"Connect, Integrate, and Humanize: Cities Facing the Challenge of Generating Community"

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CONCEPT NOTE

Session 12

Facing the Challenges of Informal Settlements

Date: May 23, 2025

Time: 9am-10:30am

Venue: UNC Auditorium, UNC Cultural Center, Córdoba, Argentina

Thematic Area: Community Building ⌄

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BACKGROUND

Informal settlements are at the heart of the urbanization challenge, home to millions who face precarious living conditions, limited access to services, and systemic exclusion from decision-making processes. Traditional governance approaches have often failed to recognize the agency of communities living in informality, leading to top-down policies that do not reflect their needs or realities. In response, a **care-centered approach** to governance is emerging—one that prioritizes **participation, co-responsibility, and the recognition of informal communities as key actors in urban transformation**.

This session explores how local governments can govern with care, ensuring that informal settlement residents are not merely beneficiaries of policies but active co-creators of solutions. It builds on the understanding that **participatory governance is not only about consultation but about creating sustained mechanisms for decision-making, resource allocation, and accountability**. It also acknowledges the

political challenges that local leaders face in balancing short-term governance cycles with the long-term structural changes required for inclusion.

At the same time, technical expertise plays a crucial role in translating political commitments into actionable strategies. Rights-based legal frameworks, innovative urban planning tools, and evidence-based policy approaches can help cities **institutionalize participation, ensure land tenure security, and integrate informal settlements into the urban fabric without displacing communities**. This requires an intersectional lens that considers **gender, human rights, economic inequalities, and environmental vulnerabilities**, ensuring that policies truly respond to the lived experiences of those in informality. Moreover, **care-centered approaches to governance** must be linked to **human rights**, as addressing informality through human rights-based approaches is key to achieving **social inclusion**. This ensures that policies not only support basic needs but also protect the dignity and rights of marginalized communities, fostering long-term empowerment and equality.

By bringing together political and technical perspectives, this session seeks to bridge the gap between **commitment and implementation**, offering a space for dialogue on **how participatory governance can be scaled, funded, and sustained in the face of rapid urbanization and climate change**. It will highlight experiences from different regions, showcasing what works, what barriers remain, and how a care-centered governance model can reshape urban futures.

OBJECTIVES

This session aims to **build collective knowledge** on participatory governance in informal settlements by bringing together local leaders and technical experts to exchange experiences, challenges, and innovative approaches. It seeks to **foster trust** between policymakers, practitioners, and community representatives, emphasizing the importance of co-creation in addressing informality. By **sparking new ideas**, the discussion will explore how a care-centered approach to governance can lead to more inclusive, rights-based urban policies. Additionally, the session will **take stock of current practices**, identifying what is working, what barriers remain, and how these can be overcome through institutional and technical innovations. Finally, insights from this exchange will **inform the writing of an academic article (Urbanisation Journal)** on participatory governance in informal settlements.

METHODOLOGY

This **90-minute presentation panel** will feature two rounds of dynamic discussion, bringing together **eight panelists—four political leaders** and **four technical experts**—to explore solutions at the intersection of policy and practice. The **first round** will focus on high-level political perspectives, where political panelists will outline their priorities and

visions. The **second round** will shift to a technical exchange, with experts responding to political statements by providing data-driven insights, innovative approaches, and implementation strategies. An interactive Q&A session will follow, encouraging engagement from the audience.

SPEAKERS

Moderation:

- **Pablo Sebastián Mariani,** Program Manager, UCLG

Political Panel:

- **Carolina Basualdo,** Mayor of Despeñaderos, Argentina
- **Arturo Rey Jara Espinoza,** mayor of the district of Yhu, Paraguay

Technical Panel:

- **Christina Schade,** Coordinator of the Global Task Force on Informality, Cities Alliance
- **Maria Carrizosa,** Associate Director, Global Housing Policy, Habitat for Humanity
- **Fernanda García Monticelli**, Directora de la Dirección de Polos Productivos, Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos, Provincia de Buenos Aires. Integrante del Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos (MTE).
- **Cynthia Goytia,** Director, Centre for Urban and Housing Policy Research (CIPUV), Universidad Torcuato di Tella
- **Pablo Vitale,** Director, Asociación Civil Igualdad y Justicia (ACIJ)

Session rapporteur:

- **Adriá Duarte,** Head of the OIDP

AGENDA

Time	Segment	Speaker(s)
0:00 – 0:10	**Opening, Context Setting, Objectives**	Moderator introduces session goals, methodology, and key themes (7 min) Moderator: Pablo Sebastián Mariani (UCLG)
0:10 – 0:40	**Round 1 – Political Perspectives: Commitments & Challenges**	**Political Panel**
	Opening Statements (7 min each)	Carolina Basualdo (Argentina), Macarena Ripamonti (Chile), African Mayor, ASPAC Mayor
	Moderator Follow-up & Linking Points (2 min)	Moderator summarizes key challenges and commitments
0:40 – 1:10	**Round 2 – Technical Responses & Policy Solutions**	**Technical Panel**
	Expert Responses (7 min each)	Margarita Greene, Brenda Pérez Castro, Fernanda García Monticelli, Pablo Vitale
	Moderator Follow-up & Key Insights (2 min)	Moderator highlights intersections between political and technical perspectives
1:10 – 1:20	**Interactive Q&A Session**	Open to audience
1:20 – 1:30	**Session Rapporteur**	Summarizes key messages and relevance of the session to the IOPD (7 min) Adriá Duarte, Head of the OIDP
	Moderator Wrap-Up	Moderator (3 min)