# UTC - From Brussels to the World: Towards Gender Balanced Urban Development and Resilient Cities

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1. UTC Title: (*Title of your Urban Thinkers Campus)*

From Brussels to the World: Towards Gender Balanced Urban Development and Resilient Cities

2. UTC Date(s): *(Beginning date of your Campus)*

06/02/2022

3. UTC Date(s): *(End date of your Campus)*

06/02/2022

4. Location of your UTC:

ULB Victoire Bourgeois Auditorium, 19 Place E. Flagey, Brussels, Belgium

5. Lead organizer: *(Please provide name of organization hosting the UTC)*

Cities Alliance

6. Co-lead organizer: *(Please provide the Names and URL of partner organizations to be associated to the Campus)*

ULB Architecture Department

7. Other organizations that participated in the campus: *(Please provide the Names, URL of partner organizations, and contact email to be associated to the Campus)*

Angela D Association - angelad.asbl2018@gmail.com Perspective Brussels - ldrapeaud@perspective.brussels

8. Number of Participants:

25 in person + 25 online

9. UTC Action Day: *(Please describe the theme of your UTC Action Day and its impacts)*

On Friday 22/04, the Cities for Women Programme at Cities Alliance organized together with the Architecture department of ULB a workshop for the students of the Master’s Programme of Transition Urbanism and Regional Planning. Apart from the students of the Programme, Cities Alliance also invited two representatives of local institutions based in Brussels, the association Angela D and the authority of Brussels Region, Perspective Brussels. The workshop started with a round of introductions from the different participants and organizations. Pietro Ceppi, Giulia Maci and Leonie Grob presented Cities Alliance: Cities Alliance is an international organization hosted by UNOPS and focusing on improving the life of the most vulnerable groups living in cities and informal settlements. The Cities for Women Programme of the organization aims at creating public spaces, cities and communities that are accessible to and inclusive for women and girls. The Programme is currently active in Tunisia through the project Femmedina and has conducted assessments in Nepal, The Gambia, Liberia, and Uganda. Laura Gimenez presented the Angela D association.

Angela D is an association based in Brussels which was created together with the project Calico, a housing project managed by women for women, and located in Forest. The project aims at ensuring housing rights for vulnerable women, coming from disadvantaged groups such as racial minorities, who tend to struggle to have access to housing, loans, and pensions. Angela D manages 10 of the 35 apartments which are part of the Calico project. The project is managed in partnership with other organizations, namely Passage, CLTB, Bruxelles Logement, Eva Bxl, Perspective Brussels, and VUB. Angela D project supports the women to access the housing spaces and manage them in terms of works, maintenance, and organization of tasks. The women part of the housing projects are chosen on the basis of criteria such as revenue, and the rent of the houses is partially covered by the Belgian government. It was asked if the project only support womens or also other gender. The project is dedicated to help women and have them as owner of the rental contract, however the participants can live in the apartments with their kids and partners.

At the moment the project cannot support migrant women without documents due to the impossibility of being registered in the apartments. However, they could consider having a new project supporting migrant women. It was also proposed to have a new project with Ukrainian refugees, with 80% of them being women. The association believes in the concept of collective intelligence. The women beneficiaries work together as a group with the idea that the group can be smarter than the single individual, sharing resources and supporting each other. Leone Drapeaud presented the gender mainstreaming activities at Perspective Brussels. Perspective Brussels is currently creating guidelines to mainstream gender in its initiatives, strategies, and plans. For the strategy to be effective, 2 members of staff from each department of the institution is being involved in the development process: from the collection of data to the analysis of statics to the strategic department to set projects in motion.

A discussion which is currently ongoing in this sense is at which level to position the gender action plan / strategy, within the Regional Development Plan or separately from it as a separate document. To design and implement the gender strategy, it is first important to increase the knowledge on the topic since one issue is the impossibility of implementing the proposed actions due to lack of capacity. Gender mainstreaming is a new topic, and it is the first time it is addressed by Perspective Brussels. What the institution is working on will be a strategy/set of guidelines that, when approved, will need to be implemented operationally by the different city municipalities.

During the discussion it was asked if the gender mainstreaming plan is dedicated to women’s needs or also to the needs and priorities of the LGBTQ+ community. The two topics are divided into two different plans. In general, it is better to separate the different discrimination issues in order not to fall into universalism and the concept of ‘city for everyone’ where women’s priorities are lost in the group ones. The rationale at the base of the Cities for Women programme of Cities Alliance is, for instance, that making more inclusive and better cities for women might translate into better cities for everyone. Doing something for a minority group would benefit in general most of the population. It was brought in this sense the example of ramps for disabled individuals. Another topic that was discussed is the necessity or not to segregated men and women in different spaces. This logic might vary in different societies with different cultural norms. The creation of segregated spaces only for women for instance might be necessary in certain societies where women would not feel comfortable of mixing with men, while it might not be necessary in others.

The discussion on the necessity of Leone to involve and convince her colleagues to join the work on the gender strategy also highlighted the importance of the incorporation of the topic of gender mainstreaming within education programmes, ranging from school to university courses in land use and planning. This lack of knowledge prevents individuals from recognizing the necessity of having specific gender-sensitive activities, approaches, and projects, with the topic of gender inequality often ignored. The same Master in Transition Urbanism does not have a specific course on gender-sensitive urban planning while it focuses on other topics such as climate resilience and sustainability. Laura also stressed the importance of communicating and explaining the importance of the topic properly to the neighbors of the Calico project that could have wanted the land used for the project developed differently. Leone reported the specific case of the street lighting of the canal of Brussels. She conducted a study on how to have lighting which could have prevented dark spots and make the area more inclusive and safer to women and girls, however in the end her advices were not followed with the reason that the lights she proposed could have hurt small animals.

It is important to understand where to draw the line in between environmental sustainability and social needs. It is important to not only design a space but to also care about the programming, management, and leadership of the space. The workshop continued with the discussion of questions on gender-specific aspects and themes related to the city of Brussels. Therefore, an adapted version of the Women’s Engagement in Cities (WEC) framework has been used. The group discussed the methodology. While some supported the idea of “rating” and giving numbers, it was also strongly highlighted that the idea of having to find a consensus and quantifying could be readjusted. It was emphasized that especially in contexts where data is lacking, such quantifications can be of help. Nevertheless, the different considerations that were given per question triggered discussion and were appreciated.

It was also highlighted that personal experiences are often guiding one’s evaluation, nevertheless the group also discussed the importance of taking the experiences and realities of more vulnerable groups into account. The group touched upon 3 questions/dimensions: On safety for women in Brussels: Compared to many other cities, Brussels was evaluated as rather fair. This, however, depends on the point of comparison. The participants avoid various areas in the city (Gare du Midi, non-residential areas). For some Brussels is characterized by too much proximity and violence especially towards women, others do not see the need for women-specific actions. Evaluations span between 4 and 7. It was added that economic opportunities should be part of the safety dimension as well. On tolerance towards women in Brussels It was mentioned that before assessing, a clear definition of “tolerance” would be needed. Different terms popped up: mixed communities or co-existence, with co-existence being interpreted as ignoring others and simply not seeing each other. Different manifestations of tolerance: just a facade, acceptance, interaction. Spatially, Brussels is perceived by most participants as a very segregated city, despite the diversity of languages.

On an institutional level, ULB, for instance, was perceived as rather intolerant. On the accessibility for women to transport systems in Brussels different positions emerged regarding the question. While some did not perceive any discriminatory patterns in the infrastructure of the transport system and the “socio-economic culture”, others highlighted that discrimination permeates both the technical design as well as in the usage of the transport system. As example, biking, train schedules and the new Metro line 3 (30 meters below surface) were discussed. The problem of the latter is mostly seen with respect to safety and was described as a “no man’s line”. Closure The day ended with a short summary and an outlook to the UTC campus on June 02, where all participants are warmly welcomed. Cities Alliance thanks all participants for joining and their valuable input and contributions.

10. Background and Objectives of your Campus: *(Please explain the background and provide the list of objectives your campus aims to achieve)*

Despite a plethora of international discussion on the matter, the global climate crisis is intensifying, continuing to put large burdens on the planet and its people, especially on the most marginalized ones, including women and girls. Cities around the world are increasingly developing climate adaptation and resilience strategies. Since climate change affects men and women differently, these urban adaptation actions need to take on a gendered approach to ensure that proposed solutions do not exacerbate existing gender inequalities in cities. Yet, many climate adaptation plans fail to capitalize on women’s knowledge who are often the first responders when disaster strikes and often hold the role of the household and community educators. It is barely considered that women are more than beneficiaries/vulnerable groups to respond to climate change. Moreover, since women tend to be poorly represented in urban decision-making on climate action, gender dimensions are rarely prioritized in urban policies on climate action and adaptation.

The UTC will be an occasion to discuss this significant issue with urban practitioners, experts from academia, donors, community organizations and local authorities. The main objective of the Campus is to understand how the international community (IOs, EU, academia, practitioners, politicians) can support women-led climate adaptation actions in cities and what is needed in order to improve mainstreaming gender across urban climate adaptation plans. The event will collectively identify a set of concrete recommendations and actions.

During the UTC, local authorities and organizations will showcase some of the existing good practices of women-led local adaptation from diverse geographical areas. Urban development and gender equality experts will explore how to further address the themes of women decision-making in urban policies, as well as the integration of women, girls and other vulnerable groups in the process of co-creation and co-design of urban spaces. Finally, the panelists will discuss the results of the Action Day Lab on the gender-sensitive and climate-resilient planning of the City of Bruxelles (see section). Together with the Action Day and other follow-up events, the UTC will be part of a roadmap that will lead to the World Urban Forum 2022, where results of the discussion on the topic will be presented and showcased. The UTC will be an essential step to strengthen partnerships and build a legacy on the theme.

11. Relation of your Campus to the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals: *(Please explain how the theme of your campus relates and contributes to the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs (maximum 200 words)*

The themes of inclusive, resilient and gender-sensitive cities as well as climate action are central to the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The principles of the NUA explicitly mention gender-responsive and integrated approaches to urban development, and environmental sustainability as two of the main commitments for more sustainable cities and communities. The women-led initiatives for urban development and climate adaptation that will be presented during the UTC are strongly linked to these topics and could be used as best-practices initiatives to both inspire other organizations and local governments, and to pursue additional resources for scaling-up the projects. Moreover, the discussion on gender-sensitive urban development and women lead climate adaptation will ensure further advocacy on the topic at the local and international policy level.

The central themes of the UTC will be especially linked to SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment, 10 on reduced inequalities, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 13 on climate action. However, the UTC can be related to the majority of SDGs targets. The strong academia presence, with the participation of the ULB master students in the Action Day event and at the UTC means the contribution also to the targets of SDG 4 on quality education. The discussion on the topics of gender inequality and climate adaptation at the urban level also significantly encompass SDGs 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9, since most of them relates to issues such as the access to basic services like sanitation, clean water and energy, sustainable housing, and a healthy living environment.

12. The City We Need Now - ACTION AREAS *(Please indicate which actions areas below that your UTC covers)*

1. Health and Well-being
2. Peace and Safety
3. **Climate Adaptation and Resilience**
4. **Inclusion and Gender Equality**
5. Economic Opportunities for All
6. Culture and Identity
7. Local Governance
8. **Urban Planning and Design**
9. Housing, Services and Mobility
10. Learning and Innovation

13. List of Speakers: *(Provide name, job title and organization for each speaker and the moderator)*

Margaux Bonnet, Gender and Development Advisor, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Mar Merita Blat, Gender Expert - Gender Project Officer, Agence Française de Développement Lajana Manandhar, Executive Director, Lumanti Shelter Group - Lalitpur, Nepal Carmen Ledo, Coordinator, Planning and Management Center (CEPLAG), University of San Simon - Cochabamba, Bolivia Chloe Salembier, Co-founder, Angela D Association - Brussels, Belgium Diana Angela Wachira, Programme Officer, Pamoja Trust - Nairobi, Kenya Leone Drapeaud, Project Manager, Perspective Brussels - Brussels, Belgium Angele Khoury - Researcher, ULB Architecture Department Sophie Cottier - Researcher, ULB Architecture Department Moderator: Didier Vancutsem, Associate Professor, ULB Architecture Department

14. KEY RESULTS: *(Explain the results achieved during your campus, in particular how it will impact cities and communities and help implement the SDG and the New Urban Agenda)*

Some of the key messages highlighted during the event were: Inequality has many faces, from the gap in accessing resources, such as water in the city of Cochabamba in Bolivia or land in Kenya, to accessing finance and housing in Nepal and Belgium. Something that emerged as an answer and solution is the set up of women cooperatives, associations and forums where they can gain knowledge, they can organize themselves and finally they can claim better access to rights and resources. The international commitments and efforts to tackle gender inequality and also climate change are multiple and range from advocacy initiatives to operational actions and availability of funding, as showcased by the representatives of the French ministry and development agency. Finally, education and knowledge were identified as essential issues to the mainstreaming of gender in city planning, due to the absence of this subject in many architecture and urban development degrees.

15. SOLUTIONS: (*Describe at least 4 solutions presented in your campus that demonstrate how to accelerate the SDG implementation in cities and communities. Explain WHERE (country, city, area), WHAT (what purpose), HOW (how it is achieved), WHO (by whom and for which beneficiary) and IMPACTS.)*

In Bolivia, Professor Carmen Ledo, from the Bolivian research center CEPLAG of the University of San Simon, shared her research on the lack of access to water of the poor households of Cochabamba, highlighting especially the vulnerability of women and girls in the informal areas of the city where water can cost 10 times more than the formal city. She stated that for the situation to improve it is necessary to create a multi-stakeholder approach and the creation of a dialogue between the government and the local informal communities. This would facilitate the inclusion of the vulnerable neighbors in the formal city. Lajana Manandhar from the Nepalese NGO Lumanthi showed the role of community saving and credit cooperatives in supporting women to improve their access to resources, finance, and housing, as well as their adaptive capacity. Through this approach, Lumanthi has managed to reach and support 40000 women in 41 cooperatives, for instance, by giving them credit to rent water pumping services in moments of draught. Diana Wachira from the NGO Pamoja Trust highlighted the strong level of inequality that women face in Kenyan informal settlements, such as the unequal access to land and resources and the constantly shifting urban ecosystem that exposes women to the environmental and socio-economic impacts of climate change. Pamoja trust contributes to tackle this issue through different initiatives, including organizing women through the Women Land Right Movement and local community strategic plans that link to the national level one. Chloé Salembier from the Belgian Association Angela D presented the CaLiCo project which aims to support women through integrating a gender-approach into social housing and care and help them organize.

16. GAME CHANGERS: *(Describe at least 2 INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS presented in your campus that demonstrate how to accelerate the SDG implementation in cities and communities.* *Explain WHERE (country, city, area), WHAT (what purpose), HOW (how it is achieved), WHO (by whom and for which beneficiary) and IMPACTS.)*

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17. RECOMMENDATIONS - NEW URBAN AGENDA

*RECOMMEND which areas of the New Urban Agenda should be PRIORITIZED in the next 5 years (SHORT/MEDIUM term) and 15 years (LONG term):*

In the short/medium term, it would be essential to focus on areas such as infrastructure, climate action due to their urgency. In the longer term it would be important to focus on issues such as livelihoods, gender equality and education, because these are theme that can be gradually influenced through a constant action. Both short term and long-term areas are of extreme importance in creating more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities.

18. STRENGTHENING - NEW URBAN AGENDA: *EXPLAIN which areas of the New Urban Agenda should be STRENGTHENED in the next 5 years (SHORT/MEDIUM term) and 15 years (LONG term) and HOW:*

Areas such as gender inclusion in climate action and infrastructure planning can be developed through a process of advocacy that must be accompanied by the results and evidence of successful projects and initiatives on the ground. The involvement of local organizations as we did in our UTC, together with academic institutions and governments at different levels is essential to plan and implement projects that consider the needs and priorities of women and girls in city development as well as in climate adaptation. The inclusion of donors in decision making processes is also important due to the necessity of finance for cities and civil society organizations to implement initiatives.

19. COMMITMENTS: *List a set of clearly defined commitments by stakeholders involved in the proposed priority actions (individual and joined commitments).*

Margaux Bonnet and Mar Merita Blat, representing the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement respectively reinforced France’s national and international commitment to advance gender equality and fight climate change. Ms. Bonnet presented the feminist framework of French diplomacy, highlighting the Generation Equality Forum hosted in Paris together with Mexico in 2021 as an important milestone for the country’s efforts and progresses towards gender equality, as well as the legacy created by the Paris Agreement at COP21 and the adoption of the Gender Action Plan at COP23. She also remarked that 75% of France’s Official Development Assistance has now at least one main objective related to achieving gender equality. Ms. Merita Blat showcased AFD’s gender and climate mainstreaming approach to development projects. She also presented some of the AFD projects on the nexus between climate action and gender equality, such as the CITIES II, to improve living conditions of Indian cities through climate-responsive urban projects, and the GANDHARBPUR projects in Bangladesh to improve drinking water supply and Dakka’s vulnerable population living conditions.

23. MEDIAS: *(Provide links to articles or stories published in relation to this UTC)*

https://twitter.com/urbancampaign/status/1532310126463528961?s=20&t=e2BJWK8oS1eBoXaOxqP2eg https://twitter.com/Margaux\_Perle/status/1532311029505474561?s=20&t=e2BJWK8oS1eBoXaOxqP2eg https://www.citiesalliance.org/newsroom/events/urban-thinkers-campus-towards-gender-balanced-urban-development

24. PHOTOS: *(Please provide a link to pictures that best illustrate your event (preferably using Flickr, otherwise through Google or Dropbox folders)*

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MrkfAxrm3Rz9NzmZzTXAZVyL90HLfx6I?usp=sharing