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## **Sociospatial integration of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) within the host society**

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This brief contributes to advance global debates that contest massive standardised social housing production in multicultural scenarios. Particularly, it focuses on the accelerated growth of marginal settlements in the Global South after massive resettlement of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) - more than 40 million worldwide, which demands the design of an imperative but flexible operational political housing programme for these vulnerable populations.

## Context

More than 1 billion people (1033.546 million) live in slums in developing countries (UN Habitat 2020). The human crisis of forced displacement has contributed to the accelerated emergence of these settlements with new forms of 'forced urbanisation' that are often not officially recognised due to their lack of 'formality', making these territories politically, economically, socially, and culturally invisible places.

In Colombia, the continuous waves of rural-urban migration that have taken place since the mid-20th century have contributed substantially to the formation of marginal settlements. Initially, the search for better economic opportunities and improvement of living conditions, followed by forced displacement by the armed conflict, have been the fundamental causes. Currently, of the officially reported 48 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) worldwide, Colombia is the largest contributor with more than 8.1 million. This represents perhaps the largest (cumulative) humanitarian challenge the country has to date, considering that its current total population goes a little beyond 50 million and that in cities like Medellín, one of every five inhabitants is a forced internally displaced person<sup>1</sup> (UNHCR, 2020).

Many investigations and hypotheses suggest that the integration of IDPs into host societies is the panacea for a permanent solution to the state of vulnerability of these communities and that their integration represents an advantage for host societies. However, most of this research addresses such integration from a purely economic perspective. That is, insertion into labour markets and economic development, and very little research has been done on adequate and permanent housing solutions, especially considering that IDPs come from different socio-cultural-spatial contexts and that housing is not merely an architectural solution.

Adequate integration of IDPs into host societies represents a great challenge for local governments not only in terms of adequate and permanent provision of housing. The process of integrating populations with different cultural backgrounds continues to be a task that requires new capacities and methodologies informed by more precise evidence.

### Key Message:

To promote an adequate sociospatial integration of the IDPs, a location that allows day-to-day interaction with the host society must be guaranteed. In this sense, the redensification of socially consolidated areas of the city that have spatial deterioration, represent an opportunity for housing solutions on site (in situ) with multiple alternatives for both the existing population and for the arrival population. To achieve the above, a pluralistic approach to public policies- articulated with humanitarian aid, NGOs, and the private sector with a view to permanent solutions- is essential.



1. This does not include the international refugees who are mostly from Venezuela.

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## Recommendation 1

### Location of housing solutions as a key factor in integrating IDPs within host societies

The speed of violent forced displacement and the condition of extreme vulnerability mean that many displaced families arrive and resettle in territories unsuitable for human habitation, that is, areas without basic infrastructure with hazards such as landslides, floods, etc. These emerging urbanised areas (“invisibilised territories”) lack, in most cases, legal recognition, and therefore remain outside the official planning of the city. On the other hand, massive social housing solutions for the displaced population are generally built in peripheral (or rural) areas to urban centres, which makes the integration of displaced populations into the host society even more difficult, perpetuating the invisibility of these communities.

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## Recommendation 2

### Sociospatial standardisation (e.g. housing solutions), as a disruptive factor in the social fabric

One of the main challenges in the resettlement process of displaced communities is the integration of people from different socio-cultural and sociospatial origins. Here the concept of acculturation plays an important role, especially when we talk about the opportunities offered by spatial solutions (in this case housing) to make social injustice and exclusion visible. Thus, with regard to the official response to the housing of internally displaced persons, there is an established trend in standardised high-rise housing solutions that leads to the destruction of sociospatial ecosystems that have been formed in their territories as a resilient alternative. For example, the social fabrics and the relationships between communities and

their spaces of collective and / or individual significance. In turn, this leads to further segregation, marginalisation, and exclusion of these communities. (Calderón, 2021)

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## Recommendation 3

### The temporality of humanitarian aid creates dependency

Humanitarian aid for IDPs is temporary in nature, which makes communities depend on “external” aid. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council (IDMC) reported that in its experience at a global level, humanitarian aid has a satisfactory short-term scope but in the long term it presents a not very encouraging impact where in many cases, temporary camps have become permanent “housing” solutions. The lack of planning and articulation of national and municipal policies in a realistic and holistic framework of the conflict, focuses on housing for IDPs within a developmental framework rather than a humanitarian one. In this sense, the temporality of the solutions generates an accumulation of the problem and an inefficient management of the resources allocated to it. However, national government policies such as the “Concurrence of the Family Housing Subsidies” and its differential approach have been important steps towards the contribution of a permanent solution to IDPs in terms of housing.

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## Recommendation 4

### Plural social policies as favourable factors for the integration of IDPs in host societies

The particularisation of public social policies makes them stigmatising and exclusive. The singularity in the policies, in our case, with a migratory approach (forced displacement)

can be counterproductive when addressing the inclusion and identity of IDPs as an extraordinary state, becoming one more barrier to the sociocultural and sociospatial integration of IDPs within host societies.

## Looking forward

- Urban peripheries or remote areas to urban centres prove to be not favourable to housing developments for displaced populations as they exacerbate their marginalisation, segregation, exclusion and vulnerability to violence. Therefore, **the location of housing solutions for IDPs is identified as a key element for integration. Although this might seem obvious, it is a repeated mistake and an invitation to search for permanent alternatives in the existing city.**
- Massive, standardised housing solutions in high-rise buildings for IDPs represent a high risk for the breakdown of consolidated social tissues. **In-situ sociospatial solutions, with multiple alternatives (new housing, improvement of existing housing and acquisition of used housing in the sector), prove to have a better impact on well-being and a better reception by displaced communities, as in the case of Housing Consolidation in the Juan Bobo creek of Medellín (Calderón, Eslava and Mejía, 2020).**
- Approaching development from a purely economic perspective, leaving socio-cultural development in the background, is a barrier to integrating IDPs within host societies. **In this way, humanitarian aids would have a greater long-term impact if they were articulated with municipal and national development plans, private sector housing projects and NGOs, in order to contribute to long-term solutions where permanent housing solutions for IDPs are critical.**
- Although some government policies such as “concurrence of subsidies” have proven to be a viable alternative for many displaced families, there are family groups with a state of extreme economic vulnerability that these policies do not reach. **In this way, alternatives such as self-construction by adhering national housing subsidies and international humanitarian resources and the transdisciplinary help of the local academy (e.g. schools of architecture, sociology, engineering, etc.) could be considered for these cases.**
- Lastly, while policies around the resettlement of displaced populations may have an altruistic and well-intentioned origin, their uniqueness can lead to stigmatisation among both the beneficiary and host communities. In this sense, **policies can achieve greater inclusion, therefore, integration of IDPs, if they have a pluralistic approach, which starts from the same vocabulary used in policies.**



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This brief is the product of the panel discussion *How can we more successfully support the integration of internally displaced persons in Colombia?* Held on September 24, 2021. The event sought to discuss approach strategies for IDPs housing solutions that promote their integration with host societies, questioning the established approach to standardised housing. The discussion was attended by Dr. Aline Khoury, Advisor, and Project Manager at the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in Brazil; Pablo Cortés Ferrandez, Associate Researcher at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council (IDMC) and Felipe Walter, Director of Housing Policy of the Ministry of Housing, City and Territory. This event was hosted and moderated by Dr. Edwar

Calderón, Postdoctoral Researcher of the PEAK Urban research programme based in EAFIT University.

The points of view presented in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position of the institutions and / or people who participated in the discussion.

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2. Fostering the next generation of leaders that draw on different perspectives and backgrounds to address the greatest urban challenges of the 21st century;
3. Growing the capacity of cities to understand and plan their own futures.

In PEAK Urban, cities are recognised as complex, evolving systems that are characterised by their propensity for innovation and change. Big data and mathematical models will be combined with insights from the social sciences and humanities to analyse three key arenas of metropolitan intervention: city morphologies (built forms and infrastructures) and resilience; city flux (mobility and dynamics) and technological change; as well as health and wellbeing.

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Finally, the **Knowledge** component accounts for the way in which knowledge is exchanged or shared and how it shapes the future of the city.

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