

World Future Council Comments on Habitat III Policy Paper Framework 8

Urban Ecology and Resilience

Recognizing the need for *Regenerative* Cities

Rationale:

The Habitat III Policy Paper Framework 8 tackles in detail many of the most urgent issues with regard to urban ecology and resilience, whose significance and relevance is entirely shared and supported by the World Future Council (WFC). However, as extensively deliberated in several World Future Council Reports and major international events such as the WFC yearly Future of Cities Forums, there is a growing understanding that greater emphasis should be placed on the ability of cities to actively contribute to the **regeneration** of the natural resources and damaged ecosystems from which they depend. The concept of the *regenerative city* is included in the principles for the New Urban Paradigm as outlined in *The City We Need* document compiled by the UN-Habitat advocacy and partnership platform the World Urban Campaign. *The City We Need*, whose aim is to set key principles and establish essential paths for building a New Urban Agenda towards the Habitat III conference, states that “*the city we need is a regenerative city*”

Comment:

The World Future Council therefore wishes to formally propose the integration of the concept of the **Regenerative City** in the Policy Paper Framework 8- Urban Ecology and Resilience.

Suggested additions to the text:

More specifically, the concept of the *Regenerative City* should be integrated in the Vision part of Section 1: Challenges. In this section we propose the following additions (in italics):

iii. The city will need to maximize the advantages of its natural environment *and will need to actively contribute to the regeneration of the natural resources and surrounding damaged ecosystems from which it depends.*

Alternatively the concept could also be included as a separate additional point as follows:

ix. The future city will be a regenerative city able to regenerate much of the resources it consumes by shifting its consumption patterns from linear to circular and by actively improving the degraded conditions of its supporting ecosystems.

The concept of the *Regenerative City* should also be included in the Priorities section, more specifically:

In section 2.b.2, the following point could be added:

x. Policy needs to promote a regenerative type of urban development that supports the regeneration of the resources consumed by the city and favours the development of a circular economy

In section 2.b.3, the following point could be added:

xi. Promote education and capacity building on how to transform cities from linear systems that only consume and discard resources to regenerative, circular systems that are able to mimic nature's circular metabolism and operate in a closed-loop system converting waste outputs into valuable inputs

In section 2.b.4, the following point could be added:

xii. Planning should prioritize the regeneration and refurbishment of existing urban sites rather than the expansion and sprawling of cities into virgin land.

xiii. Planning should follow a set of minimum green areas requirement to safeguard the resilience and the ecosystem integrity of the city.

In section 2.b.7, the following point could be added:

vii. Promote the regeneration of urban and peri-urban ecosystems

Further background:

The *Regenerative City* can be defined as a city that regenerates the resources it consumes by maintaining an environmentally enhancing, restorative relationship with the

ecosystems from which it draws resources for its sustenance. Considering the unprecedented scale at which cities consume and discard resources and how many cities have already damaged much of their sustaining ecosystems, it is clear that sustaining the current status is not sufficient. A further step is needed. This means moving beyond a restrictive definition of sustainability and embrace a broader model of urban development that puts the emphasis on the need for cities not to only to sustain but to regenerate the natural resources they consume and actively improve the degraded conditions of their supporting ecosystems. This will require a switch in paradigm away from the old linear metabolism – which allows cities to operate within an isolated segment of the resource cycle – to a new circular metabolism. Regenerative urban development seeks to mimic the circular metabolic systems found in nature where all waste becomes organic nutrients for new growth. In regenerative cities priority is given to closing the urban resource cycle which means finding value in outputs that are conventionally regarded as waste and using them as resource inputs in local and regional production systems.

For further details and references to the concept of Regenerative Cities, see list below:

- UN-Habitat (2013). The City We Need. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme.
<http://unhabitat.org/the-future-we-want-the-city-we-need/#>
- Regenerative City
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regenerative_city
- H. Girardet, S. Schurig, A. Leidreiter and F. Woo, “Towards the Regenerative City,” World Future Council , Hamburg, 2013.
http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Towards_Regenerative_Cities_web_01.pdf
- F. Woo, J. Wortmann, S. Schurig and A. Leidreiter, “Regenerative Urban Development: A Roadmap to the City We Need,” World Future Council, Hamburg, 2014.

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[http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/WFC_Report_2014 -
_Regenerative Urban Development A Roadmap to the City We Need.pdf](http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/WFC_Report_2014_-_Regenerative_Urban_Development_A_Roadmap_to_the_City_We_Need.pdf)

- World Future Council, “Imagine a Regenerative City,” World Future Council, Hamburg, 2014.

[http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Climate and Energy/Cities/Imagine A Regenerative City - FCF Report 2014 - digital.pdf](http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Climate_and_Energy/Cities/Imagine_A_Regenerative_City_-_FCF_Report_2014_-_digital.pdf)

- H. Girardet, Creating Regenerative Cities, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015.