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**TITLE: NEIGHBORHOOD UPGRADING AL FOR EQUITY AND RESILIENCE:
CHALLENGES AND ALTERNATIVES IN LATIN AMERCA**

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Abstract:

This paper aims to analyze contemporary experiences in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) on integrated neighborhood upgrading, considering the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for transitioning towards a more equitable and resilient urban futures. It does so by building on the outputs of a series of multisectoral exchanges conducted during 2017-2019 in the context of the Housing Laboratories (LAVs) facilitated by the Urban Housing Practitioners Hub (UHPH). Specifically, it poses the following questions: What are the main characteristics of these contemporary initiatives? How do these initiatives align with the NUA and SDGs? What have been their strengths and weaknesses regarding the reduction of inequality and climate action? Finally, this paper highlights the importance and explore possible ways forward for disseminating inspiring practices in order to contribute to building institutions for equality and resilience across LAC.

Key words:

Climate action, housing and urban development, reduction of inequality, upgrading alternatives

Introduction

In recent years, urban trends in the Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC) have been marked by the consolidation of the urbanization process and the end of the urban explosion. However, the growth of cities occurs at the expense of lower-income populations. In fact, large segments of LAC population have failed to integrate the so-called formal city as informal settlements host between 20 and 50% of the population in LAC largest cities. According to ECLAC (2018), on average, in 2014, 21% of the urban population in the region lived in informal settlements, which represents more than 100 million people. Informal settlements concentrate people living in conditions of poverty, environmental degradation and climate risks, without access to urban infrastructure and public services, etc., constituting the most visible face of social inequality. Moreover, in the past decade urban development has followed a sprawl pattern, locating new social housing in the peripheries of the urban core, with poor habitability conditions (e.g. lack of accessibility and poor infrastructure and urban services). Adler and Vera (2018) notes that households in the periphery of cities tend to be poorer and more vulnerable than those living in central areas – even if they have a formal status.

Facing past challenges, governments in LAC have implemented different upgrading approaches to improve the living conditions of city inhabitants. This paper aims to analyze contemporary experiences in the region on integrated neighborhood upgrading, considering the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for transitioning towards a more equitable and resilient urban futures. Specifically, it poses the following questions: What are the main characteristics of these contemporary initiatives? How do these initiatives align with the NUA and SDGs? What have been their strengths and weaknesses regarding the reduction of inequality and climate action? And how can inspiring practices be shared and disseminated in order to contribute to building institutions for equality and resilience across Latin America.

This paper builds on the outputs of a series of multisectoral exchanges in which participated governments, civil society, NGOs, academia and multilateral organizations over the past three years (2017-2019). These exchanges were conducted in the context of a series of Housing Laboratories (LAVs by their initials in Spanish) facilitated by the Urban Housing Practitioners Hub (UHPH), which has been created by an innovative cross-sectoral coalition of private sector actors, on-the-ground practitioners, academics, multi-lateral institutions and local and national governments. The goal of the UHPH is to improve the quality of housing practice in alignment with many of the SDGs, with the objectives of the NUA, and with other regional and global frameworks. This paper is an example of the outputs that this coalition will increasingly produce and facilitate in the months and years to come.

The structure of the document is organized as follows. First, it introduces the LAVs process, methods and thematic. Second, it introduces representative and relevant contemporary upgrading neighborhood experiences in LAC by highlighting their key characteristics. Third, an analysis of how these

alternatives contribute to building more inclusive and resilient cities as well as their alignment with the NUA and SDGs is made. Finally, in the concluding remarks, it is reflected on how to increase the dissemination of learning from these alternatives to expand implementation in the region.

1. Background: Housing Laboratories process and methods

As governments struggle to provide adequate and affordable housing at scale, and with the rate of global urbanization continuing to increase, competition for land use is becoming more intense, making housing availability even more challenging. These factors led to the formation of UHPH - initially in the Latin America/Caribbean region (supported by a recent grant from the InterAmerican Development Bank's Regional Public Good program), and most recently in the Asia-Pacific region (with a recent grant from the Hilti Foundation). The UHPH serves as a collaborative network of stakeholders that combines in-person interaction with knowledge management and knowledge exchange on a virtual platform, with the purpose of addressing current and emerging housing issues –including those associated with land use, tenure security, and basic services.

One of the main activities of the UHPH in the last couple of years has been the facilitation of a series of knowledge exchanges known as Housing Laboratories (LAVs). These LAVs were created as multisectoral and multidisciplinary exchanges for analyzing and sharing experiences on housing and habitat in the region with the objective of fostering new ways of building and practice, contributing to transition towards a sustainable development aligned with the NUA and the Agenda 2030. The combination of 26 LAVs implemented during the period 2017-19 represented a robust collective effort towards supporting public policy and mobilizing key stakeholders, creating critical mass and structured spaces for knowledge and practices exchange.

After an experimental period with spontaneous and demand driven LAVs in 2017, a second set of LAVs was held as part of the 3rd Housing Forum in LAC, which took place in Dominican Republic in June 2018 (See Table 1). A third bulk of LAVs (See Table 2) was organized during 2019 by several national organizations and international ones, such as the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the World Bank, the Latin-American union for Housing (UNIAPRAVI), TECHO, Habitat for Humanity, the Global Platform to the Right to the City, RIVHA, REDEUS, CAF, MINURVI, COINVITE, among others, with the support of the IADB Regional Public Good grant, in response mostly to demands posed by national governments and civil society organizations.

The organization of each LAV encompasses a series of virtual preparatory meetings including all the participants (from different sectors and disciplines) to collectively construct a concept note, a process that allows building trustiness and progressively enrich the discussion among the different actors. The concept notes are firstly produced by a leading and contributing authors (usually academics) to then are enhanced by the inputs of the various participants. The structure of the concept notes includes background, main challenges, key promising experiences, key questions on the thematic and relevant

bibliography. The LAVs finalize with a face to face or virtual dialogue (taking place in circles –without speakers and audiences or rigid formats) where key questions on the topic are addressed. A final rapporteur is produced and shared with all participants to ensure systematization of the process. The organization and, in particular, the elaboration of the concept notes and final rapporteurs, is supported by the members of the Network of Researchers in Housing and Habitat in the Americas (RIVHA).

Table 1: LAVs organized at the Housing Forum in LAC 2018

Name	Objective and cases
Land policies and land-based financing to guarantee secure tenure and prevent informal settlements	To identify and explore the organization of the land and housing markets, the land policies, and the financing to: guarantee inclusive and affordable housing, secure tenure and to prevent informal settlements. The LAV focused on the experiences of: São Paulo, Brazil; San Antonio de Areco, Argentina; and Fenicia Triangle, Bogota.
Financing the Villa in Latin America: The Financial Sector, Trends and Business Models	Discuss new financing trends, innovation to characterize the demand for housing using Big Data. Identify new alternatives to meet the people who have not been served, such as: the base of the income pyramid, independent professionals and informal sector, the wide range of young adults, elderly, migrants, slum dwellers. Learn about trends in private and public spheres in LAC. Experiences from Dominican Republic, Peru, Guatemala and Mexico were showcased.
Developing integrated national policies and frameworks for inclusive land, housing and habitat	To discuss comprehensive urban management tools that contribute to the implementation of inclusive actions to prioritize effective land governance and the critical role of housing and habitat at national level. It analyzed Mexico, El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay cases.
Integral housing and settlements upgrading	To discuss needs and alternatives for neighbourhood integral upgrading. It focused on the cases of Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia and Puerto Rico.
Densification and reutilization, idle property, and social function of property	To establish a dialogue with a diversity of stakeholders to discuss different densification processes and mechanisms to facilitate equitable access to housing and to a compact, connected, integrated, safe and inclusive city; and to analyse the social function of land and property within existing empty/idle spaces in the urban mesh.
Social rental housing	To explore the potential of Social Rental Housing as an alternative for vulnerable groups to gain access to adequate and safe housing. The

	LAV focused on Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and São Paulo whose policies see rentals an intermediate solution for home ownership.
Metropolitan governance	To drive a dialogue between the agents involved in metropolitan governance to delve into the subject's importance and complexity; and to identify the potential/limitations and trends of current initiatives in LAC. Explored cases: Mexico, Chile, Brazil, El Salvador and Colombia.
Building urban resilience and environmental sustainability	To delve into the current challenges to build resilience and environmental sustainability in cities as well as to explicit the relationship among housing policies, urban planning and climate change. It analyses important initiatives implemented in LAC such as: Resilient Cities funded by IDRC – CDNK; Risk Management Programs in Peru, Dominican Republic and Haiti funded by USAID – OFDA; Emergent and Sustainable Cities Program in Peru funded by the IABD; 100 Resilient Cities Program in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Quito and Salvador; among others.

Table 2: LAVs organized post Forum 2019

Housing and inclusion of vulnerable groups in Mexico and LAC	To generate inputs to understand the problems and alternatives for the inclusion of vulnerable groups to housing access as well as to know-exchange national and international practices on this topic.
Integration of housing in the Bolivian national policy of integral development of cities	To raise awareness about the relevance of articulating housing and urban development policies in Bolivia; and to identify-define alternative solutions and specific programs to promote normative and institutional articulation.
Transmedia narratives: expanding learning of inspiring upgrading practices and methods	To explore how transmedia narratives can contribute to strengthen social participation, enhance learning and co-production of knowledge, and develop the use of information technologies in the context of neighbourhood upgrading and the UHPH in general.
Sustainable cities and climate adaptation in Uruguay	To explore processes, methods and tools related to planning, management and financing for the construction of sustainable cities through mitigation and adaptation to climate change; specially to events such as heavy rains and high temperatures in coastal cities.
Legal frameworks for development of integral	To identify the possible paths and incidence in Peru with respect to the legal frameworks in planning to develop the resilience of informal and

and participatory operations to strengthen resilience of informal settlements	precarious settlements; and to share the inspiring experiences in Peru and other countries in the region, expanding the understanding of the context and participation of the key actors in the region.
Urban Renovation for Sustainable Urban Development in Historical Centres: Lima Case	The purpose of LAV was to give continuity and deepen the debate about living conditions and urban renewal in historic centres, taking the Peruvian and Lima realities as the main reference.
Densification in Mexico and LAC cities	To discuss needs and alternatives to promote sustainable urban growth and densification processes in LAC in support to new urban and housing policy in Mexico.
Urban and city platforms in LAC	To contribute to the design and development of the Urban Platform and Cities of LAC, understanding the roles of the organizations involved as well as setting up the coordination processes.
Metropolitan governance in Mexico	To explore successes and challenges of diverse metropolitan governance approaches in different contexts in Mexico and LAC to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 agenda in this country.
Advancing local sustainable development planning in Jamaica	Contribute to consolidate the methodology of the Local Sustainable Development Plans: preparation and implementation, considering Jamaica Vision 2030.

2. Evolution and key characteristics of representative contemporary alternatives in neighborhood upgrading in LAC

This paper builds on the past series of LAVs organized in 2018 and 2019. During these LAVs it was repeatedly empathized LAC region continues experiencing urban growth and, at the same time, it also faces the end of its urban explosion. This process has been characterized by an increase of informal and formal settlements living in poverty and facing poor environmental conditions, lack of access to urban infrastructure and social services, among others within a context of new demographic and household formation dynamics. In response to this situation, different initiatives have been implemented and consolidated in recent decades.

In the mid-1970s, housing policies promoted the construction and direct distribution of housing by the State, through the financing of massive projects “keys in hand”. By the end of the same decade, public programs turned to the supply of urbanized lots equipped with sanitation services and minimal housing solutions. Both initiatives, on numerous occasions, involved the eradication of informal settlements and

transfer of households to the periphery of cities. Overall, these programs did not achieve the desired results. In fact, they received substantial criticism from the beneficiaries and experts who highlighted the high social costs that they generated for the beneficiaries —loss of resources invested in the production and improvement of housing, social networks, access to services, etc. In addition, the targeting of resources was occasionally misdirected; on several occasions, the benefits of the programs were captured by middle class families rather than by poor families. And on the whole, the level of resources allocated to these initiatives was insufficient to achieve a scale commensurate with the extent of the need (Fiori, Riley and Ramirez 2000; Fiori and Brandao 2010).

Facing past challenges, at the beginning of the 1980s and, very markedly, in the 1990s, governments adopted a new approach – one that is currently in force. It promotes integrated and comprehensive policies to improve human settlements and advocates the incorporation of approaches that facilitate the functioning of housing markets. “As a result of accumulated experience from these programs, a consensus has been developed on the fact that strategies based on settling populations in the areas that they already occupy provide the most socially and economically desirable solution. Various program approaches have been used, ranging from those limited to regularizing ownership of irregularly occupied properties to integrated neighborhood upgrading programs” (Brakarz et al 2002: 21). These initiatives have moved beyond land regularization, promoting the full incorporation of informal settlements into the formal city. Likewise, they promote investments for infrastructure improvement and urban equipment in the neighborhoods and are linked to programs and projects aimed at addressing social problems in the communities and improving their quality of life.

Issues and controversies around deficits on the implementation of integrated interventions continues at present; moreover, the relocation of informal settlements’ dwellers living in central locations at the periphery of cities is a main concern. These issues are exacerbated by the intensifying of climate crisis, which is nowadays one of the greatest challenges for all countries and regions of the world. Particularly, the LAC region is highly prone to hydro-meteorological, seismic, volcanic and other types of natural phenomena with destructive potential. Facing this context, climate change results in a higher frequency and intensity of disasters and risks; between 2000 and now, 1,205 extreme events were registered in the region, positioning it as the second prone to disasters in the world (UN 2020). By 2050 it is estimated an increase on risk and disaster events, including: landslides, cyclones, storms and flooding (mainly in coastal areas); destabilization of the hydrologic cycle in the main basins; heat waves and droughts that may affect food security; and the possible savvanization of the Amazon region and the degradation of areas that offer environmental services (IPCC 2018).

Moreover, cities are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, and LAC, being one of the most urbanized regions of the world, with eight out of ten people living in urban areas, faces important challenges. The types of cities, zones and sectors that are most vulnerable to environmental risks and

disasters are: i) Medium-sized cities, which represent the growth pattern in the region with an accelerated urbanization rate and less able to respond and to adapt; ii) Irregular settlements (where 21% of the LAC population lives) and new housing projects disconnected from the urban mesh; iii) Displaced/relocated populations who struggle to access the formal housing system and; iv) Marginalized groups with lower social power (women, indigenous people, children, sick and senior citizens) (UHPH 2018 —Building Urban Resilience and Environmental Sustainability). Cities are the main source of greenhouse gas emissions as well as the primarily responsible for environmental degradation (CEPAL 2018), making of them not only vulnerable territories, but the fundamental spaces for climate change action.

In response to inequality and environmental challenges, from 2000s onwards in LAC, neighborhood upgrading programs have evolved as well as other alternatives have emerged, characterized by incorporating efforts on both: i) An integrated approach that strengthen the social component by, in general, recognizing the right to the city and, in particular, the social function of the habitat; ii) A more systematic inclusion of the environmental and climate change dimension. Relevant contemporary approaches have been developed in countries like Colombia, Brazil and Chile and Argentina. Here below some of these alternatives are mapped, representatively rather than exhaustively, as the objective is to identify their common strategies. In the same fashion, the way of addressing the cases is by highlighting key characteristics rather than going into specificities.

Among one of the most recognized neighbourhood upgrading approaches is the Medellin experience in Colombia, first with the Integral Program for the Upgrading of Subnormal Neighbourhoods (*Programa Integral de Mejoramiento de Barrios Subnormales*) and, more recently, with the Integral Urban Projects (*Proyectos Urbanos Integrales - PUIS*) launched in 2004. The PUIS link upgrading strategies with a comprehensive process of urban planning, encompassing the regeneration/rehabilitation of public spaces, schools, parks and mobility corridors. This approach also focuses on the strengthening of the social component by actively promoting community participation during the different stages of the neighbourhood upgrading process —identification of problems, proposal of solutions, and the approval and implementation of projects; the participatory process is based on building technical capacity, promoting social organization and disseminating information of the project's execution (UHPH 2018 —Integral Housing and Settlements Upgrading).

A well-known project in Medellin city is Moravia, in a well centrally located area, where inhabitants used to live in a severely degraded environment (a waste dump) and in overcrowding conditions. The upgrading process included an integrated territorial approach that involved environmental restoration and social participation. The objective was to attain the best possible land use, not only for housing, but to foster the local economy and the community involvement on project implementation (UHPH 2018 —Densification and Reutilization, Idle Property and Social Function of Property).

The Medellin experience has “inspired cities such as Rio de Janeiro [...] among others in the region and around the globe, which have introduced similar models aiming to concentrate social and economic inclusion policies on vulnerable population zones that were upgraded and provided with housing and urban infrastructure” (Magalhães and Rossbach 2017:34). Indeed, the Rio de Janeiro approach is linked, in LAC, to a new generation of policies, combining and seeking alliances among social, political, intuitional and spatial processes and interventions (Fiori and Brandao 2010). Another characteristic of this case is its capacity to integrate not only the provision of infrastructure with social services, but also the inclusion of community participation (even when limited).

Another recognized case in Brazil is Sao Paulo city, that has followed a process to upgrade informal settlements as a part of broader initiatives to recover the quality of the environment. This process was improved by the implementation of a management information system in 2006 to track the status of favelas as well as the flooding and water hazards citywide (UPHP 2018 —Integral Housing and Settlements Upgrading). In general, Sao Paulo has sought both, to recycle city areas left by relocated families and to regenerate degraded/polluted areas in precarious settlements by converting them in parks, playgrounds or others. This approach not only provides public spaces for socialization but increases the city environmental services.

In general, Brazil has been key in paving the way for upgrading interventions. In 2002 created the Ministry of Cities, which triggered a process to restructure the housing sector. Municipal Housing Councils were set up in some cities, a role that supports the continuity of projects and their funds despite the continuous municipal changes. In 2007, the Growth Acceleration Program (*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento – PAC*) was launched, with large investments in sanitation and infrastructure in the slums seen as a national priority investment (National Housing Secretariat or *Secretaria Nacional de Habitação*, 2010). “Under PAC – Slums, integral and integrated slum upgrading was adopted as an intervention model supported by federal finance, with fund transfers to states and municipalities” (Magalhães and Rossbach 2017:43).

Another initiative that links national to municipal levels is Chile, as well as its urban and housing policies show important innovations aimed at promoting greater urban equality. This is the case of “Quiero Mi Barrio” program, launched in 2006, with a strong social component coupled with urban and housing improvement initiatives and the establishment of a National Urban Development Council, in 2014. The Council gathers representatives from the government, civil society, the academia and the private sector” (UHPH 2018 —Integral Housing and Settlements Upgrading). In addition, the “Quiero mi Barrio” program is a milestone that builds on its neighbourhood upgrading approach to intervene in the formal city, by improving neighbourhoods’ housing conditions, public spaces and basic services as well as by building community cohesion and organization (Idem).

Finally, it is worth noting the existence of cases in LAC that without specific upgrading funds or programs are contributing to improve both, the social and environmental conditions of the city precarious/vulnerable neighbours. A salient case is the city of San Antonio de Areco in Argentina that from 2011 onwards has been systematically incorporating actions to strengthen climate actions through: land zone planning, hydrological modelling, risk management programs and a municipal climate action plan. According to the LAV on Sustainable Cities and Climate Adaptation in Uruguay (UHPH 2019), key elements for its success have been the synergies created among local, national and international organizations as well among different sectors (including the academia); the incorporation of innovative green funds to ensure sustainability over time and; city land planning at a regional-basin level. Examples of implemented actions are the reforestation of open areas with native flora to retain rainwater and the amplification and redirection of the city river watercourse; the result notices on the reduction of flood risks for the general population and, in particular, for vulnerable neighbourhoods.

3. Strengths and challenges of contemporary upgrading alternatives in LAC

By analysing the rapporteurs of the 2018 and 2019 series of LAVs, and particularly, by looking at the contemporary alternatives discussed in the past section of this document, it can be noticed that since the 2000s a new generation of policies has been taken place in LAC, incorporating: the integration of upgrading processes as part of a wider context, either at city planning or at national policy or programmes; the recognition of the social function of land; a more systematic inclusion of the environmental dimension and; a more robust social component. In the same fashion, these alternatives contribute to progress of the region in line with the NUA and the Agenda 2030.

The NUA explicitly promotes the adoption of housing policies that include a holistic and integrated policy framework in all levels, including housing, urban and land planning, social inclusion and other relevant dimensions. In LAC, since 1990s different countries have linked their upgrading approaches to a wider view, including them as part of national policies, laws, programmes and/or funds to support both, formal and informal precarious neighbourhood's improvements. Further, these approaches recognize the importance of implementing integral interventions that link infrastructure to social and economic components (e.g. the PAC in Brazil, the "Quiero mi Barrio" in Chile and, the PUIS in Colombia).

However, efforts to ensure effectivity on the integration of national and local frameworks as well as the sustainability over time are still needed. In particular, it is highlighted that upgrading processes that include improvements beyond infrastructure, but access to health and education, transport and connectivity, regeneration of public spaces and/or the inclusion of vulnerable groups to economic dynamics, imply of large funds. Hence, financial inputs need to come from diversified sources—from self-construction to public-private alliances, and/or to include diverse innovative approaches such as the encouraging of social entrepreneurs that have planned projects to provide low cost housing and

basic services (UHPH 2018 —Integral Housing and Settlements Upgrading Rapporteur). Indeed, effective management and integration of diverse types of funds and programs requires appropriate roles and functions to support coordination as well as to ensure continuity of neighbourhood upgrading projects despite of constant political changes (e.g. the Municipal Housing Councils in Brazil).

Another challenge to adopt an integrated approach linking housing and urban planning is on inter sectorial and multi scale governance, a key principle of the NUA. Contemporary upgrading alternatives in LAC coincide that robust neighbourhood upgrading approaches are part of wider urban land planning processes, including the city and its surrounding or land planning at a regional scale. Vulnerable and/or precarious settlements are part of interrelated territorial systems – e.g. rural-urban links or the functional relationship between the agglomeration of cities. An urban land planning perspective involves the concertation and coordination as well as the reduction of power asymmetries among multiple scales, levels, sectors and players (government, civil society, the private sector, the academia, international organizations, among others). In general, efforts to develop methods and processes to create consensual and inclusive agendas remains an important action to support in LAC, in particular, to better understand the role and ways of building synergic alliances with the private sector; and in growing cities comprised of more than one administrative body, to incentivize joint inter-municipal among diverse-unequal municipal actors that decide over continuous territories.

On the past endeavour, it is important to concentrate efforts in intermediate cities, where demographic increase is concentrated, predominantly in poverty and marked by disorganized territorial expansion. Some of the most pressing issues to be tackled at city-metropolitan or regional level (and directly impacting neighbourhood upgrading) are: management of water basins and natural areas; management of transportation, air pollution and solid waste; industry location and the transformation-revitalization of the economy; urban infrastructure provision such as public spaces; and violence reduction and public security (UHPH 2019 —Metropolitan Governance in Mexico). The latter issue, being in general a white elephant that is left behind or without systematic linked interventions, when insecurity and violence continue increasing in LAC cities, mostly in precarious or peripheral settlements (UHPH 2018 — Metropolitan Governance 2018; UHPH 2018 —Integral Housing and Settlements Upgrading Rapporteur).

In the other hand, another aspect in which LAC has progressed is on recognizing the social function of land by approaching settlements upgrading (formal and informal) on city peri-central areas—even when at times the relocation of vulnerable populations to the peripheries has been an alternative. This approach is aligned with the NUA, that promotes the compact city as a way to achieve sustainability and inclusion (e.g. the case of Moravia in Medellin, Colombia).

Still past efforts remain as isolated projects in diverse cities. It is important to recognize the social function of land on integrated national-local policies to support a more systematic approach towards

reutilization of urban vacancies and/or densification of peri-central areas for social housing. It is also key to note the concept of densification has deformed, taking on a market perspective and often producing some of the following issues: micro dwellings tending to overcrowding with inappropriate access to public spaces and without considering peoples' needs; densification of zones located in disconnected city areas; displacement of inhabitants when city regeneration changes land value or use (gentrification); or the construction of projects that only benefit real estate developers rather than improving population quality of life (UHPH 2018 —Densification and Land Reutilization, Idle Property and Social Function of Property). When facing this challenge, the right to the city approach can promote the management of urban goods and services in benefit of the common good by redistributing burdens and benefits of the city.

Another remarkable aspect in which LAC has advanced in line with the NUA and the SDGs is on building sustainable cities, particularly with the SDG 11 that appeals to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. It results promising that, especially contemporary neighbourhood upgrading alternatives, have commence to include environmental regeneration —for example of dumps and degraded open areas— as a necessary approach for upgrading programs and city development (e.g. São Paulo in Brazil and Moravia area in Medellin, Colombia). This strain needs of equally integrating the climate change agenda (e.g. San Antonio de Areco, Argentina) in order to increase resilience (adaptation) of vulnerable settlements facing intensified incidence of disasters impacting infrastructure and the quality of life of citizens.

Some important considerations for increasing cities resilience and sustainability, include: avoiding construction in prone to natural disasters areas and mapping risk zones (by priorities); integrating water management and planning at basin level; fostering innovative longer term solutions for housing and infrastructure such as low-carbon transport, the use of eco-technologies and flexible materials-designs for housing projects; building capacities on risk reduction in vulnerable populations and; implementing weather monitoring systems and disaster-risks management programs (UHPH 2019 —Sustainable Cities and Climate Adaptation in Uruguay; UHPH 2018 —Building Urban Resilience and Environmental Sustainability).

Last, but not least important to point out, is contemporary neighbourhood alternatives in LAC show progress on the inclusion of voices of vulnerable populations (e.g. Medellin, Colombia or Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). These alternatives have understood including the needs of communities in the design of solutions and the implementation of projects are key factors to ensure appropriate and integrated interventions. This approach is on line with the NUA and the SGDs, that promote inclusive cities by enhancing the capacity for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations such as indigenous, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Main challenges identified in relation to the participatory efforts are to better systematize information at both, during interventions and post interventions, in order to monitor impacts over time; as well as the persistence of social programs to strengthen community organization and cohesion beyond interventions. In the same line, it is also important to integrate programs to support the increasing of capabilities of municipal actors (public and non-public) for projects implementation and monitoring besides to enhance and diversify ways of participation (UHPH 2018 —Housing and Habitat Thematic Agenda).

4. Concluding remarks

Undoubtedly, the diversity of programs and alternatives implemented in LAC during the last 40 years, and especially from the 2000s to date, have accumulated important knowledge and know how that can contribute to progress and inspire on the adoption-adaptation of inclusive, resilient and integrated practices in the region. In the other hand, socialisation of experiences and practices might also contribute to expand and enhance learning to advance in some of the challenges still to overcome, such as: increasing social participation, monitoring initiatives after implementation, strengthening multi-scalar and inter sectoral governance, integrating policy frameworks and agendas —particularly environmental sustainability and climate change—, increasing and managing diversified and innovative funds, promoting appropriated densification processes, among others.

One of the main objectives of the LAVs is to promote sharing, coproduction of knowledge and feedbacking the best housing and habitat practices of LAC region. In this endeavour, the LAVs have succeeded at bringing together diverse voices and those with expertise in various areas to provide fresh perspectives to persistent problems. Indeed, exchanges among the various participants have generated proposals to promote sustainable, resilient, affordable and inclusive housing.

Still, the LAVs face some challenges. One is to increase systematization of the learning and knowledge generated. The work of identifying the most significant learning and best practices require of hard work and resources. Another challenge is recognized, which is the full potential of the LAVs will not be achieved unless there are opportunities to share the results beyond those who directly participate in them. As such, the UHPH has developed a series of strategies to make the findings of the LAVs available to a broader audience:

- i) Online digital platform that collects best practices and catalogues them according to theme, region and sector.
- ii) Online chats, open- LAVs, webinars and other “social network” techniques to provide deeper dive details into the innovations from the LAVs.
- iii) Potential posting of findings with other websites, such as UN-Habitat and the National Institute for Housing Funds (Infonavit by its acronym in Spanish) in Mexico, which has one of the largest and most frequently-visited online repositories of housing studies in the world.

- iv) Annual identification of the “Top Housing Innovations”, through which results of especially innovative LAVs can be given extra recognition and attention.
- v) Bi-Annual Regional Housing Summits, gathering 500-1000 housing professionals from the public sector, private sector, civil society and academia – during which the findings of the most impactful LAVs can be highlighted.

While these are important efforts, the different LAVs also encourage the reflection on innovative ways in which the different participants can trigger processes in their own spaces and territories to bring onboard wider audiences and participants, from citizens to decision makers across diverse sectors and disciplines. Mobilization of knowledge and practices needs to flow in both directions, bottom up and top down, in order to speed up process of equality and resilience.

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