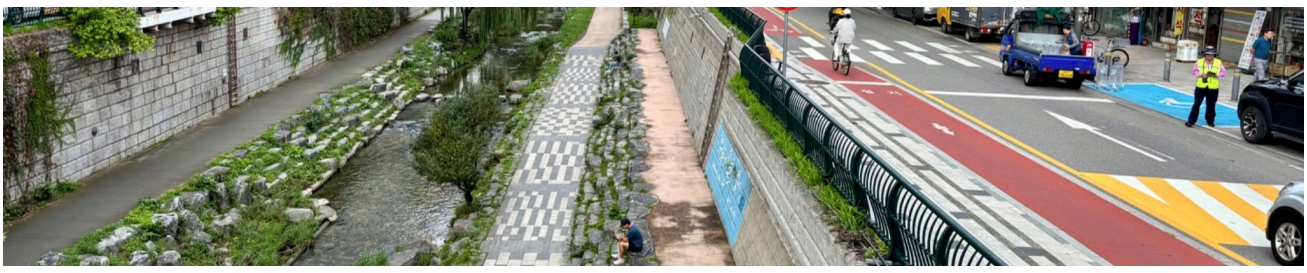


FIGURE 36 | Cheonggye Stream in Seoul, South Korea as best practice of re-naturalization of urban waterways (and removing the covering urban highway)

HOOK

10 Planning education and capacity development

A. THE DIAGNOSIS

Just as planning systems, planning education is often rooted in and flawed by outdated or (post)colonial governance regimes. Hence the shortage of properly trained spatial planners is much larger than the raw data can inform us.

- **Not simply more** — A larger pipeline alone does not close the gap
- **But differently trained** — Curricula inherited from other contexts mis-fit the places they serve
- **And home-grown** — Contextual application of global standards at regional and local level

B. A REVIEW AND REFORM OF PLANNING EDUCATION

- **01 Review the education system itself** — A review and reform of the current planning education system – not only of its intake, but of what it teaches and where that came from.
- **02 Specialised planning schools** — Dedicated schools with the depth to train professionals rather than generalists with a planning module attached.
- **03 Curricula across the whole cycle** — Planning content throughout the entire education cycle – not confined to a terminal professional degree.
- **04 Long-life learning** — Continuous professional development: planners re-tooled as the climate, data and governance context shifts beneath their training.
- **05 North–South solidarity and collaboration** — Partnership and exchange remain critical – but as support for local capability, not as a substitute for it.
- **06 Home-grown planning education** — The key to contextual, place-based application of global planning standards at regional and local levels.

C. WHERE THE CAPACITY DEFICIT IS FELT

- **LOCAL** — Most acute of all: municipal planning departments
- **REGIONAL** — Intermediate tier; variable between countries and regions
- **NATIONAL** — Usually best resourced, but often distant from delivery

More gravely in the Global South – albeit with disparities between large and small cities, where small authorities carry the thinnest teams.

D. THE CONSEQUENCE – LOST LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Capacity deficit (thin and overstretched planning departments) › **In-house planning eroded** (the authority cannot produce the plan itself) › **Outsourcing without return** (the plan is bought in; no capability built back) › **Loss of local ownership** (the place is shaped by those who do not answer for it)

E. THE TEST

After the next plan is produced – or outsourced – is the in-house capacity of the authority greater than it was? Capacity development is measured by what remains in the institution once the consultant has left.

FIGURE 37 | More planners, better trained planners and the capacity to plan in house

Just as planning systems, planning education is often rooted in and flawed by outdated or postcolonial governance regimes – so the shortage of properly trained spatial planners is much larger than the raw data can inform us. We need more trained planners, but also better and differently trained planners. This requires review and reform of planning education: specialised planning schools, curricula across the entire education cycle, and long-life learning. While North–South solidarity and collaboration remains critical, home-grown planning education is the key to contextual, place-based application of global standards at regional and local levels.

Capacity deficits are typically experienced by planning departments in national, regional and especially local government, and more gravely in the

Global South, with disparities between large and small cities. They prevent or erode the capacity to plan in house and increase the risk of outsourcing without a capacity return – resulting in a loss of local ownership.



FIGURE 38 | Capacity Development Training Session at World Urban Forum 13 in Baku, Azerbaijan, organised by ISOCARP, CAP and RTPI, under the auspices of the Habitat Professionals Forum (HPF)

What holds the ten hooks together. The hooks are not an arbitrary list, and they are not only an expression of the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda or the Guidelines – frameworks whose generational content this article has shown to be thin. They rest on an older and firmer foundation. Edith Brown Weiss set out in 1989 what she called the planetary trust between generations, held together by three duties of conservation. The first is **conservation of comparable options** – keeping the diversity of the resource base intact so that successors can satisfy their own values, whatever those values turn out to be. The second is **conservation of comparable quality** – ensuring the environment they inherit is, on balance, of comparable quality to the one we received. The third is **conservation of comparable access** – guaranteeing that each generation has equitable access both to what previous generations passed on and to what the present generation will transmit.

Read against the ten hooks, the correspondence is close enough to be structural rather than coincidental. '*Options*' is what the land-neutral hook protects, through brownfield-first sequencing and by adding to a shared estate rather than consuming it – and what the nature-based hook protects, through restoring the ability of ecosystems to evolve. '*Quality*' is the carbon-neutral hook's domain, where pollution borne now and exported forward is precisely a transfer of degraded quality between cohorts. '*Access*' is the neighbourhood hook's concern, distributing housing, public space, transport and services fairly among those living now – the intragenerational half of the same duty.

Two of the three duties remain far harder to operationalise in a plan than the third. *Access* is measurable and has an established indicator tradition. *Options* and *quality* are not: what a plan preserves in options, and what it does to environmental quality, are exactly the things no instrument reviewed in this article requires anyone to report. That is not a failing of the hooks; it is the measurement gap this article set out to name, and the cases that follow show how far practice has already travelled toward closing it – and how consistently it stops short of the baseline that would make the claim auditable.

From hooks to reform. The Theory of Change methodology can help translate the hooks into planning system reform. It is a methodology of planning, participation and evaluation that defines long-term goals and maps backward to identify the preconditions for reaching them, outlining causal linkages between shorter-term, intermediate and longer-term outcomes. Applied to planning system reform, it produces a step-wise pathway – see figure below.

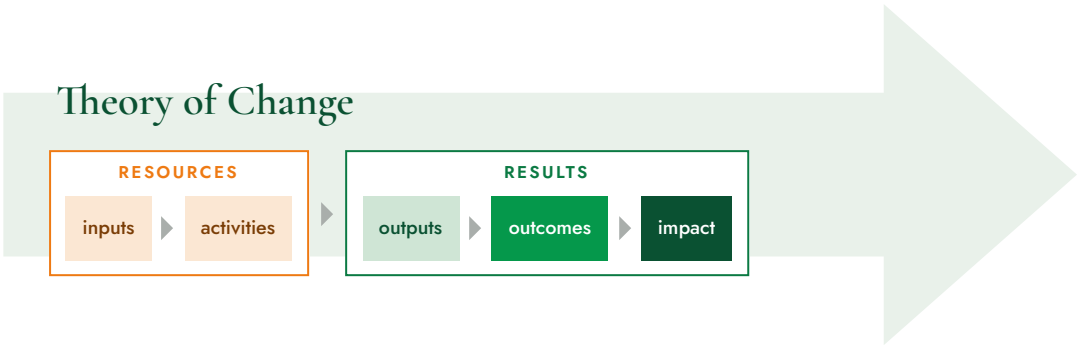


FIGURE 39 | Theory of Change scheme (D'hondt, 2017 - unpublished)

Applying the Theory of Change to establish a more performant planning system, is illustrated in figure below.

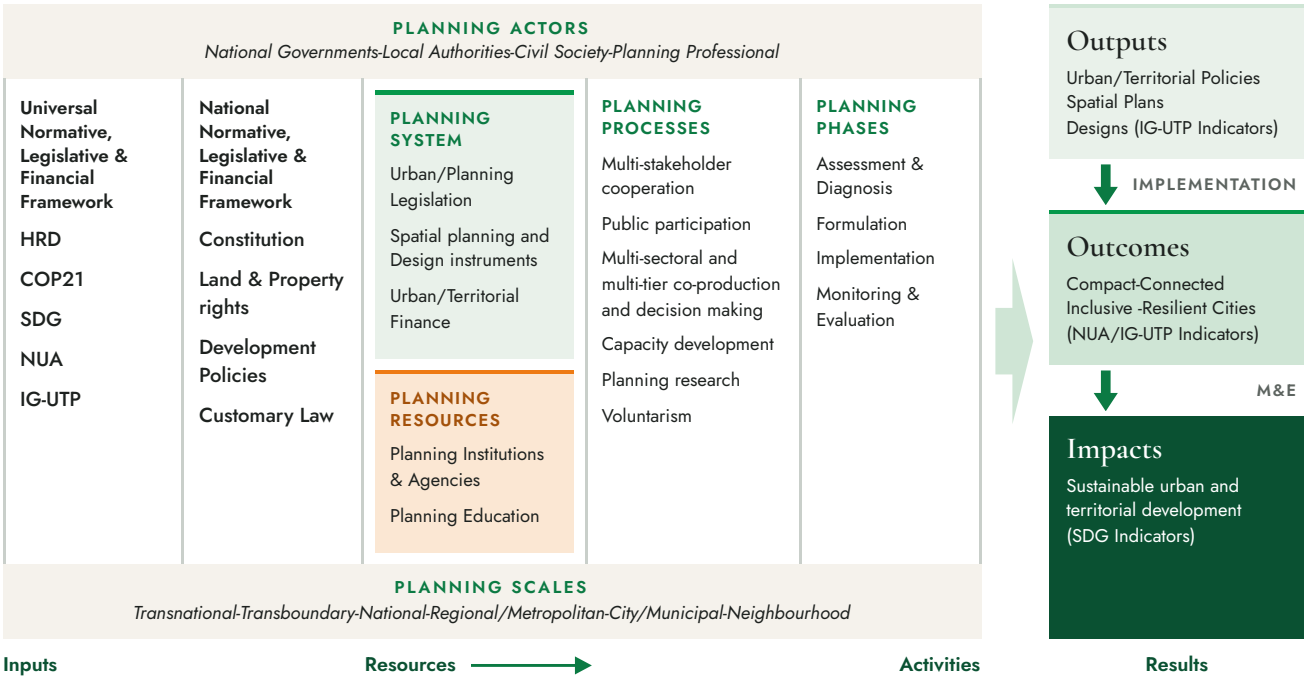


FIGURE 40 | Planning system reform scheme using Theory of Change theory (D'hondt, 2017 - unpublished)

Reformed and effective planning systems provide the aggregated package of planning instruments (policies, plans and designs), planning legislation, and planning finance including revenue-generating mechanisms. They also include planning institutions and agencies as the vehicle for implementation, planning education, and even planning culture – the degree to which planning and urban design are broadly accepted as a place-based governance tool. Planning systems refer both to future-oriented strategic spatial planning and to place-based development control including licensing, and sit within national and regional public governance schemes while also regulating private and civic involvement in development. Acknowledging that many if not most national planning systems are outdated – addressing neither climate mitigation nor biodiversity restoration, and rooted in colonial or postcolonial eras – current and future generations will need to review and reform them wholesale, on the basis of the incremental global policy framework, and with generational equity as the leading principle.

Assessing a planning system against generational fairness. A methodological framework to assess any specific spatial policy and planning system against generational fairness indicators would enable policymakers, civil society and citizens to bring the voiceless into the conversation. Such a tool should look for instances of unfairness in alternative future scenarios and provide an overall assessment of whether, on balance, a policy or planning system is fair or unfair. The School of International Futures created such a Framework for Intergenerational Fairness in 2020, applied to Portugal, whose central claim is that "policies are intergenerationally unfair if they move society further away from its vision for the future" (SOIF, 2020).

Wales adopted the *Well-being of Future Generations Act* in 2015 – the only framework with genuinely generational targets in law. The government calls its milestones "generational targets which describe the pace and scale of change needed", and they run to 2050, far beyond any electoral cycle: children's healthy behaviours to reach 94% by 2035 and over 99% by 2050; no working-age adult unqualified in any local authority by 2050. The 2025 assessment found a mixed picture, and the Commissioner stated publicly that "we're not making enough progress". That failure of delivery alongside a functioning measurement system is itself a useful finding.

The European Parliament has committed to adopt an *Intergenerational Fairness Strategy*, "to help ensure that today's decisions do not harm future generations", with Commissioner Glenn Micallef holding the portfolio and the strategy explicitly aligned with the UN Declaration on Future Generations. It is on the legislative train but not yet adopted, so no targets or indicators exist yet (EU, 2026).

None of these policies has a spatial dimension. Welsh milestones concern health, income, qualifications and emissions – not land take, housing stock durability or public space per capita. That is precisely the gap this article identifies: the instruments that measure intergenerational fairness are blind to the territory, and the systems that govern the territory are blind to generational equity.

Box 6 explores mechanisms and actions that can foster place-positive generational fairness

BOX 6

Mitigating place-based generational inequity

Intragenerational inequity, whose subjects are present and can speak for themselves, is addressed through **better representation** – participation, subsidiarity and enfranchisement. Intergenerational inequity, whose subjects are absent, can only be addressed by **proxy and restraint**: institutions that stand in for the generations yet unborn, and rules that keep the living from foreclosing their options. Collaborative long-term spatial visions and scenarios, alongside generational impact assessments, are examined as planning tools that bridge all generations, present and future.

Among the aforementioned global policy frameworks, only the NUA (Illustrated Handbook) provides some concrete corrective mechanism to foster place-specific generational fairness. Inter alia, NUA calls upon policymakers and service providers to:

- **Commit to child, youth and elderly-responsive urban planning.** The safety and needs of children and elderly should be incorporated in all aspects of urban planning and development. Children should be understood as stakeholders and involved in development processes and evaluations.
- **Commit to youth participation** and leveraging technology and innovation should be prioritized in urban youth focused programming.

To make that happen, NUA suggests to:

- **Develop place-specific indicators** – e.g. in the visioning stage of any given planning process – to measure the impact of aging on society and relative access to services.
- **Provide affordable, multigenerational housing for older persons**, e.g. offering shared housing to university students and older persons; both are able to forge multigenerational connections while also gaining access to housing.
- **Create (physical) information hubs** to connect employers and youth.

We believe there is more to it that must and can be done to correct generational inequity, which we have summarized in two graphics.

The first graphic sets out the two families of corrective measures. For the present, three levers of representation: participation that widens who is in the room, subsidiarity that decides at the scale voice can reach, and enfranchisement that corrects the electorate itself. For the future, proxy institutions that stand in for the unborn – from Finland's advisory committee and Hungary's ombudsperson to Wales's statutory commissioner, Japan's deliberative Future Design and the proposed UN Envoy – alongside five families of restraint, from irreversibility tests and statutory horizons to fiscal limits, resource protection and options-preserving scenarios. It closes on how each fails: proxy captured by present interests or weaponised against present need, and restraint that rigidifies beyond what successors can adapt to.

Correcting generational inequity

Representation for the present – proxy and restraint for the future

A. THE ASYMMETRY THAT DRIVES THE DESIGN

INTRAGENERATIONAL
Subjects are present and can speak
Corrected by REPRESENTATION

INTERGENERATIONAL
Subjects are absent and cannot speak
Corrected by PROXY AND RESTRAINT

B. REPRESENTATION – FOR THE PRESENT

who gets heard

1 Participation – widening who is in the room

Matched methods (walking interviews, school sessions, crèche-supported and evening meetings, async online); deliberation over consultation, with weight attached to the output; quotas where skew is entrenched – youth councils, tenants' panels, reserved planning-committee seats. Test: how many proposals survived into the plan?

2 Subsidiarity – deciding at the scale voice can reach

Decide at the smallest scale that still matches the geography of the problem. Catchments and corridors need a higher tier; a school street and a housing block do not. Over-subsidiarity fragments; over-centralisation silences.

3 Enfranchisement – correcting the electorate itself

Automatic and pre-registration of young voters and civic education; turnout-equalising mechanics (weekend and extended voting, vote-at-any-station); standing-eligibility reform where office is reserved for accumulated seniority; age-balanced planning commissions and development boards.

C. PROXY AND RESTRAINT – FOR THE FUTURE

standing in, and holding back

C1. PROXY – INSTITUTIONS FOR THE UNBORN

Advisory committee	Finnish Committee for the Future (1993)
Reports and shapes the agenda; no veto	
Ombudsperson	Hungarian Commissioner, Future Generations (2008)
Investigates, litigates, represents in proceedings	
Statutory commissioner	Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2016)
Reviews long-term impact; recommendations answered	
Deliberative proxy	Japan Future Design – Yahaba, Suita, Kyoto, Uji
Residents deliberate as an imaginary future generation	
Supranational post	UN Special Envoy, Future Generations (proposed 2024)
Catalyses implementation; reports on progress	

C2. RESTRAINT – RULES AGAINST FORECLOSURE

Irreversibility tests	Ask not "is this beneficial now?" but "can a future generation undo it?"
Long-horizon duties	Horizons written into law – Wales to 2050; Delta Programme to 2100.
Fiscal restraint	Debt brakes, pension rules and maintenance owed by the present.
Resource protection	Designations for farmland, aquifer and habitat; brownfield first.
Options-preserving	Multiple pathways with trigger points, not one committed end state.

D. HOW EACH CORRECTIVE FAILS

Proxy is captured by present interests – a narrowed mandate, recommendations filed, a deliberative exercise whose output is ignored. Or it is weaponised against present need – "future generations" invoked to refuse the housing and transit today's young require. Restraint can reduce adaptive capacity: rigid commitments may leave successors worse off than flexible ones – the case for options-preserving rules over fixed end states.

FIGURE 41 | Correcting generational inequity separates the two remedies the asymmetry demands – representation for the present, who can speak, and proxy and restraint for the future, who cannot

Bridging the generations

Two planning tools that hold present and future in the same decision

A. WHY BRIDGING TOOLS ARE NEEDED

Representation alone can still mortgage the future. Restraint alone can still be made by the few. Two separate processes — a community consultation and a future-generations review — produce incompatible outputs and teach each side to distrust the other. The bridging tools require the same decision to be tested on both counts at once.

B. COLLABORATIVE LONG-TERM VISIONS AND SCENARIOS

the shared object

1 Gives the intragenerational corrective something to be fair about

Participation without a shared object is a dispute. Participation over a 30–50 year spatial vision is a negotiation about a common asset.

2 Gives the proxy something concrete to represent

A deliberative proxy cannot represent "the future" in the abstract — only the future of this territory, in this scenario. Yahaba's imaginary future groups produced 2050 and 2060 town visions.

3 Converts restraint into a live choice

Scenario methods hold several futures open with trigger points, so the present neither consumes the future nor freezes it — the Delta Programme and Thames Estuary 2100 logic.

The design requirement that makes it work

Participants and proxies deliberate over the same object, at the same time — one process, two vantage points.

C. GENERATIONAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

the audit

01 A long enough horizon

Not five years — 30 to 50 at minimum, aligned with the asset life of what is being decided. Wales sets milestones to 2050; the Delta Programme looks to 2100.

02 A stock statement, not only a flow

The UNECE distinction: separate current well-being from the resources for future well-being. New Zealand's four capitals are the working model.

03 An irreversibility register

For each significant decision: is this reversible, and at what cost? Sealed land, contaminated soil and lost species enter as permanent debits.

04 A distributional statement by cohort

Not only aggregate effects, but who by age bears the cost and who receives the benefit — making the two dimensions comparable rather than traded off invisibly.

05 The safeguard clause

Long-term measures must not place disproportionate costs and burdens on the poorest — what keeps restraint from becoming austerity dressed as duty.

06 Published indicators and a review cycle

Without a target and a report, an assessment is a document. Wales' 21 milestone assessments turn appraisal into accountability.

FIGURE 42 | Bridging the generations presents the two instruments that hold present and future in a single decision — a collaborative long-term vision, and a generational impact assessment that audits it

The second graphic presents the two bridging tools. A collaborative long-term vision and scenario-planning gives the intragenerational corrective something concrete to be fair about, gives the proxy something specific to represent, and converts restraint from prohibition into a live choice – provided participants and proxies deliberate over the same object at the same time. A generational impact assessment supplies the audit: a horizon of 30 to 50 years, a statement of stocks rather than flows, an irreversibility register, a distributional accounting by cohort, a safeguard against burdening the poorest, and published indicators with a review cycle. The two families of corrective are set beside them, with the closing point that they are not alternatives and cannot be traded against each other.

In the next chapter, we subject the principles of generation-fair territorial planning to a stress-test, and ask whether there are planning practices that can inspire multiplication aiming at generational-just planning system reform.

CHAPTER 5

05 Inspiring *cases*

> *Through my experiences, I have come to see regenerative planning not only as improving existing urban areas, but also as creating conditions for communities to thrive over time, while making more sustainable use of land and resources.*
>
> EVELIN RAICO, CO-AUTHOR



Residents of Banjul walking into a side street of Independence Drive in the capital port-city of The Gambia

CHAPTER 5 · INSPIRING CASES

What the cases show. The global picture for intergenerational equity in territorial planning is not encouraging: many countries with long-established planning systems are encountering diminishing returns from instruments designed for another era, while others without well-established systems have the opportunity to leapfrog. The demographic asymmetry compounds it – most Global North countries are ageing rapidly, most Global South countries count more young citizens than elderly ones.

And yet there are thousands of inspiring planning practices in both the Global South and the North, not all of them framed in generational terms. The first generation of documented practices of integrated strategic spatial planning – besides ISOCARP's annual *Review of World Planning Practices*, annually launched at its World Planning Congresses since 2005 (and for more recent editions accessible through its online paper platform on isocarp.org – goes back to the 2010 'practices and perspectives' publication complementary to the 2009 Global Report on Human Settlements mentioned in Chapter 2 (UN-Habitat, 2009 and UN-Habitat, 2010). A second generation of cases was provided by UN-Habitat's *Towards a Compendium of Inspiring Practices* (2015), which provided the foundations for the IG-UTP; presenting 26 experiences in innovative urban and territorial planning as the groundwork for drafting the Guidelines. Later editions extended the database to urban health (2018), SDG implementation (2021) and urban–rural linkages (2023). These cases are not offered as best practice – that category barely exists in complex planning and implementation. Failures and mistakes can inspire as much as successes, often more. What the cases below demonstrate, read together, is a single finding: the corrective works where an institution exists to hold it. Almost every case in this chapter has the same feature – a body with authority over the whole territory, and a horizon longer than the mandate that created it. Where that body is absent, good practice remains a project; where it exists, practice becomes a system.

> *"Where that body is absent, good practice remains a project; where it exists, practice becomes a system.*

The listing of cases is non-exhaustive and structured along the ten spatial hooks presented in the previous chapter, adding the planning system hook. The case illustrations are unsourced thumbnails, reproduced at a scale that signals rather than documents: each indicates that a real plan, strategy or design exists as an output, rather than only as an intention. Many cases originate from the UN-Habitat compendia of Inspiring Practices, which informed the drafting of the IG-UTP and have since been extended – see the reference list. Where further cases are mentioned, their sources are given as in-text URLs rather than repeated in the reference list.

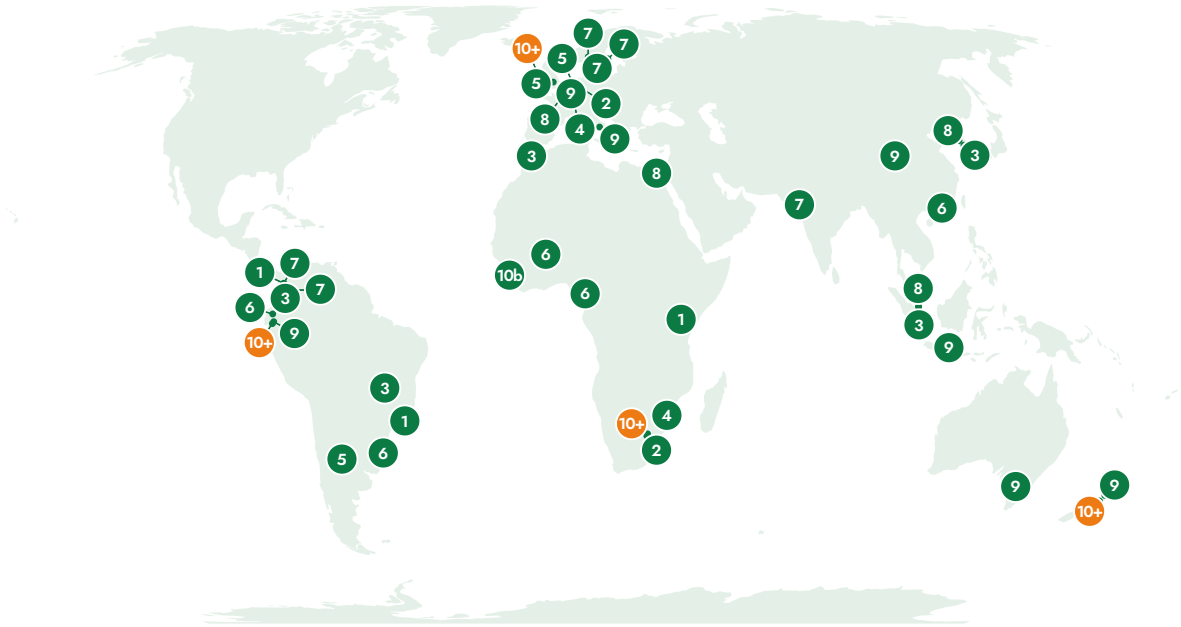


FIGURE 43 | The 41 main cases in this chapter that are tied to a place, numbered by spatial hook. The other 7 are networks and programmes that work across many countries.

Source: Cities Forum, based on the cases in this chapter. Base map: Natural Earth.

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1 Street & Neighborhood



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Medellín and Kibera share one structural feature: a single municipal body with authority over the whole neighbourhood or city. Favela-Bairro adds the counterpoint the other two lack – that a generation hands on the title, not the improvement. Where upgrading transfers tenure, the asset it leaves behind is inheritable; where it transfers services alone, the improvement is real but does not outlast the next rent rise.

Colombia, Medellin

FROM
2003

APPROACH
Social urbanism

The city's development model, combined with urban sprawl and population growth, increased fragmentation and excluded the poor at both metropolitan and city scale. From 2003, elected mayors brought a more holistic paradigm to territorial planning, defined as social urbanism: physical transformation of urban fringes and hillside informal neighbourhoods to make public places safe and accessible, connecting them to the city centre and reintegrating environmental factors. Social transformation followed – fostering community and individual participation in urban regulation, economic integration, and reducing fear and violence to encourage solidarity-based cohabitation. The Urban Development Enterprise used *Talleres Imaginales* – imaginary workshops – to build community ownership, with residents co-designing rather than receiving (UN-Habitat, 2015).

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY

Kenya, Nairobi, Kibera

RUN BY
Resident groups

LED BY
Women and youth

A network of resident-designed sites where community-workshops addressed flooding, safety, poverty and the lack of play space in one integrated design; sites are run by resident groups, with programmes led by women and youth generating income to maintain them. The urban plan for one site was deliberately staged "to allow staged investment" as funding arrives. Maintenance is funded by the site itself – which answers the handover problem that Medellín's library parks illustrate (kounkuey.org).

SELF-FUNDED MAINTENANCE

Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, Favela-Bairro

LAUNCHED
1995

PHASE TWO
2000

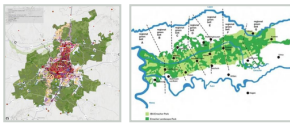
STUDIED
37 communities

Launched in 1995 and extended through a second phase from 2000, Favela-Bairro connected informal settlements to the city by delivering water, sewerage and infrastructure, engaging residents in design and implementation and coordinating multiple government agencies. A 2005 IDB study of 37 phase-one communities found significant increases in water and sewer access compared with unserved areas, with the strongest effect in the poorest favelas. But household-level research found no significant appreciation in dwelling values: without a land-titling component, upgrading improved living conditions without transferring an inheritable asset. The programme did, however, reduce inequality among slum dwellers and lessen economic and spatial segregation within treated neighbourhoods (Soares and Soares, 2005; Autesta and Soares, 2018).

SERVICES WITHOUT TITLE

Further cases. **Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales** – Neighbourhood Spatial Liveability Assessments for evidence-based urban health (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Belgium, Brussels** – the Walkability Score Tool (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Ecuador, Quito** – Healthy Neighbourhood: closing the gap in health inequalities (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Egypt, El Obour City** – Y'Ahl El Hay: architecture for coexistence (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Georgia, Tbilisi** – Hualing Tbilisi Sea Residence (UN-Habitat, 2021). **India, Surat** – urban health and community resilience in low-income neighbourhoods (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Nepal, Bagmati Province** – sustainable tourism and green growth for the heritage settlements of Kathmandu Valley (UN-Habitat, 2021). **South Africa, Western Cape** – neighbourhood upgrading in informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2018). **USA, Springfield, Massachusetts** – #GreenNFit neighbourhood rebuild (UN-Habitat, 2021).

2 City & Region



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Both cases answers to inherited burdens – one social, one industrial – and both demonstrate that the corrective is a territorial and long-horizon instrument rather than a project

South Africa, Gauteng City Region

MUNICIPALITIES **12**

APPROACH **Territorial**

For Gauteng, the enduring legacy of apartheid left high levels of social exclusion, poverty, inequality and spatial dislocation. Polluting industrial uses and derelict manufacturing areas had left city cores in decline and created further spatial discontinuity. Recognising that these pressures impeded sustainable development and economic competitiveness, the Provincial Government rallied the twelve municipalities within its boundaries to commit to establishing the Gauteng City-Region, moving from a sectoral approach to a territorial one. To begin, the provincial government established an Integrated Urban Planning Framework to guide inclusive, resilient and liveable settlements through spatial integration – which required consensus among multiple public and private stakeholders that a city-region would deliver more sustainable and competitive development than a sectoral approach. Working collaboratively between provincial and municipal governments, a unified agenda was established. Expected outcomes are long-term, but access to basic services has increased across the region even amid rapid population growth, and the move away from silos has produced horizontal and vertical coordination of public and private actors (UN-Habitat, 2015).

TERRITORIAL INSTRUMENT

Germany, Rhine-Ruhr Metropolitan Area

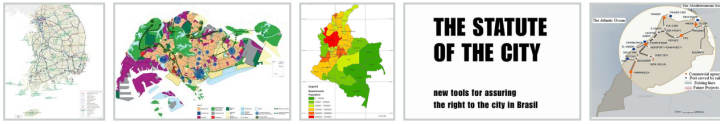
IBA LAUNCHED	PROGRAMME	PLANNING
1989	10 yrs	20+ yrs

The largest urban agglomeration in Germany and one of the largest in Europe, developed as a manufacturing and coal-mining centre through the first half of the twentieth century. De-industrialisation from the mid-1970s and the transformation of energy production relocated industrial activity, eliminated jobs and reduced the population. To stimulate ecological and urban revitalisation, the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia initiated the International Building Exhibition at Emscher Park in 1989 – a ten-year programme to give the region a greener image and breathe life into the old industrial plants. A vision was developed and a master plan drafted, targeting abandoned industrial sites and transforming them into facilities that improved the quality of surrounding urban areas. After more than twenty years of planning and implementation, the Emscher Landscape Park has gone from vision to reality, achieving lasting improvements in the living and working environment of the surrounding towns – and, by reusing and preserving the relics of the industrial era, the Ruhr has kept its identity (UN-Habitat, 2015).

LONG-HORIZON PROGRAMME

Further cases. Vietnam – City Development Strategy for Thanh Hoa City in the regional context (UN-Habitat, 2010); **Argentina, Santa Fe and Mozambique, Niassa/Lichinga** – harnessing the potential of intermediary cities through base plan methodology (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Austria, Vienna –** the Vienna Model and the New Danube (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Canada, Greater Toronto Area** – long-term food security through progressive planning (UN-Habitat, 2015). **China, Shenzhen** – from fishing village to economic powerhouse (UN-Habitat, 2015); **China, Shenzhen Yantian District** landscape improvement (UN-Habitat, 2021); **China, Yangtze River Delta** – the transformative power of integrated regional planning (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Colombia, Medellín** – air quality management plan for the Aburrá Valley metropolitan area (UN-Habitat, 2018). **France, Lyon** – metropolitan planning towards inclusion and quality of life (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Ghana, Greater Accra Region** – Ningo Prampram planned city extension (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Nigeria, Lagos** – developing a context-specific built environment check for metropolitan Lagos (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Tanzania, Dar es Salaam** – corridor development strategy (UN-Habitat, 2021).

3 National & Federal



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

The national cases show that the generational device at this scale is legal and fiscal rather than programmatic. Three powers recur: the statutory horizon, which Colombia sets at twelve years and Korea at twenty, so the plan outlasts its authors; the fiscal instrument, which Brazil's City Statute uses to return land value uplift to the public rather than to the present owner; and the reserved asset, which Singapore safeguards land against requirements not yet arisen. Where a framework has none of the three, it fails – Morocco's regional tier, the OECD found, "were not followed." And in every case, the instruments exist while the measurement does not: all four have solved the horizon problem, and none publishes an account of what the land-use decisions transmitted to the next generation.

South Korea

PLAN	HORIZON	GOALS
2020–2040	20 yrs	3

The Fifth Comprehensive National Territorial Plan (2020–2040) is the highest-level national spatial plan, established under the Constitution and the Framework Act on the National Land – a continuous chain of twenty-year commitments spanning more than half a century of Korean statehood. Its vision is framed as inheritance rather than growth: "The Land for All, Living Place being Together," with three goals – Balanced Land, Smart Land, Innovative Land – and six development strategies. Independent analysis records one of the 2040 plan's strategies as "establishing safe, inclusive, and resilient living environments across generations and social strata." Korea's sustainable development framework states its purpose as ensuring "competitiveness for the current generation while preserving the environment for future generations," and the 4th Basic Plan for Sustainable Development (2020) "aims to achieve sustainable development in harmony with future generations," with Korea-SDGs and associated indicators; its environment strategy is titled "Environment for Both Present and Future Generations." Korea therefore holds both a spatial instrument and an indicator framework with generational language – a combination almost no other country has (nationalatlas.ngii.go.kr).

STATUTORY HORIZON

Singapore

HORIZON	REVIEWED	LINEAGE
50 yrs	10 yrs	1971

A city-state with a fifty-year land-use plan reviewed every ten years, and a Long-Term Plan Review built on a year-long public engagement. The lineage runs back to the 1971 Concept Plan, whose "legacies continue to this day, more than 50 years after the plan was published," and the latest iteration is framed around "providing and sustaining a high-quality living environment for future generations of Singaporeans" (ura.gov.sg).

RESERVED ASSET

Colombia

HORIZON	EQUALS	SINCE
12 yrs	3 terms	1997

Law 388 of 1997 and the *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial* system. Colombia's territorial development law establishes the technical guidelines, authorities and instruments for land-use planning in municipalities and districts. Its central instrument, the *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial*, has a statutory horizon of three mayoral periods – twelve years – expressly designed as the medium- and long-term territorial planning instrument, sitting alongside the four-year Local Development Plan that sets policy guidelines and projects. The plan therefore outlasts the administrations that adopt it by design, not by convention – the clearest legal remedy anywhere for the horizon problem this article identifies (UN-Habitat, 2018; plataformaurbana.cepal.org).

STATUTORY HORIZON

Brazil

ADOPTED	TOOL	CITED BY
2001	Land value capture	OECD

the City Statute. A 2001 national law regulating urban-law instruments that did not previously exist in the legal system, including the mechanisms that let a municipality capture land value uplift for public benefit rather than private gain. Its instruments have travelled: the OECD's Morocco review cites "land value capture instruments like development rights fees in Brazil" as good practice for other countries to adopt (citiesalliance.org; oecd.org).

FISCAL INSTRUMENT

Morocco

PLANNING LAW	OECD REVIEW	STATUS
100 yrs	**2025**	Reform

the National Spatial Planning Scheme; a country with a century of planning law undertaking a documented reform, with an OECD National Urban Policy Review published in 2025 proposing "a roadmap for coherent, polycentric urban development that is a source of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability" (oecd.org).

REFORM IN PROGRESS

Further cases. Egypt – Strategic Vision for 50 cities (UN-habitat, 2010); **Sri Lanka** – Urbanisation Framework (UN-Habitat, 2010); **Japan** – National Spatial Strategy and the Grand Design towards 2050 (mlit.go.jp japanreview.ru) **Kenya** – National Spatial Plan 2015–2045 (lands.go.ke vision2030.go.ke.). **Ireland** – Project Ireland 2040 (npf.ie gov.ie).

4 Transnational & cross-border



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

The two cases are structurally opposite, and the contrast is the lesson. Great Limpopo is a *treaty* – binding, state-level, modest in geographic ambition (35,000 km² with a target of nearly 100,000), and explicit about community representation in its governing machinery. Greater Geneva is a *plan* – non-binding, adopted by a cross-border body of Swiss and French authorities, with a 2050 vision purpose-built to guide "future generations of agglomeration projects." One binds the parties and needs no horizon statement; the other states its horizon precisely because it cannot bind. Read together, they show that the transnational tier offers a choice rather than a formula: a binding instrument that constrains sovereignty, or a shared long-horizon vision that aligns it. Great Limpopo demonstrates what a treaty can hold – landscape, habitat and community rights across borders. Greater Geneva demonstrates what a plan can hold that a treaty cannot: an explicit statement that the present document is the inheritance on which later generations will build. Neither case yet measures the result, and neither has been read across to the other.

Southern Africa, Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park

TREATY	AREA TODAY	TARGET
2002	35,000 km²	~100,000 km²

Proclaimed by treaty in December 2002 at Xai-Xai, Mozambique, by the Heads of State of Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. It links Kruger National Park in South Africa, Limpopo National Park in Mozambique and Gonarezhou in Zimbabwe – about 35,000 km² today, with an intended eventual size of nearly 100,000 km². The planning horizon is explicitly intergenerational: the stated aim is to cooperatively establish and manage "on a sustainable basis, a viable Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park with full stakeholder participation, including local communities, fostering regional co-operation, biodiversity conservation, and cross-border socio-economic development." Community representation is written into the treaty machinery rather than the participation programme (sanparks.org).

TREATY

> *One binds the parties and needs no horizon statement; the other states its horizon precisely because it cannot bind.*

Switzerland and France, Greater Geneva

MUNICIPALITIES	INHABITANTS	VISION
212	~1 million	2050

A cross-border agglomeration covering the Canton of Geneva, the district of Nyon and 120 French border municipalities – 212 in total, roughly one million inhabitants. Its governing body, the Groupement local de coopération transfrontalière, was constituted by convention in 2011 as a structure of Swiss public law with legal personality and budgetary autonomy, governed by an assembly of twelve Swiss and twelve French members. In July 2024 the assembly adopted a *Vision territoriale transfrontalière* to the 2050 horizon, framed explicitly around carbon neutrality and resource preservation, and designed as the basis for "future generations of agglomeration projects" – with each member's statutory plan required to align to it (grand-geneve.org).

SHARED VISION

Further cases. **France and Germany, Strasbourg–Kehl** – a French-German cross-border urban project to deliver local development (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou and Cameroon, Douala** – the power of a collective vision (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa** – the Sengwe–Tshipise Wilderness Corridor, community collaboration on cross-border environmental protection (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Europe** – the Leipzig Charter, supra-national coordination for universal sustainability (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia –** Migraplan (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Albania–Kosovo–Montenegro** – the Prokletije/Bjeshkët e Nemuna cross-border national park, a shared mountain range managed as one ecological unit (UN-Habitat, 2023). **Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia** – the Fertő/Neusiedler See transboundary wetland, a UNESCO cultural landscape managed jointly by six municipalities on either side of the border (UN-Habitat, 2023). **Germany, Netherland and Denmark** – the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, running since 1978 (waddensea-worldheritage.org).

Moldova, Romania and Ukraine – the Lower Danube Euroregion, coordinating ecological management of a shared river basin (UN-Habitat, 2023).

5 Multi-scale urban & territorial governance



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that multi-scale governance can be built without new statutory powers – Place Alliance works through a network, Córdoba through a shared analytical tool – while the Delta Programme shows what a statutory arrangement adds: a commissioner with a mandate to hold the horizon, and sub-programmes that carry it into every region. The horizontal platforms are abundant and transferable; the vertical arrangements are rarer, and only the statutory ones survive a change of political will. Which is the same conclusion the national cases reached: the instruments that bind are legal and fiscal, and the rest depend on goodwill.

United Kingdom, England

FOUNDED	CONFERENCES	SUPPORTERS
2014	10	1,000+

Established in 2014, the Place Alliance is a network rather than a governing body: over a thousand supporters representing hundreds of organisations, ten conferences convening thousands of participants from government, NGOs, industry and community sectors, and a body of evidence reports, practical guides and campaigns distributed freely. Its work includes design training for public sector professionals and cross-disciplinary working groups that give specific areas of action a place to organise. The Alliance is a horizontal platform of an unusual kind – a professional and civic coalition operating at national scale but with no statutory role, and deliberately confined to England, where cuts to national policy and practice capacity were most severe. It demonstrates how networks can mobilise and share expertise in support of SDG's, and it has made the quality of public space the focus of that effort, positioning well-designed places as locations for civic engagement and inclusive interaction, as the NUA emphasises (UN-Habitat, 2021).

NETWORK

Argentina, Province of Córdoba

STAKEHOLDERS **200+**

GOALS **SDGs 1–5 and 10**

a co-produced SDG synergy matrix. Córdoba's provincial government, with over 200 stakeholders from the public, private, not-for-profit and academic sectors, built a matrix identifying and measuring the synergies and trade-offs among social and other SDGs. The province's political priority was continuity for its social inclusion and well-being agenda, so it prioritised the social Goals (1 to 5 and 10) and asked its stakeholders to identify the links between targets and rank the intensity of each link. The matrix now identifies the key sectors that can drive social inclusion, allowing them to be prioritised, synergies to be promoted and trade-offs managed (oecd.org).

SHARED ANALYTICAL TOOL

Netherlands, the Delta Programme

HORIZON **50–100** yrs

LED BY **Delta Commissioner**

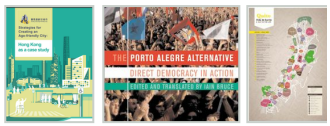
EXPORTED TO **3** deltas

A national framework with a binding long horizon. A national programme, led by an independent Delta Commissioner and involving the national government, provinces, municipal authorities, the regional water authorities and a range of stakeholder organisations, working to a single strategy for flood risk management, freshwater supply and spatial adaptation. Its design principle is explicitly intergenerational: measures are not fixed in detail for the next fifty to a hundred years, so that decisions taken now are linked to long-term agendas by adaptation pathways that keep options open for successors. Regional sub-programmes carry the strategy into specific areas, and the programme has been exported through the Bangladesh Delta Plan, the Mekong Delta Plan and the Manila Bay Master Plan. It is the fullest instance in this chapter of a vertical arrangement: several tiers bound to one long-term framework, with a commissioner whose role is to hold the horizon across changes of government (deltaprogramme.nl).

STATUTORY COMMISSIONER

Further cases. **Netherlands, Regio Southeast Friesland** – multi-level cooperation for village quality of life and resilience (UN-Habitat, 2023). **Austria –** the Austrian Spatial Development Concept, coordinating federal, provincial and municipal spatial policy on a partnership basis (oecd.org). **Nigeria** – mainstreaming climate resilience planning into spatial planning at all levels, beginning with hazard vulnerability risk analysis and mapping (oecd.org). **Costa Rica** – the National Urban Development Plan for the Greater Metropolitan Area, coordinating four sub-regions within one national framework (oecd.org).

6 Generational & inclusive planning



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that generational and inclusive planning at this scale works through process rather than provision: Hong Kong builds partnerships with older people, Porto Alegre hands residents a share of the investment decision, Ouagadougou and Douala convene a shared vision, and Quito targets the districts that were being left behind. None of them requires a new power. What each requires – and what the article's argument turns on – is a durable channel through which the cohort furthest from the decision can reach it: for Hong Kong, the Elderly Commission and its NGO partners; for Porto Alegre, the assembly and delegate structure; for the West African cities, the vision process itself. That is the representation corrective in Hook 6, operating at neighbourhood and municipal scale. And as with the multi-scale section, the channel is the mechanism that outlives the mandate – Porto Alegre's budgeting has survived changes of administration for over three decades, which is a statement about design rather than goodwill.

China, Hong Kong

APPROACH
Bottom-up

PARTNERS
NGOs and faith groups

age-friendly urban policy built from the community up. Hong Kong treats older persons' participation as a policy subject rather than a service category, and two bodies carry that work: the municipality's Elderly Commission, an advisory group pursuing security, health maintenance and enabling environments for older residents; and the Hong Kong Housing Society, an NGO that addresses physical barriers within the home – level changes, narrow doorways – that make ageing in place impractical. The approach is unusual less for its ambition than for its implementation: age-friendly neighbourhoods have been built in collaboration with NGOs and faith-based organisations, and the programmes are structured wholly bottom-up, which guarantees a degree of inherent support. Their success follows from approaching the problem at community level, building partnerships with older people and treating them as both decision-makers and participants rather than as beneficiaries (UN-Habitat, 2018; NUA Handbook, 2020).

DURABLE CHANNEL

Brazil, Porto Alegre

SINCE
1989

REPLICATED IN
Hundreds of cities

participatory budgeting as generational infrastructure. Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting, running since 1989, directs a share of municipal capital investment according to priorities set in open neighbourhood assemblies, with delegates elected from those assemblies to negotiate the city-wide allocation. Its significance for this chapter is structural rather than financial: it created a durable channel through which residents of peripheral and informal neighbourhoods influence where public money goes, and it has been replicated in hundreds of cities worldwide (UN-Habitat, 2015).

DURABLE CHANNEL

Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou and Cameroon, Douala

CITIES
2

METHOD
Shared vision

the power of a collective vision. Two West African cities developed shared long-term visions through participatory processes that brought municipalities, informal settlement residents, traditional authorities and the private sector into one framing exercise. The cases are notable because they were produced in contexts of rapid informal growth and thin planning capacity, where vision-making is usually displaced by project delivery (UN-Habitat, 2015).

DURABLE CHANNEL

Ecuador, Quito

FOCUS
Worst-outcome districts

healthy neighbourhood: closing the gap in health inequalities. Quito's programme targeted the neighbourhood determinants of health inequality – housing conditions, service access, public space, mobility – through integrated interventions in the districts with the worst outcomes(UN-Habitat, 2018).

DURABLE CHANNEL

Further cases. **Belgium, Ghent, Belgium** – A child-friendly city programme with children in design roles. **Colombia, Bogotá –** Urban95. **Brazil, Recife** – children's priority zones around community centres. **India, Pune –** infant, toddler and caregiver assessments built into neighbourhood planning. **Albania, Tirana –** schoolyard and public-space redesign led by children. **UK, Manchester** – the UK's first WHO age-friendly city, with older residents on planning boards. **Austria, Vienna** – age-friendly housing and public space. **Belgium, Brussels –** the Walkability Score and elder-focused public space audits. **Japan, Akita –** one of Japan's fastest-ageing prefectures, with a compact-city strategy around service hubs. **Taiwan, Taipei –** intergenerational co-housing and senior-civil-servant shared housing. **Spain, Barcelona –** *superilles* (superblocks) framed partly around children's and older people's mobility. **Lithuania, Vilnius –** courtyard and school-ground conversions for mixed-age use. **Canada, Montreal –** *Ruelles vertes* (green alleys) as intergenerational community space. **Austria, Salzburg –** intergenerational housing projects with shared facilities. **China, Shenzhen** – community centres combining childcare, elder care and civic functions.

7 Climate-positive planning



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that carbon-neutral planning at city scale advances through three different instruments, and only the first of them is a plan. Norway's route is statutory: climate became an object of planning by act of parliament, which obliged every municipality to assess its own risk. Medellín's route is metropolitan: clean air treated as a shared airshed requiring ten authorities to act as one. Copenhagen's and Stockholm's route is the published target with a reporting cycle – the plan that states what it will be held to. What none of these has yet demonstrated is a generational account of the carbon committed: each measures its own progress against its own baseline, but none reports what it has transmitted – how much carbon budget it has spent, and what remains for those who inherit the city. That is the same gap the national cases reached from a different direction, and it is where the article's recommendation on generational impact assessment begins.

Norway

WARMING	RAINFALL SINCE 1900	CITIES
+3.4 ℃	+20 %	13

Cities of the Future: climate adaptation as a statutory planning duty. Norway's economy has been dominated by oil and gas exports, placing it among the top twenty countries by CO2 emissions, and the climate is shifting under it: IPCC forecasts project a rise in annual mean temperature of 3.4°C this century, with precipitation already up 20% since 1900. Acknowledging the role cities play in mitigating climate risk, Norway adopted a multifaceted urban policy in which municipalities were identified as carrying significant responsibility – both for influencing the local urban environment and for shaping residents' attitudes to energy consumption. White Paper no. 33 of 2007 set out the need for greater adaptation, and in 2008 the government issued planning guidelines requiring municipalities to prepare climate and energy plans. This was then ratified in the Planning and Building Act, whose section 1 made addressing climate change one of the principal objects of planning. The legislation generated a series of local assessments identifying risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities for proactive adaptation – and from that base the Cities of the Future Programme invited thirteen of Norway's largest cities into a collaborative project to cut emissions and make cities more liveable (UN-Habitat, 2015).

STATUTORY DUTY

Colombia, Medellín

AUTHORITIES
10

SCALE
Valley airshed

Air quality management for the Aburrá Valley. The metropolitan authority of the Aburrá Valley, which contains Medellín and nine neighbouring municipalities, adopted an integrated air quality management plan for the whole valley. The case matters for this chapter because airsheds do not respect municipal boundaries: the plan required the ten authorities to act jointly on emission sources, monitoring and public information, making clean air an inherited condition of the valley rather than a by-product of any one city's policy (UN-Habitat, 2018).

SHARED AIRSHED

Denmark, Copenhagen

TARGET
Carbon neutral

REPORTING
Annual

the carbon-neutral capital plan. Copenhagen's climate plan commits the city to carbon neutrality and is structured around energy supply, mobility, buildings and city administration, with annual reporting against published targets. Its relevance here is the reporting cycle: the plan states what the city will be accountable for and by when (City of Copenhagen).

PUBLISHED TARGET

Sweden, Stockholm

TARGET
Fossil-free

TEST DISTRICT
Royal Seaport

the Fossil Fuel Free Stockholm programme and the Royal Seaport. The city's fossil-free programme sets out a pathway to phasing out fossil fuels, and the Stockholm Royal Seaport development applies the city's most demanding environmental profile – energy, transport, waste and green space – to a large new district, treating the development itself as the test of the standard (start. stockholm.org)

PUBLISHED TARGET

India, Ahmedabad

FIRST IN
South Asia

Heat Action Plan. The first city in South Asia to adopt a comprehensive heat action plan, combining early-warning systems, cooling centres, public awareness and adjustments to working hours, with particular attention to slum residents and outdoor workers. It is a reminder that adaptation for the present vulnerable is also adaptation for the future cohort (nrdc.org).

HEAT ACTION PLAN

Colombia, Bogotá

CICLOVÍA SINCE **1974**

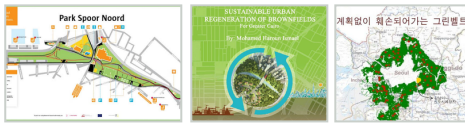
FREQUENCY **Weekly**

the Ciclovía and the city's air quality strategy. The weekly closure of main roads to motor traffic has run since 1974, and the city's air quality work links transport mode shift to respiratory health outcomes (pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) – the pollution-and-carbon double dividend the article's Hook 7 describes.

MODE SHIFT

Further cases. Kenya – Planning for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Embu (UN-Habitat, 2010); **Australia, Melbourne** – Cooling and Greening Melbourne, targeting urban heat through street tree canopy and cool materials (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Belgium, Brussels –** the Walkability Score Tool, linking mobility choice to emissions (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Canada, Vancouver –** the Greenest City Action Plan and its successor Climate Emergency Action Plan, with published annual progress (City of Vancouver). **China, Yangtze River Delta** – integrated regional planning addressing airshed and watershed management across provincial boundaries (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Ecuador, Quito** – Healthy Neighbourhood, integrating health, mobility and air quality at district scale (UN-Habitat, 2018). **India, Surat** – urban health and climate resilience in low-income neighbourhoods (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Netherlands, the Delta Programme** – spatial adaptation and flood risk management to a 2100 horizon (Delta Programme). **Singapore –** long-term land-use planning with land safeguarded for future infrastructure needs. **South Africa, Western Cape –** neighbourhood upgrading integrating climate resilience (UN-Habitat, 2018). **USA, Portland** – climate action planning with a published carbon inventory (City of Portland).

8 Land-saving planning



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that land-saving planning operates through four instruments, and that the brownfield is the only one that adds land to the usable stock without taking it from somewhere else. Antwerp and Cairo work on land already used – the brownfield, the port, the derelict site, the industrial corridor – and each demonstrates the same arithmetic: reuse consumes no greenfield, and where the reuse is designed as park or public space it also *raises* the quality of what the surrounding residents inherit. The reserved asset – Singapore's safeguarded sites, Korea's green belts – holds land unspent by decision rather than by reuse. Korea's green belts were relaxed after three decades, which suggests that a constraint not written into a durable instrument will eventually yield to land pressure. What none of these cases does is measure the net position. Each saves land somewhere, but none reports whether the territory as a whole has consumed more than it restored this decade. That is the land-neutral test – has the total built footprint fallen, held or risen – and it remains the gap the article identifies.

Belgium, Antwerp

RAILWAY SITE	NEW PARK	AGENCY
24 ha	18 ha	2001

Park Spoor-Noord: co-productive brownfield redevelopment. In 2000 the National Belgian Railway Company abandoned a 24-hectare railway site in the northern part of Antwerp. The brownfield was heavily polluted, and the railway infrastructure formed a barrier between three surrounding deteriorated residential areas whose residents had long demanded a park. The real stimulus for redevelopment came from the Federal Urban Policy and European funds, which provided substantial financial incentives for socially interesting urban projects. In 2001 a new municipal agency was established to develop a vision for the area attending to the interests and ambitions of all parties – the owner, citizens, the Federal Government, the EU and the city. A policy agreement then fixed the structure, the planning team, the project definition, the financial consequences and a strict schedule, forcing the city to take decisions within short periods. The result was an 18-hectare park and a 6-hectare commercial area on land that had been derelict for a quarter-century (UN-Habitat, 2021).

BROWNFIELD REUSE

> *“ a constraint not written into a durable instrument will eventually yield to land pressure.*

Egypt, Greater Cairo Region

LAND
Derelict

brownfield regeneration for inclusion and connectivity. A regeneration project on derelict land that used the intervention to connect previously severed parts of the urban fabric while delivering inclusion outcomes for surrounding communities (UN-Habitat, 2015).

BROWNFIELD REUSE

Singapore

INSTRUMENT
Land safeguarding

land safeguarding as institutionalised reserve. Singapore's long-term land-use planning sets aside sites for uses not yet required, holding land in trust against future need rather than releasing it to the highest present bid. It is the purest form of the reserved asset: the state declining to spend a resource now so that a later generation has the option (mof.gov.sg).

RESERVED ASSET

South Korea

GREEN BELTS
1971

RELAXED
Late 1990s

the green belt and its later relaxation. Korea's green belts, established from 1971, held a ring of undeveloped land around major cities for decades before being partially relaxed from the late 1990s. The case is instructive in both directions: a long-run constraint on extension, and a caution about how durable such constraints prove when land pressure rises (koreanlii.or.kr).

GREEN BELT

Further cases. **Belgium, Ghent** – the Port Area, converting a polluting port into a socio-economic hub (UN-Habitat, 2015). **China, Shenzhen** – the Yantian District landscape improvement on already-developed land (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Colombia, Medellín** – the Aburrá Valley air quality plan, which includes control of urban extension into the valley slopes (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Egypt, Greater Cairo Region** – brownfield regeneration for inclusion and connectivity (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Germany, Rhine-Ruhr** – Emscher restoration and industrial site reuse (UN-Habitat, 2015). **Ghana, Greater Accra** – Ningo Prampram planned city extension, framed around containing sprawl (UN-Habitat, 2021). **Netherlands** – Delta Programme spatial adaptation (Delta Programme). **Singapore** – land safeguarding in long-term land-use planning. **South Africa, Western Cape** – neighbourhood upgrading on existing settlement land (UN-Habitat, 2018). **Tanzania, Dar es Salaam** – corridor development strategy directing growth along existing axes (UN-Habitat, 2021).

9 Nature-based planning



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that nature-based planning advances on two fronts, and both are institutional rather than technical. The first is *de-cementification*: Campania, Melbourne, Surabaya and China's sponge cities all replace hard surfaces with vegetated systems, and each depends on a target – a canopy percentage, a permeability standard, a de-sealing programme – against which progress can be reported. The second, and the more consequential, is *giving nature a standing*: the Whanganui River's legal personhood and the Delta Programme's room-for-the-river logic treat the ecosystem as an entity with a claim rather than a resource to be stewarded at the community's discretion. What none of these cases yet does is measure the net ecological position. Each reports its own intervention, but none reports whether the territory's ecosystem function is higher or lower this decade than last. That is the same measurement gap the national, climate and land sections each reached from a different direction – and it is the gap the article's recommendation on generational impact assessment addresses.

Italy, Campania Region

APPROACH
De-cementification

SCALE
Region

Edible Green Infrastructure. Campania's integrative approach is an example of transformative urbanisation moving from de-cementification toward a greener, garden-oriented future: it introduces vegetation in place of non-green or less-green development, triggering the application of nature-based solutions. Across the region, development pressures and lack of financial support have left municipalities uncertain how to advance, often with minimal external provision – yet local efforts have delivered Edible Green Infrastructure projects and demonstrated their applicability throughout Campania. The approach is judged expandable to other Italian regions with few complications, and Edible Green Infrastructure methodologies developed through project experience are now the subject of enlargement research across Europe, Africa, Asia and North America (UN-Habitat, 2018).

DE-CEMENTIFICATION

Australia, Melbourne

INSTRUMENT
Canopy target

turning a great city green. Melbourne's green infrastructure programme treats the urban forest as public infrastructure rather than amenity, with street tree canopy targets, greening of major arterials and an explicit urban heat rationale. It is the clearest case of a municipality adopting a canopy target and holding itself to it (UN-Habitat, 2015).

DE-CEMENTIFICATION

Indonesia, Surabaya

DELIVERY
Community

championing green community development. Surabaya combined city-led greening with community-run planting and waste-to-compost programmes, achieving measurable reductions in temperature and improvements in public space in a rapidly growing city with limited municipal resources. Its significance lies in the community delivery model: residents maintain what the city plants (UN-Habitat, 2015).

DE-CEMENTIFICATION

New Zealand

PERSONHOOD
2017

GUARDIANS
2

Whanganui and the Whanganui River settlement. The Whanganui River was granted legal personhood in 2017 under the Te Awa Tupua settlement, with two guardians – one Crown-appointed and one Māori – holding rights on the river's behalf. It is the most radical institutional form of the nature-as-rights-holder principle, and it reframes the river as an inheriting entity rather than a resource to be allocated (legislation.govt.nz).

NATURE'S STANDING

Ecuador

CONSTITUTION
2008

The Rights of Nature in the 2008 Constitution. Ecuador's constitution recognises nature as a rights-holder, and spatial planning was mandated as the instrument for achieving Buen Vivir, with territorial planning recognising nature's rights and guaranteeing biodiversity conservation through the national protected-area system (garn.org).

NATURE'S STANDING

China

MANDATE
National

Sponge City programme. A national programme to retrofit urban areas with permeable surfaces, retention basins and green corridors so that cities absorb and reuse rainfall rather than channel it away. It is the largest-scale application anywhere of green infrastructure as an alternative to conventional drainage, and it is driven by a national mandate rather than local initiative (circle-economy.com).

DE-CEMENTIFICATION

Netherlands

INSTEAD OF
Raising dikes

Room for the River. Rather than raising dikes, the programme gave rivers more space to flood safely – lowering floodplains, relocating dikes and creating flood bypasses. It is the fullest demonstration of working with natural processes instead of against them, and it carries an explicit long-term horizon (rijkswaterstaat.nl).

ROOM FOR THE RIVER

Further cases. **Germany**, **Emscher** restoration alongside the Emscher Landscape Park (UN-Habitat, 2015). **India, Bangalore** – urban wastewater treated for peri-urban farming (UN-Habitat, 2023). **Singapore** – ABC Waters and the park connector network. **South Africa –** Working for Water and Working on Fire, ecological restoration delivered as public employment.

10a Planning education



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that planning education reform advances through regional networks, and that the decisive feature of the strongest of them is the direction of the impulse. AAPS, APSA and GPEAN were established by institutions in the South and linked globally afterwards; the European association joined an arrangement the South had called for. This matters because the argument of this chapter is that home-grown planning education is the precondition for applying universal standards in specific places – and the networks demonstrate that "home-grown" is not a euphemism for parochial. AAPS's most consequential act was to decline a UN agency's proposal to *harmonise* planning education across Kenya, on the grounds that harmonisation risked reimposing a single standard; the network's own term is curriculum review and revitalisation. That exchange is the home-grown principle argued in the room, by the people it concerns – and it is the same principle this Hook applies to planning systems.

Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS)

FOUNDED	SCHOOLS	INITIATIVE
1999	50+	2008

A voluntary, peer-to-peer network of African institutions that train planners, founded in 1999 to improve the quality and visibility of planning pedagogy in Africa, and now linking over fifty schools through the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN). The scholarly account is blunt about the colonial inheritance: "Planning laws, planning governance systems, and even planning curricula in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa were strongly shaped by the colonial history of the subcontinent, and much of this imprint remains today." In 2008, AAPS began a three-year initiative on revitalising planning education in Africa – two strands, curriculum reform with network building, and case-study research. Its stated objectives are "curriculum review and revision, to produce planning programmes that are contextually relevant and engaged with the needs of local communities," plus collaborative and comparative research on local urban dynamics (africanplanningschools.org.za).

REGIONAL NETWORK

Asian Planning Schools Association (APSA)

CONGRESSES
Biennial

NEXT
Hong Kong 2026

An association providing opportunities for scholars and planners to discuss and exchange on planning problems in Asian countries – with the stated aim of fostering "new generations of academics and professional" planners. Congresses run biennially, from Seoul 2019 to Bangkok 2024 to Hong Kong 2026 (apsaweb.org).

REGIONAL NETWORK

World Planning Schools Congresses

FIRST CONGRESS
Shanghai 2001

The first in Shanghai in 2001 brought APSA, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, AESOP and others together, and produced the Shanghai Statement, which called for a Global Planning Education Association Network. GPEAN is what carries the South-North solidarity our hook describes – and notably, the impulse came from the South (aesop-planning.eu, gpean-planning.org).

REGIONAL NETWORK

UN-Habitat's University-partnerships

PARTNERS
Universities

UN-Habitat works directly with universities on knowledge partnerships – "linking UN-Habitat and universities: harnessing the potential of knowledge partnerships" is a published strand of its capacity work. That is the mechanism by which global standards reach professional training, and vice versa (unhabitat.org).

KNOWLEDGE PARTNERSHIP

Further cases. Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN) – umbrella body linking ten regional planning school associations. American Planning Association and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning – practitioner and academic bodies with substantial online learning provision. **African Centre for Cities –** research and teaching partnerships across African universities. **UN-Habitat's online learning platform on the NUA** – open courses for city leaders and institutions.

10b Planning capacity development



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that planning capacity development works through three mechanisms, and that the ones which endure share a single property: the capability stays behind. This is the capacity-return test the hook sets: what remains in the institution once external support has left. The cases answer it positively; the outsourcing the hook describes answers it negatively. And the distinction is not about the tool but about who holds it – a plan written by the city's own team in nine months, as in Bo, is a different object from the same plan delivered by consultants.

Slum/Shack Dwellers International

COUNTRIES
33

SLUMS IN ITS DATA
7,000+

A transnational federation of slum dweller organisations from 33 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America, built on the "federation model of community organising." Solutions developed in one place are explored and adapted by community federations and city officials elsewhere. Its data covers more than 7,000 slums in 16-plus countries, and its own learning categories include "Exchanges and Learning," "Women in the Lead" and "Youth at the Centre." (unhabitat.org, sdinet.org).

FEDERATION

Our City Plans toolkit

MONITORS
SDG 11.3.2

An incremental, participatory planning toolbox developed by UN-Habitat, with a step-by-step methodology with actionable instructions, downloadable tools and diverse planning experiences, which UN-Habitat describes as democratising and articulating a comprehensive planning framework. Its community of practice is now global, with planning experiences from Neuquen in Argentina to Tam Thanh in Vietnam, and it includes a self-assessment tool measuring civic engagement – monitoring SDG indicator 11.3.2 on participatory planning structures (ourcityplans.org).

TOOLKIT

Rapid Planning Toolkit for urban expansion

STEPS	HORIZON	PILOT
4	10–20 yrs	Bo

A free, four-step participatory planning method developed by CAP and the Kings' Foundation, aimed at secondary cities and towns expected to grow rapidly over the next 10–20 years, aimed at producing "a simple but effective urban plan in collaboration with stakeholders and the community." The audience is explicit – mayors, local government representatives and built environment practitioners, not trained planners alone. And the framing is striking: "no experience needed." The Bo, Sierra Leone pilot is the documented case. Step 3's stated learning includes "the importance of capacity building to create community ownership," and the Bo record notes that "youth of Bo alongside a range of other community members were involved in the tree planting which gave a greater sense of community engagement and capacity building." (rapidplanningtoolkit.org).

TOOLKIT

ISOCARP's UPATs, YPPs and World Planning Congresses

CONGRESS SINCE	FREQUENCY
1965	Annual

An annual world congress (since 1965) hosted in a different city each year, with a thematic focus, plus regional and national events. The congress is where practitioners, academics, young planners and host-city officials meet in one place, with the host city itself used as the case study. At the annual congress, results of Urban Planning Advisory Teams (UPATs) and Young Professional Planners workshops (YPP) are presented, alongside the launch of the annual Review of World Planning Practices (isocarp.org).

CONGRESS

Further cases. **Commonwealth Association of Planners** – professional exchange across the Commonwealth, including peer support to planning departments in the Global South. **Cities Alliance** – capacity support to city governments and community organisations, including slum upgrading. **UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme –** training and guidance on public space delivery, with a youth co-design method. Local2030 coalitions – city-level capacity support for localising the SDGs. **UN-Habitat's online learning platform on the New Urban Agenda** – open courses for city leaders and institutions. Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments – peer exchange among city and regional governments. **UN-Habitat's Her City Toolkit –** guide to inclusive urban planning and placemaking *with* girls; a capacity-development instrument for professionals as much as for communities.

10+ Planning system reform



WHAT THE CASES SHOW

Read together, these cases show that planning system reform divides into two kinds, and the distinction matters more than the content of any single reform. South Africa and Ecuador reform *for redress*: both confront an inherited order – racial spatial injustice, a colonial epistemology – and make the correction of that inheritance the statutory purpose. SPLUMA writes redress into its first principle; Buen Vivir writes a non-Western cosmology into constitutional planning. Ireland and New Zealand reform *for delivery*: both confront a system that is slow, fragmented or unfit, and pursue speed, consolidation and integration. The second kind is far commoner and far easier to pass; the first kind is what this article's argument requires, because generational fairness is a redress claim at root. And New Zealand supplies the caution that runs through the whole chapter. A reform designed over three years and enacted in 2023 was dismantled within a year of a change of government. Its horizon was shorter than the plans it was meant to govern – the "buildings outlive the builders" argument, applied to the instrument itself. The lesson is not that the reform was wrong but that a system with no statutory entrenchment is a system the next administration can reverse, which is the same conclusion the national cases reached from a different direction.

South Africa

ACT	IN EFFECT	FIRST PRINCIPLE
16 of 2013	**2015**	Spatial justice

Dismantling the apartheid planning system. The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 provides a single overarching framework for spatial planning, policy and land use management for the whole country, replacing a fragmented and racially structured system. It repealed the colonial and apartheid instruments by name, and its purpose included "the correction of the historically distorted spatial patterns of settlement in the Republic and the optimum use of existing infrastructure in excess of current needs." Its first statutory principle is spatial justice, written as redress: past spatial and other development imbalances "must be redressed through improved access to and use of land," and land use schemes must incorporate provisions enabling redress for disadvantaged communities. By placing spatial justice, resilience, sustainability and good administration as co-equal principles in one act, SPLUMA makes the inherited spatial pattern and the climate-and-resource crisis addressable in the same statutory instrument. The Act came into effect on 1 July 2015; the ten-year assessment notes the process "was long overdue and fraught with numerous challenges" (gov.za; saflii.org).

REFORM FOR REDRESS

Ecuador

CONSTITUTION **2008**

PLAN OBJECTIVES **12**

Buen Vivir. The 2008 Constitution adopted Buen Vivir (Living Well) as a state objective and mandated spatial planning policy as the instrument for achieving it, following the twelve objectives of the Buen Vivir National Plan – with territorial planning recognising nature's rights and guaranteeing biodiversity conservation through the national protected-area system. The decolonising claim is explicit and structural: the concept's source is the indigenous cosmovision, and its adoption established "a plurinational direction for our cultural, political, economic and social co-existence." That is the clearest case of a planning framework derived from a non-Western epistemology rather than reforming a Western one. The critical literature on its materialisation records a gap between the constitutional rhetoric and urban outcomes (researchgate.net; tni.org).

REFORM FOR REDRESS

Ireland

ACT **2024**

SHIFT **Plan-led**

Planning and Development Act 2024. Described as an overhaul of Ireland's planning system, it consolidates existing legislation into a single framework – reported as the third-largest piece of legislation in the state's history – and shifts the system from decision-led to plan-led, with all tiers from regional to local aligning to the National Planning Framework. The Act requires the Framework to integrate the national climate objective and the National Biodiversity Action Plan into plan-led development, and it introduces statutory timelines for decision-making alongside reform of judicial review (lexology.com; gov.ie).

REFORM FOR DELIVERY

New Zealand

NBA ENACTED **2023**

REPEAL CONFIRMED **2024**

REGIONAL STRATEGIES **15**

the Resource Management Act replacement (RMA), and its repeal. In February 2021 the government announced it would replace the RMA 1991 with three new laws, including the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) – enacted August 2023, with a National Planning Framework to guide fifteen regional spatial strategies. Then it was repealed. Cabinet confirmed on 6 March 2024 a phased approach: phase one, repeal the NBA and the Spatial Planning Act, now complete; phase two, a fast-track consenting regime, targeted RMA amendments, and implementation of a Going for Housing Growth work package. The ministerial foreword states the RMA "has not delivered," having "become increasingly complex, costly, and difficult to navigate," with consequences for "the timely delivery of housing, infrastructure, and other investments needed to support New Zealand's future." The new system is being built around system-wide natural hazard directives, directing growth away from hazard areas and identifying existing development where adaptation planning should be prioritised (environment.govt.nz).

REFORM FOR DELIVERY

Further cases. **Ireland—United Kingdom** – cross-border spatial planning work of the North-West Region, aligning the two planning systems across the Irish border (UN-Habitat, 2023). **China, Wuhan** – metropolitan planning system assessment (UN DESA, 2020). **Morocco** – the National Spatial Planning Scheme (SNAT), a century of planning law now under documented reform (OECD, 2025). **Colombia –** Law 388 of 1997, the statutory basis for the POT system and its twelve-year horizon. **South Korea –** the Framework Act on the National Land, giving the territorial plan constitutional standing.

Overall, the cases in this chapter serve a double purpose. They are a source of inspiration for others – evidence that generational fairness in territorial planning is not a theoretical aspiration but something municipalities, regions and states have already begun to build. And they are a mirror for the normative frameworks: read against the SDGs, the IG-UTP and the NUA, they show where those instruments are silently operating, where they are being exceeded by practice, and where practice has arrived at an answer the frameworks never supplied. That is a two-way test, and it is more demanding than either citation or catalogue.

Four findings emerge from reading the cases as a set, each of which the frameworks would have difficulty producing on their own.

The corrective works where an institution exists to hold it. Almost every case in this chapter shares a structural feature: a body whose remit matches the geography of the problem and whose existence outlasts the mandate that created it. The Mediterranean Edible Green Infrastructure, Kibera's design initiative and residents' groups, Greater Geneva's cross-border grouping, the Ruhr's state programme, the Delta Commissioner, a treaty secretariat – each is a mechanism, not a project. Where that body is absent, good practice remains an exception; where it exists, practice becomes a system. This is the finding that most directly answers the frameworks' silence: they name future generations as beneficiaries but supply no instrument to represent them, and the cases show what such an instrument looks like in practice.

The instruments that bind are legal and fiscal. The national and city-region cases converge on the same point from different directions. Colombia sets the plan horizon at twelve years by statute. Korea gives the territorial plan constitutional standing. Brazil's City Statute returns land value uplift to the public. Singapore safeguards land against requirements not yet arisen. None of these depends on the goodwill of a particular administration, which is precisely why they survive. And New Zealand supplies the counter-example: a reform designed over three years and enacted in 2023 was repealed within a year of a change of government, because nothing entrenched it. The horizon of a reform must be longer than the horizon of the politics that produced it – a condition the frameworks, all non-binding, cannot themselves create.

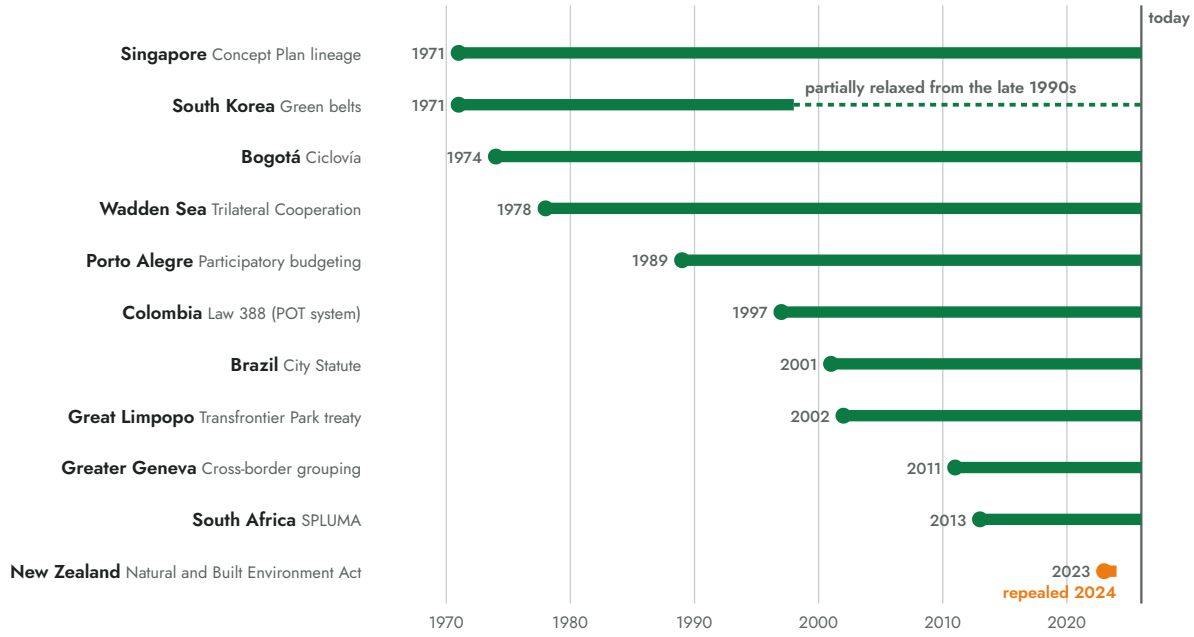


FIGURE 44 | Start year of selected instruments in this chapter and how long they have held. The one reform with no statutory entrenchment (amber) was repealed within a year.

Source: Cities Forum, based on the cases in this chapter (sources as cited in the text).

Capacity stays behind only where the local party doesn't hold it. The capacity development cases divide cleanly along this line. Horizontal exchange between federations, community-led enumeration, a city council team completing its own plan in nine months, an advisory model that transfers judgement to colleagues rather than contracts to consultants – all leave capability where it is needed. Outsourcing, however well executed, does not, and it produces the loss of local ownership the Hook describes. The distinction is not about the tool but about who holds it, and it is the same distinction that separates the enduring cases in this chapter from the rest.

The measurement gap is common to every case. This is the chapter's most consequential negative finding. Countries and cities have solved the horizon problem – Colombia's twelve years, Korea's twenty, Singapore's fifty, Greater Geneva's 2050 vision, the Delta Programme's 2100 framework – and none of them publishes an account of what its land-use decisions transmitted to the next generation. Bhutan embeds a national measure of progress in its planning cycle but not a territorial one. Wales sets generational milestones to 2050 but not for land, housing stock or public space per capita. The instruments to protect the future exist; the instruments to verify what we have left it do not. That is the gap the recommendations in the final chapter address, and it is where practice and the normative framework are most conspicuously out of step.

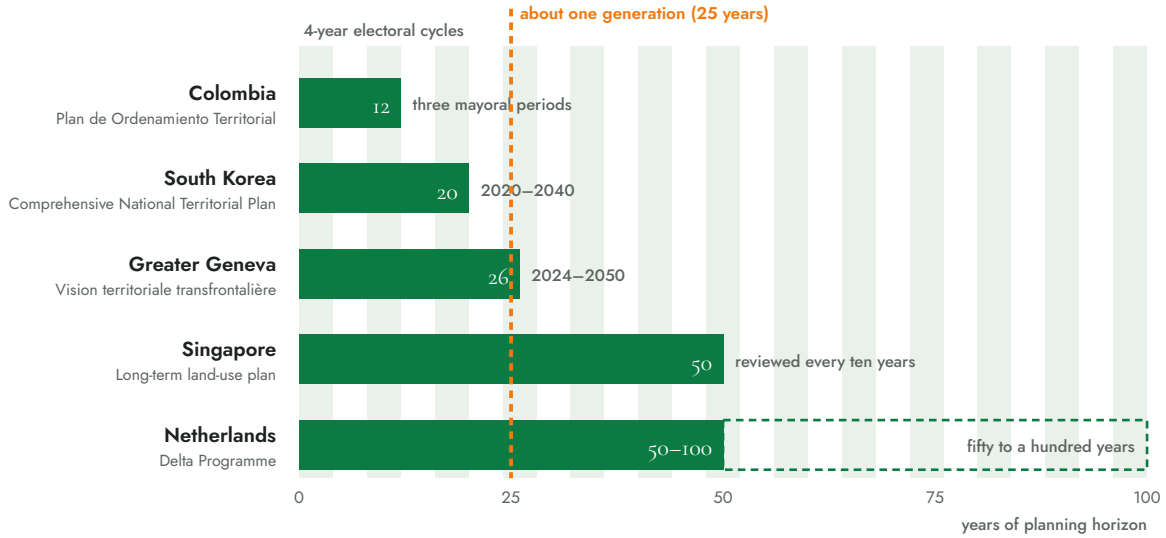


FIGURE 45 | Planning horizons set by cases in this chapter, against a four-year electoral cycle and one generation (about 25 years). None of them yet reports what its land-use decisions transmitted to the next generation.

Source: Cities Forum, based on the cases in this chapter (sources as cited in the text).

We therefore call for a single digital library of planning practices, indexed to spatial hooks set out in this article and to comparable hooks used by others. Such a library would do more than catalogue: it would make the two-way test routine. A practice entered against Hook 3 would be searchable by what it demonstrates, by the institution that carried it, by the horizon it set and by what it measured – so that a municipality seeking a precedent for a statutory plan horizon would find Colombia, and a region seeking a cross-border device would find the Geneva grouping or the Limpopo treaty. It would let the failures in as well as the successes, since a repealed reform teaches as much as an adopted one. And it would make the measurement gap visible as a gap: if a practice is entered without a reported baseline, the absence would be recorded rather than concealed. Building such a library is a modest undertaking compared with the reforms it would document – and it is the natural next contribution the profession can make to the frameworks it is asked to deliver.

CHAPTER 6

06 Recommendations

The greatest reward of my planning career has not been a completed plan. It has been watching community members become barefoot planners after an intensive week of collaborative visioning - able to read their own territory, articulate a shared future and claim a lasting role in shaping it. Like the dancers of all ages in the Greek square, they join a circle larger than themselves: receiving a place from those who came before and taking responsibility for what they will pass on.

FRANK D'HONDT, LEAD-AUTHOR



Yanbu Night Market (Souq Al Layl), a 500-year-old marketplace located in the Yanbu Historic Area (Al-Balad) near the Red Sea port

Generational fairness is not a new ambition for the practitioners of territorial planning. It is the trait that determines whether planning's promises survive the people who make them. This article set out to show where that trait is named, where it is missing, and what would have to change for it to become operative.

SIX FINDINGS EMERGE FROM OUR RESEARCH

01 **No single instrument holds the three necessary elements together.** The 2009 Global Report on Human Settlements supplies the system's diagnosis without the generational frame. The 2015 IG-UTP carries both the systems framing and a single generational clause – "current and future societies". The 2016 NUA states the generational vision and the delivery mandate but drops the systems language. The 2018 IG-UTP Handbook is dense with planning-system reform and thin on generational equity. The 2024 Declaration on Future Generations names intergenerational equity, justice and solidarity – and never mentions territory. The 2024 Global Digital Compact, whose technical settlements will constrain the next half-century, contains no intergenerational provision at all. The pattern is consistent and it is not accidental: the frameworks that govern the longest-lived decisions are the ones that omit the generational test, while the framework that carries the test governs nothing spatial.

02 **The corrective mechanisms for the two forms of inequity are unequal in maturity.** For the present generation – present, and able to speak – the corrective is **representation**, and it has six decades of theory and practice behind it: participation, subsidiarity, enfranchisement. Arnstein's ladder – see *Local Planners and Global Goals* – remains the sharpest instrument for judging it, precisely because it measures authority rather than process quality. For future generations – absent, and unable to speak – the corrective can only be **proxy and restraint**: institutions that stand in for the unborn, and rules that prevent the living from foreclosing their options. Here the record is thinner. Five proxy models are documented – Finland's advisory committee, Hungary's ombudsperson, Wales's statutory commissioner, Japan's deliberative Future Design, and the proposed UN Special Envoy – and almost none has been evaluated for effect. Only the NUA's Illustrated Handbook offers concrete place-specific corrective mechanisms. This article proposes the rest; it cannot claim they are proven.

03 **The only demonstrable legal remedy for the horizon problem sits in the Global South** Colombia's Law 388 of 1997 sets the Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial at three mayoral terms – twelve years – expressly as the medium- and long-term territorial instrument, alongside the four-year Local Development Plan. The plan therefore outlasts the administrations that adopt it by design, not by convention. No European reform reviewed in this article – Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, England – reaches that horizon. The lesson for the Global North is uncomfortable and worth stating plainly: the mechanism most needed to make generational fairness operative is one that has been in force for nearly thirty years in a country the North does not usually look to for planning legislation.

04 **Statutory reform is where generational fairness either becomes enforceable or remains ceremonial.** A planner can cite generational equity in a report; she cannot refuse a permission on a ground the enabling act does not recognize. Proportionality, participation duties, climate duties, fiscal powers and long-term planning horizons are all stat-

utory. Without them, the frameworks presuppose capacities that no plan-making process can conjure.

05 **Capacity without a capacity return reproduces the dependency it claims to relieve.** The outsourcing of plan-making without transfer of capability leaves the institution no more able to plan in house than before, and the locality no more in ownership of its own future. The corrective measure is not more consultants and certainly not (more) A.I. but the capacity-return test: what remains in the institution once the external support has left. This is why the Rapid Planning Toolkit's four-step method, run by a city's own team in Bo, Sierra Leone, matters more than its modest scale suggests – and why AAPS's insistence on "curriculum review and revitalisation" rather than "harmonisation" is not semantic. Home-grown planning education is the precondition for applying universal standards in specific places.

06 **The two dimensions cannot be traded against each other.** Pretending intra- and intergenerational fairness automatically converges in good theory and practices is probably the article's most attackable flank. Restraint can rigidify beyond what successors can adapt to. Heritage protection can block the housing today's young require. "For future generations" is routinely invoked against densification. The 2024 Declaration supplies the only safeguard on offer – long-term measures must not place disproportionate costs and burdens on the poorest – and it should be treated as a standing condition on every recommendation that follows, not an optional courtesy.

PAIRING WITH THE REGENERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

These six findings converge on the successor framework for the MDGs and SDGs. In *Local Planners and Global Goals*, we argued that the frameworks and diagnosis are sound, but that the agenda has been formally accepted without being institutionally absorbed: the profession's real division is over the size of the implementation gap, not the worth of the frameworks. We proposed a roadmap with three horizons – by 2030, the horizon of the SDG Agenda: to salvage and measure SDG 11 among all others; by 2036 - the NUA horizon: to rebuild the machinery through statutory reform; beyond 2036: to regenerate, with the successor framework pitched as **'Regenerative Development Goals'** (RDG's), anchored in a binding land-use convention and threaded by the IG-UTP, the instrument that never expires.

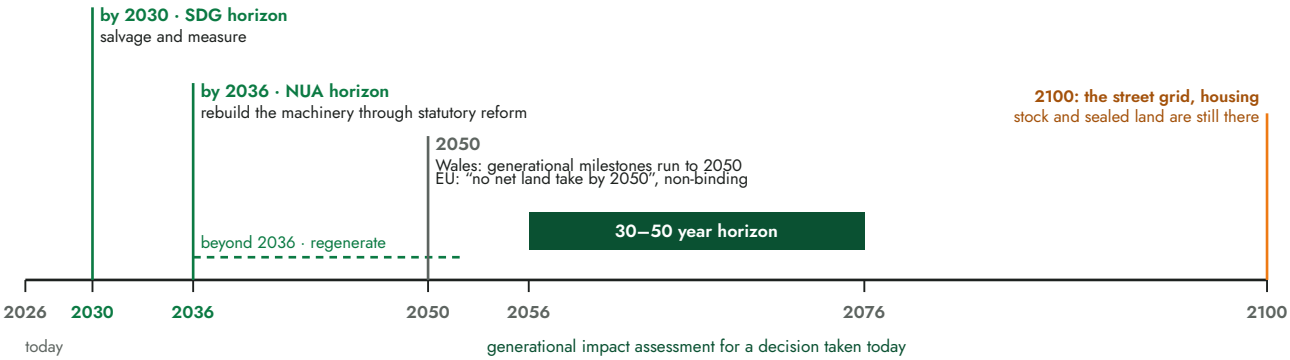


FIGURE 46 | Deadlines and horizons: the global agenda's 2030 and 2036 milestones fall well inside the 30–50 year horizon this article asks generational impact assessments to cover, and far inside the life of what planning builds (Source: Cities Forum, based on the dates given in the text)

We now add the argument this article was written to supply: generational fairness is the precondition of regenerative development, and regenerative development is the measurement frame that makes generational fairness testable. The dependency runs both ways.

Regeneration is a claim about a baseline. To say a territory has been regenerated – more soft soil, more biodiversity, more carbon held, more ecosystem function – is meaningless unless one specifies since when, and at whose expense. That specification is generational. Regenerative outcomes cannot be asserted in the present tense alone; they are statements about what one cohort received and what it will hand on. The RDG-framework therefore cannot be built without generational accounting at its foundation.

Symmetrically, generational fairness currently suffers from a problem of verification. Proxy institutions and rules of restraint are mechanisms; they tell us what we have built, not whether it worked. A minimal test – has the total built footprint fallen, held, or risen? Can the next generation still walk out of the city into land never built on? Is the aquifer cleaner than we found it? – is only answerable against regenerative metrics.

Without the RDG frame, intergenerational equity remains a moral claim. With it, it becomes an auditable one.

Regenerative Development Goals × Generational-Fair Planning

The dependency runs both ways: regeneration supplies the measures, generational fairness supplies the institutions

THE SHARED OBJECT

One territory, measured once, reported to two audiences: the generation that inherits it, and the generation that follows.

Neither the RDG framework nor a generational-fair planning system can be verified without the other.

REGENERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

What regeneration supplies to fairness

- **A baseline**
  Regeneration is a claim about what was inherited – a result cannot be stated in the present tense alone.
- **A stock statement**
  Soil, water, biodiversity, carbon held, ecosystem function – measured, not asserted.
- **An auditable claim**
  Turns intergenerational equity from a moral position into a testable one.
- **Land as the anchor**
  The least reversible stock: sealed ground and contaminated soil do not recover on electoral timescales.

supplies the measures →

← supplies the institutions

Neither works alone

Measures without institutions cannot be enforced. Institutions without measures cannot be assessed.

GENERATIONAL-FAIR PLANNING

What fairness supplies to regeneration

- **The institutions**
  Commissioners, ombudspersons, deliberative proxies – someone able to speak for the inheritors.
- **The restraint**
  Rules that stop the present foreclosing the future: irreversibility tests, statutory horizons.
- **The horizon**
  Colombia's twelve-year plan – three mayoral terms – so the plan outlasts its authors.
- **The safeguard**
  Long-term measures must not place disproportionate burdens on the poorest.

THREE CONSEQUENCES FOR RDG DESIGN

The baseline is the inheritance
Each cycle opens with what the incoming generation received and closes with what it leaves. New Zealand's four capitals; Wales's 2050 milestones.

Land is the anchor goal
Of all stocks the least reversible. A binding land-use convention is not one goal among many but the spine that makes the RDGs enforceable.

The horizon must be statutory
A target the present can meet by borrowing from the next is not a goal. Colombia's twelve-year plan horizon is the available precedent.

THE ROAD TO THE RDGs

BY 2030 salvage and measure › BY 2036 rebuild the machinery › BEYOND 2036 regenerate – RDGs

FIGURE 47 | Regenerative Development Goals and generational-fair planning: the dependency runs both ways

We draw three consequences for RDG design:

01 The baseline is the inheritance, not the target. Each RDG cycle should open with a statement of what the incoming generation received and close with what it leaves – the UNECE distinction between current well-being and the resources for future well-being, applied territorially. New Zealand's Living Standards Framework is the working model – its four capital stocks (physical and financial, natural, human and social) are treated as the resource base for intergenerational wellbeing, with a dashboard updated every six months. Wales's 2050 generational milestones are the working target – though they measure health, income, qualifications and emissions rather than land, housing stock or public space, which is the gap this article identifies.

02 Land is the anchor goal. Of all stocks, land is the least reversible: sealed ground, contaminated soil and fragmented habitat do not recover on electoral timescales. A binding land-use convention, as argued in Local Planners and Global Goals, is therefore not one goal among many but the spine of the framework – the point at which the RDGs become enforceable rather than aspirational.

03 The horizon must be statutory. A regenerative target set at 2036 and reviewed annually is a target the present generation can meet by borrowing from the next. Colombia's twelve-year plan horizon is the available precedent; the horizon should be written into planning law, not into a declaration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

01 **For governments and legislators.** Set the plan horizon in law. Amend national planning legislation so that the statutory spatial plan covers at least three electoral cycles, with the four-year development plan binding to it rather than overriding it. Colombia's Ley 388 de 1997 is the working precedent. Require a generational impact assessment for every major spatial decision. Minimum content: a 30–50 year horizon aligned to the asset life of what is decided; a statement of stocks rather than only flows; an irreversibility register; a distributional accounting by cohort; the safeguard against disproportionate burdens on the poorest; published indicators and a review cycle. Establish a future-generations institution with standing. Commissioner, ombudsperson or deliberative proxy – with statutory review powers and a duty on public bodies to answer its recommendations, as the Welsh settlement requires. Where the deliberative route is preferred, Japan's imaginary-future-generations method is the tested model and has been applied to municipal spatial plans. Install a generational indicator in the national urban policy monitoring set. No framework reviewed here asks a generational question of its own land-use decisions. One indicator – net built footprint per capita against the inherited baseline – would change what national urban policies are accountable for. Fund in-house planning capacity before outsourcing. Attach a capacity-return condition to every contract for externally produced plans, and direct capacity funding structurally at public planning institutions, in the Global South first. Adopt land-neutral rules where growth is fastest. Brownfield-first sequencing, land banking for trade-offs, and hardening offset by softening, with multi-scale land-use monitoring – the zero-land-growth paradigm that must accompany the zero-carbon one.

02 **For the profession and its associations.** Make statutory reform, not plan-making, the priority theatre for advocacy, through the New Planning Agenda and ethical charter proposed in Local Planners and Global Goals, carried jointly to Habitat IV in 2036. Revive the IG-UTP review cycle and pair every political review with an expert review. What is not reviewed is not resourced; the instrument written for planners, and the only one without an expiry date, has had no dedicated implementation review since 2021. Reform planning education through curriculum review rather than harmonisation, in the AAPS sense – contextually relevant programmes, South–South networks, and the deliberate formation of the next generation of planners as a counterweight to an ageing profession. Practise participation as continuous engagement, judged by authority rather than process quality. A beautifully facilitated workshop that changes nothing sits on rung four of Arnstein's ladder, and its excellence is irrelevant to the ranking.

03 **For the international community.** Open negotiations toward a binding convention on sustainable land use, with a defined role for qualified planners, as the centrepiece of the road to Habitat IV and the RDG framework. The Paris Agreement moved energy; nothing equivalent has moved land. The EU's non-binding "no net land take by 2050" objective, unlegislated after fifteen years, shows both the appetite and the hesitation. Design the

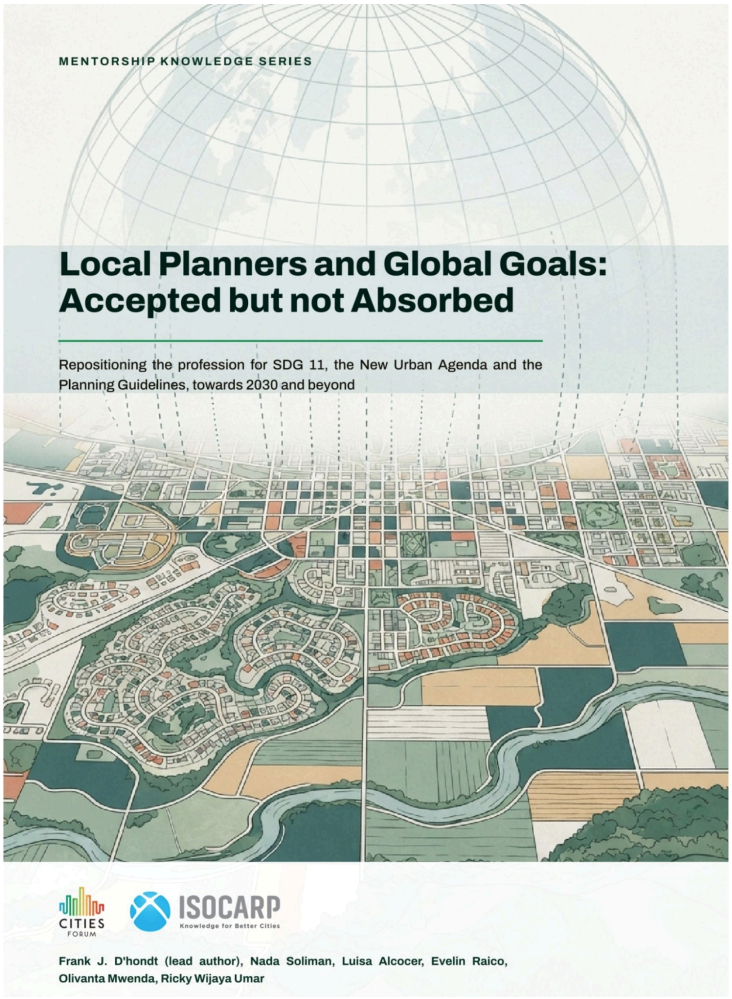
Regenerative Development Goals as generational by construction – baseline first, land as the anchor, statutory horizon – so that the successor framework does not repeat the pattern this article documents, in which the instruments governing the longest-lived decisions carry the weakest generational test.

A TEST OF OUR OWN CLAIM

If a jurisdiction adopts a statutory plan horizon of three or more electoral cycles, a mandatory generational impact assessment, a future-generations institution with standing, and a published generational indicator – and if, after two plan cycles, the inherited stock of land, soil, water and ecological function in that jurisdiction is measurably no worse (or better) than at the start, while the distribution of benefits has not worsened for the poorest – then the proposal works. If it does not, the argument requires revision. Colombia supplies the horizon; Wales supplies the institution and the milestones; New Zealand supplies the stock accounting. No jurisdiction yet supplies all four. That is the task for the decade to 2036.

TWO ARTICLES, ONE ARGUMENT

In our first article of this Cities Forum Knowledge Series – a decade after the adoption of the SDGs, IG-UTP and NUA, and with 2030 approaching fast – we asked a critical question:



> *"Why are global urban frameworks widely accepted, yet still not fully absorbed in the institutions, systems and everyday practices that shape cities and communities?"*

The publication examines the evolving role of urban planners and designers in translating SDG 11, the New Urban Agenda and the IG-UTP into locally relevant action. Its six findings converge on one conclusion: the binding constraint is not what planners know how to do but political will and statutory authority. The instrument everyone overlooks, it argues, is the **planning system** itself. From this it produces three priority clusters – participation beyond consultation, capacity development, adaptive planning systems – and one governing metaphor: planners as flippers, the fixed points of leverage that keep the ball in play, rather than the ball being pinballed around the machine.

The diagram below sets out the relationship between two companion papers from the Cities Forum Mentorship Knowledge Series. It is arranged as three vertical columns on a shared horizontal grid, so the eye can move across any row and compare like with like.

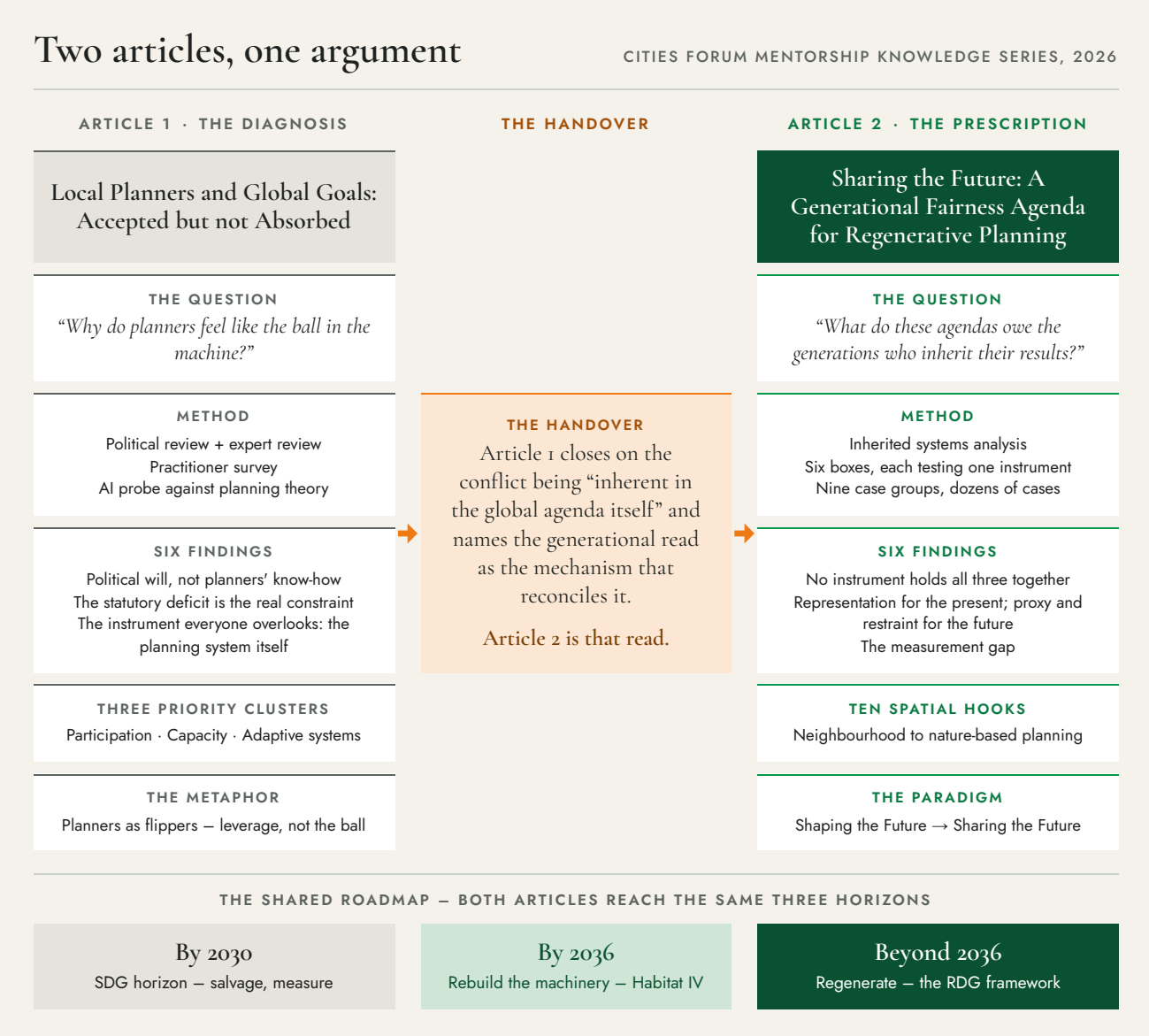


FIGURE 48 | Relationship between two companion papers from the Cities Forum Mentorship Knowledge Series

What connects them is a single sentence. The first article closes by describing the conflict as inherent in the global agenda itself, and names the generational read as the mechanism that reconciles it. The second article is that read. This is why the relationship is best described as a handover rather than a link: neither paper depends on the other for its own argument – each stands alone – but the pair does. The diagnosis hands forward a question the prescription answers; the prescription rests on a systems analysis the diagnosis established. The second article already names the first in exactly these terms in its introduction. The first could not reciprocate, having been written first.

What the roadmap adds is the evidence that the pairing was real rather than retrospective. Working independently, both papers arrive at the same three horizons – by 2030, salvage what exists and measure it; by 2036, rebuild the machinery, carried to Habitat IV; beyond 2036, regenerate, through the Regenerative Development Goals – and both name Habitat IV in 2036 as the vessel. That alignment was not coordinated. It fell out of the material.

THE LONG TERM IS NOT OPTIONAL

Every generation inherits a world it did not make and will hand on one it will not inhabit. Generational fairness asks only that we make that exchange visible, and then make it just.

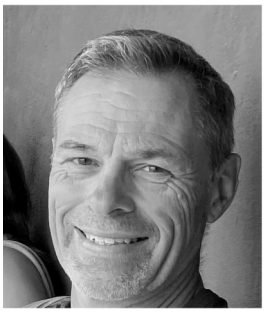
Shaping the Future was a decision made by few on behalf of many, including those not yet born. **Sharing the Future** is the same territory, decided in the open, by everyone who will live with it – and it begins the moment a statute says the long term is not optional.

Bios & Stories



Underground entrance to Waterloo railway station in London, United Kingdom

AUTHORS	CITY/COUNTRY/MACROREGION
Frank D'hondt dhondt.f@gmail.com (lead author)	Athens/Greece/Europe
Nada Soliman arch.nadasoliman@gmail.com	Cairo/Egypt/Middle-East & North Africa
Evelin Raico evelin.raico@gmail.com	Lima/Peru/South-America
Luisa Alcocer luisa.alcocer@proton.me	Mexico City/Mexico/Latin America
Olivanta Mwenda olivantamwenda@gmail.com	Nairobi/Kenya/Subsahara Africa
Ricky Wijaya Umar ricky.wumar@gmail.com	Jakarta/Indonesia/Asia-Pacific



Frank J. D'hondt is founder/manager of Territorial Intelligent Communities and a freelance senior city and regional planning advisor based in Athens, Greece, working mainly with United Nations agencies – including UN-Habitat, UNOPS, UNDP and UN DESA – in more than 20 cities and countries worldwide. He served as (voluntary) Secretary General of the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) from 2019 to 2026, and currently co-chairs the Capacity Development chapter of the Habitat Professionals Forum and the World Urban Pavilion of the Urban Economy Forum. A mentor at Cities Forum, he is the author of two UN-Habitat publications: *Visioning as a Participatory Planning Tool: Learning from Kosovo Practices* (2012) and the *Handbook to the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning* (2018). He writes regularly for planning journals and magazines, speaks at international planning conferences, and lectures at universities in Europe and beyond.

FRANK'S STORY WITH GENERATIONAL PLANNING

"At Greek summer festivals, I am repeatedly moved by the sight of every living generation joining hands and dancing in circles across the village square. Children learn the steps beside parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, each generation receiving a tradition and accepting responsibility for passing it on. Even in 2026, the generational chain remains visible and alive. Yet this instinct for continuity rarely translates into generationally fair urban and territorial policies, plans and designs in that same country (Greece). In my professional life, I have often found more space for meaningful long-term planning outside the European Union, in rapidly urbanising regions such as the Horn of Africa, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean. There, I have initiated Shared Vision workshops in which people of different ages collectively imagined the future of their cities and regions, turning lived knowledge into long-term plans and projects for both present and future generations. The greatest reward of my planning career has not been a completed plan. It has been watching community members become barefoot planners after an intensive week of collaborative visioning - able to read their territory, articulate a shared

future and claim a lasting role in shaping it. Like the dancers of all ages in the Greek square, they join a circle larger than themselves: receiving a place from those who came before and taking responsibility for what they will pass on."



Nada Soliman is an architect and urban planner with an international background in urban strategy, and sustainable urban development. She holds a MSc in Urban Management and Development from the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), Erasmus University Rotterdam. With experience across the MENA region and Europe, she has contributed to projects in community development, heritage conservation, placemaking, and urban transformation. Her work focuses on how planning, policy, and the built environment can shape more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities. She is committed to advancing urban approaches that connect social impact with long-term spatial and environmental value.

NADA'S STORY WITH URBAN REGENERATION

"From architecture to urban regeneration, and from designing places to connecting generations. I began my journey in architectural engineering, focusing initially on buildings, design and development. Over time, my interests expanded beyond individual projects toward the wider relationships between people, places and communities. My postgraduate studies in urban management, together with my work in urban regeneration, heritage, placemaking and community development, introduced me to the broader principles of sustainable and inclusive urban development. The SDGs, particularly SDG 11, became an important reference for understanding how cities can become more resilient, inclusive and people-centred. My research on proper adaptive reuse in Old Cairo strengthened my belief that regeneration is not only about preserving buildings or improving public spaces, but about preserving connections between places, communities and generations. Through my work with Cities Forum and our From Urban Loneliness to Urban Soul publication, I became increasingly interested in how planning, mobility and public space can create opportunities for different generations to connect and belong."



Luisa Alcocer Rubio is an urban philosopher and social sustainability consultant working at the intersection of people, policy, and place across Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. A member of ISOCARP since 2023, she was nominated a Young Leader at the Urban Futures conference in 2024, and she participated in the ECOSOC Youth Forum at the United Nations Headquarters in 2025. Her work advocates for more sustainable communities and equitable cities, using the Sustainable Development Goals as a framework to identify opportunities, guide action, and measure meaningful outcomes. Alongside her consulting practice, Luisa is committed to knowledge-sharing and capacity building. She has delivered masterclasses through Mexico's national architecture institutions and trained hundreds of public-sector professionals internationally, translating global sustainability frameworks into practical approaches to urban and territorial development.

LUISA'S STORY WITH URBAN REGENERATION

"My experience in urban planning and development has been shaped by both personal experiences and professional projects across different geographical and cultural contexts. These experiences have strengthened my interest in understanding cities as interconnected systems, where mobility, public space, local economies, social relationships, and environmental conditions collectively influence quality of life. Living in Saint-Gilles, Brussels, as a student offered an early perspective on what makes urban neighborhoods thrive. Its cultural diversity, lively public markets, independent businesses, and walkable streets demonstrated how proximity and everyday interactions contribute to a strong sense of place. Experiencing these qualities firsthand shaped my appreciation for human-scale urban environments and the importance of preserving the social and cultural fabric of neighborhoods. Professionally, my involvement in transit-oriented development (TOD) in Lima, Peru, expanded this perspective by highlighting the relationship between mobility, land use, accessibility, and urban transformation. The experience reinforced the importance of integrated planning approaches that go beyond infrastructure provision to consider how urban development can improve connectivity, strengthen local economies, and create more inclusive opportunities for communities. Together, these experiences have informed my growing interest in regenerative planning as an approach that moves beyond mitigating negative impacts toward actively strengthening the social, ecological, and economic systems of a place. I am particularly interested in how urban planning can build upon local identity, support community well-being, and create lasting value, recognizing that successful urban transformation is measured not only by what we build, but by the conditions we create for people and places to thrive."



Evelin Raico is an architect and urban planner with over seven years of international experience in urban planning, sustainable development, spatial analysis, and project management. She holds a Master's degree in Territorial and Urban Planning and has worked with UN-Habitat, WWF, and public institutions on projects related to sustainable urban development, climate resilience, mobility, and SDGs. Her work combines strategic planning, spatial data analysis, and urban development to support evidence-based urban policies and more resilient, inclusive, and adaptive cities. Her current interests include urban resilience, planning systems, climate adaptation, spatial data management, and the application of systems thinking to urban governance.

EVELIN'S STORY WITH URBAN REGENERATION

"My professional experience has strengthened my interest in urban planning that creates lasting benefits for current and future generations. At the Metropolitan Charity of Lima, I contributed to a public-private partnership for multifamily housing and urban regeneration, exploring how public assets could support more sustainable urban development. My work with WWF Peru on SDG 11.3.1 and my subsequent work with UN-Habitat have further reinforced the importance of evidence-based planning, responsible land use, and inclusive urban development. Through these experiences, I have come to see regenerative

planning not only as improving existing urban areas, but also as creating conditions for communities to thrive over time, while making more sustainable use of land and resources."



Olivanta Mwenda is an urban designer and developer based in Nairobi, Kenya, with experience working across government, policy, and community organisations on climate-resilient public space design, participatory planning, and gender-responsive urban development. She holds a Bachelor of the Built Environment in Urban Design and Development from the Technical University of Kenya and a Postgraduate Certificate in Environmental Impact Assessment and Audit. Her work has focused on translating community insights into actionable urban strategies, with a particular interest in how urban planning and design can address inequality and build more inclusive cities.

OLIVANTA'S STORY WITH GENERATIONAL PLANNING

"I came to generational planning through a WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). Not a metaphor. In 2024, for my undergraduate thesis, I spent months in Silanga Village, Kibera, researching the gender dimensions of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. I interviewed women and girls (schoolgirls, mothers, market traders, grandmothers) about how they used the toilets and water points in their neighbourhood. What I expected was a study of infrastructure. What I found was a study of inheritance. The women described the arithmetic of their days. A round trip to the nearest water point took forty minutes. A shared toilet cost ten shillings a visit and had no lock on the door. After dark, the walk to either was avoided. Girls stayed home from school on the days they were menstruating, because the school's facilities offered nowhere private to manage it. And none of this was new. These were the conditions the mothers I spoke to had grown up in, and the conditions their daughters were growing up in too. A planning failure was compounding across generations. A girl who misses school for want of a safe toilet becomes a woman with fewer options. Her daughter, statistically, inherits the same. I did not have the language for it then, but that research is where I first understood the argument this article makes. Planning is not neutral. Every decision about a drain, a path, a streetlight, a plot boundary distributes not just benefits among the present but options among those who will live with the result. And those options are not distributed evenly across a cohort. They are distributed by gender, and by age.

Since then my work has moved through housing, green building standards, community advocacy and public space. In each I have found the same absence: the people who will live longest with the result are the least present when the decision is made. Public Spaces are livelihoods passed between generations, a place that outlasts the individuals who use it. The planning question is not only what the public space becomes. It is who inherits it. I am an early-career planner. I will spend my working life implementing decisions I did not make, inside a system whose enabling acts predate my birth. That makes me a subject of the intergenerational trust this article describes, and I hope, one of its agents. What I want to help build is a profession that plans with the generations who will inherit its work. Not only for them."



Ricky Wijaya Umar is an architect and a master's graduate in spatial planning from Radboud University. His professional background combines cross-sector and multidisciplinary experience in architecture, consulting, and participatory urban design. He currently works at Cities Forum as an urban governance consultant, focusing on collaborative governance, publications, and knowledge exchange, while also helping to build networks and outreach in Indonesia. His approach is shaped by Topoethic, a co-design and knowledge-sharing platform he founded, which connects urban strategies, design visuals, practical adaptation and resilience solutions through collaborative decision-making.

RICKY'S STORY WITH URBAN REGENERATION

"I believe urban regeneration can begin at the grassroots level. After completing my master's degree in spatial planning in the Netherlands, I returned to Indonesia with a clear realisation: planning cannot create meaningful impact if it remains only on paper. It must meet people where everyday life happens. Especially those living in informal settlements, where policy, space and daily reality meet. Listening became my first planning tool. I began to understand my role as an urbanist not simply as designing spaces or housing, but as helping communities, authorities and other actors shape decisions together. Through this process, design can build not only places, but also trust, agency and neighbourhood resilience. Along the way, however, I experienced a kind of political exhaustion. I entered planning believing that even a small contribution could make a difference, yet in where I live, it can be difficult to create change without formal authority or access to political networks. Instead of waiting for permission, I chose to begin from below. Working at the grassroots level taught me that small-scale action can still give real meaning when we stop planning for people and start planning with them. For me, that is the essence of collaborative governance. It does not simply by inviting people to participate, but by sharing the space, responsibility and power to shape what happens next. When it comes about urban regeneration, every plan is an investment in the future. Yet investment should not be measured only through financial profit. It should also be measured by how it improves people's lives. Even when a neighbourhood shares the produce of its community chicken farm with elderly residents and children, that is already an impact. It strengthens care, circulates local resources and gives regeneration a human scale. Regeneration also means sustaining what a community has today so that future generations can inherit something better. It can begin with one neighbourhood, one shared space or one collective decision. We do not always have to wait long term plans to see the results. Think globally, act locally, but always begin by listening."

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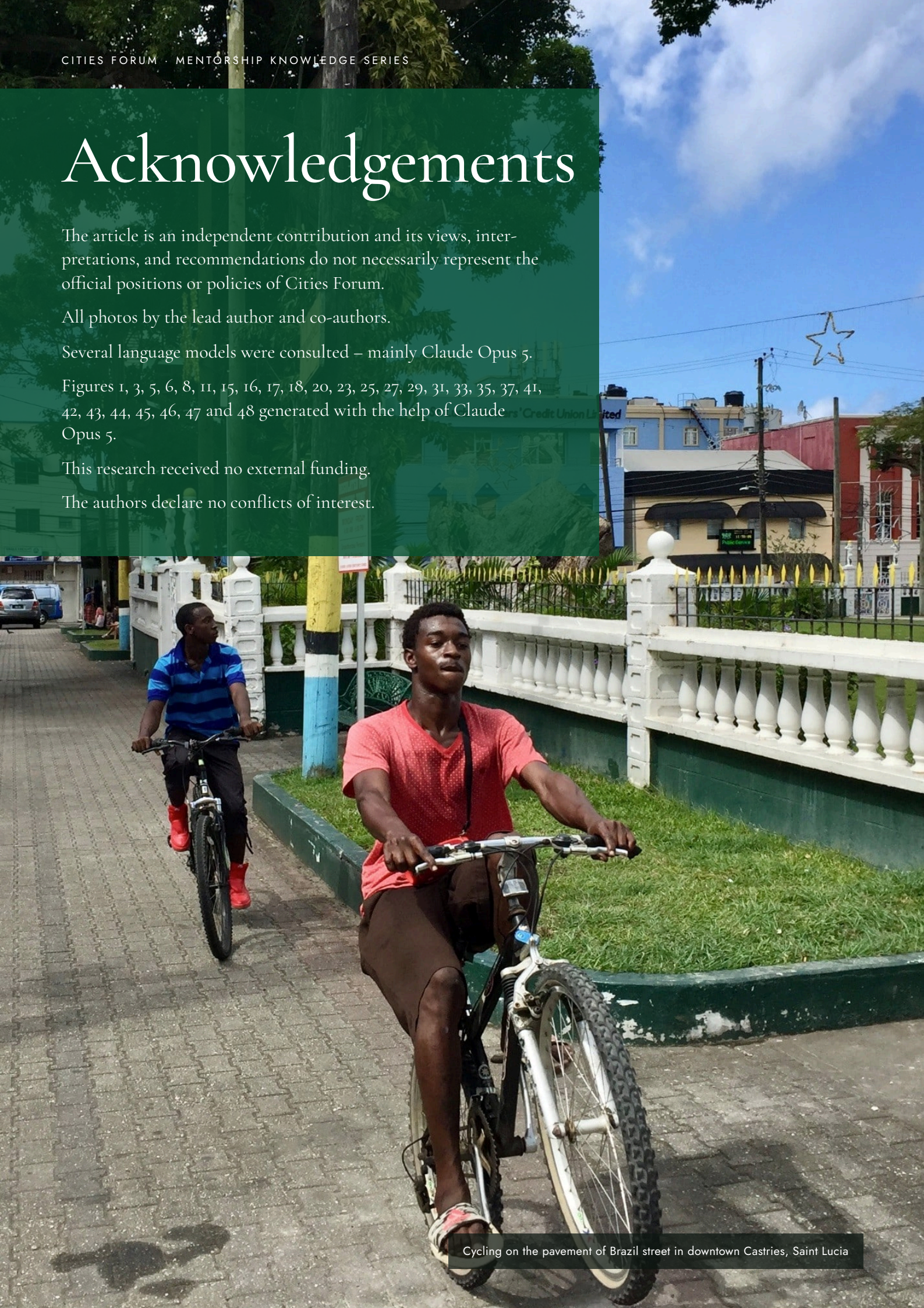
All photos by the lead author and co-authors.

Several language models were consulted – mainly Claude Opus 5.

Figures 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47 and 48 generated with the help of Claude Opus 5.

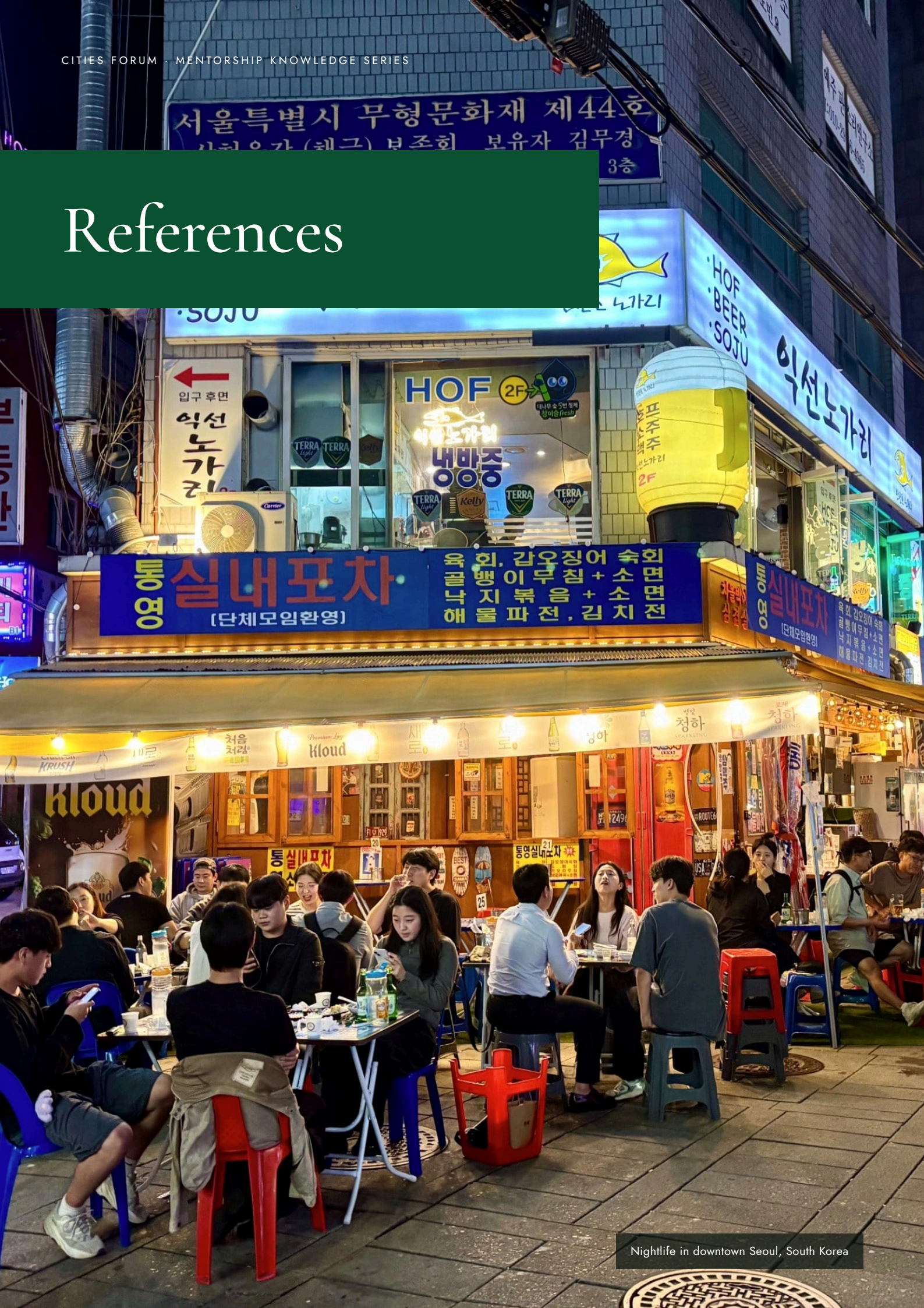
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Cycling on the pavement of Brazil street in downtown Castries, Saint Lucia

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Nightlife in downtown Seoul, South Korea

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Sharing the *Future*

A Generational Fairness Agenda for Regenerative Planning

ABOUT CITIES FORUM

Cities Forum is a strategic advisory firm and think tank specialised in sustainable urban development globally. We support local governments, international organisations, and development agencies in designing evidence-based urban transformation programmes.
citiesforum.org · info@citiesforum.org

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