

# 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



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**17 ROOMS GLOBAL FLAGSHIP  
2021 ROOM DOCUMENTS**  
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This document summarizes the ideas and actions that emerged from Room 11, a working group for Sustainable Development Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, that convened as part of the annual 17 Rooms global flagship process in 2021. The [17 Rooms initiative](#) is co-hosted by the Center for Sustainable Development at The Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation. Each Room, one per SDG, was asked to identify actionable priorities that can be advanced by the end of 2022 to improve some component of 2030 outcomes for its respective Goal. Corresponding documents prepared by the other flagship Rooms are available [here](#), alongside a synthesis report prepared by the 17 Rooms secretariat.

**Room 11 Final Note**  
**Advancing a “localisation revolution”**  
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Context

1. Now is a good opportunity to advance a dramatic shift in power, process, and funding towards “localization.” By localization we mean: community-embedded leaders and groups and social entrepreneurs are setting the agenda, designing, and implementing solutions to their fullest potential, especially in urban settings. There are a number of dimensions to the current context;
  - a. The COVID-19 crisis and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement together have shifted the status quo, helped people reframe decisionmaking, and introduced a reputational risk for not taking localization seriously.
  - b. Government donors have been unable to deliver on effective programming in response to COVID-19, raising the risk profile and changing the conversation for major funding streams.
  - c. Technology can make localization easier and less costly
  - d. COVID-19 and climate are increasing costs and negative perceptions of travel by expats or capital city visitor to oversee/deliver programs etc
  - e. COVID-19 and climate and BLM and Me Too are all forcing practical change
2. We need to move beyond rhetoric around shifting power—we need to allow local leaders to take control, and that requires embedding a localization agenda in high-level G7-G20-IFI development finance commitments.
3. We need to avoid elite capture/creation of a new elite. This is especially important for women and girls. Women’s groups and women leaders must be included in proximate leadership.
4. We need to ensure we are faithful to the urbanization agenda of Goal 11 and deliver a localization revolution in urban settings engaging all stakeholders from public, civic to private.
5. Crucially, we need to find trusted global south campaign leaders to balance the proper time this takes to get right, with the urgent opportunity and need right now to influence significant funding and policy decisions happening at bilateral and multilateral and private donors and investors in the next few weeks and months.

We commissioned an extensive research project landscape/lit review on the known challenges around really delivering localization looking at 3 questions:

- i) Expose the real scale of the problem localisation is trying to address and how degrees of localisation can be defined and measured (gather data to inform a case for change. Immediately this data will focus on disparities in where funding goes; longer term we will work towards data which measures the pros (and cons) of degrees of localisation).
- ii) Review of historic, current and proposed **models and mechanisms**<sup>11</sup> which aim to shift power and deliver localization, and what insights/recommendations can be gained.
- iii) Honest analysis of why the shift towards localization hasn't already happened (risk aversity/bureaucracy/donor politics/inertia/complex settings) and how various actors can practically advance a new paradigm of localization.

This resulted in [this great paper from ODI](#) which the Room and a wider network of mainly global south partners has engaged on.

The top-line recommendations, in much more detail in the paper, are summarised here:

1. *Learn from and accelerate initiatives that already exist, especially emanating from the global South*
2. *Challenge perceptions and narratives and redesign models to enable greater transfer of resources to local led actors*
3. *Demonstrate graceful stepping back and shifting the mindset to reduce encroaching of local actors' agency and respect for their ways of being*
4. *Let Global South actors lead the campaign to promote localisation and locally led development in partnering with trusted global networks where appropriate and needed*

Recommendation 4 is particularly important for Room 11's next steps. We are now exploring how best to identify and back for scale local-led campaigns for localisation policy change to help them go national then global in influence. We are excited that there should be an opportunity to either scale an existing campaign or co-create in a local owned way a campaign that goes from the grassroots to the global level, but the campaign design phase will need to be special, and itself pointedly different. With these leaders, and through this process, we will support the drafting of a strategy and campaign plan to measurably change the degree to which locally led development is supported by the SDG sector, universally, south and north.

Based on the conclusions reached by these leaders, the campaign will identify items such as:

- Key outcome goals (suitable indicators need to be found – (for example as measured through: funding levels delivered through innovative mechanisms which shift power; and quantity of local leaders and local leaderful settings supported/empowered)
- Key individuals and institutions whose behaviour we aim to change (for example: the 131 UN Resident Coordinators; the top ten foundations and official donors, think tanks and advocacy groups?)
- Key messages and messengers - inspirational leaders, advocates, stories , south and north.
- Key global moments we intend to influence (For example: Summit for Democracies; Open Government Partnership Summit; international financial institution (IFI)

meetings in 2022, Germany-hosted G7, Indonesia-hosted G20; UN Least Developed Country conference; Stockholm + 50)

- Common local and national moments of influence (local budget decision, local election cycles, seasonal opportunities, the local expressions of global social movements such as BLM, Metoo, Fridays for Future, vaccine justice)
- A regular localization accountability product/annual report, perhaps including an index which tracks quality and quantity of localisation efforts by key actors

Room 11 cannot do everything. We need all the roommates in all the Rooms to identify how they can take on the recommendations in the paper, and the four summary recommendations; and to ask how they can partner on the campaign design and delivery of the mindset and policy change required. If you are in an IFI, an international organization, a multilateral or bilateral agency, a private philanthropy or campaign group or think tank please—please take on this agenda. This change starts with all of us.

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[<sup>1</sup>] For example, historic models to review could include: Global Fund for Community Foundations; the Global Fund for AIDS and Malaria; the Grassroots Business Fund; Echoing Green. Recent models being developed could include: Local 2030; Local coalition accelerator; Catalyst 2030; IDA 20 CSO fund. Policy frameworks to review could include: The Istanbul Grand Bargain; the HIPC/MDRI Poverty Action Funds.