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Inclusive City, Perspectives, Challenges, and Pathways

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Synonyms

Boundless; Undivided; Unlimited; Unrestricted

Definitions

Inclusive city is a city which without prejudice to economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, or religion provides equal access to social, economic, and political opportunities for a wide variety of urban residents. It is also where city residents are enabled and empowered to share in the growth and prosperity of the city by avoiding marginalization in terms of access to basic urban services, social engagement, and political participation.

Introduction

Urbanization has become a major issue owing to its contribution to the increase in the number of people who live in cities and the global concerns about making cities where everyone counts.

Unfortunately, the management of urbanization has remained very tricky as its contributions to global economic prosperity are not matched with shared prosperity given the high rate of poverty, inequality, and exclusion within cities. The major pathways of exclusion include unequal access to resources, limited economic opportunities, and lack of political participation. Some of the evidences of exclusion in modern cities are spatial, economic, or social exclusions. These manifest in cultural or religious restrictions, gender imbalance, poverty clusters, political alienations, neighborhood segregation, poor access to basic services, home appliances and social infrastructure, unattractive environment, exclusion of older people from financial products, and the physically challenged from mainstream society or public spaces through unfriendly city designs and planning. Indeed, Harvey has smartly encapsulated this when he noted that the quality of the city has become a commodity for those with money, power, and influence in a world where political economy is fast becoming a lifestyle (Harvey 2008).

This underscores the need for making an inclusive city to ensure that urban dwellers have a fair share of resources, spaces, and prosperity. In this context, both the World Bank, Department for International Development (DFID), and the United Nations have unanimously endorsed the call for an inclusive city. For instance, the twin goals of the World Bank focus on ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity and the

Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 11 calls for "inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable" cities, while DFID supports the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's Inclusive Cities Network (ICN) and the Safe and Inclusive Cities Initiative for the prevention of urban violence and crime in 40 cities of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America. All these thoughts suggest that there are three interrelated components of an inclusive city which include social inclusion, social integration, and social cohesion. While social inclusion and social integration are embedded in the process, social cohesion is the outcome. According to the World Bank (2013), social inclusion refers to "the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights." Similarly, the Report of the World Summit for Social Development (1995) defines social integration as "a society for all in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play." These two will lead to the establishment of social cohesion in which there is the "the absence of fractures or divisions within society and the ability to manage such divisions. A cohesive society creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, fights exclusion and marginalization and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility" (OECD 2011).

Creating an inclusive city for all cuts across various dimensions and involves different perspectives which aim for improved economic performance, service delivery, and social participation. As a result, it has become necessary to examine some definitions of an inclusive city in the following section.

Inclusive City

There are several definitions used by various organizations to characterize an inclusive city. The UN Habitat defines an inclusive city as a city that promotes growth with equity. It stated further that an inclusive city "is a place where everyone, regardless of their economic means, gender, race, ethnicity or religion, is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic and political opportunities that cities have to offer" (UN Habitat 2004). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has adopted the motto that "Liveable Cities are Inclusive Cities." This strengthens a framework which conceives of an inclusive city as one which is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable (Lindfield and Steinberg 2011). Similarly, the Department for International Development (DFID) in supporting the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's Inclusive Cities Network (ICN) has argued that inclusive city enables the participation of the vulnerable groups including slum dwellers, migrants, minority groups, women, and young people in decision-making (Kessler and Steingberg 2011). Furthermore, DFID along with the Canadian Aid Agency encourages the Safe and Inclusive Cities Initiative (SICI), which focuses on urban crime and violence prevention in 40 cities in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. In addition, the Asian Development Bank (2014) defines an inclusive city as one which "creates a safe, liveable environment with affordable and equitable access to urban services, social services, and livelihood opportunities for all the city residents and other city users to promote optimal development of its human capital and to ensure the respect of human dignity and equality." These definitions have put the human face on cities by incorporating economic growth and prosperity into city planning and development. Furthermore, they recognize that cities exist to promote human well-being and happiness. Inclusive city therefore ultimately aims for the restoration of human dignity, honor, and values within the society by addressing the constraints and challenges which creates dysfunctional cities. This leads to the next section which conceptualizes and maps various dimensions of inclusive city using measures and indices which include access to basic services, material good or urban spaces, social relations, cultural activities or civic participation, rights and privileges, and

improved neighborhood conditions, economic or financial opportunities.

Concepts of Inclusive City

There are various perspectives and dimensions of inclusive city which requires proper conceptualization and mapping (See Fig. 1). The first is the concept of accessibility. According to the National Road Administration (1998), accessibility focuses on "the simplicity with which activities in the society can be reached, including needs of citizens, trade and industries and public services." This examines the availability of opportunities, goods or spaces in the society in terms of their number and the value they add. It also underscores the need to emphasize social programs targeted at the vulnerable populations including women, girls, children, the elderly, and the people living with disabilities. Similarly, accessibility describes the openness involved in enjoying these opportunities, goods or spaces. Accessibility is also connected with affordability which relates to providing urban services including shelter, sanitation and water for the poor segment of the society at low-cost. This is to ensure the benefits of urban governance and service delivery for the low-income groups.

The second concept is social participation and rights. The European Urban Knowledge Network (2014) uses this to delve into the process of making decisions around opportunities, goods or spaces. The city's political economy characteristically fails to integrate all citizens into the formal sector which often makes residents to suffer anger, frustrations, depressions, and deviant tendencies. Social participation and rights aim for crimes and violence prevention, rights-based approaches, support for urban poor organizations, community-led development, participatory planning, and governance (The World Bank 2013). It is the process of effective governance which provides urban spaces to enable rights and privileges by recognizing different actors through social engagement and participation who are seeking for the right to the city and the right to opportunities, goods and spaces. This is evidently enshrined in the 2016 New Urban Agenda (NUA) of the United Nations Habitat (UN-Habitat 2016). The NUA recognizes that populations, economic opportunities, social and cultural networks, as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts are always focused in cities which continues to create serious challenges for urban governance in terms of housing, basic services, infrastructure, health, education, food security, employment, safety, and environment. Thus, cities are characterized by complex manifestation

of poverty clusters, rising inequalities, and environmental decay. These are disrupting sustainable development aspirations coupled with spatial, social, and economic exclusions. Furthermore, the NUA acknowledges the need for cities and their administrators to take full advantage of the transformative influence of urbanization as a vehicle for sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural networks, and environmental protection. In this regard, the NUA aims to evolve efforts which could "help to end poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions; reduce inequalities; promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls to fully harness their vital contribution to sustainable development; improve human health and well-being; foster resilience; and protect the environment." This, in a nutshell, captures the processes and expectations connected with the making of an inclusive city with a human face and the empathy to make room for all.

The third is the concept of diversity which identifies and provides the range and variety of opportunities, goods or spaces for all within a society. It exemplifies how cities are composed of a more heterogenous rather than homogenous populations which should be recognized in planning, policies, and actions. For instance, the provision of opportunities, goods or spaces which recognizes the diversities of populations within a city in terms of age, class, gender, ethnicity, race, education, income, and place has greater chance of reaching all. In this way, the vulnerable and marginal groups which form a large majority of the population are included in creating an inclusive city. The benefits of this will mean that it strengthens the processes of social integration and social inclusion of the urban space for all economic strata, promotes social cohesion and equity, fosters inclusive economic growth and personal fulfilment, as well as creates cities as places of honor and dignity.

The fourth is the concept of equitable social space. This examines the use of city design and planning to create social spaces that are responsive, appropriate, and acceptable. The goal is to create a more equitable social space with a higher level of liveability with the guarantee of the rights and access to urban services including shelter, sanitation, and water for all. There are still discriminatory sociocultural, economic, and political systems which subtlety denies or outrightly refuses to provide equal opportunities for the vulnerable individuals and groups especially women and girls, the older people, and the physically challenged. Many cities of the developing world still lack policies of urban mobility and infrastructure with friendly and dedicated facilities such as the paratransit services, cycling lanes, pedestrian bridges, and walkways. Sometimes, women in some African cities are not allowed to have access to sections of the city during certain festivals, use urban spaces, compete for political offices, or even inherit landed properties because of religion or culture.

The fifth is the concept of education and awareness. Knowledge and information engender engagement, civil mobilization, and empowerment which are embedded in social inclusion. The city's drive and aspiration towards an inclusive city depends on how knowledgeable and informed urban citizens are about the challenges and opportunities of present and future sustained, safe, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. This will enable them to see urbanization as a vehicle of transformation and opportunity for shared prosperity by harnessing the potentials of local economies and recognizing the vital role of the informal economy to tackle poverty and reduce inequality.

The concept of safety and security in cities is the sixth. This touches on how safe or secure urban residents feel when going to worship places, children attending schools or in boarding facilities, fun-seekers going to the cinema, tourists visiting an art gallery or museum or going to the theatre, showbiz enthusiasts attending concerts or opera, or football lovers going to the sports arena or at the viewing centers. The underlying factors accounting for the above characteristics are the foci of the next section.

Factors for Understanding an Inclusive City

There are three factors identified by the World Bank (2015) which are fundamental for interpreting and analyzing inclusive city, namely, spatial, social, and economic factors. First, the spatial factors of an inclusive city relates to the provision of adequate and affordable housing, water and sanitation, security of tenure, slum upgrading and prevention, land registration and regularization, land use planning and enforcement, land-based financing, among others. The lack of adequate and affordable urban services leave a large number of urban dwellers in slums and informal settlements to be excluded from urban services. According to UN Habitat (2014), almost one in every three urban residents in the developing world, estimated at one billion, inhabitants live in slums. The slums and informal settlements depict human life and urban spaces lacking in government presence, actions, or regulations (Elias et al. 2017a, b).

The second are social factors which address discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization by creating opportunities for individuals and groups to have a sense of belonging and to participate in a society (World Bank 2013). With growing marginalization of individuals and groups by decision makers in a city, there is bound to be nonrepresentation of different interests which could seriously derail the decision-making process (Goransky 2015). This underpins the role of social engagement and participation in planning and policy decision-making, and governance of basic service delivery (Elias et al. 2017a). Also, public policies that are not sensitive to the needs of the excluded persons generally fail to provide basic services for the target populations, which consequently reinforces exclusion and disaffection within the society. When vulnerable individuals and groups are not given opportunities to be heard and to contribute to the decision-making process, social tension and instability are inevitable. Many cities are beginning to establish the process of engagement and participation in decision-making to close the gap between policy actors and nonparticipants. They achieve these

by arousing their interests and providing incentives for grassroot mobilization, participation, and promotion of embedded and sustainable integration of vulnerable individuals and groups (Travis 2015).

The last comprises economic factors, which should ensure opportunities for all, to contribute to, and share in rising prosperity. These factors include the state of the local economy, improved spatial access to employment, improved institutional access, building skills, access to education and training, pro-poor economic development, and access to finance. It is noteworthy that these so-called informal groups have formal and organized system of collectivism and economic empowerment by way of savings and loans, microfinance within their groups, and self-help projects to provide services and social amenities (Elias et al. 2018; Chapman and Maki 2016). This involves renewed efforts at addressing the quality of data and information available for people and governments especially about informal settlements and slums. Data collection and management should be standardized to include their comparability across cities and nations, and disaggregation by age, sex, ethnic group, race, income level, place of residence, place of birth or nationality, and level of disability in order to leave no one behind.

The Challenges of Making an Inclusive City

There are several constraints and challenges which should be addressed to make an inclusive city. The approach of making an inclusive city involves a multidimensional strategy of interconnected activities including spatial, social, and economic. The first is the challenge of the complexity of rapid urbanization. The fact that the proportion of the world's urban dwellers is expected to increase with additional two billion by 2030 (Angel et al. 2011) to become five billion representing 60% of the world population (UN-Habitat 2016; 2007; United Nations 2017) means a lot for the state of world's cities (United Nations 2017). Making an inclusive city therefore entails recognizing this phenomenal

rapid growth and the prospects of additional low-income new urbanites by preparing them to benefit and share in the opportunities embedded in the growth mechanism. The fact that this remarkable urban growth will concentrate in world's poorest regions (United Nations 2011) also has implications for various thematic issues including income, housing, land, health, social protection, education, sanitation and water, energy, solid waste management, climate change, and urban mobility. This may require proactive planning such as inclusive infrastructure assessment, inclusive service needs assessment, pro-poor housing strategy, and inclusive economic growth which entails properly recognizing priorities, mapping needs, and implementing programs of interventions.

The second is the challenge associated with the development of the informal economy and informal settlements. Rapid urban growth leads to increase in the number of urban dwellers with little or no skills to access the available specialized opportunities, goods and spaces in cities (Collier 2007). In this context, an inclusive city should be able to evolve strategies which ensure that everyone in the city is equally able to share in and contribute to its growth and prosperity (Hodges 2015). To boosts the prospects of an inclusive city, there must be programs for affordable land and housing, access to basic services and infrastructure, employment and economic inclusion, skill-building, pro-poor local economic development strategies, and improved access to credit and finance (Xie 2015). There should be systematic policies for integrating the informal economy into the formal system in cities.

The third is the challenge of elitist class in the society which creates inconsistent policies for city development (Atikinson et al. 2017). There is a subtle way of making city policies to favor the elites without caring about the conditions of the poorest in a world characterized by increasing gaps (Forrest 2017). Making inclusive cities must target the poorest in the society (Koh et al. 2016). Indeed, the main challenge confronting inclusive city is more political than economic or technical. For instance, governments often shy away from what should be done to appease powerful elites, such as speculative landowners and business owners who may bluntly oppose any restrictions on the use of urban spaces or automobiles (Atkinson et al. 2016). In many African cities, there are controversies and conflicts connected with land speculations, land grabbing along water fronts to make room for the elites, gentrifications of inner city to make way for the middle and upper class, largescale global acquisitions of land by the government in most cases for personal interests, and weak land governance and/or administration which favor multinational corporations.

A cursory look at urban policies and priorities show that they are generally not housing, water, or sanitation but improved road infrastructure and networks to serve the interest of affluent elites. The elites always demand for additional, better, and fast-moving highways to solve traffic congestion by spending funds which could have been channelled towards providing more houses, jobs, water, and sanitation. Yet, public transportation remains an effective urban mobility strategy which should normally compel government to deliberately impose restrictions and surcharges on car use, such as parking limitations, congestion pricing, fuel taxes, and others with the proceeds spent to subsidize better and cheaper public transportation.

The challenge of governance is the fourth which relates to how decisions are made and implemented for inclusive growth and development. In making an inclusive city, for instance, there is need to make room for everyone such as women and girls, the older people, and the physically challenge by recognizing their peculiarities and creating a sense of belonging. For example, city governments should encourage participatory decision-making which is democratic and bottom-up. Increasingly, social engagement and participation are being considered as significant pathways for achieving inclusion, through involvement of the community in the development processes, governance and accountability, and decision-making. A community-led development which encourages co-production of knowledge, public goods, and services has become a means of mobilizing and coalescing both the public and private sectors towards social cohesion and equity. Engagement

of the community has often included participation during planning and implementation, and in certain instances, the community has taken the leadership and ownership of planning and resource mobilization to make a change. Most recently, rights-based approaches to inclusion have attempted to fundamentally change exclusionary and inequitable practices of city governments. In urban contexts, rights-based approaches have been particularly notable for securing land tenure, providing access to basic services, creating access to urban spaces, and participatory planning (World Bank 2014).

The World Bank (2014) report also noted that while there has been a wide recognition of participation and protection of rights of the marginalized communities as important factors for achieving inclusion, the efforts to involve and engage with the marginalized communities have been inconsistent and erratic. Similarly, for instance, apart from livelihood and vocational training components attached to the slum upgrading and housing projects, there has not been evidence of integrating economic empowerment as an important factor to promote inclusive cities. Therefore, priority should henceforth be on pro-poor local economic development rather than over reliance on external resources, influences, or inputs (Elias et al. 2017). This strategy of local economic development involves building capacities at the local levels to implement inclusionary development and harnessing local assets and potentials as strategic partners in creating inclusion. Another dimension is the state of local institutions and governance structure. There is need for institutional mapping, capacity needs assessment, and stakeholder analysis. This will lead to the strengthening of institutions, capacity-building, and stakeholder profiling for effective and inclusive urban development.

The fifth challenge relates to inadequate data about the city especially about informal settlements and slums where urban problems are fiercest. To this end, the World Bank (2014) observes that lack of relevant and accurate data on informal settlements and slums is responsible for spatial, social, and economic exclusion because they are not included in urban policies, planning processes,

and economic opportunities. Recognizing the excluded vulnerable groups and individuals such as women, girls, the elderly, the physically challenged, and the slum dwellers through relevant and accurate data is fundamental for creating an inclusive city. It also requires citizen engagement and community-led mapping and development strategies. Yet, knowledge generation and sharing are not creating the right kind of information to influence policies and planning. This situation is further exacerbated because despite all emphasis on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to knowledge generation, disciplines still work in silos (Naik Singru and Lindfield 2017). Yet, it is very impossible for a single discipline to generate the right and adequate knowledge to effectively interpret and interrogate the complex challenges of cities in the twenty-first century. Adopting appropriate tools such as boundary delineation, settlement profiling, enumeration, and household surveys can lead to data gathering and mapping, including a city-level map, a sociocultural map, poverty map, vulnerabilities and/or spatial risk profile detailing the distribution of environmental and natural hazards affecting cities and communities, typologies of environmental risks, number of people in high-risk areas, and available mitigation and adaptation measures.

The challenge of climate change and environmental hazards is the sixth which is presently threatening the making and capacity of an inclusive, safe, and resilient city for all. Several world megacities are located on the coasts where the impact of climate and environmental changes including flooding, heat waves, and infectious diseases are intensified due to their geographic locations and extreme weather conditions, and the agglomerations of populations and economic activities in coastal cities (Elias 2018). Inclusive cities and urban development must integrate climate change or environmentally induced displacement of urban populations into policies and planning which is not often the case. Also, by mainstreaming climate change and adaptation into inclusive city and urban development planning will build resilient cities and populations (Taylor et al. 2014). For instance, there should be economic programs and

tax policies which could cushion the effect of losses or damages for those whose livelihood systems are tied to natural systems which are often very sensitive to climate change and natural disasters (Elias and Omojola 2015).

The seventh is the challenge of diminishing resources/revenues which are affecting both citizens and governments in different ways (Ferguson and Navarrete 2003). The inability of government to access funds to provide infrastructure to support technology and industrialization is hampering job creation, service provision, and housing delivery (Mammom et al 2008). This in turn limits the capacity of citizens to access better jobs and improved income which also reduces their opportunities to escape poverty and contribute substantially to economic growth and access quality services (Elias 2017; World Bank 2012). Opportunities for accessing credit and finance for the urban poor and the disadvantaged could result in empowerment, asset building, and wealth creation (World Bank 2015, Turner, 1972). Thus, according to the World Bank (2015), efforts towards economic inclusion should focus on improving local access to microfinance and credits, providing support for housing markets with housing microfinance, and backing for enterprise development with microcredits which are often implemented at national level. By properly integrating and connecting these schemes to local urban initiatives such as slum upgrading and infrastructure provision as well as empowerment interventions targeted at social inclusion which will produce better impacts on the urban poor (World Bank 2014).

The eighth challenge relates to globalization. The main features of globalization include the connectedness of social, cultural, and economic life and liberalization of factors of production (Mann 2013; Castells 2001; Giddens 1990). In truth, globalization is creating growing capitalism of multinational corporations, dependence of poor nations on the central economies, and widening gaps and segregation in society (Beall 2002). The consequences of these on inclusive city are significant such as the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer; residents of gated neighborhoods enjoying the best quality of urban services

within megacities of slums characterized with dearth of basic social services and infrastructure such as water, sanitation, and education; the increasing delocalization of branded products manufactured by multinational corporations such as foods, wears, and beverages in shopping malls and the disintegration of local manufacturing industries and the traditional market centers; and the agglomerations of wealth, privileges, and consumerism in cities and the polarization of urban landscapes along these dimensions.

Finally, the challenge is associated with urban planning processes and practices. This is better demonstrated in the impact of the filtering process as a government strategy to reduce the housing burden on the low-income households of Canada (Skaburskis 2006). The rent and prices of older dwelling units in Canada became prohibitive which made them inaccessible to many poor residents in cities. Gentrification in cities is meant to improve neighborhoods for all but are increasingly leading to the influx of more affluent residents and hurting the poor city dwellers. Slums and shacks are an organic response to a dysfunctional urban governance and service delivery, and yet the government's response is usually the policy of forced evictions to make room for the urban elites (Ron 2016; Ziblim 2014). In Lagos, government is intensifying systematic elimination of the poor to create urban spaces in high-priced landed properties especially along waterfronts (Babatola and Oni 2017). This brings to the fore the question who belongs in the city? There are so much contradictions and inconsistencies, widening urban divide and class consciousness which often threatens inclusive city.

Conclusion and Future Directions

In sum, if the multidimensional perspectives and influence of inclusion to tackle rising poverty, increasing inequality, and discontentment in cities is recognized and accepted, then it becomes necessary to tackle the identified constraints and challenges towards an inclusive urban development planning into all sectors of the society. (See Table

Inclusive City, Perspectives, Challenges, and Pathways, Table 1 SWOT analysis for making an inclusive city

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Cities are agglomerations of opportunities and wealth	Concentration of poverty clusters because of rural-urban migration	Provision of land and housing will accelerate access to basic services and economic opportunities which lead to improved capacity to build assets	Rate of urbanization will outpace available opportunities and resources which exacerbate poverty
Cities are engines of economic growth	Inequalities are intensifying	Recognizing and integrating both formal and informal sectors will accelerate local economic development	Globalization will continue to limit the growth of local industries
Better quality of life	Not everyone in the cities enjoy the benefits of urbanization	Promoting participation of all marginalized groups will open the door to shared prosperity	Undemocratic policies and decision-making will affect efficient governance
Cities are melting pots of culture	A large proportion of urbanites are socially excluded	Ensuring that everyone counts through deliberate investment in data in the city including informal settlements and low-income areas	Excluding people because of where they live often breads distrust and lack of cohesion

Source: Author's thoughts

1). An inclusive city which aims for spatial, social, and economic inclusion will evolve adequate framework and policies in the context of the complex urban challenges. The starting point for such a framework is to design and develop an inclusive knowledge production and management system which provides genuine and proper data and information about the state of the cities including opportunities and challenges. For instance, a framework for data collection and management should integrate different knowledge sources and users which will ensure the involvement of relevant actors and the mix of different interests and power in the city administration. The second step is a framework to fully localize and priorities global aspirations such as UN Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction which address specific concerns about the city. When global aspirations and goals are seen through the lens of national objectives and priorities, they are easily accepted, owned, and implemented. The third step is a deliberate but definite action plan for identification, mapping, and harnessing of local resources, assets, and capacities to galvanize local economic development. This is more so as local populations better understands what matters for them and what works for their communities and fulfilments. This will promote effective resource mobilization, accountability, and transparency as key elements of inclusive and sustainable urban governance. Thereafter, the process and products of the initiatives can then be upscaled at the city, subnational, and national levels. This also underpins democratization and decentralization of governance in a way that guarantees social engagement and participation in cities on the one hand and vertical integration of strategies and policies on the other hand. Finally, inclusive city should emphasize an enduring moral framework founded on the principle of equality, justice, and fairness for all. An inclusive city which will thrive and fulfil aspirations and desires of the citizens must demonstrate that the city belongs to everyone and that everyone counts. This is will help to strengthen the right to the city of all by including the excluded thus leaving no one behind. This calls for dialogue, determination, and dexterity of all actors to make it both a watchword and a working tool.

Cross-References

▶ Inclusive Governance
▶ Inclusive Urban Planning
▶ Inclusive Urbanism

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