Global Campus Europe

UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG

European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation
A.Y. 2024/2025

Transnational City Networks and the Human Right to Housing

Local Responses to Europe's Housing Crisis

Author: Anna Isabel César Wekking
Supervisor: Lindsay Flynn

Word Count Declaration: 29785

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful for the EMA team, all the visiting professors at the Global Campus, and the University of Luxembourg. This year was an incredible experience from which I leave with invaluable new knowledge, inspiration and friendships.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Lindsay Flynn for her time and guidance, especially at the start of the writing process.

A special thanks to Chiara Aguilar and Itziar Murillas for their support and encouragement, I will miss our daily lunch, coffee breaks and adventures in Luxembourg.

To my mom, dad and sister, who were there for me through good and bad days, always believed in me and pushed me to be better.

ABSTRACT

Europe's escalating housing crisis, largely driven by unaffordability and financialization, has challenged the fulfillment of the human right to adequate housing. Transnational city networks (TCNs) have become influential in addressing global challenges such as migration and climate change through their engagement with human rights, yet their role in housing policy has not yet been examined. This thesis addresses this gap investigating how TCNs' aims and engagement with the right to housing shape cities' responses to housing financialization, specifically looking into human rights-based housing policies. Through the analysis of various TCNs' documents and interviews with city officials, the thesis examines TCNs' strategies used when confronting housing challenges, how they understand and frame the right to housing and how it influences local housing policies. The research highlights TCNs jurisgenerative capacities framing the right to housing through dignity, inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals, influencing cities' participatory, affordable and social housing policies to counter financialization. Instead of distancing themselves from states, TCNs consistently call for support and collaboration from national and international institutions to address housing challenges. Their cooperative emphasis reflects cities' need for funding and their dependency on states' resources and capacity. Without consistent national and international support, cities alone are limited in their ability to address financialization structures and fulfill the right to housing.

Key words: *Transnational city networks, Right to housing, Cities, Financialization, Housing crisis.*

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CFH	Cities for Adequate Housing
EU	European Union
GPM	Global Parliament of Mayors
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, now known as Local Governments for Sustainability
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Special Rapporteur
TCN	Transnational City Network
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

Limited housing availability, rising rents and diminished affordability are pressuring Europe's continued housing crisis across the continent. According to the European Parliament, between 2015 and 2023, the housing prices in the EU have risen on average to 48% (European Parliament, 2024). Similarly, the cost of rents has also risen on an average of 18% during the same period of time. Looking into countries, Greece experienced a 37% rise, Ireland saw a rise up to 84% and Lithuania's average rent increased by 144% (Henley, 2024). In order to measure whether costs of housing are too high, the cap of disposable income percentage destined to housing is placed at 40%, a limit which was exceeded by 10.6% of households in European cities in 2023 (Ibis.). The housing crisis is not a product of recent years, it has rather been developing through decades. What have been the major sources for the rising prices and lack of affordable homes? Many scholars have explained the crisis through the terms of financialization or commodification, which explains the dominance of financial markets and corporations in the housing sector, leaving little room for state intervention or regulation (Kumnig & and Litschauer, 2025). Financialization of housing dramatically increased through the capitalistic and neoliberal ideologies which promoted reliance on the market for resource distribution (Potts, 2020), turning housing into a capital investment and wealth accumulator for profit making rather than a social right (Leijten & de Bel, 2020).

Cities and their local governments have always had a role in the housing sector, as the funding provided from the state had to be properly planned, built and managed by them (Morris, 2021). The creation of a globalized financial market for housing attracted demand from both local and foreign investors from the already strained housing availability, which made the costs of renting in the inner city higher and slowly unaffordable (Ibis.). Local governments had to engage with the competition, creating opportunities for investments in central city housing areas, favoring projects to attract big corporations and boosting marketing to international actors (Rolnik, 2013). Nowadays, the housing crisis is most deeply felt in popular capital cities which attract people due to work opportunities, amenities and cultural activities (Ellen, 2019).

As markets are insensitive to the need for housing and exacerbate social inequalities, they stand directly at odds with human rights frameworks providing for universal protection to the right to housing (Mikkola, 2008). European countries have committed themselves to multiple

international treaties protecting the right to housing and the need for housing to be accessible, affordable, secure and universal. Examples are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which comprises housing in the right to an adequate standard of living in article 11 (United Nations, 1966). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment Nr.4 also specifies the obligations of states in terms of the right to housing. Within the European System, the European Social Charter also protects the right to housing in article 31 (Council of Europe, 1996). International and Human rights law place much responsibility on the states to fulfill their obligations. For social rights specifically, they have a positive obligation to achieve their progressive realization. Nevertheless, national governments have been active supporters of financialization through the introduction of legislation and policies promoting privatization and marketization (Leijten & de Bel, 2020). States' neoliberal transformations and the cut of state funding for housing protections such as social housing made lower income groups extremely vulnerable and more susceptible to violations of the right to housing (Kadi & Ronald, 2014).

Recently, the relationship between national and local governments has shifted, in which local governments are increasingly exercising more influence and political power to implement progressive policies and laws at the local level (Foster & Swiney, 2020). This recent shift has also been recorded in relation to the housing challenges. National governments' lack of social policies and minimized market interventions have pushed cities to become active in ensuring housing affordability and protection to the right to housing. Scholars such as Ellen have looked into the adoption of local housing plans in US cities as commitments to support affordable housing (2019). She argues that local governments have increasingly played an important role in housing policies, as they are in a better position to understand the populations needs and market conditions to support targeted policies. As cities are diverse, there is no housing policy fitting to every city, therefore specific housing plans for each city are favorable (Ibis.). Similarly, Morris analyses the initiatives of Australian cities to improve the housing crisis despite the lack of efforts of the national government, by focusing on Sydney's affordable housing target for 2030 (2021). Finally, Leijten and De Bel have highlighted the recent and innovative local level efforts to engage with the financialization of housing by taking human rights law as an example. They argue there is potential for local governments to change perspectives on housing policies through international legal standards, positioning housing as a human right beyond its ability to create profit (2020). Across

the world, cities have tried to reclaim and realize the right to housing by forming joint movements and networks pushing for new housing strategies across local governments in line with human rights and SDGs (Ibis.). Consequently, transnational city networks (TCNs) have become a new focus for academia, assessing their influence, potential and challenges. Foster and Swiney argue that cities have started forming alliances with other sub-national actors, jointly working on shaping national and international policies addressing global issues such as migration and climate change, something which a few years back would have been the sole responsibility of states (2020). City networks are being discussed as 'powerful agenda setters' as they provide local governments a platform to connect, diffuse and adopt policies addressing common concerns (Ibis.) Furthermore, Güntner and Gebhardt explain how city networks can act downwards by adopting international or EU policies and norms, horizontally by transferring policies from city to city or upwards by uploading local policies to international institutions, all mutually reinforcing strategies influencing cities local engagement and visibility at the international level (2022).

Multiple studies have addressed the role of TCNs' influence on policies, yet they have mainly focused on areas of the environment, climate change and migration (Güntner & Gebhardt, 2022), leaving a significant gap in how these networks could play a role in shaping housing policies amid the housing crisis. Recently, mayors from the Eurocities Network such as Amsterdam, Barcelona and Budapest met the new EU Commissioner on Housing and Energy to call for more action regarding the housing crisis (Eurocities, 2025). During the meeting, they emphasized the importance of cities in their commitment tackling the housing affordability crisis and called on the fundamental right to housing to maintain housing as a top priority in the EU. Further mobilization regarding housing at the international level has also increased, since recently human rights bodies have started to engage with the housing crisis and housing financialization more critically (Leijten & de Bel, 2020). Given the growing importance of transnational city networks in shaping local and international decision-making and the increasing focus on the housing crisis and financialization, this research aims to contribute to the field by connecting recent literature on transnational city networks, the housing crisis and international legal frameworks on the right to housing. It specifically examines the potential of transnational city networks and the role of local governments in addressing the housing crisis through a human rights lens. Therefore, the thesis will answer the question: How do transnational city networks' aims and engagement with the right to housing shape cities' responses to housing financialization? This research will specifically

analyze what strategies, in the form of aims and tools, transnational city networks use when confronting housing challenges. It will also explore how these networks understand and translate the right to housing as a human rights framework, influencing cities' responses to the housing crisis and housing financialization. Specifically, 'cities' responses' refers to cities' human rights-based housing policies and examines how they reflect the right to housing as understood by transnational city networks.

Through the analysis of 129 TCN documents between the years of 2015-2025 and two interviews with city officials, the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 1 analyzes the aims and instruments of TCNs related to housing, chapter 2 examines how TCNs interpret the right to housing locally, chapter 3 identifies the main challenges in relation to the right to housing and financialization and chapter 4 assesses the influence on cities' housing policies shaping local responses to financialization.

This thesis argues that TCNs have successfully shaped cities' human rights-based responses to the housing crisis and housing financialization, through calling for close collaboration and support, and by creating a right to housing framework grounded in dignity, community and the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, without sustained and robust national and international cooperation, specifically through the allocation of resources, cities will remain limited in their ability to fully address the structural drivers of financialization and implement the right to housing.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Right to Housing

When we think of human rights, we often focus on civil and political rights such as freedom of expression and the right to life. However, social rights, such as the right to work and the right to an adequate standard of living are just as essential since they contribute to the fulfillment of civil rights and dignity. Consequently, the right to housing is more than just access to shelter, but it should provide for privacy, ability to participate in social life and leading a decent life (Kreide, 2022). According to the former Special Rapporteur, the right to housing is at its core the right to live in dignity and security (Farha, 2017). The right to housing can be found in many international documents, and it was first mentioned in Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Right. Here, the right to housing is comprised in the right to an adequate standard of living, which also ensures the right to food, clothing and medical care (United Nations, 1948). The right to an adequate standard of living is also enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, stating that the state parties must 'recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.' (United Nations, 1966, art. 11(1)). In the European context, the revised European Social Charter specifically mentions the right to housing in article 31, (1) promoting access to housing of an adequate standard, (2) ensuring and reducing homelessness and (3) making the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources (Council of Europe, 1996).

In order to clarify the obligations of states, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights published the General Comment nr.4 on the minimum guarantees of right to adequate housing (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). The comment specifically mentions 7 factors which should be considered when determining housing as 'adequate' regardless of the context (United Nations, 1991, para. 8). The first one is legal security of tenure, which calls for states to take immediate measures to guarantee of legal protection against forced evictions or similar threats (para. 8(a)). Paragraph 8(b) focuses on the proper 'availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure' to ensure health, security, comfort and nutrition, such as having access to drinking

water, have energy for cooking, heating and light as well as having food storage (United Nations, 1991). Central to this research, the comment ensures affordability in the sense that housing costs should not compromise the ability of the household to attain other basic needs. Housing costs should be proportionate to income levels and there should be an availability of housing subsidies and other forms of housing finance reflecting housing needs alongside tenants' protection of unreasonable rent increases (para 8(c)). Habitability refers to guaranteeing an adequate space and protection against natural changes of weather and diseases, emphasizing the health and living conditions protection of the people inside the buildings (para 8(d)). Moreover, adequate housing needs to be accessible for all groups in society, and vulnerable groups should be considered as a priority where housing takes their special needs into account (para 8(e)). Location is another important factor as housing should be close to 'employment options, health care services, schools, childcare centers and other social facilities.' (para 8(f)). Finally, housing should be culturally adequate allowing the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing, something which should not be given up on in modernization processes (para 8(g)).

Alongside specific housing standards the right to housing should fulfill, as a social right states also have the obligation to meet their positive obligations. As social rights have a stronger need for positive action of states in comparison to civil and political rights, the duty of states to progressive realization is crucial to fulfill the right to housing. Article 2(1) of the UN covenant of economic, social and cultural rights states that each party should undertake steps […] to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights […] by all appropriate means' (United Nations, 1966). Acknowledging the full commitment to social rights requires resources which might be limited, yet states are still expected to take effective steps towards the realization of the rights. The principles of non-discrimination and equality are fundamental to the realization of the right to housing in order for it to apply to everyone (United Nations, 1996, Article 2(2).

The right to housing is one of the most basic human rights and its fulfillment is crucial for the realization of other rights, therefore, the international community has enshrined it in multiple authoritative documents to ensure its protection. However, the current housing crisis has extremely weakened the right, as rising costs and lack of affordability overburden families, exacerbate discrimination and worsen existing social inequalities. The right to housing is facing many challenges due to the escalating crisis, where housing is being stripped away from its social

function and turned into a commodity and a tradeable financial asset (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). Financialization has deep effects on the realization of the right to housing, which origins and repercussions will be addressed in the following section.

Housing Affordability and the Right to Housing

In one recent report of the current Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, Rajagopal emphasized housing affordability as one of the key components to the right to adequate housing, as the lack of affordability severely impacts all other aspects outlined in the comment nr.4 of the CESCR (2023). For instance, housing unaffordability pushes people to live in unregulated and uninhabitable housing, compromising crucial standards such as services, materials, proper infrastructure and overall protection. Furthermore, unaffordability is connected to other human rights, such as the right to food and drinking water, health, education and work, and it contributes to the segregation of groups who can and cannot afford the skyrocketing prices of housing (Rajagopal, 2023). In the report, Rajagopal also outlines crucial aspects to ensure housing affordability. He emphasizes on acknowledging the interconnectedness of affordability with other fundamental needs for an adequate standard of living and other civil and political rights, in order to guarantee a holistic perspective of adequate housing. Moreover, there is a need for a comprehensive housing benefit system, acknowledging the dynamic nature of affordability by addressing timely access to housing benefits and addressing other affordability aspects such as upfront costs and utilities (Ibis.)

Housing Financialization and De-commodification

As the housing crisis continues to expand through the rising lack of affordable adequate housing, scholars have explained the crisis through the concepts of financialization, commodification and de-commodification. The concept of financialization in housing is used to explain the expanding role and dominance of the financial markets and corporations in the area encouraging private profit-interests (Kumnig & and Litschauer, 2025). In other words, the role of the state as regulator is diminished through increased privatization and leaves housing at the mercy

of the market. Housing financialization is closely connected to housing commodification, which describes the ways in which housing within its social function as a place to live comes as secondary to its capital and profit-accumulation role as real estate (Rogers et al., 2018). Both concepts are deeply interrelated yet have a slightly different focus. Financialization processes focus on financial actors and organizations that drive the accumulation of capital through housing, and their actions contribute to the commodification of housing, further transforming housing as a vehicle to store capital (Ibis.).

On the other hand, de-commodification is characterized as a process in which the reliance on the market is diminished, allowing people to leave the market if needed (Flynn, 2023). Housing de-commodification aims to remove housing from the market forces and foreground its social good and public service characteristics, extending its availability to lower income and vulnerable groups (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). De-commodification therefore needs a bigger influence of the state in the housing market, by providing rental regulations protecting tenants, social housing or subsidies reducing the costs of housing (Flynn, 2023).

In this context, housing policies have played an important role on the degree of tension between financialization, commodification and de-commodification, helping to shape the market, housing availability, prices and the target audience (Kadi & Ronald, 2014). Throughout history, housing has been shaped predominantly by the market, however, the increased financialization of housing has transformed the function of a house as a right and a basic need to a commodity at the reach of a few used for investment and profit (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). Financialization of housing represents a dramatic shift of the goal and function of housing across the world in only a few years and has been deeply embedded with capitalists and neoliberal processes, which will be discussed in the following section.

Capitalism and Neoliberalism

Potts identifies the first major contribution to the financialization of housing as the ‘current hegemony of the capitalist mode of production’ across the globe (Potts, 2020; p.3). As capitalism became globalized and foregrounded the operation of markets via supply and demand to determine incomes and prices, the protection of private property and the importance of profit production, it simultaneously became the underlying force determining housing outcomes (Potts, 2020). The

reliance on capitalism boosted fierce competition for profit and slowly stripped protections of vulnerable and lower-income groups in the housing sector away.

This process was only heightened with the introduction of the neoliberal ideology in the 1980s and 90s, which promoted a stronger reliance on the market for resource distribution and reduced the role of the government even more (Ibis.). Neoliberalism promoted cuts on public expenditure, which reduced the level of de-commodification in housing by removing housing programmes for lower income groups, such as social rental housing and subsidies while expanding supply in private markets and promoting of homeownership (Kadi & Ronald, 2014). Under neoliberalism, housing became one of the biggest tools for investment during the economic boom, which later resulted in one of the main factors influencing the 2008 economic crisis.

As governments cut on public spending, they encouraged the access of low-income households to homeownership to enhance their financial assets while cutting their reliance on government aid (Rolnik, 2013). The neoliberal ideology of homeownership spread internationally, blurring the division between local, national and international processes (Aalbers, 2015). Consequently, the global market turned housing into a 'tradeable debt' on the financial market, which impacted the affordability of rents and real estate now compared to global prices (Rolnik, 2013). On the other hand, new policies on mortgage markets, such as reduction of interest rates and relaxing credit controls allowed the private sector to provide mortgages to households that would normally not afford it. These policies made financial actors powerful but vulnerable, expanded debt on households and contributed to the expansion of a 'financial bubble' (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). Housing became a financial asset and also a source of economic risk, which had severe repercussions on the right to housing before and after the financial crash of 2008, as millions of households were affected unable to pay their mortgage, resulting in evictions and homelessness (Ibis.).

Financialization and Human Rights Challenges

The repercussions of the neoliberal model on housing expand beyond the consequences of the financial crisis, as it secured the role of housing investment as an asset in a globalized financial market based on the belief that it was the most rational and effective for its distribution (Rolnik, 2013). This idea that the market could be self-sufficient in providing housing led to a decline in

public housing and restricted basic housing to affluent segments of society, leaving the vulnerable groups behind (Rajagopal, 2023). Real estate is now viewed as one of the biggest investment and wealth accumulation assets for profit making, highlighted after the financial crisis opened an opportunity for investors to buy properties for cheaper prices (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). The big amounts of money that are put into the housing markets are directly at odds with the lack of adequate housing conditions, as financial actors disregard housing needs for the population in search for more profit, investing in luxury and short-term accommodation rather than affordable housing and seeing rights holders as mere clients, sidelining crucial human rights aspects such as dignity, equality and non-discrimination (Ibis.)

The increasing negative impact of housing financialization has widened the gap between international norms and standards and the practice and realities on the ground, turning housing into battleground where the lack of adequate and affordable accommodation keeps widening (Farha, 2014). Financialization has stripped housing from its social function and has turned it into an economic good for wealth investment and profit (Kreide, 2022), heightening rents and housing prices, contributing to the global lack of affordable housing, weakening welfare protections and increasing social inequality (Potts, 2020). This has made millions struggle to find adequate housing, living in substandard housing conditions, facing discrimination and at risk of homelessness (United Nations Secretary-General, 2024). According to the 2023 report of the Special Rapporteur to the right to housing, 1.6 billion people were residing in inadequate dwellings without proper access to water, sanitation and electricity, as housing costs rise faster than low and middle incomes of families globally (Rajagopal, 2023). Amid the housing crisis, states who are the main duty holders under international and human rights law and have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to housing, have instead contributed to its violation by encouraging the dominance of the private sector in housing, deregulating rental markets and allowing housing to be catered only to the wealthy (Farha, 2019).

Human Rights as the Solution to Financialization?

As explained throughout this framework, housing financialization, commodification and the housing crisis are clearly connected with the right to adequate housing. Even though financialization has not usually been seen though a human rights perspective, human rights bodies

have started to confront the issue more directly, presenting reports with possible solutions (Leijten & De Bel, 2020). At the local level, experiencing the biggest effects of the housing crisis, cities are also looking towards human rights when confronting financialization. The right to housing stands in direct contradiction with the financialization of housing used to make the biggest profit and represents a new perspective with potential to alleviate the crisis (Kreide, 2022). In order to reach the right to adequate housing, authorities need to regulate, direct and engage with private and financial actors, ensuring there is no violations of rights and ensuring that their actions are consistent with the realization of the right to housing (Farha, 2017). Human Rights obligations are normally seen as the sole obligation of states, yet, for many rights, including the right to adequate housing, there are many stakeholders involved, creating a complex playing field. Therefore, national governments can't and should not be seen as the only relevant actors engaging with and implementing human rights (Farha, 2014). Furthermore, cities are at the front lines of the housing crisis and have been pushed to engage with possible solutions to the crisis. Therefore, the next section will dive into the call for local governments engagement with human rights and specifically, the right to housing.

Local Governments and the Human Right to Housing

The Former Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, Lelani Farha (2014-2020), was the first to emphasize on the importance of local governments for the fulfillment of the right to adequate housing. She argues that local governments often have significant authority in housing processes and therefore should share responsibility in upholding the right with national governments (Farha, 2014). A number of housing policies and programme decisions are made at the local level, such as housing budgeting, zoning, planning and provision of rent subsidies and regulation of services. Through decentralization and increasing diversification in governance structures, there has been a bigger delegation of responsibilities and authority to local actors related to the right to housing (Ibis.). Local governments have become a piece of a complex network involving national and global actors such as transnational corporations, financial institutions and UN agencies, all influencing the right to housing. UN-Habitat, a UN agency promoting sustainable urban development in cities aiming to support local governments in creating sustainable, inclusive and affordable cities has also been active in calling for local and regional governments to expand

access to safe, sustainable, adequate and affordable housing in holistic housing strategies while strengthening cooperation with national governments (UN Habitat, 2023). In her 2019 guidelines, Lelani Farha emphasized the importance of ensuring capacity and accountability of local governments to realize the right to housing, as they play an essential role in housing policies and have the advantage of being the closest to the people and vulnerable communities. Consequently, cities have a unique opportunity for participatory decision-making and finding inclusive and inventive solutions addressing local needs (Farha, 2019). A human rights approach to housing includes the recognition of the position local governments hold between rights holders and multi-level governance systems (Farha, 2014). For cities to realize their potential, the state should ensure proper funding, resources and capacity support. Finally, Farha also encourages local governments to adopt local charters protecting the right to housing or establishing offices addressing human rights complaints (Ibis.).

Local Government challenges realizing the right to housing

Even though local governments are framed as important stakeholders needed to ensure the right to housing, international UN bodies have also outlined their shortcomings the reasons behind their challenges. In the various reports of the former Special Rapporteur, Farha states that it is of utmost importance that local governments are fully aware of their obligations with respect to the right to adequate housing (2014). The correct implementation of the right to housing ultimately lies on the responsibilities of local governments acting in partnership and close collaboration with the state, private companies and other local organizations. Nevertheless, local governments are often unaware of their obligations under the right. Moreover, when cities are allocated responsibilities, their obligations don't match the amount of resources, training and capacity to fulfill them (Farha, 2019). National governments often refrain from providing proper funding to cities tackling housing challenges, alongside necessary training and briefing of their obligations and means to achieve them. Local governments have to rely heavily on the national government to provide them with the necessary resources and attention in order to effectively address the housing crisis, a requirement which is increasingly unmet by states due to their conservative approach to international challenges, leading them to move away from human rights standards in their policies (Oomen, 2017).

Lacking enough support from their state to combat the housing crisis, local governments should be pushed to organize themselves independently from their national governments, attempting to engage with different stakeholders and initiatives, empowering their leverage and power in international challenges (Farha, 2014). What has been encouraged and recorded by the Special Rapporteur regarding local governments' activism in ensuring the right to housing has increasingly been analyzed and explained in academic circles, as local governments have effectively taken a stance addressing international challenges locally, oftentimes through engagement with human rights while simultaneously drifting away from their national counterpart (Oomen & Baumgärtel, 2018). The next section will engage with the existing literature on local governments mobilization when it comes to international challenges,[1] presenting a useful framework applicable to yet another challenge: the housing crisis.

Explaining the 'Local Turn'

Many researchers have theorized the so called 'local turn' in migration and climate change challenges tackled by local governments. Specifically in migration, the emerging 'local turn' has been embedded in discussions of migration management and policy development, where cities have claimed a central role (Oomen, 2019). Similarly, other scholars have emphasized how cities have become more active in defining their policy strategies in relation to immigrant integration. The 'local turn' is argued to explain why and how cities are confronting international challenges and how these can influence state or international level management (Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017).

One of the most effective and well researched strategies cities have used to engage with the 'local turn' is through transnational city networks, which research has been gaining more attention since the early 2000, as researchers aimed to explain its functions and impact within multilevel governance and legal pluralism frameworks (Busch et al, 2018). In the multilevel governance framework, governance is addressed through the changing capabilities of local, national and supranational governmental institutions. Here, it is argued that the nation-state has lost its central role in policy making processes and has given room to other actor's importance in the area, such as international institutions like the EU (Camponio, 2017). With the focus of the 'local turn' and

[1] The literature has mainly focused on migration and climate change as international challenges.

TCNs, governance competences have been spread across multiple regional and local levels as well as to private and public actors. In Europe, authority has been increasingly transferred from the national to the sub-national level as decentralization and local competencies have been expanded (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Similarly, legal pluralism explains how the various actors operate in terms of their normative commitments, which often lead to contradictory or overlapping international, European, national and local laws and regulations (Oomen, 2019).

Decoupling

Another important concept in the local governments' and TCNs' literature is 'decoupling', which has been characterized as a process where in shared policy fields, the policies developed at various levels are disconnected and inconsistent (Oomen, 2019). 'Decoupling' is also argued to emphasize the complexities of multi-level governance, specifically between national and local policies becoming fully detached, creating policy contradictions and even conflicts (Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017). This process has mainly been addressed in literature regarding the refugee 'crisis', which pushed many European cities to distance themselves from their national policies by taking a different position on migration and integration compared to the nation-state, often engaging with human rights and international law to do so **(**Oomen, 2019). Transnational city networks are argued to help cities with decoupling their local policies from their national counterpart alongside seeking legitimacy for their chosen path. These networks have the ability to engage with different actors like international organizations, further supporting the expansion of the legal pluralism framework (Ibis.).

In this context, transnational city networks contribute to the dynamic processes of policy and norm making, by supporting both the 'local turn' and 'decoupling' processes of local governments.

The importance of TCNs

According to Bush et al., city networks are transnational institutions which build a platform for local governments' exchange on various topics, where literature has mainly focused on

environmental and migration areas (2018). These transnational networks normally have three characteristics: the member cities are autonomous and free to join or leave, they are non-hierarchical, horizontal, polycentric and decisions taken within the network are directly implemented by the members (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; p.310). TCNs are interesting to study as they are a relatively new phenomenon and have a major influence in how local governments engage in global challenges, especially as cities join multiple transnational city networks, which often overlap in competences (Oomen, 2019). TCNs have been argued to positively influence and strengthen cities in their aims while changing global and national norms, such as in their support for migrants or sustainable policies. As cities look for a seat in regional and global law[2] and decision making, TCNs represent an important platform to do so (Durmus & Oomen, 2021).

The city networks' influence as 'powerful agenda setters' can provide local governments a platform to connect, diffuse and adopt policies addressing common concerns (Foster & Swiney, 2020). Therefore, TCNs have the potential to provide cities with the necessary tools and influence to realize the right to housing, especially in light of the lack of national support. Transnational city networks could enhance cities' ability to develop innovative approaches to applying international human rights norms at the local level, such as the various guidelines and standards human rights bodies have presented on the right to adequate housing. The next section will dive deeper into the responsibilities of national and local governments on the right to housing according to UN reports.

Local governments' responsibilities to the right to housing

In order to combat commodification processes, there is a big demand for policies which address housing affordability and the right to housing (Kreide, 2020). In 2023, the current Special Rapporteur on housing, Balakrishnan Rajagopal published a detailed report presenting with measures to alleviate the crisis and foreground human rights in housing affordability practices. This section will briefly explain the main guidelines for a better right to housing realization. It is important to note that the following guidelines and solutions to the current right to housing challenges are based on the principles of respect, protection and fulfillment of the right (Rajagopal, 2023).

[2] This counts for both binding and soft law.

Firstly, ensuring participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies addressing housing affordability across all levels of government is essential, in order to gather insights from people who are affected, civil society, different governmental sectors, minority groups and vulnerable groups. This way policies could align with actual needs on the ground (Rajagopal, 2023). The right to meaningful participation is essential to the right to housing, as it is connected to dignity, agency and self-determination. It moves from viewing people in need of benefits as charity to rights holders, giving them access to relevant information and thus allowing them to become engaged community members in decision making, advocating for affordable, sustainable and effective housing programmes (Farha, 2019). Secondly, policies should be non-discriminatory, and foreground marginalized group's needs. Most human rights violations on the right to housing stem from discrimination and exclusion. Therefore, policies should also ensure that other private actors do not engage in discriminatory practices on the basis of income, social class, gender or along racial and religious grounds. Therefore, states should address discrimination by conducting regular data collection to understand the impact on different groups (Rajagopal, 2023).

One of the most important actions needed to address housing affordability is state intervention regulating financial actors and private businesses. State regulation would increasingly allow for the dimishing of housing financialization, ensuring actions of the private sector are consistent with human rights obligations (Farha, 2019). Governments should be able to have the power to put the market in its place through different policy venues. One of them is to provide for social and public housing as a way to ensure housing is accessible and affordable for many. Social housing offers dwellings at rates below market prices, and it not only has potential to make housing more affordable and accessible to lower income households, but it can also reduce spatial segregation (Rajagopal, 2023). Social housing should, however, not only be designed for vulnerable segments of society, it should also attract middle income people to combat segregation and there should not be unreasonable waiting periods to access social housing (Ibis.). Consequently, preventing the privatization of public and social housing is crucial to ensure governments can regulate them according to human rights standards (Farha, 2019). Encouraging housing cooperatives by ensuring its legal protection is another effective way to combat the housing crisis. Moreover, another popular policy for housing affordability and the right to housing is the provision of social and housing subsidies, even though these policies might not target the

root causes of the housing challenges. Subsidies should be legal, effective, transparent and accessible without discrimination (Rajagopal, 2023). Finally, taxation and tax incentives are instrumental for governments to promote or prevent certain types of housing investments and to have a degree of control in the market to ensure affordability. For instance, governments should remove tax incentives for foreign and residential real estate investment. Taxes also create revenue, which could be used by governments to provide for public investments in housing projects, such as social housing (Ibis.).

On the other hand, monitoring of housing affordability and its demographic, as well as developments in housing business plans or investors activities is encouraged (Farha, 2019). This information should also be published to promote transparency, participation and accountability. Monitoring should also record the progress on the implementation of the right to housing, assessing information on rights holders' experiences and challenges (Ibis.). Finally, all these measures should be implemented following the principle of progressive realization, by being deliberate, concrete and targeted towards the fulfillment of the right within a reasonable time frame and by showing they are using the maximum of their available resources and avoiding retrogressive measures (Rajagopal, 2023).

The responsibilities of both state and local governments are exhaustive, and without proper knowledge, capabilities and resources they are difficult to fulfill. As previously mentioned, TCNs present an opportunity for local governments to achieve these responsibilities and realize the right to housing through the management of housing affordability policy in light of the current 'local turn' focus on local governments' 'decoupling' from national policies and norms. Yet, how can TCNs specifically help to fulfil human rights? And is it applicable to the right to housing? This next section will engage specifically with transnational city networks' roles and means.

The Jurisgenerative and Policy Entrepreneurship Role of TCNs

A typical aim of TCNs to become a central part of global discussions is their jurisgenerative role. This jurisgenerative role is described as a mechanism of norm-generation, typically focused on TCNs contributing to the translation of global norms to local settings aligning with local government's aspirations both in legal and policy areas (Durmus & Oomen, 2021). Furthermore, TCNs are also involved in supporting cities aims in setting their own standards in the language of

international law. These activities often involve the creation of soft law and of formal binding agreements, which further emphasize the connection between the global and the local norm setting (Oomen, 2019). TCNs enhance the member city's ability to engage with international and regional organizations, which contribute to the cities' acquisition of power and influence in the global legal sphere. International organizations have also developed an interest in collaborating with cities more closely in areas such as human rights, migration and climate change. This has become increasingly common due to the shift in international law to include soft law mechanisms which have normative power on international actors. This legal shift has also become more inclusive of other actors in the international community, such as NGOs, businesses and sub-national governments (Durmus & Oomen, 2021). In order for TCNs to develop local governments jurisgenerative role, they use different mechanisms such as including local governments in multilateral processes and forums. They also negotiate boundaries of local competences compared to national governments by appealing to international law and emphasizing the cities' capacity to create norms (Ibis). This jurisgenerative role brings local perspectives of international law into light through the work of TCNs, offering an innovative outlook on existing international and national laws and by using international law to emphasize local governments autonomy and capacities.

The jurisgenerative role of TCNs has also been explored in the realm of city policymaking and governance by scholars such as Busch et al, describing how actors in cities use TCNs to institutionalize and frame local governance (2018). Policy analysis scholars have identified 'policy entrepreneurship' as a way in which transnational city networks influence policies. Even though the concept has mainly been used to describe individuals, recent literature has also applied the concept to organizations and networks behavior (Stone, 2019). Similar to the jurisgenerative role, TCNs' policy entrepreneurship aims to create substantial change in the normal workings of their field of interest, and use 'policy windows' to foreground their interests and concerns (Güntner & Gebhardt 2021). For instance, Camponio applies this concept by analyzing Italian cities' participation in European city networks, examining how the different mechanisms of policy entrepreneurship like building teams, coalitions and leading by example influenced the work of the networks and cities behaviors and decisions (2017). TCNs' policy entrepreneurship allows for change through the collaboration of the different members involved in the networks. Furthermore, it also foregrounds cities' positions on international topics such as migration, encouraging

leadership in the area (Camponio, 2017). Using the lack of engagement of national governments and international organizations in addressing global challenges, TCNs push for a bigger involvement of local governments as solutions to these challenges. Networks, however, tend to be most effective for cities which are the most entrepreneurial and active within the network, which characterizes TCNs as 'networks of pioneers for pioneers', leaving more inactive cities behind (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; p.311).

Considering the goals TCNs attempt to achieve, what are the mechanisms TCNs use to reach their jurisgenerative and policy entrepreneurship roles and show their importance at the center of global debates? This next section will explore how TCNs attempt to strengthen cities influence.

TCNs' Influence Instruments

Much of the TCNs' literature has explained the different strategies TCNs use to influence debates and actions on their interests. While many scholars use different terms to explain their behavior, many strategies identified are similar and can therefore be grouped together. Kern and Bulkeley for instance mention that most of the networks concentrate on representing the interest of their members at the international or European level and on facilitating the exchange of experiences and learning among their members (2009). TCNs' focus on both internal governing between the city members and in external governing, through influence, interdependence and intermediation. Similarly focusing on 'internal' and 'external' forms of governing, research has introduced three directions of influence. The first direction is downwards, where TCNs 'download' norms and policies from international structures, such the EU. Secondly, the horizontal direction exchanges policy and norms across cities. Finally, the upwards or vertical direction is concerned with 'uploading' local policies or norms to international institutions (Güntner and Gebhardt, 2021; p.1113). Many scholars have identified horizontal and vertical dimensions of TCNs' activities as the most important ones, emphasizing the horizontal process as monitoring developments between cities and the vertical dimension as the attempt to influence international processes of policy and norm development (Oomen, 2019). Durmus and Oomen also emphasize these dimensions as crucial for TCNs' role forming jurisgenerative practices (2021).

Finally literature has also mentioned the symbolic role of TCNs strengthening cities' actions and support. The next section will go deeper into these dynamics while grouping the different actions of TCNs within the horizontal and vertical dimension.

The Horizontal Dimension

The horizontal influence in transnational city networks builds cross-national policy making venues including local authorities and sometimes civil society to participate in policy making for specific topics (Camponio, 2017). The proliferation and participation of the members is crucial for the functioning of the horizontal dimension (Busch et al., 2018). Therefore, one of the most important tools for this dimension is the sharing of information and communication between the members of TCNs, described as the "bread and butter of TCNs" (Kern & Bulkeley, 2019; p.319). Municipalities have also mentioned sharing information and direct exchange of practices as the most important function of TCNs. The information exchanges include the exchange of best practices, close collaboration and seeking support among the members (Bush et al, 2018). Members have the chance to share common challenges, policy initiatives and answer questions (Oomen, 2019). Similarly, information exchanges can include building teams and coalitions for better advocacy and leading examples showing how policy and normative changes could work (Güntner & Genhardt 2021; Durmus & Oomen 2021). Networks represent an opportunity for cities to understand what works from other members and use it as a motivation to continue their participation. According to Oomen, the best practices shared are normally addressed to more open and rights-based policies in light of more restrictive national decision-making, contributing to the 'decoupling' of policies (2019). To achieve policy entrepreneurship, tactics such as think tanks and constant communication are crucial (Stone, 2019). Collaboration also goes beyond city members and expands to strengthening communication with NGOs and civil society for a more successful policy implementation (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017) The exchange of practices also implies challenges, as the examples do not count with any guarantee of quality or transferability to others. Another issue with these tactics is that it is heavily reliant on cities' participation, and there is little evidence of members actually taking up examples of other best practices beyond their function as inspiration (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009).

Another tool included in the horizontal dimension is internal mobilization and cooperation. TCN membership influences local governance by raising awareness in the local population on local politics (Busch et al., 2018). The membership can introduce policies into the local agenda but also be used as a means to justify them. Cooperation is also highlighted by the literature as cities in networks have the possibility to have close cooperation with other local governments experiencing similar challenges, which then is amplified by creating a sense of 'working together towards a common goal', creating a sense of companionship (Bush et al., 2018; p.226). Durmus & Oomen refer to a social justice mobilization tool of TCNs, where members are pushed to achieve results on social justice issues, specifically important for the jurisgenerative role of TCNs (2021). This mobilization brings cities together to generate norms, obligations, commitments and enforcement mechanisms, leading to on-the-ground change. For policy entrepreneurship, mobilization is characterized as the usage of 'policy windows' (such as elections, disasters or crisis) to push for new policies and gain support for them. The usage of policy windows for an effective introduction of new proposals to the political agenda is highly context specific and is dependent on the attention, organization and collaboration of members participating in such policy influence (Stone, 2019). This relates back to the role of TCNs in pressing global crises such as climate change and migration.

The Vertical Dimension

In the vertical dimension TCNs are involved in activating and seeking support from external and international organizations, such as EU institutions, supporting cities to avoid the national governments involvement in their discussions around decision and norm making spaces better aligned to local needs or access to funding (Camponio, 2017). Gaining access to funding and lobbying is one of the major tools of the vertical dimension, which popularity has also created competition between networks. The creation of declarations and charters in the language of international law also fall within the vertical dimension as they aim to influence and be influenced by international law-making processes, which is important for the jurisgenerative role of TCNs (Camponio, 2017). In addition, TCNs are an important tool for local governments to access and contribute to law-making and-decision making processes. According to the literature, these efforts are appreciated by international actors, as they see potential in implementing their objectives

locally, circumventing the national restrictive stance (Durmus & Oomen, 2021).[3] Regarding support and cooperation, networks see transnational projects as an important way of enhancing cities engagement with topics of interest, such as environmental protection. For this to be successful, TCNs help with the provision of joint funding submissions (Kern & Bulkeley., 2009). Access to funding has increased in importance, as even though the state still represents a big source of resources, international actors such as the European Commission have started to play a major role. Without government or Commission funding, networks would not be able to achieve their aims, creating dependence on these sources of resources (Ibis.). The support for projects ties cities closer together and increases their external visibility, however it is very resource intensive and normally attracts the most active members of the network. Projects support the networks' ability to advocate and lobby for influence at the international level to create better conditions for local policy proposals (Bush et al., 2018). The access to funding creates competition between various networks as they claim the resources, yet it also fosters cooperation. Some networks in the field of climate change have cooperated through joint projects and campaigns, which has been supported by member cities as it increases their lobbying position.

In policy entrepreneurship, seeking support and influence from other organizations represents attempts to provide for solutions to various public problems by involving different governments, international organizations and other partnerships (Stone, 2019). In order for TCNs to thrive in the multi-level governance system, they need to be equipped with successful interventions at the international stage and have power to influence its actors. Influence is aimed at the international community to progress in their stance on global issues. Horizontal cooperation among cities and vertical engagement with international organizations are mutually reinforcing, as TCNs encourage the adoption of international norms locally through progressive policies, while presenting local innovations that shape global decision making.

The Symbolic Dimension

The last tool of influence is the symbolic dimension, which is a less common yet interesting addition to the literature. Essentially, scholars have argued that TCNs can fall short on reaching

[3] It is important to note that international organizations (as the UN) are still mainly oriented towards states. One of the exceptions to this is the UN Habitat programme.

their intended horizontal and vertical influence while retaining their symbolic role vis a vis its members. The symbolic function serves to legitimize existing policies, build identity and to position cities at international stages (Camponio, 2017). Through the symbolic role, TCNs reshape the national-local relationship, opening a bottom-up local relation, further emphasizing the 'local turn'. In Camponio's research, municipalities stressed the symbolic functions of the networks the most, as it allowed them to legitimize and strengthen their prestige vis a vis other local and national actors (2017). Similarly, Oomen focuses on three tactics as part of the symbolic influence of TCNs: showcasing, storytelling and shaming (2019). All three tactics support the 'decoupling' process of local policies from national ones and strengthens their legitimacy. Showcasing includes exchange of best practices but internationally through digital media such as social media accounts. Storytelling includes the search for narratives which differentiate the local with the national, which contribute to the identity of the city. Diverging narratives on migration for instance, seek to convince others to support refugee integration while alluding to global challenges (Oomen, 2019). These narratives can also be targeted towards rights-based approaches, such as the right to the city as a discourse strategy. Finally, shaming focuses on the critique of the state's failure to solve global challenges, and the local governments potential to properly address them.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The following section outlines the main hypothesis, sampling methods and methodology choices: The samples were collected through the various transnational city networks' website information, alongside city official interviews involved with transnational city networks. The data collection methods involve a mixed approach of both deductive and inductive strategies, while using qualitative content analysis for the website retrieved information and interview analysis as research data methods. Finally, the section reflects on possible challenges and ethical concerns the chosen methodology poses.

Hypotheses

This research aims to explain how transnational city networks' aims and engagement with the right to housing shape cities' responses to housing financialization. To answer the question, it is important to understand TCNs' mechanisms shown through their initiatives, their framing of the right to housing and their influence on cities' implementation of human rights-based policies regarding housing challenges such as housing financialization and the housing crisis. To help guide the research question during the data collection and analysis, a set of hypotheses was formulated to concentrate on each of the relevant aspects of the right to housing and transnational city networks theoretical frameworks. Building off of transnational city networks' research (Oomen, 2019; Camponio, 2017; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017) the first hypothesis proposes that TCNs will engage with their jurisgenerative and policy entrepreneurship roles through vertical, horizontal and symbolic instruments when addressing housing affordability and the housing crisis. The first hypothesis looks closer into whether transnational city networks use the tools as outlined in the literature on sustainability and migration in the field of housing, while the second and third hypothesis aim to integrate the right to housing and human rights language into transnational city networks and local governments practices: Research has explained how local governments have started to address international challenges locally by engaging with international and human rights law (Oomen & Baumgärtel, 2018) and how these practices are often carried out through the influence and impact of transnational city networks serving as powerful

agenda setters (Foster & Swiney, 2020). Considering that the housing crisis and financialization are global challenges, the second hypothesis suggests that transnational city networks engage with human rights standards by applying right to housing language and guidelines in their practices when confronting housing challenges. Following from the second hypothesis, the third hypothesis zooms into local governments specifically, suggesting that TCNs engagement with human rights shape cities' application of human rights in their housing policies and norms. Both hypotheses aim to better understand how the human rights inclusion processes regarding international challenges are carried out by TCNs and consequently city governments, as TCNs support cities in their inclusion in global decision- and law-making processes (Oomen, 2019).

Sample, Sampling and Key Participants

To answer the research question and test the formulated hypotheses, purposive sampling methods were employed for the data collection, as the selected sources needed to meet specific criteria to ensure the relevance of the results for the research (Harding, 2019). The research is focused on transnational city networks and European local governments' responses to the housing crisis, therefore there was a selection of both specific TCNs' content and local government city officials. The TCNs chosen were Eurocities, Cities for Adequate Housing, the Global Parliament of Majors, URBACT, Metropolis and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI). Eurocities is a network of over 200 European cities which supports action to implement just, sustainable and innovative urban strategies and influence EU policymaking (Eurocities, 2022). ICLEI is a global network of more than 2500 local and regional governments specifically committed to influencing sustainability policy and drive local action for circular development (ICLEI, n.d.). Moreover, Cities for Adequate Housing is a municipalist movement led by UCLG, one of the biggest international networks, closely working with the #MaketheShift campaign promoting the right to housing and calling for stronger action against housing financialization (UCLG, 2018). Metropolis is a global network aiming to make the world's biggest cities more liveable, by fostering economic development, sustainability and social cohesion (Metropolis, n.d). URBACT is a co-financed programme of the European Union that enables cooperation between European cities within thematic networks, focused on inclusive, just and green initiatives (URBACT, 2024). Finally,

Global Parliament of Mayors is a global governance network of mayors advocating for cities as partners for an inclusive and sustainable world (Global Parliament of Mayors, 2025).

These transnational city networks were selected due to their status as active city networks which are either based in Europe or have a significant number of European local governments as members. Furthermore, many of these TCNs are mentioned in research on transnational city networks (Busch et al., 2018; Oomen, 2019; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009), which increases their validity for the purposes of this research. The last criteria applied to the selection of TCNs was their engagement with housing challenges, specifically housing affordability. As for the textual documents selected for the analysis, I sampled all the relevant material from the TCNs websites. The documents mostly ranged from declarations, policy briefings, reports and news articles specifically published in relation to the key word 'housing' between the time frame of 2015-2025 (mainly 2019-2025), as the housing crisis intensified during this time period and became a topic of international debate. The total number of documents attained from the six different TCNs mentioning housing between 2015-2025 amounted to 192 resources for the analysis. A detailed table presenting the number of documents per transnational city network, year and type of resource is available in Appendix nr. 2. Moreover, a list of cited TCN resources in the thesis chapters can be found in Appendix nr.3.

Regarding the selection of local governments, the cities had to be European, currently in a housing crisis and members of at least two of the above-mentioned TCNs. The two cities included in the analysis were Brussels (Member of Eurocities, Global Parliament of Mayors, URBACT, Metropolis and ICLEI) and Berlin (Member of Eurocities, Cities for Housing, Metropolis, ICLEI). The contacted officials from both cities chosen for interviews needed to either be in contact, know of or work with transnational city networks within the government and preferably be knowledgeable or involved in city housing policies.

Inductive and Deductive approaches

According to research, a favorable way to ensure a systematic and detailed analysis process is to employ a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. The analytic transparency helps researchers apply concepts from the theory to the data, increasing the trustworthiness and the applicability of the research (Bingham, 2023). Furthermore, both deductive and inductive

approaches are widely used in social science data collection methods, such as qualitative or thematic data analysis. Inductive analyses are considered a key characteristic and strength of qualitative research, as it requires the completion of preliminary research on the topic, yet the researcher allows themes, codes and patterns to emerge during the data collection analysis (Ibis.). This flexible approach allows research findings to emerge from the dominant themes in the data, enriching the analysis allowing unplanned or unanticipated themes to appear and become central to the research. Inductive approaches are especially interesting when comparing the data results with existing literature, as it can bring new perspectives not yet grounded in research to be compared and contrasted with used theories and literature (Harding, 2019). On the other hand, deductive research allows the researcher to conduct preliminary research and formulate categories and important themes before the data collection and analysis is carried out (Bingham, 2023). This allows the researcher to find categories tailored specifically to the research hypotheses, purpose and questions. This approach is especially useful when using basic content analysis.

The analysis made use of both deductive and inductive approaches, as it not only strengthens the transparency, validity and applicability of the research, but both approaches are used in the chosen data collection methods: content and interview analysis. Finally, the literature and theories on transnational city networks and the human right to housing used in this research have been widely researched and described: the aim of this research is to understand whether existing theoretical concepts and themes are applicable to TCNs' and cities' activities regarding the housing crisis and housing affordability. Therefore, a solely inductive approach would ignore the applicability of crucial concepts and practices already described by previous research. The list of deductive themes was supplemented by inductive methods, ensuring the flexibility of the analysis allowing for new information to arise and avoiding overlooking new themes specifically relevant to housing themes. For a detailed overview of the codes and themes derived from the analysis, see Appendix 4.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

For the analysis, I applied a mixed methods approach combining interview analysis with two different types of content analysis: basic content analysis and qualitative content analysis. All three types of methods are explained in the sections below. This research analyzed both visual resources

gathered from the websites of transnational city networks and interviews with city officials, which has been typically used in research concerning transnational city networks. The Literature either used a combination of in-depth analysis of official documents, project reports and interviews (Campoino, 2017) or interviews were carried out alongside a general survey (Busch et al, 2018). Moreover, Camponio clearly explains why the combination of analyses should be carried out: it is important to understand how and if TCNs actually pursue their officially stated goals (2018). Therefore, the combination of TCN documents and interviews with City officials ensures for a comprehensive collection of relevant information. Specifically, the inclusion of interviews serves as a way to triangulate the data of the content analysis. Triangulation refers to the employment of multiple methods and data sources to strengthen the studies credibility, confirming or disproving the data and allowing for a deeper understanding of the subject (Jentoft et al., 2017).

Basic Content Analysis

Content analysis is described as a systematic coding and categorizing approach used to examine and understand significant amounts of information, attributing themes to structure the data (Grbich, 2013). This analysis can be carried out through different means: one approach is quantitative in nature, as it focuses on investigating the frequency of words used in visual documents, describing which words are used more frequently than others varying on the type of research aims being followed (Thelwall, 2021). This first approach is also known as basic content analysis, and it can be based on both inductive and deductive forms of analysis. I am interested in its deductive application, where preliminary codes developed before the data collection are calculated numerically (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). This descriptive approach counting the repetition of words is used to indicate the level of importance of the words in the documents and are meant to describe 'key words' in their context (Gribch, 2013). This tool is useful to provide for a quick and effective way of breaking into particular data.

This research conducted basic content analysis through the elaboration of five different queries in the Nvivo software: the 'Fundamental right or human right' query, the 'right to housing or right to adequate housing' query, the 'housing affordability or affordable housing' query, the 'financialization' query and finally the 'housing crisis' query. The elaboration of the queries was the result of the development of deductive and central themes of the research, closely tied to the theoretical framework and research question, as it provides for an introduction to the textual data

analysis and frames the research around crucial human rights concepts. Moreover, the deductive analysis following human rights standards as mentioned by the UN contributes to Chapters 2 and 3 testing the second hypothesis, as TCNs should use human rights to ensure effective human rights-based policies confronting housing challenges. Much literature has described the influence of human rights language on governments and organizations policymaking (Sutton, 2015), therefore it is important to analyze TCNs' use of human rights language as part of their influence on cities' policies and norms responding to housing financialization. The results of the queries were visually represented through charts, presenting the results of two complementary metrics: The first one calculated how many individual documents contained each term, showing how widely it was used across the texts (document %). The second one measured the amount of text dedicated to each term within the documents, helping to assess how meaningfully the queries were discussed (Coverage %). This separation allows to distinguish between queries that were briefly mentioned and those which were more central to topics within the documents.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative or thematic content analysis is the second method used for the data analysis. Basic content analysis provides for a useful overview of the importance of specific concepts appearing in the textual data, yet this approach falls short in providing information about the context and meaning of the data identified (Thelwall, 2021). Therefore, content analysists tend to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to explain and identify valuable information from the word frequencies in texts. In this sense, the qualitative method is used to expand on the quantitative results (Ibis.). Without the qualitative section, the list of words risks becoming ambiguous and context free, failing to provide with useful insights into the texts meaning. Therefore, qualitative analysis goes a step further, by using descriptive means of data identification but also through analyzing, identifying and classifying key themes arising from the descriptions (Krippendorff, 2019). Qualitative data analysis involves both the identification and organization of themes in textual and interview data (Cassel & Bishop, 2019; Cary, 2024). This method provides a systematic and meaningful testing of answer the research question and the hypotheses, as it extracts emergent themes from both the website information in relation to the right to housing, transnational city network practices and cities' responses to financialization. Furthermore, qualitative research is

meaningful in context rather than universally applicable. The generalizability of the analytical findings is limited to the specific area and context in which the research is conducted (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Given that this study contributes to the literature on TCNs by introducing a right to housing perspective, the context-specific generalizability of qualitative content analysis is particularly appropriate.

Interviews

The addition of interview analysis to the research as the most common method in qualitative research (Harding, 2019) increases the advantages of flexibility and adaptability of the research, as it allows to further investigate whether the housing practices and human rights engagement outlined by TCNs are followed beyond the information available in their websites, and what their impact is according to experts. Interviews to city officials in their professional capacity contribute to the triangulation of the data expanding on transnational city networks' influence on cities' housing policies in relation to the right to housing, which is specifically relevant for the third hypothesis (Jentoft et al., 2017).

The interview participants were contacted through the emails listed in municipalities and TCNs' websites. The interviews were conducted online and had a duration of 30-45 minutes. More specifically, the type of interview chosen for this study was semi-structured, as according to Harding, it produces the richest data as it allows for the gathering of in depth and thick descriptions on the experiences and views of the interviewees (2019). This flexibility allows to bring up various topics and talk over different perspectives, which are essential for this research as it gathers a holistic understanding of the tools and human rights standards used by TCNs and cities in connection to the housing crisis.

Instrument of data collection and data analysis process

The data analysis was carried out with Nvivo software and following Krippendorff recommendations on how to carry out qualitative data analysis (2019). According to his research, the first step of analysis is unitizing, where you bring together all relevant information for the

analysis while also omitting irrelevant matter. As a second step, sampling limits the observation to information which is representative and complementary to the research. The most important step is the recording/coding of the data in Nvivo, which reduces the data and identifies themes and key concepts connected to the theoretical framework. During the coding process, I made use of coding lists (both deductive and inductive) and of memoing (or analytic memo writing) to reflect on conceptual developments and ensure a consistent and transparent interpretation of the data. Analytic memos are important for the reflection of the coding process and code choices, as well as for later stages of the process where codes are grouped into themes, categories and subcategories (Cooper, 2009). The coding process was carried out through first cycle and second cycle coding: the first cycle represented a descriptive analysis on condensing information into relevant codes, while the second cycle reorganized and reanalyzed the first cycle coded data and developed a sense of the categories or themes arising from the data (Cooper, 2009).

For the basic content analysis, as recommended by Drisko & Maschi, a list of all the word frequencies was generated specifying how often or infrequent the words were found in the relevant text documents. It is important to note that the omission or infrequent use of expected words is also meaningful for the research purposes (2015).

Methodology challenges and ethical considerations

Even though the chosen methods are the most fitting to test and answer the hypotheses and research question, it is important to take their shortcomings and ethical considerations into account.

Context is always constructed by someone. Therefore, researchers should always be aware of how their background, knowledge and expertise might affect the construction of themes, categories and key concepts during the data analysis stages (Krippendorff, 2019). I am aware that as a researcher, I made choices about which information to discard and which to keep, which is influenced by both my research aims and my perspectives on the field of interest (Ozuem et al, 2022). This is not only applicable for the text analysis, but also for interviews, as the researcher will always have influence on the interviewee's perceptions and responses to questions. In addition, interviewees might answer questions differently when they are aware of how the research findings could affect them (Krippendorff, 2019). When looking through the data, I made sure not to favor some perspectives or viewpoints over others and was careful to not exclude important

meaning from the analysis when focusing on deductive themes prior to the data analysis. According to Drisko & Maschi, self-awareness is vital during the planning and carrying out of the data collection and analysis in order to obtain, to the biggest extent possible, diverse and credible data (2015).

Finally, for the preparation of interviews, I made sure to closely follow all the University of Luxembourg GDPR regulations when conducting interviews for research purposes. Before starting the interviews I sent informative documents over the purposes of the research and mentioned the requirement of oral informed consent. Prior to the interview recording, I explained the research once more to obtain competent informed consent for the interview. Finally, I protected the confidentiality of the interviewees data by anonymizing any quotes or references used.

CHAPTER 1: THE AIMS AND TOOLS OF TRANSNATIONAL CITY NETWORKS IN THE FIELD OF HOUSING

This chapter contributes to the research question explaining how transnational city networks' aims and engagement with the right to housing shape cities' responses to housing financialization, as it explores the various aims and mechanisms transnational city networks use in relation to housing. Consequently, the chapter examines the validity of the first hypothesis, namely TCNs will engage with their jurisgenerative and policy entrepreneurship roles through vertical, horizontal and symbolic instruments when addressing housing affordability and the housing crisis. This is central to understand the extent of TCNs' influence on cities when discussing and foregrounding housing challenges, specifically the housing crisis and housing financialization. While addressing the first hypothesis, the analysis did not include any inductive codes, indicating the close alignment of the findings with existing scholarship on TCNs. Furthermore, the chapter mainly relies on information retrieved from the websites of the TCNs, yet it also includes some insights from the interviews. In connection to policy entrepreneurship and jurisgeneration, the chapter outlines the importance of cities inclusion in multilateral processes, cities innovation, power and influence as well as the role of TCNs' translation of global norms. Regarding the horizontal, vertical and symbolic dimensions, the chapter emphasizes the salient themes of collaboration, call for support, declarations and the lack of relevance of symbolic instruments.

TCNs' call for Inclusion in Multilateral Processes

One of the most salient characteristics of the transnational city networks' aims in the analysis was their ability and eagerness to engage in multilateral policy and norm-making processes. TCNs' support for cities inclusion in global decision-making processes is deeply embedded in TCNs' jurisgenerative and policy entrepreneurship goals (Oomen, 2019; Stone, 2019). Furthermore, cities engagement in international negotiations has been characterized in the literature as the 'local turn', as local governments have recently put effort into their inclusion in discussions formerly reserved for nation states and international institutions (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). TCNs' membership has increased these processes, as their introduction of local perspectives

in decision-making strengthens multilevel governance and legal pluralism frameworks (Busch et al., 2018). In the local turn literature, cities are seen as active participants with a central role in global challenges and have gained authority in topics close to their interests (Camponio, 2017). The literature on the 'local turn' in multilevel governance and legal pluralism closely resonates with TCNs statements analyzed: Eurocities for instance showcases how cities 'are essential, trusted partners of the EU in developing and implementing measures that work for everyone' (Article, 2024). In a Metropolis report in 2023, it is mentioned that there is an 'urgent need to adopt a metropolitan vision in the design of public policies' and that 'this perspective is crucial to meet the goals of global agendas, which are fundamental to addressing planetary challenges.' GPM also references multilevel governance, emphasizing that 'true multilevel governance requires systematic and institutional involvement of the local level in decision-making' (Empowering Cities Report, 2025). All these statements refer back to the shift in global processes including cities' participation as the 'local turn', which is evident in this Eurocities statement:

> 'Cities are not just implementers; they are drivers of Europe's social future.'
> Article 2024

Transnational city networks are argued to actively engage in global governance dynamics and multilateral processes, where interaction with Sustainable Development Goals represents a typical avenue for cities engagement (Davidson et al., 2019). According to Oomen and Durmus, the inclusion of TCNs in the international arena signifies a shift in the complexity of these processes, as it includes a wider range of diverse actors, rules and practices (2022). In their research, they also mention the Sustainable Development Goals as an important shift in international legal processes, as they were negotiated and adopted by states, international organizations and sub national governments, which represent an opening for cities to engage in multilateral fora more openly (Oomen & Durmus, 2022). Throughout the analysis, all selected transnational city networks emphasized Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 agenda as an important international framework for cities' inclusion in housing challenges. For instance, one Metropolis Report in 2023 clearly expresses this relationship:

> 'The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs have emphasized the role of cities and local and regional governments in promoting and monitoring progress… 17 SDGs will only be reached with

> the engagement of local and regional governments. The New Urban Agenda acknowledges the critical role of metropolises in developing sustainable spatial plans.'
> European Metropolitan Report

URBACT further emphasized the role of SDGs in order for cities to implement housing initiatives locally. More specifically, the URBACT 'Pilot on affordable housing promises to look for better knowledge, funding and regulation for innovative and more adequate housing solutions (…) committed to contribute to the 2030 and EU URBAN agenda' (Article, 2019). The Sustainable Development Goals as international frameworks were frequently mentioned by the TCNs, yet they were not the only frameworks mentioned to increase their inclusion in relevant international fora. According to Oomen, network participation incentivizes cities to participate with different international organizations, as they are their most important partners in foregrounding cities power in international decision-making (2019). As TCNs look for closer collaboration with international institutions, the organizations themselves start looking to work with cities, which is typical in the human rights field specifically (Oomen, 2019). Research on TCNs has also focused on the importance of UN Habitat as one of the most relevant institutional spaces for local governments' inclusion in international governance, as cities have gained a seat at the table in UN leadership (Oomen & Durmus, 2022). A recent report of GPM is an example of how the cities' engagement with international organizations and governance is foregrounded:

> 'The GPM aims to be involved in debates on critical city issues and to participate actively in the decision-making process. By intervening in discussions at the UN, OECD, and other international institutions and organizations, the GPM promotes mayors' proposals and demands, draws on policies and activities successfully implemented by mayors around the world and creates greater awareness of the crucial role cities play in our interdependent world.'
> Annual Summit Report 2021

This quote is interesting as it does not only emphasize the importance of cities' engagement in international discussions, but it also emphasizes the necessity of cities' perspectives in multilateral processes. ICLEI also foregrounds the value of cities in international processes, specifically European Union dynamics through appealing to the 'new European Commission's first Affordable Housing Plan to increase investment in sustainable and affordable homes by making recommendations aiming to support this transition, ensuring that Europe's buildings not only meet

climate goals but also improve living conditions for all citizens' (Article, 2025). The European Union's role as a strong international institution which cities aim to be a part of was also evident in Eurocities documents and news articles: In the information analyzed, the TCNs often appealed to the European Pillar of Social Rights in relation to housing, through campaigns such as 'Inclusive cities 4 all' where cities efforts have also been recognized at the EU level to 'build resilience, drive innovation and enact policies to tackle global challenges effectively' (Article, 2022). During the interview with the Berlin city official, TCNs impact in providing for successful international advocacy platforms was foregrounded, where cities' perspectives on housing are included:

> '…they also advocated the cities needs to the United Nations and to international organizations and they said: This is an important topic, housing has to do with social issues and reducing social indifferences especially, and we have a certain crisis here.'

Finally, according to Stone another important aspect for successful engagement with international decision-making processes for policy entrepreneurs is the extent of expert authority, communication and successful visibility presenting on the ground perspectives to international policy elites (2019). All TCNs analyzed seemed to understand the importance of communication and visibility techniques, as they frequently organized conferences and webinars related to housing challenges and solutions. Cities for Adequate Housing (CFH), for instance organized a series of webinars on co-housing as a new response to housing unaffordability which were co-hosted by the UN special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (Article, 2020).

The importance of Cities' Power and Influence through TCNs

Cities' inclusion in multilateral fora has pushed for local governments visibility as critical players in global governance, where they have become a crucial piece of influence, alongside states and international institutions guiding global conversations and norm-making (Foster & Swiney, 2021). Cities' jurisgeneration is heavily reliant on the extent of influence and power cities carry, and TCNs are powerful agenda setters where cities can successfully shape law and policy making (Ibis). Statements of TCNs on housing have reflected some of these power and influence dynamics. For instance CFH has recognized the increasing influence of cities, stating that 'local, metropolitan and regional governments are collectively claiming more power to regulate the housing markets;

attracting more funding towards affordable housing options and improving public and social housing stocks and produce public-private community alternative housing' (Article, 2020). This has also had implications for human rights, as local governments have 'played a major role in helping to bring the right to housing at the center of the global conversation'. The CFH statements emphasize cities jurisgenerative potential influencing global processes through the right to housing and offering solutions for affordable housing.

In terms of power and influence, multilevel governance as a negotiation between many government levels has been argued to advance authority from the national to the local governments, decentralizing decision making, where TCNs have played a powerful role and are considered to be a part of the structure of European multi-level governance (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). In one of Metropolises reports, the role of the TCNs contributing to the multilevel structure was explicitly stated in relation to tackling gentrification processes:

> 'We are no longer looking at the question of a single metropolis or metropolitan area, but rather at systems of cities and metropolises that form megaregions. In other words, there are now connected supranational by urban advanced groups transport systems and digital technologies that have created a new urban and transnational infrastructure that could even be considered global in scope.'
> Issue paper 2019

The Berlin city official also alluded to TCNs' impact on the power cities have in shaping international processes, stating that 'one city cannot express anything. Only together cities can be very strong'. The contribution of TCNs in multilevel governance has also created a shift in international law, as cities contribute to the creation of soft law mechanisms which have normative power across the international community, impacting NGOs, businesses, local governments and institutions (Durmus & Oomen, 2022). In this sense, nation states have been sidelined in their norm and policy making roles, making space for local governments interventions and influence (Caponio, 2019). The increasing inclusion and influence of local governments vis a vis states in norm making is shown in a GPM report.

> 'Cities have shown that they can be as influential as nation-states and are often more innovative in pioneering and implementing policy solutions to address global challenges.'
> Cities at the Intersection Report, 2022

Eurocities has also foregrounded its strength in norm making, specifically calling for international law standards in Europe: In a 2024 Report, it is stated that cities need to 'push for a strong European Union that defends respect for the rule of law, fundamental rights and democratic values (…) In turn, an empowered EU must be encouraged to work more closely with member states, regions and cities.' (Pulse Mayors Survey Report, 2024).

The Role of Innovation for Policy Entrepreneurs

As cities are described as powerful and influencing actors in global arenas, another aspect which was foregrounded during the analysis of the documents was its potential source of innovation. Innovation is specifically relevant in Stone's (2019) research on policy entrepreneurs. Policy entrepreneurs are characterized in her research as 'proactive change agents in policy formulation and decision making' (p.1130). Specifically through the so-called policy stream, policy entrepreneurs try to present solutions to public issues in the form of proposals for change to existing policies or through proposing new ones, either at the national or international level (Stone, 2019). In the analysis, TCNs entrepreneurship was shown through their willingness of change by emphasizing on housing projects or cities innovative efforts. In terms of projects, ICLEI has been active with the ReHousIn project, which aims to 'reduce housing inequality and spark innovative policy solutions towards inclusionary and quality housing' (Homepage Project, 2024). Similarly, URBACT has presented the 'European Responsible Housing Awards', which were characterized as 'an exciting opportunity for local authorities from URBACT cities to discover new ideas and practices to tackle housing challenges' (Article, 2022). TCNs have also been active in highlighting cities efforts in introducing new innovative policies, for instance, Eurocities article on housing mentions the following:

> 'Despite obstacles and limited capabilities and funding, cities across Europe have not hesitated to implement innovative approaches to address the housing challenge. Many are focusing on developing affordable housing for those most in need, while others are working on regenerating neighbourhoods, blending residential spaces with essential amenities to foster vibrant, inclusive communities.'
> 2024

Cities for adequate housing have also illustrated how cities are 'actively transforming their housing policies to incorporate and implement the right to housing in all of its dimensions (…) and hold themselves accountable to these standards' (Case for Support Report, 2024). These statements show TCNs particular desire to meaningfully change current processes in the area of their interest, in this case housing (Güntner & Gebhardt, 2021).

Jurisgenerative Processes of 'Decoupling' and 'Translating Norms'

As previously mentioned, a central part of TCNs jurisgenerative role is through striving for inclusion in international law-making processes. Another crucial aspect of jurisgenerative practices is norm-generation, which is described as the translation of global norms to local settings depending on the cities' objectives in legal or policy areas (Oomen & Durmus, 2022). Transnational city networks carry a key position in translating global norms to local settings in order for cities to be better positioned to contribute to international standards (Oomen, 2019). The analysis has shown that transnational city networks actions in the field of housing are closely aligned with the previous literature on climate change and migration. When talking about the role of human rights and the right to housing in the city, Berlin's city official clearly states how TCNs membership has shaped Berlin's engagement with international norms and rights:

> '… Even though they are not sort of say related to the human rights standards so to say explicitly, uh, this whole aspect of social inclusion, of a healthy society, and no discrimination (…) is very important for the political discourse in Berlin (…) but what happens at the international level or in the networks is that suddenly this whole relation which is treated implicitly here is made very explicit (…) And you need these international standards to find a way to translate problems from one city to an international level and then to another city (…) So you need certain orientation points And the SDGs, for example, can give you these orientation points.'

In this quote it is evident not only that TCNs are important for the explicit translation of international norms to the city level, but also for the translation of cities' norms to the international level, emphasizing the relationship between the translation of global norms and the inclusion in multilateral processes as jurisgenerative aims (Oomen & Durmus, 2022). This further contributes to the 'glocalization' of global standards, where TCNs play a role in strengthening the normative protection of rights in local settings (Foster & Swiney, 2021), yet in this case related to housing

rights. The various documents from the TCNs' websites further emphasize the 'translation' of the global to the local, for instance, in the GPM Annual-Summit report in 2022, it is stated that 'they must localize international and national objectives at the local level' and that 'SDGs can't be accomplished without the involvement of the local government'. Furthermore, another report emphasized how 'mayors are the crucial link in cascading global decisions to a local level' as well as 'presenting progressive, tangible and practice-based solutions to global issues' (GPM report the voice of mayors, 2019). CFH similarly expressed the importance to promote the right to housing and turn it into 'one of the main priorities of local and global agendas.' In a report, CFH explicitly stated their willingness to 'develop further its contents and include new policy perspectives that reflect the regional diversity of the framework' (referring to the right to housing framework) (2019). Finally, Metropolis also explains how the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda 'include a number of guidelines that should serve as a model of action in metropolises' since they 'help take an international approach dealing with urban challenges' (Principles for Better Cities, 2020). The various statements outlined represent what Foster & Swiney characterize as 'glocalization', since they address the process connecting the 'local to the global and the global to the local' (2021, p.370). Finally, specific to the EU, Kern & Bulkeley also argue EU's legal instruments have an impact on local authorities, also known as vertical Europeanization (2009). Especially in Eurocities documents referring to the European Pillar of Social Rights, this Europeanization process is evident: 'We remain committed to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights at the local level (…) we made it possible to bring the Pillar to the cities, and also the cities to the Pillar' (Policy Paper, 2020).

Closely related to the translation of global norms to local setting, the concept of 'decoupling' is also central in jurisgenerative processes. According to the literature, engaging with international norms also supports local governments in seeking legitimacy for their policies and norms, which often diverge from their national counterpart, and can become powerful contenders when cities join forces through TCNs (Oomen, 2019). 'Decoupling' also emphasized the complex nature of multilevel governance and legal pluralism, as national and local policies and norms become disconnected, which can create contradictions and conflicts (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). The literature has analyzed decoupling specifically when looking into TCNs and migration, where local authorities decided to surpass the state in order to support migration integration. Based on the analysis of TCNs' documents regarding housing, there was almost no reference to decoupling

practices of cities. The only reference to diverging goals between cities and national governments was mentioned through Eurocities, where the City of Dublin expressed the following: 'We have a target of 2030, and then a further one of 2050 and there is tension because our national government is not helping' (Article, 2021). Even though this statement does mention tension between the local and the national, there is no mention of specific policies or norms which are contested. The lack of decoupling in housing-related topics might be linked to the high emphasis TCNs make on collaboration and partnership between different levels of government, rather than challenging the states. This will be further analyzed through the horizontal and vertical instruments TCNs use to achieve their policy entrepreneurship and jurisgenerative roles in the following section.

The importance of Collaboration

The horizontal dimension, and specifically the exchange of best practices and information between cities through transnational city networks has been described as one of the most important instruments of TCNs (Camponio, 2017). For jurisgenerative purposes, the horizontal dimension is a crucial function as it allows for TCNs to collaborate and set standards for themselves, which can support the translation of international norms (Oomen, 2019). The analysis revealed that one of the most important aspects of the horizontal dimension for TCNs working with housing is collaboration, which includes the exchange of information and best practices. Collaboration was also emphasized not only between cities participating in networks but also within cities public and private actors. A useful form of collaboration for policy entrepreneurs is through building coalitions and teams, which was stated in multiple documents of the TCNs analyzed (Güntner & Gebhardt, 2021). Cities for adequate housing for instance, outlined the following as one of their aims through the housing declaration:

> 'In municipalist cooperation in residential strategies we want to enhance cooperation and solidarity within city networks that defend affordable housing and equitable, just, and inclusive cities by boosting long-term strategies on a metropolitan scale.'
> 2018

Moreover, ICLEI also encourages 'other local and regional governments to join the network, share strategic policies to address housing affordability, and work together prioritizing safe, affordable and permanent housing solutions' (Article, 2024). Both statements foreground the collaborative

nature of TCNs and frame the joint efforts for housing as 'team building', which is an important feature for policy entrepreneurship (Güntner & Gebhardt, 2021). Furthermore, not only collaboration between cities in TCNs is important, but TCNs push for collaboration between local governments and other public, private and social actors, such as NGOs (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). According to Caponio (2017) and Davidson et al (2019), TCNs have reinforced the interdependence between public and private actors at the city level. In the field of housing, the collaboration between local actors and city governments was also pointed out by the various TCNs. CFH has fostered local governments 'cooperation with community-led initiatives to promote and protect the right to housing' (Article, 2019). Moreover, Metropolis stresses the importance of collaboration to address housing challenges:

> 'Metropolises around the world are facing an increasing number of challenges. From housing affordability to inequality (…) which have significant impact on the wider environment. To tackle these challenges, it is crucial that cities adopt a collaborative approach. This means bringing together a range of stakeholders, including government, business, and the wider community, to work towards sustainable, long-term solutions.'
> Article, 2023

For a successful collaboration, sharing information and best practices are crucial for cities to achieve their 'soft' governance and keep updated with global and local processes (Busch et al., 2018). During the interview, the berlin city official explained which information exchanges were helpful for the city, mentioning a Metropolis 'online database on sustainable development' where they had around '600 case studies divided in different thematic fields' which included topics on housing. Furthermore, ICLEI's ReHousin project provides for 'valuable opportunities to share emerging findings, exchange insights with leading experts (…) helping to shape academic and policy discussions for fair and sustainable housing policies.' (Article, 2025). This statement corroborates Camponio's (2017) argument on the importance of collaboration and information exchange to inform policy and further policy implementation. Sharing of best practices was also mentioned often in the TCNs websites, for instance URBACT mentions they have 'collected city experiences and concrete practices from various European cities implementing the right to housing so others can take inspiration from and exchange between other stakeholders' (Article, 2020). Examples of this have been 'Barcelona's housing plan 2016-2025 with a strategy to improve

housing affordability, adequacy and accessibility' (Article, 2019). Furthermore, the Brussels city official corroborates the statements, mentioning how Brussels participation in the 'Netco network of cities for collaborative housing' which 'main objectives were to promote social inclusion and civic engagement in housing, share best practices between cities and influence local policies to support this initiative', furthermore they 'also maintained a direct contact with specific cities as part of housing exchanges', emphasizing the influence of best practices on city policy development. Best practices are an important feature for policy entrepreneurs, since through exchange of ideas and cities 'leading by example' cities learn from one another and can better develop solutions for common challenges (Güntner & Gebhardt, 202; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009).

TCNs Call for support

Besides the horizontal dimension, vertical instruments have also been described as important tools used by TCNs, mainly involved with seeking support from external and international organization and calling for funding, such as EU institutions (Camponio, 2017). Calling for support is deeply linked with TCNs' jurisgenerative and policy entrepreneurship aims of inclusion in international decision-making processes, which has been analyzed in TCNs' involvement with migration issues (Oomen & Durmus, 2022; Güntner & Gebhardt, 2021). The analysis of TCNs' involvement in housing shows that seeking support from organizations was also a key avenue of engagement. Through the analysis, it was evident that TCNs call for support came from a humble place, as they emphasized that cities alone can't achieve all their aims in the field of housing policy. The Global Parliament of Mayors exemplifies this:

> 'Despite recent progress, cities require further technical, financial, and legal support when implementing local policies. To this end, mayors have called "on national and regional governments, central banks and international financial institutions, and international organisations" for support.'
> Report, 2022

Similarly, Eurocities stated that 'cities won't be able to solve present and future crises without support from above (…) it's an illusion to think that all global transformations can be handled at the local level (…) we need bold initiatives at the EU and national level.' In addition, Eurocities

called for 'EU institutions to make the issue of social and affordable housing for all a priority (…) and involve all regions in the development of EU policy' (Article, 2024). Even though these statements align with previous literature on TCNs and sustainability and migration, TCNs in relation to housing also emphasize the need of support from the national level, which goes against research stating that TCNs seek support from international organizations in order to distance their reliance on the nation state (Camponio, 2017). This further emphasizes the focus on collaboration rather than competition and tension between cities and states in housing related topics. On the other hand, when TCNs called for funding, the importance of the EU was highlighted rather than the national governments. URBACT emphasizes their responsibility in 'making sure that citizens benefit from access to adequate and affordable housing (…) and the European level can play an important role in supporting such endeavors through the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund+, European Investment Bank, Invest EU and others' (Article, 2020). Finally, ICLEI emphasizes that public funds only will not be enough to respond to current challenges, calling for 'EU recovery funds and other EU funding opportunities' for support in providing public and social housing, security of tenure and rent control' (Policy Brief, 2024). These statements resonate with Camponio's (2017) and Kern & Bulkeley's (2009) research foregrounding the relevance of EU funding for TCNs addressing local and global challenges.

The role of Entrepreneurial Visibility and Jurisgenerative Declarations

So far, this chapter has outlined the strive for TCNs' inclusion in multilateral processes through their influence, power and innovation, as well as their focus on collaboration and support, which all contribute to the TCNs' goals. This final section will look closer into two specific vertical tools used by TCNs tailored to both their policy entrepreneurship and jurisgenerative intentions.

Closely linked with their mission for inclusion in international fora, TNCs as policy entrepreneurs organize conferences, summits or send representatives to international meetings, which include international organization headquarters, universities, think tanks and other global private partnerships (Stone, 2019). Interestingly, the analysis showed that most TCNs engage in these types of events as a way to draw attention to the right to housing. The Global Parliament of Mayors has for instance hosted webinars on the impact of COVID-19 on the right to housing with the UN special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (Webinar Summary Note, 2020).

URBACT and Metropolis also engaged with the UN special rapporteur in university events and conferences on local governments and the right to housing (Articles 2021 & 2017). ICLEI also mentioned their meetings in Brussels with the Commissioner for Energy and Housing to discuss EUs affordable housing strategy (Article, 2025).

On the other hand, Oomen and Durmus (2022) foreground how TCNs support for cities declaration making is a key instrument to achieve the jurisgenerative aims. Declarations increase cities visibility and legitimacy at the international stage as they demonstrate fluency and knowledge in legal language, which is crucial to be taken seriously in international decision making. In this sense, TCNs adopt the form and language of international law and foreground their norm-generation internationally (Oomen & Durmus, 2022). In the field of housing, the most prominent example of this is the Declaration of Cities for Adequate housing. The declaration is described as 'the first and only step at the international level regarding such issues' (referring to housing challenges). The declaration is also 'based on a clear commitment to promote renewed housing strategies, and to do it in terms of social inclusion and human rights standards.' Besides the housing declaration, GPM mentions the Bristol Declaration which 'expresses their commitment to work in partnership with UN-Habitat to advance the UN guidelines on safer cities and human settlements' (Report, 2020). This declaration reinforces the importance of collaboration between TCNs and international institutions to tackle housing challenges which are often mentioned through UN-Habitat. ICLEI also presented the 'Basque declaration' aimed at creating 'productive, sustainable and resilient cities in an inclusive Europe' (2016). Furthermore, the Barcelona Manifesto is an important document which supports the Housing Declaration, as it reinforces and defends the right to housing. Finally, the Durban Declaration was adopted in 2019 aimed to advance sustainable development and foregrounding cities as key actors, and has TCNs such as Metropolis, ICLEI and Eurocities as signatories. Even though not a specific local governments declaration, during the Brussels interview, the city official mentioned how 'Brussels presented the European conference of the housing ministers in March, where the Liege declaration was signed and established a common framework for priority projects and political commitments to elevate housing as a European level policy issue.' This quote expresses the cities' willingness to participate in multilateral norm generation in relation to housing, also representing Brussels as the center of the European Union. These are a few examples of how TCNs showcase their legal

capabilities to jointly tackle housing challenges, by aiming to be included in international norm-generation (Oomen & Durmus, 2022).

The sidelined role of Symbolic Instruments

Camponio (2017) and Oomen (2019) stressed the role of the symbolic dimension used by TCNs, which mostly serve to legitimize local governments policies, build identity and strengthen their prestige vis a vis other local and national actors. Through storytelling, showcasing and shaming, these symbolic instruments aim to strengthen decoupling practices (Oomen, 2019). As previously stated in this chapter, decoupling was only minimally mentioned by TCNs in the field of housing, which goes hand in hand with the use of symbolic instruments, which the analysis equally showed minimal engagement within housing challenges. Only 'shaming' as explained by Oomen (2019) was referenced by TCNs. Shaming is described as a critique to the nation states handling of key global challenges, which has pushed local governments to step up and take up the state's role in the field (Oomen, 2019). CFH mentioned how 'governments are tying, and in most cases failing, to combat some of the key drivers of the housing crisis' and that 'the systems that produced the current crisis were facilitated by governments' (Missions Report, 2023). Eurocities similarly mentioned how 'it is remarkable how cities often step up to fulfill roles that fall under the purview of national governments' (Article, 2024).

Oomen (2019) argues that the symbolic dimension contributes to strengthening local authorities' independence vis a vis national governments. The symbolic dimension, therefore, is used mostly when TCNs and local governments aim for 'decoupling' and independence and are in need for legitimacy as they assert themselves as autonomous actors. As this chapter has showed, TCNs and cities in housing related topics emphasize on collaboration, support and inclusion with different levels of government and international organizations. Therefore, cities aim to strengthen collaboration, rather than independence, where symbolic instruments are less needed in housing related matters.

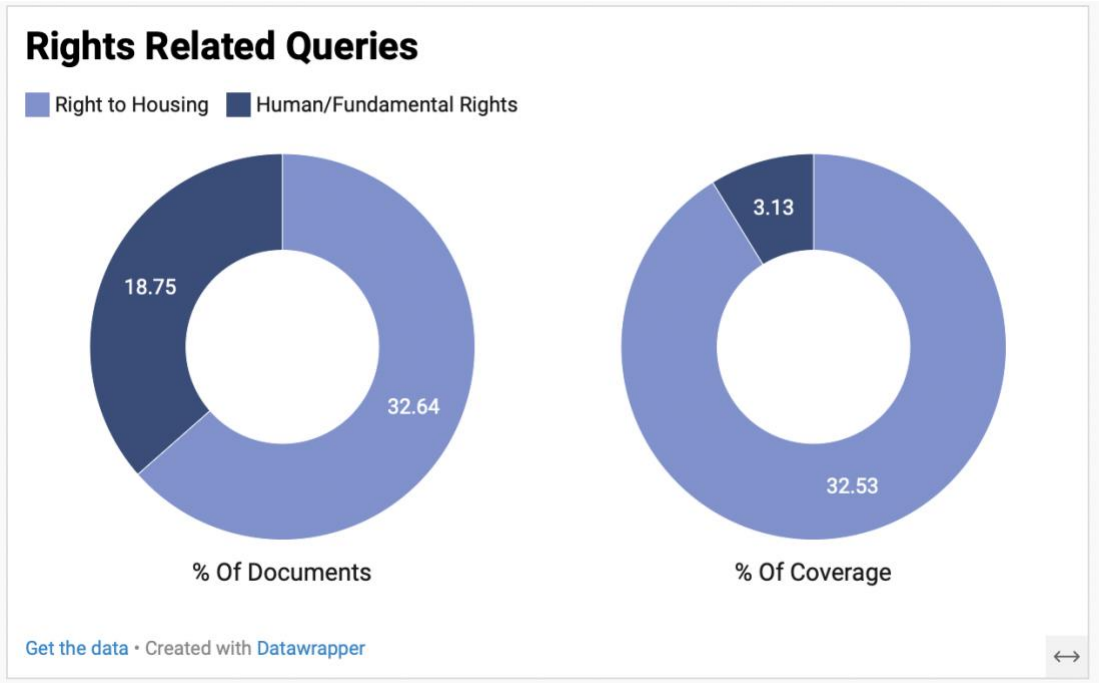
Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that transnational city networks act as policy entrepreneurs and jurisgenerators in the field of housing, using various vertical and horizontal instruments. To achieve their inclusion in international decision-making, TCNs specially make use of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were often used as a guiding framework for cities to engage in global challenges. The significance of SDGs will be further looked into in Chapters 2 and 3, when the way in which TCNs use their jurisgenerative language and framing of housing challenges and the human right to housing is analyzed. Another important finding is the collaborative position TCNs have adopted, rather than challenging the nation state and pursuing decoupling strategies, they call for more close collaboration between the national government and other international institutions when it comes to housing challenges. Only in the context of funding allocation TCNs specifically call for the European Union's Resources. This emphasizes how TCNs call for a stronger multilevel partnership in housing related topics. Finally, the importance of declarations for jurisgenerative practices was underscored in order for cities to gain visibility in multilateral processes. The following chapter will further examine the legal language and framing of the right to housing in the declarations and other key TCN documents.

CHAPTER 2: THE RIGHT TO HOUSING THROUGH A TRANSNATIONAL CITY NETWORKS PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 2 and 3 address the second hypothesis: TCNs will engage with human rights standards by applying right to housing language and guidelines in their practices when confronting housing challenges. Similar to chapter 1, chapter 2 and 3 are mainly based on the content analysis, however, include some relevant insights brought forward during the interviews. This chapter is crucial for the research question as it outlines how TCNs engage with and translate the right to housing to local settings, creating a normative framework influencing how cities view and act upon the right. The chapter begins by presenting word frequency results related to human rights, then explores the contexts in which human rights and the right to housing are referenced in the documents. It outlines how TCNs integrate UN treaties, Special Rapporteurs' documents, and General Comments, focusing on dignity and protection of vulnerable groups. Finally. TCNs frame housing rights in relation to the SDGs. Notably, inductive codes and particularly those linked to Sustainable Development revealed new findings not fully covered by the theoretical framework.

Explanation of the Word Frequency Results



These charts visualize the results two right based queries: The 'Fundamental Right or Human Right query' and the 'Right to housing or Right to adequate housing query.' The use of rights-based language across the documents reveals a significant difference between general human rights references and specific mentions of the right to housing. The former query showed that only 18.75% of the analyzed documents (36 out of 192) mentioned these concepts, with an overall coverage of just 3.13%. This shows that while human rights language is present, it is relatively limited in depth and frequency. Mentions of these terms were distributed relatively evenly across all TCNs analyzed. The low coverage suggests that when the terms appear, they are typically mentioned only once or twice per document, suggesting that they don't form a core part of the discourse.

On the other hand, the "right to housing" and "right to adequate housing" query gave significantly higher results: 32.64% of documents (63 out of 192) included these terms, with a much higher coverage of 32.53%. This reveals that the right to housing is not only mentioned more frequently across the data, but is also discussed in greater depth when it appears. The high coverage is largely the result of the documents from Cities for Adequate Housing and URBACT, which refer to the right to housing often, reflecting the importance of the terms in their texts. This contrast suggests that while general human rights language appears sporadically, the right to housing emerges as a more focused and central concept within certain TCNs. It is important to note, however, that while not all TCN documents explicitly reference human rights or the right to housing, the qualitative analysis reveals that many TCNs implicitly engage with these concepts. Through the use of rights-based language and references to related frameworks, they often allude to the right to housing without directly naming it. The following sections further explore the combination of implicit and explicit framing across the different documents and contextualizes it.

Relevance of the Right to Housing in International Frameworks

As shown by the word frequency results, the right to housing was oftentimes mentioned by all TCNs, which shows the importance the right to housing carries for the networks when dealing with housing related challenges, specifically in the housing affordability field. However, it is important to contextualize these words in the various documents of the networks, in order to attain

meaning attached to how transnational city networks understand and translate the right to housing through their jurisgenerative capacity. This is crucial as TCNs set standards through introducing and complementing norms, in this case related to the right to housing (Oomen, 2019). According to the 2008-2014 Special Rapporteur Raquel Rolnik, the right to adequate housing needs to be fully integrated in all policies, projects and activities concerning housing, where all public and private actors involved with housing need to acknowledge the right (2009). The TCNs analyzed understand and acknowledge the right to housing as public actors. In one of their main information websites, Eurocities states that 'access to adequate and affordable housing should be a fundamental right for all people.' In the Durban political declaration it is emphasized that 'the right to housing is at the core of the priorities of any citizen and it needs to continue to be at the center of the political agenda' (2019). URBACT also explains 'Housing is a fundamental necessity and the access to housing is a fundamental right' (Article, 2022). More generally, the Berlin city official also mentioned that 'human rights standards will always, especially in Berlin, play a role.' Lastly, as a more implicit mention, the Brussels city official mentioned 'the key part of my mission is to (…) maximize the impact promoting decent and affordable housing.'

Naturally, the right to adequate housing is attached to multiple principles which need to be adhered to. The UN Secretary General stresses the importance of progressive realization and non-retrogression as components to the right to adequate housing, as states need to meet their positive obligations to the right (2024). Furthermore, Leijten & de Bel (2020) mention the importance of equality and non-discrimination as further components to the right, stemming from Article 2(2) of the ICESCR. Even though these are essential elements for the fulfillment of the right, they were not mentioned in relation to the right to housing throughout the analysis of the TCNs and interviews. On the other hand, the General Comment nr.4 (1991) had a more central position in the various documents. The Housing Declaration clearly states their commitment to the right to housing within the General Comment's factors:

> 'We, the local governments strongly believe that all people should have actual access to "adequate housing", understood by the United Nations as the one that has the correct "affordability", "legal security of tenure", "habitability", "availability of services, materials, facilities an infrastructure," accessibility", "location" and "cultural adequacy.'

The TCNs mostly mentioned accessibility and affordability separately throughout the documents. Eurocities for instance talks about accessibility through sustainable practices, highlighting they want to support 'building a city where every resident sees green outside their window and can walk to a part' (Article, 2025). Furthermore, Metropolis wants to contribute to the 'development of accessible cities to all households wishing to live in the city core and promote a social mix' (Article, 2018). On affordability, Eurocities 'calls for ending housing exclusion and costs increase and ensuring the right balance between energy efficiency and affordability' (Article, 2022). Finally, cities for adequate housing states 'housing costs must be commensurate with household income, not set using market rates or at a rate that threatens the attainment of other housing rights' (Review Report, 2023). From all the ICESCR general comment factors, housing affordability took a central stage, as TCNs outlined its challenges and solutions. Chapter 3 will look into housing affordability in more detail.

The understanding of housing as a social good

Housing is not only protected under international human rights law but also constitutes a social good that welfare states should provide and protect. In global frameworks, de-commodification is seen as integral to the right to adequate housing, as it reduces individuals' reliance on market forces. In housing, this means states must intervene through social housing, subsidies, and rent regulation (Flynn, 2023). Without such regulation, housing becomes commodified and loses its social function. The right to housing is often framed in direct opposition to commodification (Kreide, 2022), requiring states to actively regulate and engage with private actors to uphold this right (Farha, 2017). Building on this, TCNs have foregrounded de-commodification in housing by explicitly calling for state regulation and independence of markets and by recognizing housing as a social good. Eurocities for instance, stated 'housing should be treated as a social right' and that 'living in cities shouldn't be a luxury', eventually 'urging the EU to treat housing as a basic social right' (Article, 2020). URBACT also stressed the importance of de-commodification and financialization in housing stating that 'housing should be completely detached from finance' (Article, 2021). Most importantly, when TCNs mentioned the social nature of housing they mainly did so calling for a stronger market regulation. The Barcelona Manifesto commits to 'join forces to demonstrate to the global markets that they (cities) are not territories

open for speculation and unjust extraction of richness' (2018). CFH advocate for 'allowing governments to regulate housing prices in the private market in order to ensure affordability and adequacy' (Article, 2020). Finally, URBACT also affirms that 'cities have to intervene with conventional policies (taxation, incentives) as well as novel arrangements to make the promises become true (housing promises)' (Article, 2019). The statements suggest that TCNs recognize that markets alone cannot ensure the right to adequate housing, particularly when the social function of housing is undermined by insufficient regulation of markets and the private sector (Rolnik, 2009; Farha, 2017).

TCNs' focus on Dignity and Vulnerable Groups

So far, this chapter has explained how TCNs relate to and understand the dominant notions of the right to housing in international law and welfare approaches. The following segment addresses which principles were highlighted by TCNs interpreting the right to housing, stressing their jurisgenerative function, as networks tailor the right to what they believe is most important in local settings (Oomen, 2019). For TCNs engaged with housing, the role of dignity and vulnerable groups were essential components of the right to housing at a local level.

Related to dignity, TCNs stress housing as a place to live in peace, safety and in community, and it should be a central element for cities. CFH stresses that 'housing is a place to live in dignity, to raise families and participate in the community' (2018). For Eurocities, dignified housing means 'ensuring everyone has a place to call their own' which requires 'investing in our communities, in the future of our children, and the very idea of solidarity and compassion' (Article, 2024). Metropolis sums up the connection between dignified housing and the city:

> 'Providing affordable, quality housing for citizens should be seen as lying at the heart of a liveable city.'
> Affordable Housing Report, 2019

The TCNs' ideas on the right to housing and dignity influenced the way Berlin sees the right to adequate housing. During the interview, when asked about TCNs' influence on human rights in Berlin, the city official explained the following:

> ‘We have to find adequate ways of housing for everybody in the city. So that's has to do with certain gap of needs and and also things that policies could fulfill for people (…) and it also has to do with dignity of course to have to find so to say the right housing and to treat people with dignity in that sense.’

Finally, similar to Metropolises statement on the ‘livable city’, the Brussels city official mentioned how ‘the stakes are therefore high for the quality of life of Brussels residents, and access to secure adequate housing remains one of the top concerns.’ The Brussels city official connects access to housing with the quality of life of the city’s residents, directing towards the notion that housing is not just a ‘roof over one’s head’ (Leijten & de Bel, 2020; p.96). TCNs’ idea of the right to adequate housing is in line with the former Special Rapporteurs statements on the right to housing being an integral part of core human rights, as housing needs to be understood in relation to the inherent dignity of the human person (Farha, 2019). More than just a ‘roof over one’s head’, housing means somewhere to be living in security, peace and dignity (Leijten & de Bel, 2020; p.96). TCNs’ view on the right to housing expands on these ideas through a local perspective by relating housing to a place for solidarity and community building. Dignity is constructed through cities’ close knit experiences of living and supporting each other, which is a unique characteristic of cities as they are the ones closest to their population.

On the other hand, the protection of vulnerable groups has always been connected to the right to housing, and housing affordability specifically, in international law. The Secretary general has outlined the housing unaffordability crisis impact in urban contexts, specifically on individuals in a vulnerable situation (United Nations Secretary General, 2024). Rajagopal (SP, 2020-2026) emphasizes the importance to take different socioeconomic backgrounds, marginalized groups and homeless persons into account for the proper protection of the right to housing (2023). In addition, Rolnik (SP, 2008-2014) highlights the need to protect vulnerable groups at the forefront of the housing crisis as there is an increased reduction of public and social housing and many people are forced to live in substandard conditions (2009). As explained in international frameworks, vulnerable groups need special protection as the housing crisis has a disproportionate effect in urban areas, which TCNs have also emphasized when tackling housing challenges. Cities for adequate Housing stresses the importance of ‘governments to be accountable to people, specifically marginalized and vulnerable groups’, which ‘include homeless people, women, indigenous people and people with disabilities’ (Housing Missions Report, 2023). Similarly, Eurocities calls for the ‘need for cooperation with national and European bodies (…) to secure

support for vulnerable populations during transitions' (Article, 2024). Emphasizing on their nature as urban spaces, Eurocities also stated the following:

> 'Cities must be "caring cities", meaning they should be urban spaces where adequate housing is protected, with a strong safety net for most vulnerable populations.'
> Article, 2024

This has led TCNs to push for their protection through different means, for instance ICLEI explains how cities have 'addressed the specific needs of disadvantaged groups' such as 'Paris focusing on providing affordable housing in low-income suburbs' (Policy Brief, 2024). URBACT has also mentioned how 'many authorities have taken exceptional measures to protect vulnerable people in rental and homeownership sectors (…) such as bans on evictions and temporary accommodation for homeless people' (Article, 2020). The analysis has shown that cities take their responsibility to vulnerable groups in relation to the right to housing with great care, which is also related to cities nature as urban areas which have the closest contact to the population.

The right to housing through the Sustainable Development Goals

This final section of the chapter will particularly look into a significant finding which was not part of the original theory framework: the framing of the right to housing within the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The right to housing and especially the ability to afford or not afford housing has a big impact on other rights, such as the right to food and drinking water, health, education and work (Rajagopal, 2023). The right to housing is therefore deeply interconnected with other rights, and it should be addressed by governments in a holistic manner (Ibis.). The interconnectedness of rights was mentioned often by all the TCNs: Examples are URBACT stating that 'citizens who lack housing cannot participate fully in society and avail themselves of all their fundamental rights' (Article, 2022) and CFH arguing that 'the right to housing is indivisible and interdependent with other human rights' (Article, 2020). During the analysis, as TCNs evidently connected the human right to housing with other rights, the relevance of the SDGs started to gain importance. The GPM for instance, mentioned 'housing has been formulated in several interesting ways, including in connection with other issues recognized by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as the environment, pollution, employment, energy and sanitation' (Summary Note,

2020). Metropolis goes further to name housing as the first target of the SDG 11, arguing that 'access to decent housing is at its core multifaceted, affected and being affected by access to health, education, employment and gender disparities.' (Affordable Housing Report, 2019). The 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were first introduced in 2015 during a UN Summit. The Goals are meant to set goals for inclusive sustainable development and achieve a healthier environment (Alharbi, 2024). Since then, the SDGs have been included and referenced in many international law documents, and in the field of housing they have been mentioned by multiple Special Rapporteurs. Farha for instance, asserts that the realization of the right to housing with clearly allocated roles and responsibilities are central to the commitments of the 2030 Agenda (2017). Rajagopal emphasizes that ensuring affordable housing, especially for people in need will ensure the target 11.1 of the SDGs (2023).

The analysis has shown that through positioning the right to housing in an interconnected web of rights and SDGs, TCNs successfully framed their understanding of the right under the Sustainable Development Goals framework. Oomen & Durmus explain that the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and specifically the inclusion of SDG 11 on safe, inclusive and sustainable communities was influenced by local governments' engagement, and now is seen as a crucial entry point for local governments to localize or 'translate' the SDGs regarding local challenges (2022). Oomen & Durmus article offers a convincing explanation of the salience of the SDGs in relation to housing in the data analysis, which importance was also highlighted by the TCNs themselves. In the Durban (2019), the Basque (2016) and the Housing Declaration (2018), the 2030 Agenda is mentioned as a standard to follow for cities, as it 'represents an opportunity to renew the social contract and rethink relationships (…) fostering direct exchanges and peer to peer learning to allow for the 'Implementation Decade' of the SDGs (Durban Declaration, 2019). Furthermore, Metropolis sums up the importance of the SDGs in connection to the right to housing:

> 'Thus, in the area of housing rights, the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11 put the spotlight on the role of local governments in achieving this goal'
> Article, 2018

According to the TCNs, the internalization of the SDGs in connection to housing has been successful in engaging local governments with new perspectives to tackle housing affordability challenges. For instance, Eurocities showcases how the 'SDG framework has inspired many city

development strategies', for instance 'Amsterdam embracing a sustainable development model putting people and environmental needs first.' (Policy Paper, 2020). Furthermore, CFH also mentions that 'achieving SDGs and specifically the 11.1 target provides a strong orientation for new policy approaches for cities.' (Housing Missions Report, 2023). The TCNs statements were corroborated during the interview with Berlins city official, as they stated that the 'SDGs can give you orientation points to translate problems from one city to another' (referring to housing problems).

Perhaps the most prominent expression of TCNs translation of the right to housing under SDGs was their mention of the phrase 'leave no one behind', which is related to the TCNs' focus on vulnerable groups as previously mentioned in this chapter. The preamble to the Resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals states 'we are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our plane (…) as we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.' (United Nations, 2015). Member states are committed to leave no one behind by combatting inequalities and discrimination, which are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. 'Leave no one behind' in that context means that the targets need to be met for all people and governments have to make the strongest effort to reach the furthest behind (UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, 2017). The following quote from a Eurocities policy paper referring to the housing crisis illustrates how this obligation was internalized:

> 'Addressing this crisis requires bold actions. Nobody can respond to this crisis alone, but only by working together in solidarity between all levels of government can we mitigate the negative impact on the most vulnerable in our society and build a fair, inclusive and sustainable recovery in the EU, leaving no one behind (…) As the level of government closest to people, cities are best placed to connect citizens to the EU and ensure their urgent needs get a European response, leaving no one behind.'
> Policy Paper, 2020

Conclusion.

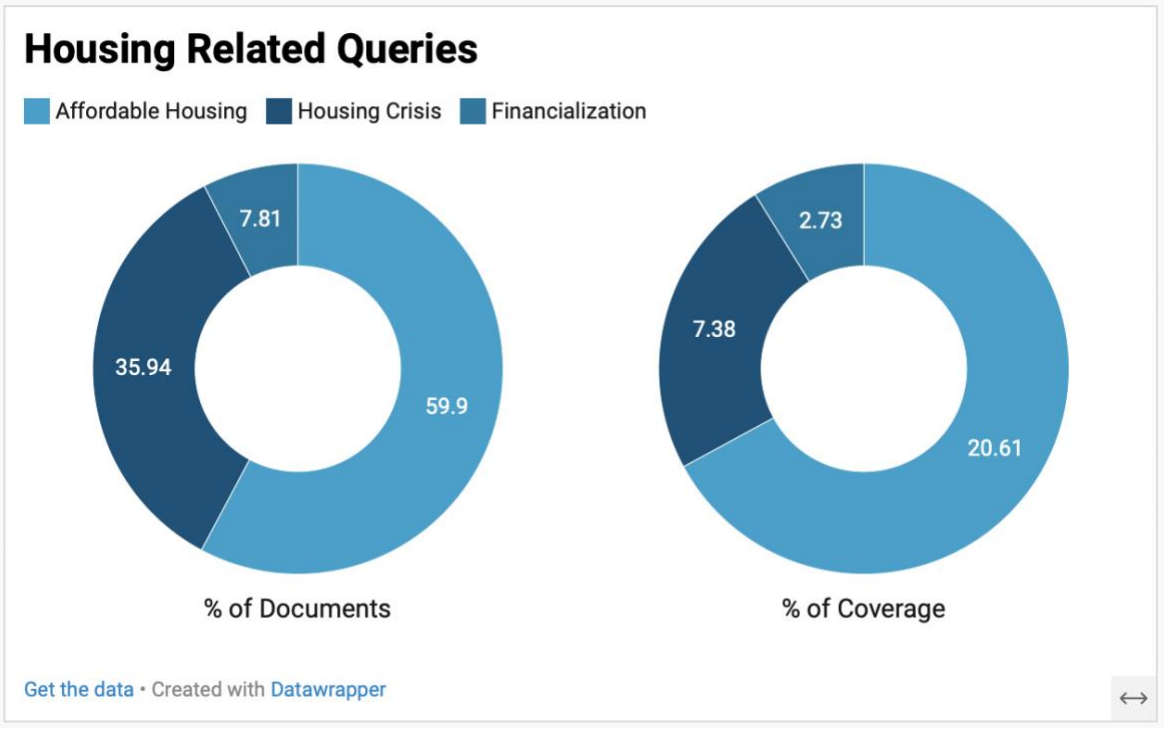
This chapter has looked into how TCNs interpret and translate the right to housing to local settings. It outlined how TCNs follow UN standards of the right to housing, such as the general comment nr.4 and their recognition of housing as a social public good and the importance of its protection and regulation. More importantly, the chapter highlights how dignity and protection of

vulnerable groups are highlighted in all the TCNs' right to housing language, showing an important prioritization of these elements of the right for local governments, which is tied to the cities' nature of being the closest to its citizens. What stands out of this analysis is the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals in relation to cities and the right to housing. The SDGs represent a critical avenue for TCNs and cities to apply the right to housing in local settings, and TCNs showcase this commitment through the use of the phrase 'leave no one behind' calling for more inclusive and regulated housing policies. Altogether, this chapter has proven the second hypothesis to be true, as TCNs engage with human rights standards and right to housing language in their practices regarding housing, yet mainly through positioning the right to housing within a Sustainable Development Goals normative framework.

CHAPTER 3: THE RIGHT TO HOUSING IN THE FACE OF FINANCIALIZATION AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

This chapter is a continuation of the second chapter aiming to answer the second hypothesis: TCNS will engage with human rights standards by applying right to housing language and guidelines in their practices when confronting housing challenges. This chapter deepens the research question as it analyzes the challenges transnational city networks face in relation to the right to housing, which further contributes to the influence it has on which challenges related to housing financialization the cities will respond to. This chapter looks into which challenges are considered the most relevant by TCNs when discussing the right to housing and the housing crisis, giving particular attention to affordability concerns, the impact on vulnerable groups, segregation and the broader implications of inequality. Finally, the chapter also mentions how TCNs understand and address the structural nature of unaffordability and financialization, closely linked to the TCNs framing of the right to housing with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Explanation of the Word Frequency Results



These charts visualize the results of three housing-affordability related queries: the 'housing affordability and affordable housing' query, the 'financialization' query, and the 'housing crisis' query. The use of these terms across the TCN documents show significant differences in both how frequently each theme appears and the depth of engagement with each of the terms.

The results of the queries show that housing affordability emerges as the most prominent theme, appearing in 59.90% (115 from 192) of all documents, which is by far the highest among the three queries presented here and the rights related queries from Chapter 2. The query results also show a textual coverage of 20.61%, which indicates that the topic is not only widely mentioned across documents but is also discussed in detail in the documents. Housing affordability is uniformly addressed across most TCNs website documents, indicating that all TCNs position housing affordability as central topic and challenge in relation to housing policy and the right to housing.

On the other hand, financialization only appears in 7.81% (15 out of 192) of the documents, with a coverage of 2.73%. Housing financialization is mostly referred to in documents from Cities for Adequate Housing and ICLEI, showing that the term is less frequently addressed in general in relation to housing affordability. This result explains the more specialized and technical nature of the term: Financialization is mainly used in academic circles to explain the housing crisis, making the low appearance of the concept in TCNs' documents unsurprising. It is important to note, that similar to the "right to adequate housing", even though financialization may not have explicitly appeared in the texts often, a large amount of documents from the various TCNs did mention topics which implicitly refer to the term, such as the lack of state regulation, dominance of financial markets in housing, and the loss of the social function of housing, all of which will be addressed in later sections in this Chapter.

Finally, the "housing crisis" term appears in 35.94% (69 out of 192) of the documents, with a coverage of 7.38%. Regarding TCNs, references to the housing crisis appeared mostly in Eurocities documents. Although the term is widespread, its lower coverage is related to the fact that it was mostly used to contextualize and introduce specific housing themes, rather than the term being a central topic in the texts. The following section will dive deeper into the word frequency

findings by contextualizing how TCNs engage with the concepts in relation to the right to housing and housing affordability challenges.

Connecting the right to housing, the housing crisis and financialization

The right to housing has increasingly been challenged by the rise of unaffordable homes, slowly turning residences into a luxury good and shrinking the number of affordable homes for lower-income families (Ellen, 2019). As the former SP Raquel Rolnik expressed, the housing crisis has revealed the inability of the market to provide for adequate and affordable housing for all (2009). As the crisis worsens, affordability issues become widespread not only for the lower-income and vulnerable groups, but also middle-income people (Rolnik, 2013). As the word frequency analysis showed, TCNs often mention the housing crisis in their documents, and they often frame it as a threat to the right to housing. Cities for Adequate Housing for instance, state that 'in almost every country, in cities and towns across the globe, we are experiencing a human rights crisis – the housing crisis.' (Article, 2019). Eurocities also connects the housing crisis with human rights:

> 'Access to adequate and affordable housing should be a fundamental right for all people. Yet across Europe we are facing a housing crisis in cities, which creates new forms of inequality and contributes to the most extreme form of poverty: homelessness.'
> Article, 2024

The relationship between the housing crisis, inequality, and human rights highlights a core concern reflected throughout the analysis. Inequality and segregation emerged as recurring themes when TCNs discussed both financialization and the housing crisis, which aligns with the statement of former Special Rapporteur Leilani Farha (2014–2020), emphasizing that the housing crisis is different to other crises since housing has also become a key driver of socioeconomic inequality (2019). These interconnections will be further explored later in the chapter.

When discussing the main drivers of the housing crisis, financialization has gained popularity in academic circles and in international legal frameworks, as it is argued that financialization has profoundly affected the enjoyment of the right to housing across the world (Rolnik, 2013), turning housing to a financial asset and profit-making tool rather than a social good

(Leijten & de Bel, 2020). As the main TCN explicitly mentioning financialization in their documents, CFH corroborates the findings in the literature, arguing that 'financialization has accelerated the housing crisis and is fundamentally irreconcilable with the right to housing' (Housing Missions Report, 2023). Similarly, ICLEI explains the impact of financialization in local settings, stating that 'general trends such as financialization have an impact on the local dynamics of demand and supply of housing' (Report, 2020). The following section will further examine which aspects of financialization were mostly engaged with throughout the analysis.

Financialization through a transnational city networks' perspective

As explained before, financialization was not explicitly mentioned in the majority of the documents, yet TCNs did engage with the concept implicitly. As financialization explains the expanding and unprecedented dominance of financial markets and corporations in the housing sector contributing to housing commodification (Kumning & Litschauer, 2025), TCNs mainly focused on how housing is increasingly controlled by markets, the nature of housing as a financial asset and the diminished regulation of the housing sector by states.

Regarding the dominance of markets in the housing sector and housing as a financial asset, the Housing Declaration brought forward by CFH calls on local governments to implement 'urban planning practices that avoid the dependence on the private vehicle' as 'residential real estate has become an investment of choice for institutional investors such as private equity firms, pension funds and insurance companies' (2018). Metropolis connects the presence of markets to the segregation and gentrification of cities, as the cultural attractiveness of urban city centers start being 'highly sought after by investors in hotels, tourist accommodations, and luxury apartments, which makes the price of the land higher'. In turn, 'the growing increase in prices makes these areas an attractive draw for investors looking for higher profit margins' (Gentrification Issue Paper, 2018). The Berlin city official corroborates these findings explaining the city's attractiveness as a bait for investors and a source for gentrification, stating that 'people are keen to invest in Berlin' since they 'have companies, universities (…) so it's interesting for investors to invest there' leading to 'a lot of refurbishments for 30 years everywhere in the city (…) which creates higher prices.' TCNs focus on markets leading financialization is closely linked to the literature, which outlines how urban housing sectors have been reshaped according to the interest of investors and financiers,

as real estate is now seen as one of the biggest investment and wealth accumulation assets for profit gaining popularity after the financial crisis in 2008 (Kadi & Ronald, 2014; Leijten & de Bel, 2020).

The high influence of corporations and markets in the housing sector looking for profit is deeply linked to the inaction and lack of regulation from the government, which is another point frequently referenced by TCNs throughout the analysis. For instance, ICLEI mentions the following:

> 'In the last decades, many national and local governments have implemented cuts to public spending, which leads to more restrictions in the access to services and benefits and curtained local and national governments abilities to meaningfully intervene in the functioning of the market.'
> Policy Brief, 2023

URBACT also explains how the housing crisis is interlinked with different factors, such as 'inefficient public and planning policies, regulations on housing investments, weakened national welfare mechanisms and deregulation of the rental markets' (Article, 2016). Moreover, TCNs have gone a step further by demonstrating how states, instead of upholding their human rights obligations, have encouraged the dominance of private markets: CHF explains how 'instead of regulating this phenomenon, governments often fuel financialization by implementing common polices like tax incentives for development of market rate rental housing or preferential tax treatment, all in the hope that their involvement and capital will solve the housing crisis' (Financial Review Panel, 2023). Finally, URBACT states that 'homelessness has to be contextualized in a discourse of wealth production and the role of government in providing leeway to unregulated financialized residential real estate markets (…) viewing housing not as a right, but as a commodity' (Article, 2019). TCNs' emphasis on the lack of government regulation is closely tied to broader capitalist and neoliberal paradigms, which have historically promoted market liberalization under the assumption that markets could efficiently regulate the allocation of housing as a rational means of resource distribution. This shift has led to policy frameworks that increasingly abandon housing's role as a social good, enabling widespread privatization and exposing housing to the volatility of market forces (Kumning & Litschauer, 2025). In this context, neoliberalism has played a central role in the financialization and commodification of housing, as states have actively supported and subsidized these processes, often to the detriment of the population (Rolnik, 2013; Farha, 2017). After outlining how TCNs frame the housing crisis and

financialization, the next section will examine the impact these dynamics have as outlined by the networks.

Unaffordable Housing, vulnerability and segregation

Financialization has a widespread impact on the right to adequate housing in its components as outlined by the General comment number 4. There is significant research on how financialization impacts housing accessibility, habitability, cultural adequacy and non-discrimination (Leijten & de Bel, 2020; Rolnik, 2009). However, in the context of the housing crisis, TCNs mainly focused on financialization's impact on affordability, as reflected in the word frequency results. This is unsurprising, since affordable housing is one of the most important elements of housing, attracting businesses, economic activity, diversity and cultural vitality (Ellen, 2019). Furthermore, the housing crisis has mainly been focused on the rising prices and increasing unaffordability of both the low and middle-income population (Rolnik, 2013). The conceptualization of housing as an asset through financialization mainly put pressure on the affordability aspect of the right to housing (Leijten & de Bel, 2020). The same concerns are voiced by TCNs, as for instance CFH asserts 'financialization is reducing the availability of affordable housing, undermining its access for low income and other marginalized groups' (Financial Review, 2023). Furthermore, ICLEI highlights that housing affordability in many European capitals has become a 'leading source for concern' and has 'become an increasingly urgent global issue' (Policy Brief, 2024). The Berlin Interviewee also mentioned how the unaffordability of housing in the city had a strong 'sense of threat as the sensation of change made some people afraid.' In addition, the Brussels interviewee mentioned the following:

> 'The forthcoming federal reform in Belgium (…) is also likely to further restrict the access to housing (…) These measures are reducing the purchasing power of vulnerable groups in the society including single parent families, low income with old or unemployed cohabitants (…) as a result a rise in homelessness is increasingly likely.'

This quote stands out as it connects the states actions to the increasing vulnerability of the population, corroborating arguments on how states can enable a hostile housing situation (Kumning & Litschauer, 2025; Rolnik, 2009). What is interesting in the analysis, however, is how

affordability challenges were often linked to vulnerability and segregation, which is closely tied to the notion of 'leaving no one behind' stemming from the Sustainable Development Goals.

As explained in the previous chapter, protection of vulnerable groups was one of the TCNs' core aspects of the right to adequate housing, which explains the focus on the impact unaffordability has on vulnerable groups. The global parliament of mayors for instance, explains how the crisis has 'fallen mostly on vulnerable persons, such as the homeless, girls, women, migrants, the disabled and black people' (Summary Note, 2020). Eurocities corroborates this statement, indicating that 'vulnerable people are among those who face the greatest's challenges accessing affordable housing' (Report, 2024). The disproportionate impact of housing unaffordability has been extensively covered by research, connecting neoliberal policies and globalized financial markets to the decline of public and social housing, leaving people in need of these options with little ability to access the increasingly exclusive private rental or ownership markets (Rajagopal, 2023; Flynn, 2023; Kadi & Ronald, 2014). An ICLEI Report explains the following:

> 'Not only lower income individuals tend to have less funds to allocate to housing but they also tend to have less access to financing (…) they cannot afford better homes or better locations and thus tend to live in areas that, in turn, accentuate inequalities.'
> Report, 2021

Both Flynn (2023) and Leijten & de Bel (2020) explain that around 30% of low-income households spend more than 40% of their income on housing costs, restraining their ability to spend it on other necessities. This quote is also interesting since it introduces inequality and segregation concepts in connection to vulnerability. Eurocities explains 'families are being priced out of neighborhoods they have called home for generations' (Article, 2024) and Metropolis points out that unaffordability processes 'are expressed spatially with growing residential segregation and gentrification of central areas (…) while a great part of social wealth is being appropriated by real-estate rents, the low-income population is being driven out of central urban areas' (Issue Paper, 2019). Segregation has also often been linked to unaffordability and vulnerable people in academia and international legal documents. For instance, Kadi & Ronald (2014) explain that neoliberalisation of housing polices have undermined the ability of marginal households to live in the city and central districts. Rolnik (2013) alludes to gentrification when she explains the creation

of ‘world class enclaves for the wealthy and tourists’ (p.1063), where people unable to afford those prices are pushed into inadequate living areas and away from their sources of livelihood.

Finally, TCNs also often linked segregation processes with inequality, as Metropolis for instance argues that ‘one of the most visible aspects of inequality is gentrification, a process that nearly all of the metropolises in the world have experienced to some extent.’ Moreover, the network also claims that ‘gentrification is one of the main obstacles to ensuring the human right to adequate housing, as it encourages marginalization of vulnerable groups’ (Issue paper, 2019). In addition, ICLEI highlights that ‘economic segregation reflects disparities in how different communities experience access to housing, often deepening inequality’ (Article, 2024). As suggested, segregation and inequality have deep implications for the human right to housing and place important obligations on governments (Leijten & de Bel, 2020), which is why the following section will go deeper into the subject.

Inequality as a Human Rights Target

As Leijten & de Bel (2020) clearly state, in times of crisis, states have a duty to design policies in a way that mitigates inequalities and ensures the rights of disadvantaged and marginalized are not disproportionately affected. This specifically applies to housing rights too, as housing has become a key driver of contemporary inequalities as it becomes a place to store wealth (Flynn, 2023). The analysis shows that TCNs understand their obligations to mitigate inequality under the right to housing, as not only are they aware of the negative effects of financialization, housing unaffordability and segregation on vulnerable people and middle-income groups, but they also call for ways to combat and rectify it: The Housing Declaration states that cities ‘must guarantee a balanced distribution of affordable housing in the city, in order to promote fair housing and combat socio-spatial segregation’ (2018). ICLEI also stresses how housing ‘as one of the largest and main component of a household’s expenditure (…) is one of the dimensions where income inequality reflects the most’ (2020). Metropolis also emphasizes how ‘metropolises face complex challenges stemming from territorial and socioeconomic disparities closely linked to their elevated cost of living’ (Metropolitan Report, 2019). Indeed, TCNs are right to highlight the role housing plays in economic inequality, as inequality, exclusion and discrimination are at

the core of all violations of the right to housing, creating an intensified social, economic, political and spatial inequalities (Farha, 2019), which are mostly seen at the local level.

Lastly, when discussing the right to housing, financialization and inequality, TCNs often alluded to the structural nature of the housing unaffordability crisis, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the origins of the high housing prices and their commitment to solving their root causes. The GPM for instance, explains how structural issues came to the foreground through the Covid19 crisis, which 'has been helpful in a way that it meant local governments pay more attention to people who are usually neglected (…) the human rights approach to the Covid pandemic is what brought the right to adequate housing into the spotlight.' (Article, 2020). Calling for action and solutions, ICLEI states that if they 'want to successfully tackle social inclusion in cities, we have to rethink the political and economic infrastructures tying our cities together.' (Report, 2018). Likewise, Eurocities emphasizes how they are 'still living with the scars of multiple crises' and that 'poverty, exclusion and lack of access to services are not temporary, they are structural' (Article, 2025). Finally, URBACT mentions that 'housing exclusion is a systemic issue that requires not only local solutions, but also a national enabling environment (Article, 2020). TCNs' attention to the structural dimension of housing challenges is closely linked to their framing of the right to housing within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 and SDG 10, which aim to address systemic inequality and urban planning issues (United Nations, 2015). This structural perspective is further echoed by several UN Special Rapporteurs, including Farha (2017), Rajagopal (2023), and Rolnik (2019), who emphasize that the drivers of the housing affordability crisis and financialization are not isolated problems but stem from structural flaws in current economic and housing systems shaped by global financial markets.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how TCNs engage deeply with housing affordability, financialization and the housing crisis in connection to the right to adequate housing, framing them as highly interconnected issues threatening the right. Even though 'financialization' was not often explicitly mentioned, the analysis showed that its core dynamics, such as market dominance and weakened government regulation are often mentioned in TCNs' documents. Finally, housing

unaffordability is presented as a central concern in relation to the right to housing, as it is linked and exacerbates inequality, segregation and the marginalization of vulnerable groups. This chapter expands on the second hypothesis by including TCNs' engagement with housing affordability and financialization challenges, ultimately reinforcing TCNs' position as strong actors engaging with current housing crisis challenges. Finally, the TCNs' focus on the effect of unaffordability on vulnerable groups and the structural nature of the crisis and financialization can be traced back to the TCNs' framing of the right to housing through the SDGs.

The following and final chapter builds on the last 3 chapters, looking into how the aims and tools of TCNs and their translation and usage of the right to housing has influenced cities' engagement with human rights and their application of right to housing centered policies and norms.

CHAPTER 4: LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' OBLIGATIONS TO THE RIGHT TO HOUSING AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

The last chapter addresses the third hypothesis, namely TCNs' engagement with human rights impact cities application of human rights in their housing policies and norms, by looking into the interviews with the Berlin and Brussels city officials and cities' statements and projects mentioned in the various TCN documents. This chapter directly answers the research question by connecting the previous chapters and evaluating how transnational city networks shape cities' responses to housing challenges related to housing financialization through the implementation of human right based housing policies. The chapter starts explaining how TCNs view of human rights obligations influence cities in their responsibility awareness to the right to housing. The main section of the chapter dives deeper into how TCNs and cities aim to fulfill their obligations, outlining their collaboration with states and the private sector, ensuring participatory housing policies, affordable housing schemes and providing social and public housing. The chapter culminates by stating the main challenges local governments face when trying to fulfill their obligations.

Human Rights Responsibility and Obligation Awareness

Chapters 2 and 3 explore how transnational city networks translate the right to adequate housing and how they frame this right from a local perspective. Framing is a crucial aspect of human rights practice, as it shapes how actors interpret the nature and obligations attached to the right, which are responsibilities that have traditionally been assigned to states (Farha, 2019). This section looks into how TCNs understand their obligations to the right to housing, and how it has influenced local governments awareness of their human rights obligations. Recent research has started to turn to local governments' human rights obligations, arguing that cities contribute to the effectiveness of rights on the ground, being the closest to its residents (Oomen & Durmus, 2022). Regarding the right to housing, it has been argued that it is of high importance that the local governments become fully aware of their obligations, as the implementation of the right to housing

becomes more diversified and responsibilities are moved from states to local governments (Farha, 2014). The analysis showed TCNs' clarity and willingness to fulfill their obligations. As an example, CFH states that 'solving the housing crisis will require governments to lead and a willingness to hold themselves accountable to people' (Housing Missions Report, 2023). Furthermore, Metropolis, drawing on the SDGs, states that ensuring that 'no one is left behind requires a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance system (…) we need governments as a whole to take action and make policies together' (Article, 2021). TCNs awareness of their obligations has had an impact on cities' engagement with responsibilities, showing similar determination to contribute to the fulfillment of the right in relation to housing financialization. A Eurocities article for instance, quoted the former major of Dublin Alison Gilliland claiming that 'we are (referring to mayors) the ones that need to make it happen, and we must take that responsibility (referring to ensuring social rights) ′ (2021). During the Brussels interview, the city's mayor efforts fulfilling the right to housing were also highlighted:

> 'The Deputy Mayor is deeply committed to defending the right to housing. She works closely with organizations that advocate for housing rights, particularly by raising awareness of and enforcing tenant protections, such as safeguards against excessive rent.'

The interview with Berlins city official also stressed how human rights are the city's responsibility through the following statement:

> 'Well, I think they're the main actors (referring to cities), there are many actors but the main actors in this field, of course (…) This policy is a is a communal policy. It's a city's policy and and it of course has a lot to do with reducing indifferences. Housing is something we need as a basic need of human beings.'

These city statements clearly show how TCNs engagement with the right to housing has influenced the cities' ideas and responses to housing challenges by taking up responsibility to the right, therefore the following section focuses on how cities and TCNs fulfill their responsibilities to the right to housing.

The fulfillment of housing rights responsibilities

Local governments have specific qualities which make them pivotal to ensure the fulfillment of the right to adequate housing. One of the key characteristics that set cities apart from their national counterpart is their nature of being at the 'front lines' of global challenges due to their unique position of being the closest to their population (Ellen, 2019). TCNs have repeatedly highlighted their close exposure to global challenges, which includes the housing crisis. Eurocities provides us with a useful example, arguing 'local authorities play a central role in delivering housing support' and that 'cities have long been at the forefront of improving access to adequate and affordable housing' (Article, 2022). Due to their position vis a vis citizens, local governments have the potential to interact with various stakeholders, which include affected communities, private actors such as companies, civil society and states. In other words, local governments are at the intersection between right holders and complex systems of multi-level governance (Farha, 2014). Consequently, as part of their obligations to the right to adequate housing, the analysis foregrounded the need for collaboration with the state, the private sector and the sharing of responsibilities attached to the right.

Staring with the private sector interaction, human rights reports have stressed the increasing importance of the governments engagement with various stakeholders, specifically in the private sector such as private landlords, real estate agencies, landowners and financial institutions to make sure they are aware of the nature of human rights obligations and improve the effectiveness of programmes and policies (Farha, 2014; Rajagopal 2023). These obligations are in line with statements of TCNs, as for instance Metropolis stresses how 'the urban system is too complex to be governed solely by elected administrations' and therefore 'consultation, participation of and coproduction with the private sector and civil society is necessary' (Report, 2019). Focused on the economic aspect, Eurocities also states that 'attracting private investment is necessary to meet the huge demand for affordable housing' and that 'collaborative efforts between public, private and non-profit sectors' are essential to 'leverage innovative financing models and sustainable building practices' (Article, 2024). TCNs call for more participation with the private sector are reflected in Valencia's government initiatives: The city government has 'carried out various actions seeking to bring more affordable housing in the city, through cooperation initiatives with the private sector.' Specifically, former Councilor Lozano 'called for more investment, strengthened coordination between different spheres of government and enhanced cooperation framework with the real estate

sector.' Finally, the programme was an 'unprecedented demonstration of public private cooperation to enhance the right to housing local guarantee' (2020).

As local governments' importance is foregrounded and their authority is acknowledged, cities and states should share responsibility in upholding the right to housing (Farha, 2014). The call for closer collaboration between states lies on the idea that the effective implementation of the right requires all levels of governments to be committed to their obligations (Ibis.). Instead of drifting away from states policies and find independent ways to tackle housing challenges, as suggested in past literature on TCNs engagement migration and sustainability (Oomen, 2019; Oomen & Baumgärtel, 2018), TCNs push for collaborative approaches towards national governments, as outlined in chapter 1. TCNs call for local governments to engage with states to tackle housing challenges: Global Parliament of Mayors references the 2030 Agenda and the new Urban Agenda stating that they 'highlight the necessary cooperation between the national and local levels for their successful implementation' (Report, 2022). Moreover, Eurocities argues that one of their most important strategies is to 'find better ways to cooperate with the national and EU level' as 'when looking at climate action and housing, it is very clear that the existence of national frameworks supporting cities can make a difference in the long term' (Pulse Mayors Report, 2024). Both the Brussels and the Berlin City officials mentioned collaboration with the national governments when asked about TCNs influence on human rights and housing in the city: Berlin stated that 'of course, cities have to collaborate very strongly with the national level, which includes negotiation processes on money and the exchange between different cities in one national system.' This quote is also interesting since it mentions a monetary dimension, which will be addressed later in the chapter. Lastly, during the Brussels interview, the collaboration and influence between national and city governments was also highlighted in order to confront the housing crisis:

> 'During the 2019-2024 legislative term the Secretary of State for housing launched an emergency housing plan (…) consisting of 33 measures supporting affordable and decent housing (…) and the municipalities were important partners in the implementation of this plan (…) the outcomes of this plan were significant and contributed to alleviating the housing crisis.'

The fulfillment of housing affordability responsibilities

After analyzing the impact of general obligations to the right to housing on TCNs and cities, this section will dive deeper into the specific action's cities have taken to address housing challenges, specifically affordability challenges connected to TCNs' statements. As presented in the literature, local governments have many tools at their disposal to ensure affordable housing, ranging from housing trust funds, inclusionary zoning programmes, enforcing building and housing codes, and taxation to create or renovate affordable housing (Ellen, 2019; Keating, 2019). Due to their extensive competences in the field of housing, cities can bear higher obligations to the right to housing and confront financialization, which range from interventions in housing markets such as granting social subsidies, community and cooperative housing initiatives, eviction prevention, tenant protection and improved accessibility of land and materials (Rajagopal, 2023). The analysis has shown that TCNs are aware of cities obligations and the need to combat financialization, as ICLEI states, 'the task of providing affordable and social housing falls to local governments and their administrations, municipalities have to work out how to deliver and finance affordable and social housing in a context that is often dominated by a free market paradigm' (Article, 2018). As explained, cities have multiple options to implement affordable housing measures in line with human rights, and this section looks into the most salient policies both TCNs and cities stressed the most: ensuring participatory housing policies, ensuring affordable housing schemes and providing social and public housing.

Ensuring participatory approaches has been widely recognized by academia and UN reports as a measure to fulfill right to housing obligations. Lelani Farha for instance, stresses the importance of local governments as the closest to the people and vulnerable communities, having a unique opportunity to engage in participatory decision making and find inclusive solutions to address local needs (Farha, 2019). Furthermore, Rajagopal argues that participation is pivotal to address housing affordability, as it makes sure that all individuals, especially the ones with significant housing concerns, can participate in public life to inform proper policy responses (2023). It is to no surprise that participatory policies have been foregrounded by both TCNs and cities, since they corroborate with TCNs understanding of the right to housing within the Sustainable Development Goals and the notion of 'leaving no one behind.' This framework ensures that all communities, especially also vulnerable groups, are included in housing processes and decision making, which were highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3. UN Habitat is also an example, as it has encouraged local governments to continue developing inclusive strategies which take

marginalized and vulnerable communities into account (2023). The housing declaration affirms local governments 'must collaborate with organizations and foster participation, self-management and empowerment of residents, supporting good practices as collaborative design' (2019). The Global Parliament of Mayors confirms the former statement, by arguing that 'cities are for the people and communities are experts regarding their own needs. For this reason, it is necessary to involve citizens in decision making processes' (Annual Summit Report 2022). The strong stance of TCNs emphasizing the importance of participatory measures in housing has influenced various policies at the local level. Copenhagen and Amsterdam are two cities which have 'been able to develop comprehensive strategies that prioritize disadvantaged groups through (…) robust participatory housing models involving local communities in decision-making processes.' They have 'encouraged community involvement and trust-building by investing in capacity building programmes to help engage local communities' (Policy Paper, 2024). Furthermore, Eurocities has also highlighted Braga's efforts 'supporting neighborhood associations' and 'engaging residents through participatory budgeting' (Article, 2025). During the interview, the Brussels city official also presented the Brussels city's aim to 'collaborate closely with organizations promoting housing inclusion, as well as with social housing providers, and apply exceptions and special measures to identify appropriate rehousing solutions.' Finally, URBACT also presented the cities' Garges-lès-Gonesse's initiative as a URBACT good practice example of participatory practices, explaining how the city 'has been working with apartment block owners to improve the living conditions of residents in the city's large private housing complexes' by 'bringing together residents, property owners, and institutional and financial partners, to create a model of participatory urban governance that other cities can adapt to address their own urban challenges' (Article, 2024).

Another way in which cities have implemented participatory approaches is through supporting community housing. The Berlin City official mentioned how the city supported 'co housing projects, for example where people lived together and formed cooperatives and they bought a piece of land and built a house and so to say, formed a house together (…) and that was very particular for Berlin.' The city of Glasgow was also mentioned because of their 'community led housing' which has 'implemented a governance shift, transferring significant housing stock to community housing associations' and that 'this transition empowers community-led initiatives, ensuring housing decisions reflect local priorities and needs' (ICLEI, Article 2024). Finally, in 2020 Bologna 'committed itself to tangible actions (…) foreseeing spending about 60 million to

modernize 600 old public apartments and to build 400 new public housing units.' Furthermore, Bologna took part in 'a new cooperative movement part of a broader, ongoing aim of the city to requalify public areas' (Eurocities Article, 2020).

As outlined earlier, affordable housing schemes were another aspect which stood out in the analysis. UN reports of the special rapporteurs are clear in maintaining that governments are obliged to ensure that private investors respond to the needs of residents for secure and affordable housing, instead of focusing on the high-income groups (Farha, 2019). Housing affordability obligations are crucial to respond to ensure accessible housing for all, as housing affordability is interconnected with other rights and impacts vulnerable groups (Rajagopal, 2023). Therefore, local governments have started to address affordability and financialization through making housing accessible for lower income groups (Farha, 2019). As outlined in chapters 2 and 3, promoting housing affordability is a crucial aspect of TCNs' vision of the right to adequate housing, identifying housing unaffordability as one of the main challenges to the right to housing, as it influences other human rights and impacts vulnerable communities and contributes to segregation. Cities' examples of their engagement with housing affordability are in line with TCNs' wishes to tackle affordability challenges, further signaling the influence of TCNs on cities' housing polices. The city of Barcelona was often mentioned by various TCNs as an example to follow to improve housing affordability through their 2016-2025 housing plan:

> 'The City of Barcelona has implemented a mission-oriented approach through their Right to Housing Plan, which places the right to housing at the centre of city policymaking (…) This approach has fostered new forms of partnership between the public and private sectors and given rise to new markets for affordable, sustainable housing (...) In Barcelona, 4,500 affordable units were recently built on public land through a public-private partnership company, called Habitatge Metropolis Barcelona, with a shareholder structure that allocates 50% to the public sector and the other half to the private sector. This translates into a shared governance structure and ensures that the risks and rewards are equally shared.'
> CFH Housing Missions Report, 2023

The Barcelona housing plan also received the URBACT good practice label, foregrounding its importance for many TCNs (Article, 2019). During the interview, Brussels also mentioned that on the face of 'rising rents making housing inaccessible, even for middle income households' their solution was to 'implement a public rent socialization scheme, where tenants pay based on their

income and the Region covers the differences.' Other cities mentioned were Valencia and Malmö: In 2020, Valencia 'made available 20 new housing units following a scheme of affordable rental housing. These units are located in central areas and have been fully rehabilitated in recent months.' Furthermore, 'access by residents at risk of vulnerability has been prioritized' (Article, 2020). Finally, Malmö also 'addresses housing affordability through several policies and tools designed for the cities specific challenges. These include working with a public housing company and housing agency on the one hand, and on the other utilizing their land policy right and municipal planning monopoly' (ICLEI Article, 2024).

The last action we will address in this section is the provision of public and social housing. Public housing is one of the most popular solutions for affordability challenges, as it increases state funding on housing and prevents privatization (Rolnik, 2009). Throughout the analysis, the 'housing first approach' was mentioned by many TCNs as it connects prevention of homelessness, vulnerability protection and construction of public housing together. 'Housing first' was first implemented in Belgian cities, mainly Antwerp, Ghent, Brussels and Liege to combat poverty and support vulnerable groups (URBACT article, 2021). Now, the initiative has spread to many other cities such as Lyon, Toulouse, Florence and Berlin, 'which have seen a massive increase in social housing construction' (Eurocities, 2021). The Brussels city official also stressed two projects the city has been working on related to social housing. Tied to TCNs' influence, the interviewee stated they collaborate with 'the city of Paris, with whom we are exploring the implementation of a rent-to-own scheme for tenants (…) the aim is to allow tenants who meet the criteria of social housing to eventually access homeownership, by giving them the opportunity to purchase their dwelling after several years of renting.' Furthermore, when asked about TCNs' membership influence on housing policies, the Brussels city official mentioned that 'in the domain of public housing, whether social or municipal, allocations are made strictly on a non-discriminatory basis. Anyone who applies, regardless of nationality or gender, is eligible, which is a core principle of our housing policy.'

This section has analyzed the specific measures cities have taken to protect the right to housing and combat housing financialization, yet even though the initiatives show willingness and progress of both TCNs and cities to solve housing issues, there is still challenges local governments face when trying to meet their ambitions. The following section will look into the main challenges as found in the analysis.

Main Challenges for Local Governments

Even though local governments and TCNs have high standards to follow right to housing obligations, there are still significant challenges which restrict their ability to do so. The three main limitations are insufficient capacity, lack of resources and reliance on states resources. As presented through Eurocities, the major of Cluj-Napoca (Romania) pointed out that 'money is not the first and only problem – administrative capacity and technical support are vital for cities in Europe.' (Article, 2024). Furthermore, in the Eurocities 2024 Pulse Mayor Survey Report, which gathers information of Mayors opinion in various topics, 'when asked about their current ability to match the needs of their city 54% said they lack sufficient tools and capacity to meet their commitments and will struggle to meet the current housing needs of the most vulnerable people. Moreover, 'Only 5% of mayors strongly agree that they have enough tools and resources.' Metropolis corroborates these challenges, stressing the following:

> 'One of the main challenges faced by large cities and metropolitan areas is the contradiction between the key role they play in the world economy and global society, and the unequal distribution of the benefits brought by this role within each metropolitan area.'
> Issue paper, 2019

Focusing on resources, ICLEI mentions that their already difficult situation is 'further intensified by reduced state funding, leaving municipalities with limited resources to address critical housing needs' (Article, 2024). In addition, Eurocities and URBACT also stress that EU funding is often not directly made available to cities, as they are mostly directed to member states and call for cities to be able to use the existing EU funds (Report & Article, 2020).

These struggles are amplified through their reliance on state resources. Turku and Malmö are cities which 'must navigate shrinking state support while managing the compounded effects of inflation in their budgets' as 'greater financial responsibility is placed on the cities' (ICLEI, Article 2024). ICLEI also stresses how 'local governments are overly reliant on the approval and support of national actors' (Policy Brief, 2024). Finally, URBACT also mentions that cities' 'ability to act depends heavily on other factors, such as national policies on housing and welfare' (Article, 2021). The situation becomes even more dire when the state does not seem to support cities. The former

Dublin Mayor stated that 'the city council depends a lot on central government findings' and that they 'have a target for 2030, and then a further one for 2050 and there is tension because their national government is not helping' (Eurocities Article, 2021). Similarly, In the Mayors Pulse Survey Report, 'when asked if their national government considers the housing crisis a priority and is working with cities to develop suitable policies and make sufficient investments, more than half of mayors disagree.' Moreover, 'when asked if they had received additional resources from the national level, a strong majority of mayors disagrees.' (2024). Finally, when asked about the cities action in realizing the right to housing, the Brussels interviewee also stressed that 'at the city level, we welcome all form of support from government at various levels as well as targeted action plans.' The local governments struggle as presented in this section is strongly connected to academic and UN reports discussions. Oomen for instance, outlines how often national governments refrain from supporting cities tackling international challenges due to their increasingly conservative approach (2019). As states move towards the promotion and creation of an environment attracting foreign investment and real estate operations, the national budgets and public funds aimed for affordable housing is decreased (Rolnik, 2009). Lelani Farha specifically called for states to ensure local governments receive adequate funding and European funding for them to have the ability to carry on with their responsibilities (2014), however this obligation has been increasingly unmet by states. In this context, cites are often faced with difficult choices to make about which policies or activities to push forward regarding housing (Ellen, 2019), which confirmed by local governments and TCNs' statements as presented in this analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how TCNs have influenced cities' engagement with human rights responsibilities. The chapter proved the third hypothesis to be true, by showing initiatives and policies which align with the right to housing obligations, such as close collaboration with the private sector, collaboration with states, ensuring participatory housing polices, community housing schemes, implementing housing affordability policies and implementing social and public housing initiatives. Cities such as Berlin, Barcelona, Valencia and Brussels have attempted to introduce practices to improve the living conditions in their cities, showing TCNs' influence and the willingness of cities to achieve their aims. However, local governments also face significant

challenges in their quest to ensure affordable and community-based policies. The analysis showed local governments' heavy reliance on states support and resources as one of their main barriers, alongside lack of capacity and local resources, which decreases their ability to meet housing needs. These constraints represent tension between local governments aspirations and their actual ability to act on them, highlighting the urgent need for multilevel support for cities to fully realize the right to adequate housing. These findings are closely linked to TCNs advocating for more funding, international support and inclusion in multilateral fora, which would improve the cities' ability to meet human rights standards and housing crisis solutions. The findings in this chapter further explain the lack of cities defiance of their national counterpart, unlike cities approaches in sustainability and migration challenges as explained by previous research. Both TCNs and cities advocate for a collaborative relationship with the nation state, rather than pursuing decoupling strategies, since even though local governments have significant power on housing policies, they still heavily rely on the states decisions, resources and capacity to fulfill their obligations. In the field of housing, it seems that only through close cooperation cities will have sufficient strength to aim for more affordable, inclusive and human rights-based housing policies and norms.

FINAL CONCLUSION

This research has aimed to answer the question: How do transnational city networks' aims and engagement with the right to housing shape cities' responses to housing financialization? To address this, the thesis conducted a thorough analysis of transnational city networks' aims and instruments (Chapter 1), their interpretation of the right to adequate housing and its challenges (Chapter 2 & 3) and finally, the influence of their right to housing engagement on city's responses to financialization through human rights- based policies and norms (Chapter 4). This thesis contributed to both transnational city networks' literature and the human right to housing scholarship in three main areas: research on transnational city networks in the fields of migration and sustainability; the literature on housing financialization and the housing crisis; and various international instruments and UN reports by Special Rapporteurs on the right to adequate housing. After the systematic data collection and analysis of 192 documents and two interviews, the chapters were divided to answer the three different hypotheses supporting different sections of the research question.

The first chapter validated the first hypothesis stating that TCNs will engage with their jurisgenerative and policy entrepreneurship roles through vertical, horizontal and symbolic instruments when addressing housing affordability and the housing crisis. This chapter emphasized the jurisgenerative role of TCNs as the networks stressed their power and influence in international processes, claiming a seat in multilateral decision-making as key actors in housing affordability challenges, strengthening the 'local turn' of cities' role in housing discussions and highlighting the importance of multilevel governance (Barrero et al., 2017; Camponio, 2017). TCNs also illustrated their policy entrepreneurship through innovation, pushing for new policies, housing projects and presenting cities innovative efforts. The horizontal and vertical dimensions of TCNs' housing engagement highlighted a strong preference of collaboration, information sharing and support among cities horizontally and vertically by appealing to higher levels of government, such as national governments and international organizations. This explains the lack of symbolic influence as argued by Oomen (2019) and the lack of 'decoupling' practices in relation to housing, as networks seek to work closely with states and international institutions alike, rather than using the power of international organizations to distance their policies from their national counterparts. Finally, the first chapter serves as an introduction to the importance of the Sustainable

Development Goals in housing related topics. As the SDGs were adopted including sub national governments (Oomen & Durmus, 2022), transnational city networks use them as powerful tools for cities inclusion in multilateral housing discussions.

The second chapter supported the second hypothesis stating TCNs will engage with human rights standards by applying right to housing language and guidelines in their practices when confronting housing challenges. This chapter highlighted how TCNs understand and acknowledge the human right to housing, drawing on UN treaties, documents, and most importantly the Sustainable Development Goals. The analysis showed networks engage with the CESCR General Comment nr. 4 specific principles of housing accessibility and affordability and understand housing as a social good in need for states regulation ensuring its decommodification (Farha, 2017; Kreide, 2022). In relation to UN right to housing frameworks, TCNs focused on dignity and protection of vulnerable groups, highlighting their jurisgenerative function by tailoring and emphasizing aspects of the right they believe are most important in local settings (Oomen, 2019). TCNs relate the right to housing as a place for solidarity and community building, where dignity is built through close knit experiences and support for one another, ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Above all, the TCNs vulnerable groups focus and the interconnectedness of the right to housing contributed to the framing of the right within the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 11. The Agenda 2030 proved to be a critical avenue for TCNs and cities to engage with the right to housing in local settings.

The second hypothesis was further validated in chapter 3 as it analyzes the framing of TCNs' challenges in relation to the right to housing and financialization. This chapter is distinguished by its focus on the interconnectedness of the housing crisis, housing financialization with human rights challenges such as unaffordability, the segregation of vulnerable groups, gentrification and inequality, which are also connected to the 2030 Agenda looking to leave no one behind. Even though financialization lacked explicit mentions in the analysis, TCNs engaged with the concept thoroughly focusing on the dominance of markets in the housing sector and diminished governments regulations. TCNs positioned the impact on vulnerable groups in the center of the financialization and housing crisis, arguing how they are forced to move out of their homes and risk marginalization, further exacerbating structural inequality (Farha, 2019).

The final chapter provided for a direct answer to the research question by supporting the third hypothesis stating TCNs' engagement with human rights impact cities' application of human

rights in their housing policies and norms. This chapter highlighted the importance of chapters 2 and 3, as the framing of human rights shape how actors interpret the obligations attached to the right (Farha, 2019), in this case how they shape cities' responses to financialization using human rights-based housing policies. TCNs' engagement with the right to housing has been proven to shape cities' housing policies, particularly by encouraging conformity with right to housing obligations. Positioned at the intersection between rights holders and complex multilevel governance systems, networks play a unique role in influencing how cities' respond to housing financialization (Farha, 2014). Moreover, the importance of chapter 1 was underscored through cities' human rights obligations collaborating with private actors and national governments, further stressing TCNs' and cities' willingness to collaborate, rather than contend with nation states when tackling housing challenges. Local governments have many tools at their disposal to comply with their right to housing obligations (Ellen, 2019), and cities primarily adopted participatory housing policies, housing affordability schemes and provision of social housing. The influence of the Sustainable Development Goals came to the foreground once more through cities' emphasis of participatory policies including all communities and vulnerable groups. Even though cities have successfully engaged with human rights-based policies, there are still significant challenges which need to be addressed for TCNs' and cities' efforts to diminish the housing financialization effects at the local level. Local governments are faced with insufficient capacity, lack of resources and reliance on state resources limiting their ability to provide for affordable, inclusive and adequate housing. The already short number of local resources destined for housing is further strained as the availability of state resources is simultaneously diminished. Cities are faced with difficult choices on which policies to pursue and which ones to leave behind.

This research presents a robust and detailed analysis of TCNs' strategies, the human right to housing and cities' human rights-based policies, nevertheless the research faced limitations mainly related to the collection of data. Originally, the data collection aimed to include a higher number of interviews, including both city officials and individuals working for TCNs. Even though cities initiatives, policies and statements were frequently mentioned in TCNs publications, the limitation of the interview data to two city official interviews constrains insights on how cities interpret and implement TCNs human rights norms in the housing sector. Therefore, future research could further examine the perspectives of city officials in connection to transnational city networks and housing to enable a more comprehensive comparative analysis. Additionally, TCNs'

engagement with the right to housing remains a relatively unexplored area, and therefore further contributions could strengthen the field by analyzing diverse dimensions of the housing crisis, such as homelessness. Lastly, one unexpected yet central finding of this research is the salient relationship between the right to housing and the Sustainable Development Goals. While this thesis has outlined this connection within the context of TCNs, future scholarship could explore this intersection with greater detail, contributing to understanding how both frameworks can reinforce each other and be implemented in local settings.

To conclude, I argue that through their strategies, TCNs in their jurisgnerative function have developed a normative framework of the local relevance of the right to housing through dignity, inclusivity and the Sustainable Development Goals. This framework, particularly through the focus on vulnerable groups, has influenced cities' housing policies, engaging with affordable, social and participatory approaches. For cities' continued efforts and engagement with solutions to the housing crisis, TCNs have actively called for close collaboration and support between city actors, local governments, states and international relations. Rather than choosing to 'decouple' from national policies, TCNs use their growing responsibility, power and influence to push for cooperation between all levels of government. Even though TCNs acknowledge the structural and unequal consequences of financialization, current cities' efforts will fall short in accommodating the housing needs of their population and limit financialization processes without substantial national and international support. The increasing responsibility of cities in housing affairs is at odds with the resources allocated to them. Local governments are still heavily reliant on states capacity and resource provision, explaining the cautious and collaborative centered approach of TCNs. Were networks and cities to more openly shame or confront national or international organizations, they risk losing the already strained access to resources for housing transformations. However, in order to achieve a paradigm shift from housing financialization to one of human rights compliance, bolder actions need to be taken. Financialization has its roots in structural flaws in current economic and housing systems shaped by global financial markets (Farha, 2017; Rajagopal, 2023), and if cities want to successfully address these structures, a robust engagement with national actors is key. Even though cities' current human rights-based policies show a promising start, cities alone will remain insufficiently equipped to address the challenges ahead without stronger and systemic collaboration with state and other international actors.

REFERENCES

Aalbers, M. B. (2015). The Great Moderation, the Great Excess and the global housing crisis. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, *15*(1), 43–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2014.997431

Alharbi, R. K. (2024). *Housing finance inaccessibility for Saudi Arabia's low-income employees: Are housing-related sustainable development goals 2030 under threat? International Journal of Housing Markets and Analysis*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJHMA-05-2024-0071

Barbara Oomen. (2019). *Decoupling and Teaming up: The Rise and Proliferation of Transnational Municipal Networks in the Field of Migration*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918319881118

Bingham, A. J. (2023). From Data Management to Actionable Findings: A Five-Phase Process of Qualitative Data Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *22*, 16094069231183620. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231183620

Busch, H., Bendlin, L., & Fenton, P. (2018). Shaping local response – The influence of transnational municipal climate networks on urban climate governance. *Urban Climate*, *24*, 221–230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2018.03.004

Caponio, T. (2018). Immigrant integration beyond national policies? Italian cities' participation in European city networks. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(12), 2053–2069. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341711

Caponio, T. (2018). Immigrant integration beyond national policies? Italian cities' participation in European city networks. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(12), 2053–2069. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341711

Cary, D. P. (2024). *Content Analysis: Methods and Practices*. Nova Science Publishers, Incorporated. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unilu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=30974128

Cassell, C., & Bishop, V. (2019). Qualitative Data Analysis: Exploring Themes, Metaphors and Stories. *European Management Review*, *16*(1), 195–207. https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12176

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (1991). General comment No. 4: The right to adequate housing (Art. 11(1) of the Covenant). United Nations. https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/cescr/1991/en/53157

Cooper, R. (2009). Decoding Coding via The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers by Johnny Saldaña. *The Qualitative Report*, *14*(4), 245–248. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2009.2856

Council of Europe. (1996). Revised European Social Charter https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/163.

Davidson, K., Coenen, L., Acuto, M., & Gleeson, B. (2019). Reconfiguring urban governance in an age of rising city networks: A research agenda. *Urban Studies*, *56*(16), 3540–3555. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018816010

Drisko, J. W., & Maschi, T. (2015a). A Case Example Applying Basic and Interpretive Content Analysis to Newly Collected Data. In J. Drisko & T. Maschi (Eds.), *Content Analysis* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.003.0007

Drisko, J. W., & Maschi, T. (2015b). Basic Content Analysis. In J. Drisko & T. Maschi (Eds.), *Content Analysis* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.003.0002

Drisko, J. W., & Maschi, T. (2015c). Interpretive Content Analysis. In J. Drisko & T. Maschi (Eds.), *Content Analysis* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.003.0003

Drisko, J. W., & Maschi, T. (2015d). Introduction. In J. Drisko & T. Maschi (Eds.), *Content Analysis* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.003.0001

Durmus, E., & and Oomen, B. (2022). Transnational city networks and their contributions to norm-generation in international law: The case of migration. *Local Government Studies*, *48*(6), 1048–1069. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2021.1932478

Ellen, I. G. (2019). Addressing affordability challenges: The role and scope of local housing plans. In K. B. Anacker, M. T. Nguyen, & D. P. Varady (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of housing policy and planning* (pp. 375–389). Routledge.

Eurocities. (2022) *5 reasons to become a member - Eurocities*. https://eurocities.eu/why-become-a-member/

Eurocities. (2025, February 21). *Mayors meet Commissioner Jørgensen to call for stronger housing action*. https://eurocities.eu/latest/mayors-meet-commissioner-jorgensen-to-call-for-stronger-housing-action/

European Parliament. (2024, October 17). *Rising housing costs in the EU: The facts (infographics)*. Topics EuropeanParliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20241014STO24542/rising-housing-costs-in-the-eu-the-facts-infographics

Farha, L. (2014). Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living (UN Doc. A/69/274). United Nations General Assembly. https://docs.un.org/en/A/69/274

Farha, L. (2014). Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living (UN Doc. A/HRC/28/62). United Nations Human Rights Council. https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/28/62

Farha, L. (2017). Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living_ (UN Doc. A/HRC/34/51). United Nations Human Rights Council. https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/34/51

Farha, L. (2019). Guidelines for the implementation of the right to adequate housing: Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living (UN Doc. A/HRC/43/43). United Nations Human Rights Council. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4343-guidelines-implementation-right-adequate-housing-report-special

Flynn, L. (2023). *How do We Talk about Housing Equality in an Increasingly Unequal Europe? – EuropeNow*.

Foster, S., & Swiney, C. (2020). *City Networks and the Glocalization of Urban Governance* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3748123). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3748123

Gebhardt, D., & Güntner, S. (2022). 'We as leaders of major European cities' – how Eurocities works to influence EU migration and integration policies. *Local Government Studies*, *48*(6), 1113–1131. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2021.1938552

Global Parliament of Mayors. (2025). *Home*. Global Parliament of Mayors. https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/

Grbich, C. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529799606

Harding, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: From start to finish*. Sage.

Henley, J. (2024, May 6). Higher costs and cramped conditions: The impact of Europe's housing crisis. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/news/article/2024/may/06/higher-costs-and-cramped-conditions-the-impact-of-europes-housing-crisis

ICLEI. (n.d.) *About Us*. ICLEI. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from https://iclei.org/about_iclei_2/

Jentoft, N., & Olsen, T. S. (2019). Against the flow in data collection: How data triangulation combined with a 'slow' interview technique enriches data. *Qualitative Social Work*, *18*(2), 179–193. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325017712581

Kadi, J., & Ronald, R. (2014). Market-based housing reforms and the 'right to the city': The variegated experiences of New York, Amsterdam and Tokyo. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, *14*(3), 268–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2014.928098

KERN, K., & BULKELEY, H. (2009). Cities, Europeanization and Multi-level Governance: Governing Climate Change through Transnational Municipal Networks. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *47*(2), 309–332. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2009.00806.x

Kreide, R. (2022). Global (in)justice and the human right to housing. A practice-based approach. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, *25*(1), 107–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2020.1859225

Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781

Kumnig, S., & Litschauer, K. (2025). Decommodified housing under pressure: Contested policy instruments and provisioning practices in Vienna. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, *0*(0), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2025.2458389

Leijten, I., & De Bel, K. (2020). Facing financialization in the housing sector: A human right to adequate housing for all. *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, *38*(2), 94–114. https://doi.org/10.1177/0924051920923855

Metropolis. (n.d.). *Vision, mission and values*. Metropolis. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from https://www.metropolis.org/vision-mission-and-values

Mikkola, M. (2008). Housing as a human right in Europe. *SAGE Publications*. https://doi.org/10.1177/138826270801000303

Morris, A. (2021). An impossible task? Neoliberalism, the financialisation of housing and the City of Sydney's endeavours to address its housing affordability crisis. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, *21*(1), 23–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2019.1688634

Oomen, B., Baumgärtel, M., & Durmuş, E. (2021). Accelerating Cities, Constitutional Brakes? Local Authorities Between Global Challenges and Domestic Law. In E. Hirsch Ballin, G. van der

Porras, I. M. (2009). THE CITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW: IN PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, *36*(3), 537–601.

Potts, D. (2020). *Broken Cities: Inside the Global Housing Crisis*. Bloomsbury Academic & Professional. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unilu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6175406

Rajagopal, B. (2023). Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A place to live in dignity for all: make housing affordable (UN Doc. A/78/192). United Nations General Assembly. https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/192

Rogers, D., Nelson, J., & Wong, A. (2018). Geographies of hyper-commodified housing: Foreign capital, market activity, and housing stress. *Geographical Research*, *56*(4), 434–446. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12280

Rolnik, R. (2009). _Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context (UN Doc. A/HRC/10/7). United Nations Human Rights Council. (https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/10/7

Rolnik, R. (2013). Late Neoliberalism: The Financialization of Homeownership and Housing Rights. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *37*(3), 1058–1066. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12062

Stone, D. (2019). Transnational policy entrepreneurs and the cultivation of influence: Individuals, organizations and their networks. *Globalizations*, *16*(7), 1128–1144. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2019.1567976

Sutton, B. (2015). Collective Memory and the Language of Human Rights: Attitudes toward Torture in Contemporary Argentina. *Latin American Perspectives*, *42*(3), 73–91.

Thelwall, M. (2021). *Word Association Thematic Analysis: A Social Media Text Exploration Strategy*. Springer. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unilu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6476953

UCLG. (n.d.). *Cities for Adequate Housing*. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from https://uclg.org/new/cities-for-adequate-housing/

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). (2023). _Resolution adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly on adequate housing for all_ (HSP/HA.2/Res.7).https://docs.un.org/en/A/HSP/HA.2/Res.7

United Nations Secretary-General. (2024). Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (UN Doc. A/79/53). https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/53

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. (2017). *Leaving no one behind: Equality and non-discrimination at the heart of sustainable development: A shared UN system framework for action*. United Nations.

United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

United Nations. (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights

United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

URBACT. (2024, June 30). *URBACT | Portico*. https://portico.urban-initiative.eu/urban-panorama/urbact

Weber, R. (1990a). Content Classification and Interpretation. In *Basic Content Analysis* (pp. 16–40). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412983488

Wilson Ozuem, Michelle Willis, & Kerry Howell. (n.d.). *Thematic analysis without paradox: Sensemaking and context*. Retrieved May 13, 2025, from https://www.proquest.com/docview/2619988948?parentSessionId=PSzBbvqxwIUBoSxNy40Ky1bBpz0cpI0GqYFoWyZcvro%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=26466&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals

Zapata-Barrero, R., Caponio, T., & Scholten, P. (2017). Theorizing the 'local turn' in a multi-level governance framework of analysis: A case study in immigrant policies. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *83*(2), 241–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852316688426

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire City Officials

First some General Questions:

1. Can you briefly Introduce yourself and your role in your cities administration?
2. How did your city first get involved in transnational city networks, and what has been your involvement with them so far?

Moving on to the Housing Crisis:

3. How has the housing crisis affected your city?
4. In your opinion, what are the most important factors influencing the housing crisis?
    a. Probes: financialization, commodification, affordability
    b. Why?

Focusing on Cities engagement with the Housing Crisis

5. How has your city confronted the housing crisis?
    a. Probe: housing policies: social housing, taxation, subsidies, participation etc.
6. How has your TCN membership influenced housing policies targeting the housing crisis?
7. What specific tools/mechanisms have been most helpful or unhelpful in supporting the city amid the housing crisis?
    a. Probe: information exchange, best practices, lobbying, funding, collaboration etc.

Human Rights and Housing

8. How do you view the local governments relationship with human rights obligations regarding housing?
    a. Relationship/no relationship
    b. Probe: Local vs. national governments responsibilities
9. Has your TCN membership influenced your engagement with human rights standards in connection to housing?
    a. Yes/No
    b. How?

c. Could you give an example of specific policies?
d. Probe: social housing, subsidies, increased awareness, market intervention, policy monitoring etc.

Challenges and Effectiveness of Human Rights and TCNs

10. What are the main challenges your city encounters in fulfilling the right to housing?
    a. Probe: lack of funding, capacity, State conflict
11. How would you evaluate TCNs influence in supporting the city in alleviating the housing crisis and realizing the right to housing?
    a. Importance/ lack of importance
    b. Any positive or negative outcomes?

Appendix 2: Table of Resources

Transnational City Network	Type of Resource	Ammount	Years
Eurocities	Website information	7	2025, 2024, 2019
	Policy Papers	3	2020, 2025
	Reports	7	2025, 2024, 2023, 2022, 2019
	News Articles	33	2025, 2024, 2023, 2022, 2020, 2021
	Statements	2	2013, 2023
Cities for adequate housing/ Make the Shift	Declaration	1	2019
	Website information	3	No date
	Reports	9	2020, 2024, 2023, 2019, 2020
	News Articles	8	2020, 2019
	Policy Papers	1	2019
Global Parliament of Mayors	Website information	3	2023, 2022
	Reports	10	2022, 2020, 2021, 2025
	Press Releases	1	2022
	News Articles	1	2021
	Resolutions/ Declarations	2	2019, 2023
URBACT	Website information	13	2024, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2025
	Programme manuals	2	2024
	News Articles	12	2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2021
	Reports	1	2022
Metropolis	Website information	5	2018, 2019, 2017
	Reports	9	2024, 2019, 2020, 2023, 2021, 2018
	Declarations	2	2017, 2019

	Policy Brief	1	2020
	Issue papers	4	2018, 2017, 2019
	News Articles	13	2021, 2019, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
	Infographics	1	2021
Local governments for sustainability ICLEI	Website Information	6	2024, 2020, 2021
	News Articles	7	2025, 2024, 2021
	Policy Briefs	5	2024, 2020, 2021, 2023
	Reports	12	2024, 2018, 2025, 2023, 2021, 2020, 2022
	Academic Articles	1	2023
	Position papers	1	2025
	Handbooks	1	2022
	Research Articles	3	2023
	Presentations	1	2022
	Declarations	1	2016

Appendix 3: Cited TCN Resources

Transnational City Network	Type of Resource	Year	Title	Resource Link
Eurocities	Article	2025	Cities call for social priorities to be high on the EU agenda	https://eurocities.eu/latest/cities-call-for-social-priorities-to-be-high-on-the-eu-agenda/
	Website Info	2025	Housing and Homelessness	https://eurocities.eu/focus area/housing-and-homelessness/
	Article	2024	Cities are key implementers of the European Pillar of Social Rights	https://eurocities.eu/latest/cities-are-key-implementers-of-the-european-pillar-of-social-rights/
	Article	2024	Call for affordable housing echoes through Vienna	https://eurocities.eu/latest/call-for-affordable-housing-echoes-through-vienna/
	Report	2024	Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey 2024. A state of cities report through the voices of mayors	https://monitor.eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Eurocities-Pulse-Mayors-Survey-2024-1.pdf
	Article	2024	Cities insist on a sustainable future at Eurocities 2024	https://eurocities.eu/latest/cities-insist-on-a-sustainable-future-at-eurocities-2024/
	Article	2024	Cities call for housing to get the spotlight	https://eurocities.eu/latest/its-time-for-housing-to-get-the-spotlight-cities-say/
	Article	2023	Brussels Urban Summit unites global cities to prepare for the future	https://eurocities.eu/latest/brussels-urban-summit-unites-global-cities-to-prepare-for-the-future/

	Article	2022	Amsterdam, Barcelona, Madrid and Vienna pledge to the European Pillar of Social Rights	https://eurocities.eu/latest/amsterdam-barcelona-madrid-and-vienna-pledge-to-the-european-pillar-of-social-rights/
	Article	2022	Combining housing renovation and affordability	https://eurocities.eu/latest/combining-housing-renovation-and-affordability/
	Article	2021	Working on socially equitable cities	https://eurocities.eu/latest/working-on-socially-equitable-cities/
	Article	2021	"An opportunity to build back better"	https://eurocities.eu/latest/an-opportunity-to-build-back-better/
	Article	2020	Community Living in the City	https://eurocities.eu/stories/community-living-in-the-city/
	Policy Paper	2020	European Pillar of Social Rights Cities delivering social rights. Access to affordable and social housing and support to homeless people	https://eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EUROCITIES-report-EPSR-principle-19-on-housing-and-homelessness.pdf
	Policy Paper	2020	A stronger social Europe powered by inclusive cities	https://eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EUROCITIES-policy-paper-Social-Europe-Sept-2020.pdf
	Article	2020	Housing Affordability: A European Crisis	https://eurocities.eu/latest/housing-affordability-a-european-crisis/
Cities for Adequate Housing/Make the Shift	Report	2024	The Shift Case for Support	https://make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/The-Shift-Jan-2024-Case-for-Support.pdf

	Report	2023	The right to housing A mission-oriented and human rights-based approach	https://make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Right-to-Housing-Missions-Final-DIGITAL.pdf
	Report	2023	A Brief Overview of The Shift's Work on Financialization	https://make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Financial-Review-Panel-The-Shift.pdf
	Article	2020	Local authorities are already addressing housing-related challenges face to COVID-19: Live Learning Experience #BeyondTheOutbreak	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/blog/2020/04/08/local-authorities-are-already-addressing-housing-related-challenges-face-to-covid-19-live-learning-experience-beyondtheoutbreak/index.html
	Article	2020	The UCLG-CSIPDHR contributed to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing on "COVID-19 and the Right to Housing"	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/blog/2020/08/26/the-uclg-csipdhr-contributed-to-the-report-of-the-un-special-rapporteur-on-adequate-housing-on-covid-19-and-the-right-to-housing/index.html
	Report	2020	Model Emergency Housing Legislation Protecting the Right to Housing during COVID-19	https://make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ji-covid_housing_report-housing_legislation-2020_12_07.pdf
	Article	2020	Valencia joins Cities for Adequate Housing: Strengthening affordable, adequate housing provision	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/blog/2020/12/03/valencia-joins-cities-for-adequate-housing-strengthening-

				affordable-adequate-housing-provision/index.html
	Report	2019	Manifesto The Future of Housing	https://citiesforhousing.org/www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/en_manifesto_housing.pdf
	Article	2019	Fostering the alliance between local governments and civil society on community-led housing	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/blog/2019/06/10/fostering-the-alliance-between-local-governments-and-civil-society-on-community-led-housing/index.html
	Declaration	2018	Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing and the Right to the City	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/index.html
	Article	2018	#Make the Shift	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/theshift/index.html
	Website Info	No date	Join the Declaration A worldwide commitment for the right to housing	https://citiesforhousing.org/citiesforhousing.org/how_to_join/index.html
	Website Info	No date	The Shift About Us	https://make-the-shift.org/about-us/
Global Parliament of Mayors	Report	2025	Global Parliament of Mayors Annual Summit 2025 "Empowering, Engaging, and Caring Cities: Delivering Democracy and Development with the Next Generations"	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Empowering-Cities.pdf
	Declaration	2023	Global Declaration of Mayors for Democracy	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Global-Declaration-of-Mayors-for-Democracy..pdf

	Report	2022	Cities at the Intersection: Climate, Culture, and Migration	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Cities-at-the-intersection-Climate-Culture-and-Migration.pdf
	Report	2021	Annual Summit Report: Reset: Cities Leading in a New Era	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/GPM-Annual-Summit-Report-2021-NEW-January.pdf
	Report	2022	Annual Summit Report: *Transforming Together:* How Cities Must Lead Democratic, Inclusive, and Innovative Global Change	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GPM-Annual-Summit-Report-2022.pdf
	Report	2020	Rethinking the city: how mayors respond to the needs of a post-COVID city	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Report-GPM-webinar-Rethinking-the-City_Nov-2020.pdf
	Report	2020	Global Network on Safer Cities Partners Consultative Meeting: Safer Cities for All	http://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Report-Safer-Cities-for-All-UN-Habitat-and-the-Global-Parliament-of-Mayors.pdf
	Report	2020	Summary Note "The impact of COVID-19 on the right to adequate housing: local government perspectives", co-hosted by *UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal, and*	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Summary-note-Webinar-right-to-adequate-housing_Short-version-1.pdf

			the Global Parliament of Mayors, *24*	
	Report	2019	The Voice of Mayors	https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GPM-the-voice-of-mayors.pdf
URBACT	Website Info	2024	Tool for monitoring housing	https://urbact.eu/good-practices/tool-monitoring-housing
	Article	2022	Inspiring Ideas for Housing	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/inspiring-ideas
	Article	2022	A roof over everyone's head	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/roof-over-everyones-head
	Article	2021	'Housing First': how two URBACT cities in Belgium implement the right to housing	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/cities-belgium-right-housing
	Article	2021	Fighting homelessness: the role of cities	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/fighting-homelessness
	Article	2021	No one left behind	https://urbact.eu/no-one-left-behind
	Article	2021	Definancialising the housing sector	https://urbact.eu/definancialising-housing-sector
	Article	2020	Cities implementing the right to housing	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/cities-implementing
	Article	2019	The housing paradox: what can local municipalities do?	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/paradox-local-municipalities

	Article	2016	EU Urban Agenda: The challenge of "affordable housing" in Europe	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing/eu-urban-agenda-challenge
	Website Info	No year	Adequate and Affordable Housing	https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/housing
	Website Info	No year	Collaborative Housing	https://urbact.eu/collaborative-housing
Metropolis	Report	2023	European Metropolitan Report	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/European_Metropolitan_Report_0.pdf
	Article	2023	Citymakers Lead the Way: Local Actions, Global Outcomes	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/uclg_thedurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en_rv.pdf
	Article	2021	Let's talk about Urban Resilience	https://www.metropolis.org/blog/sustainable-future-lets-talk-about-urban-resilience
	Report	2020	Principles for Better Cities Towards Sustainable Development in Metropolitan Regions, Precincts and Places	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/Principles-for-Better-Cities.pdf
	Issue paper	2019	Gentrification and impoverishment in the metropolis	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/Gentrification-impoverishment-metropolis.pdf
	Declaration	2019	The Durban Political Declaration	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/uclg_thedurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en_rv.pdf
	Report	2019	Affordable Housing: profiles of five metropolitan cities	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/AffordableHousing-5Profiles-EN.pdf

	Report	2019	European Pillar of Social Rights: the role of metropolitan areas in social issues	https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/INFORME%20GLOBAL%20CITIES-AMB_EN.pdf
	Article	2018	Living the City: Affordable housing development	https://www.metropolis.org/agenda/living-city-affordable-housing-development
	Article	2017	Metropolitan Governance for the Right to Housing	https://www.metropolis.org/news/metropolitan-governance-right-housing
	Declaration	2017	Manifiesto de Barcelona	https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/premsa/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UCLG_ManifiestodeBarcelona.pdf
Local Governments for Sustainability ICLEI	Article	2025	ReHousIn in dialogue: Contributing to the debate on housing inequalities and green justice	https://rehousin.eu/news/rehousin-dialogue-contributing-debate-housing-inequalities-and-green-justice
	Article	2025	EU fit for local governments: ICLEI mayors meet in Brussels for strategic talks	https://iclei-europe.org/news?EU_fit_for_local_governments__ICLEI_mayors_meet_in_Brussels_for_strategic_talks_&newsID=YgLi6SyS
	Policy Brief	2024	POLICY PAPER: Advancing a Just Urban Transition	https://sustainablejustcities.eu/sites/default/files/media/INCLUDE_EU%20policy%20paper_0.pdf
	Policy Brief	2024	Policy Brief: Transforming Europe's building stock for a fair, affordable, climate-neutral future	https://iclei-europe.org/publications-tools/?c=search&uid=9ZDMuoe6

	Article	2024	Transforming Europe's building stock for a fair, affordable, climate-neutral future	https://iclei-europe.org/news/?Transforming_Europe's_building_stock_for_a_fair%2C_affordable%2C_climate-neutral_future_=&newsID=HjwTIGbu&utm_source=chatgpt.com
	Article	2024	Addressing housing affordability: Lessons from Malmö Commitment pioneers	https://talkofthecities.iclei.org/addressing-housing-affordability-lessons-from-malmo-commitment-pioneers/
	Report	2022	Housing policy co-creation in Amsterdam "Housing co-creation for tomorrow's cities" conference	https://uplift-youth.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Housing-co-creation-for-tomorrows-cities.pdf
	Report	2021	Inequality concepts and theories in the post- crisis Europe Summary of the literature review-revised version	https://uplift-youth.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/D12-Inequality-concepts-revised_october-2021-web.pdf
	Report	2020	Framework study on socio-economic inequalities in Europe Drivers of inequalities and typology of inequalities	https://uplift-youth.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/D14-Framework-Study-on-inequalities.docx.pdf
	Report	2018	Financing the inclusive city: A case study of the Danish model of affordable and social housing	https://iclei-europe.org/publications-tools/?c=search&uid=gDCrxJk2&utm_source=chatgpt.com
	Declaration	2016	The Basque Declaration	https://iclei-europe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Our_Work/Advocacy/Basque_Declaration/Basque-Declaration-ENGLISH-www.pdf

	Website Info	No date	ReHousIn About the Project	https://rehousin.eu/about

Appendix 4: Thesis Nvivo Codes and Descriptions

Name	Description	Sources	References
Characteristics Right to Housing	Theme/Parent Node	0	0
Business and Rights	Used whenever Business responsibilities and obligations are mentioned linked to human rights standards. The UN guiding principles being one of the most prominent examples.	1	2
Connection to other rights	Used when the right to housing is mentioned alongside other rights, in particular when they are mentioned in connection to or related to one another	24	35
Dignity	Whenever Dignity is mentioned in connection to the right to housing. Dignity can also be referred to as "quality life" etc.	12	13
Leave no one behind	Started coding this as multiple texts mentioned this phrase linked to the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.	5	6
Non-discrimination	Coded whenever housing was connected to the protection of non-discrimination specifically, which includes the mention of vulnerable groups discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, migration background etc.	4	5
non-retrogression	Coded whenever the principle was mentioned in connection to the right to housing.	1	1
Progressive Realization	Coded when texts mentioned the obligation of states or local governments to progressively realize the right to housing.	3	5
protection to vulnerable groups	Vulnerable groups in this code are low-income groups, groups at risk of eviction and homelessness, and other marginalized groups. Coded whenever the texts mentioned these specific groups or vulnerable groups needed special protection.	19	21
SDGs role	When the right to housing was mentioned alongside number of goals as mentioned in the Sustainable Development goals principles, specifically nr. 11.	15	20
Security	Security is coded whenever it was mentioned as an important part to the fulfillment of the right to adequate housing	3	5
Economics and human	Whenever the importance of economics and economic	5	8

Name	Description	Sources	References
rights	proposals/models are intertwined with the fulfillment of human rights, specifically the right to housing		
General Comment nr. 4	Theme/Parent Node. Coded whenever all 6 criteria of the right to adequate housing were mentioned as an overview in a sentence and not broken down in the text.	5	5
Accessibility	Inherent part of the General Comment nr. 4 parent node. Specific focus on housing accessibility.	6	6
Affordability	Inherent part of the General Comment nr. 4 parent node. Specific focus on housing affordability.	3	3
Availability	Inherent part of the General Comment nr. 4 parent node. Specific focus on housing availability.	2	2
Cultural Adequacy	Inherent part of the General Comment nr. 4 parent node. Specific focus on housing cultural adequacy.	2	3
Habitability	Inherent part of the General Comment nr. 4 parent node. Specific focus on housing habitability.	1	1
Legal security of tenure	Inherent part of the General Comment nr. 4 parent node. Specific focus on housing legal security of tenure.	4	4
General Human Rights	Whenever human rights and their importance were mentioned without their connection to the right to adequate housing.	6	9
Housing Affordability Challenges	Theme/Parent Node	0	0
Forced Evictions	Coded when texts mention when, how, and by whom evictions are taking place. Explanation of eviction risk and lack of protection to individuals facing forced evictions.	6	8
impact on vulnerable groups	Whenever repercussions of housing affordability and other housing challenges were mentioned in relation to the effects it may have or has on vulnerable individuals.	14	22
Lack of accessibility	Coded whenever a housing challenge was mentioned in relation to housing affordability and accessibility.	5	7
Lack of state regulation and intervention	Coded whenever texts mentioned the diminished role of the state in housing issues, allowing for market dominance and financialization of housing.	9	13
reach across social status	When the effects of housing unaffordability were expanded beyond vulnerable groups to other society sectors such as the middle class.	8	8

Name	Description	Sources	References
Segregation	Whenever the housing unaffordability challenges were mentioned in the context of social separation and groups segregation in cities. Also coded whenever gentrification was mentioned in relation to housing and housing affordability.	14	24
unaffordable housing	Coded when challenges to housing are mentioned in terms of their costs: rising prices, lack of affordability, affordability only to higher segments of society etc. are examples of this.	28	24
Unhabitable housing	Coded when housing conditions are mentioned which fall below the adequate standards (health hazards, lack of maintenance etc.) or it's explicitly stated in the text that housing conditions are unhabitable.	7	10
Youth focus	Coded whenever the specific emerging challenges of housing affordability have impacted youth.	11	20
Housing Crisis	Whenever information is placed within the context of the housing crisis explicitly.	13	20
Housing De-Commodification	Parent Node/Theme	0	0
Market independence	Coded for mentions of low reliance or no reliance on markets and prices fluctuations in housing provisions. Alternative solutions such as community and family support.	5	6
Social Right	Used when housing is mentioned within its social function catering to the populations needs. Moving away from market centered ideas of housing as a profit-making tool to one that provides for social services. Coded as a concrete action, need or aspiration for housing to be a social right.	11	15
State Regulation and Intervention	Coded whenever states or local governments activities were focused on private corporations and market regulation, as well as balancing needs and interests and intervening where necessary. Coded as a concrete action, need or aspiration.	14	17
Housing Financialization	Parent Node/ Theme	4	6
Housing as a financial asset	Coded whenever housing is mentioned as a tool for profit and capital growth, investment and financial growth. Also included when the disparity between housing as a need and as a luxury was mentioned due to the lack of interest of private corporations of local	18	37

Name	Description	Sources	References
	needs.		
Housing commodification	Coded when housing commodification or housing as a commodity were specifically mentioned.	12	13
Markets and Corporations	Coded when companies, investors, corporations and businesses interests and roles are mentioned in relation to housing.	14	20
Profit prioritization	Coded whenever housing practices sideline social necessities and foreground the wealth and profit accumulation housing can provide.	8	16
social function disregarded	Coded whenever texts mentioned how profit or investment are prioritized over local needs.	5	8
Human Right to housing	Coded whenever housing was mentioned as a human right or a fundamental right. Context in which housing is mentioned as the right to adequate housing or as a right to housing.	29	35
HR Frameworks	Coded whenever human rights declarations, treaties, and other forms of human rights law were mentioned	5	7
Protection of the right	Coded whenever actions or aspirations were mentioned to protect the right to housing.	10	11
Interconnectedness	Coded whenever challenges or crisis are mentioned together and as related phenomena. Coded whenever solutions proposed involve the interconnectedness view of challenges.	24	32
Local governments and housing affordability	Theme/Parent Node	0	0
Community living	Coded when initiatives for co-housing or other community living forms were mentioned.	12	31
Ensuring affordable housing	Coded whenever local governments identify housing affordability as a priority, a goal, an aspiration or as a statement and plan of action.	18	22
Ensuring non-discrimination	Coded when inclusivity and non-discrimination are mentioned in housing policies and aspirations in cities.	5	6
Eviction protection	Coded when texts mentioned initiatives to prevent evictions and homelessness.	6	7
government intervention	Similar to state regulation and intervention node. However, this was coded with a special focus on local governments efforts in intervening in housing markets as a means to achieve other aims (right to housing,	3	3

Name	Description	Sources	References
	housing affordability etc.)		
Housing subsidies	Coded whenever cities mentioned initiatives for housing affordability involving the provision of subsidies.	7	8
Mixed neighbourhoods and community	Coded whenever the text mentioned local governments approaches to diverse and social mixtures in housing and neighborhoods as solutions to housing challenges or to revitalize the cities community. Coded whenever the need for a closer community was mentioned.	13	17
Monitoring	Coded whenever cities engaged in monitoring practices of current effects of housing policies.	5	7
Participation and inclusion	Code used whenever cities were aiming at a more inclusive housing landscape for instance through combatting discrimination and segregation. Also coded whenever local governments initiatives were centered around tenants or people living in the cities, ensuring the voices and interests of the people are heard when dealing with housing policies and initiatives.	45	73
Social and public housing provision	Coded when the provision and increase of public and social housing was mentioned as solutions for the lack of housing affordability and accessibility.	21	29
sustainability and affordability	Coded whenever the connection between housing prices and housing policies was connected to sustainability, the environment and climate change, emphasizing the important link between both.	24	34
Tax incentives	Referred to when initiatives and measures for housing affordability involved taxing and taxing incentives.	4	6
Transparency	Coded whenever the texts mentioned cities engaging in providing for information and ensuring a transparent housing reform and policy making process.	8	8
Local Government Challenges	Parent Node/Theme	0	0
Capacity deficit	Coded whenever cities are explained to lack training, tools or capacity in tackling pressing challenges, specifically housing challenges. Coded when cities are actively calling for more support in this area. Code falls out of any mention of state influence for their lack of capacity.	18	26
Economic shortage	Coded whenever the mention of lack of cities economic	2	3

Name	Description	Sources	References
	resources was mentioned. This code is specific to cities shortages of monetary resources without mentioning the role of national governments or international organizations.		
Exclusion in decision making	Coded whenever cities were not included in either national or international policy making fora. (For instance mentions of how local governments are often sidelined, have a lack of influence or their issues are not heard). It also codes the possible impact the exclusion has.	13	20
Insufficient resources	Coded when related housing challenges of local governments were connected to their lack of resources (resources in this code are mostly related to economic means and funding).	17	24
Lack of national support	Lack of national support is referred to instances where States restricted or limited local governments, failed to provide for proper resources or support in other forms such as training, decision making power and information. Similar to other codes, however this code is different than the others since it has to specifically mention the States influence in the local governments' challenges.	11	17
No awareness of obligations	Referenced whenever local governments or states are explained to have a lack of understanding or awareness of their obligations towards human rights norms.	2	2
population density and inequality	Coded when text mentioned the downside of the rich cultural diversity and attractiveness of cities and metropolitan areas. Mostly when it was connected to high concentrations op population numbers and the exacerbation of inequality.	9	12
regulation and administrative barriers	Coded whenever regulatory, policy, administrative or legal barriers were mentioned as a challenge for local governments to achieve their aims.	5	9
Reliance on state resources	Coded when the dependence of local governments is explained vis a vis the state resources.	10	13
Slow procedures	Whenever challenges related to slow procedures, long waiting times are mentioned. Also coded when there is a push for faster administration in housing related issues.	2	2
Unaccessible funds	Coded whenever the text mentioned positive funds	2	5

Name	Description	Sources	References
	provisions, yet these were inaccessible for lower income households or sections of the populations which are most in need of them.		
Local governments General Actions	Parent Node/Theme	0	0
Activism and Advocacy	Coded whenever cities are leading or driving change, advocating for change or are engaging with human rights standards to push for and defend their interests. Whenever cities are trying to set an example and push for others to do the same. Connected to horizontal dimension to some extent.	47	60
Confronting international challenges	Coded whenever cities speak of tackling global challenges such as housing affordability, inequality, climate change, discrimination etc. Code is closely connected to the aims TCN have in their engagement.	24	40
Independence and Autonomy	Coded whenever cities assert themselves as independent entities capable of acting in their own capacity and with no connection or under any other power. Cities recognize their influence and power as cities, not as a sub level of government.	28	55
Network with actors and cities	Coded whenever cities are actively engaging with other cities and other actors within the city to achieve their aims.	40	46
Local governments specific potential	Parent Node/Theme	0	0
adaptability	Coded whenever cities flexibility, readiness to change and adapt are mentioned as a positive city trait	6	6
Cities act first	Coded whenever cities are mentioned to be at the forefront or being the first to experience social challenges, leading them to be the first responders to crisis.	16	23
Cities urban power	Coded whenever the rising urban importance, cultural significance, population concentration or other importance and power of cities is mentioned. General code outlining the potential power of cities.	34	49
Cultural significance	Coded whenever the texts mentioned cities urban aspects in relation to their diversity, cultural activities and traditions in a positive light and as something that local governments are different from others.	10	14

Name	Description	Sources	References
Collaboration with private sector	Coded whenever local governments emphasized their willingness in collaborating with the private market, including the mention of businesses and corporations dealing with housing.	13	23
Community closeness	A very important code. Coded whenever the role of cities as the ones closest to people's needs is mentioned.	18	28
Cooperation with state	Coded whenever cities talk about efforts or aspirations to closely collaborate with the state or national governments.	19	42
Local policies and decision-making	Coded for specific cases when cities underline the need for local policies addressing challenges (housing challenges, international challenges etc.). When local governments argue for the importance of local policies and action. Code is similar to the community closeness but is tailored to the mention of specific policies.	33	51
Nature of Cities	Closely connected to the code on cities urban power. Coded whenever the texts explained cities important characteristics, specifically capitals.	3	18
Obligation awareness	Coded whenever cities explicitly state their obligations or their potential to fulfill their obligations in terms of housing affordability and human rights.	9	14
Sharing responsibility with States and higher	Coded when texts mention the importance of partnerships between local governments and national ones. Whenever they mention specific social issues are the responsibility of both levels of governments. Also coded whenever the EU was mentioned to play a role in sharing responsibility.	14	18
Uncertainty preparedness	Coded when there is mention of the role of uncertainty to tackle challenges. Also connected to urgency.	15	21
Right to housing challenges	Parent Node/Theme (Deeply inked with the housing financialization theme)	2	4
Covid	Coded whenever housing challenges were mentioned alongside the Covid Pandemic impact and effects on the population.	10	18
Discrimination		4	5
Displacement	Coded whenever population displacement was mentioned. Also I connection with quality of life and dignity.	1	1
Homelessness	Whenever texts mention homelessness in the context of	12	7

Name	Description	Sources	References
	housing challenges which are in need to be addressed.		
Inequality	Coded whenever housing challenges are mentioned in relation to or are causing the rise of inequality.	13	18
Lack of public housing	Whenever cities mention there was a decline or there is a lack of public housing.	6	7
States encouraging private market	Coded whenever it is mentioned that states have had an impact and influence in privatization and market dominance in housing processes. Code is linked with financialization.	6	13
structural issues	Coded whenever the current housing crisis or other housing challenges are mentioned in connection to an earlier, structural and broader issue.	19	21
TCN aims	Theme/Parent Code Most of the codes in this section are connected to policy entrepreneurship and Jurisgeneration.	0	0
Decoupling	Coded whenever texts mentioned an intentional separation of local policies vis a vis national government policies: this includes mentions of disconnection and contradiction of local governments policies, or action taken by them in light of national governments inaction.	4	4
Inclusion in multilateral processes	Code relevant for both Jurisgenerative and Policy Entrepreneurship goals. Coded whenever texts mentioned the ability or the aspiration for cities to be an active part in international and global debates.	43	81
Influence and Power	Coded whenever cities power and influence of both international policy, norms and politics was mentioned. This code works specially when cities power and influence is mentioned vis a vis global processes. Similar to inclusion in multilateral processes but this one is focused more on cities power, moving away from cities aspirations.	30	54
Innovation	Connected to Policy entrepreneurship and to some extent Jurisgeneration. Coded whenever new or innovative policies, projects, conferences, brainstorms, frameworks are proposed by cities in order to tackle current challenges (mostly connected to the housing crisis). Connected to activism code but this one goes further to outline specific instances of policy or project innovation.	42	82

Name	Description	Sources	References
Jurisgeneration	Child Node/Theme	0	0
Innovation of laws	Coded whenever texts mention creative or innovative approaches to existing legal frameworks. This code is closely connected to the translation of norms code.	6	7
Translation of norms	Coded whenever international standards in forms of laws and policies (SDGS, Human Rights, EU laws and policies) are mentioned to be downloaded or translated to local contexts and environments.	20	36
TCN Instruments	Parent Code/Theme	0	0
Horizontal dimension	Child node/Theme	13	17
Best practices	Reference to different project cities have been implementing, or exchanges of practices in meetings, conferences or other forms of diffusion.	19	27
Collaboration	Coded whenever joint efforts of collaboration between different actors are mentioned, special focus on cities collaboration. Does not include collaboration with higher forms of governance (international fora and businesses etc.).	37	54
sharing information	Code similar to collaboration code but this one zooms in specifically into the information sharing practices of the cities at the horizontal level.	26	36
Support	Similar to Collaboration Code but this one zooms into the support and joint encouragement the collaboration may give rise to.	10	11
Symbolic dimension	Child Node/Theme	0	0
Identity building	Coded whenever the texts mention any identity forming from various cities or a city in specific. Whenever cities label themselves with a specific term which relates back to the challenges they are trying to tackle.	0	0
Legitimacy	Whenever texts mention cities struggle to gain legitimacy for their actions. Whenever legitimacy is explicitly mentioned.	4	4
Shaming	Coded whenever texts mentions cities or TCNs exposing limits to national policies or efforts, or whenever policies have gone against their local or international principles.	10	17
Showcasing	Connected to power and visibility code. However this code zooms into the aim of showing the best practices to	13	15

Name	Description	Sources	References
	higher levels of government (national and international organizations). Coded whenever the word showcase or showcasing was explicitly mentioned.		
Vertical dimension	Child node/Theme	0	0
Access to funding	Refers to efforts of cities to get funding from either national governments, international organizations or other actors. Focused mostly on EU funding access.	25	33
call for support from inter. organizations	Coded whenever there was an explicit call or aspiration to work with international organizations. Excludes coding whenever there is a call for working with other cities and actors within the horizontal dimension.	29	42
circumvent nation state	References whenever cities decide to ignore/call out and move away from states policies and actions. Also coded whenever cities appeal directly to higher forms of governance such as the EU, not mentioning or ignoring the states.	16	21
Declarations creation	Whenever declarations and other legal documents are mentioned which were created by cities to increase visibility.	19	24
Lobbying	Coded whenever it's explicitly mentioned cities are wanting to advocate or get something from higher levels of government, specifically the EU. It's connected to influence and visibility however this code focused on the specific claims cities make to other governance institutions in the vertical dimension.	20	40
Visibility and representation	Coded whenever there is mention of representation in conferences and other international fora. Specifically coded when media visibility is mentioned as part of cities efforts tackling challenges and spreading information.	29	36