



# Abstract

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In a time where political populism and critiques against the international human rights paradigm has resulted in a global backlash against global governance systems, including human rights, the thesis sets out to explore the notion of *human rights cities* as a prospective mean to confront contemporary social challenges related to social inclusion and participation. The thesis relies on an emerging human rights-oriented sociological framework, emphasising a critical tradition, which view human rights as relevant for the study of welfare policies and management. The thesis makes distinctions between notions of human rights cities *as a way of life* and human rights cities as *governance* through a critical analysis of grey literature, secondary case study reviews, expert interviews and reflections from participation in meetings and conferences. Structured as a historical analysis, focusing on new actors and their appropriation of the human rights concept, the thesis ends up identifying a shift in the foundational mechanisms behind the human rights city from initially relying on human rights learning and education towards an increased emphasis on a human rights-based approach to local governance.

**Keywords:** Sociology of Human Rights; Critical Theory; Human Rights; Local Governance, Community Development; Cities; Human Rights Education,

## Popular science summary

The thesis is a product of the author's curiosity to understand how so-called *human rights cities* have developed and transformed, as an idea and as a practical tool over the last 20 years. The thesis is about how different movements, organisations and levels of governments have taken up the idea of working with human rights in cities and municipalities, through the concept of *human rights cities* in an attempt to re-establish the relevance of human rights at the local level. The thesis explores how the idea of creating such cities was initially developed in the late 90's as a tool to enhance local understandings of what human rights is, through a critical pedagogical approach to human rights education as a tool for community development. Today, however, the idea has been transformed, by new actors, into being more about how to manage and govern cities rather than being about deliberating people to appropriate human rights for themselves. This development is unfortunate as there is a need to re-emphasise the importance of participation and inclusion in a time where there is decreasing levels of trust in authorities and populism is on the rise and human rights as an idea in itself is questioned and criticised from multiple angles. What the thesis specifically contribute with is its attempt to link the past to the present conception as initial research showed that new actors do not necessarily rely on, or know about, the initial idea of what a human rights city was meant to be about. The thesis bases its arguments on critical sociological ideas about human rights, which understands human rights not only as international law but as ideas that are constructed through social interactions and conversations between different people and in different organisations within different social structures in different parts of the world. All these conversations contribute to the development of human rights cities in different ways. The thesis frames its analysis around a set of predefined critiques against international human rights as they are broadly understood today, exploring how human rights cities could possibly be a way to challenge such critiques.

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## List of Abbreviations

ETC	European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Graz
FIHRRST	Foundation for International Human Rights Reporting Standards
FRA	European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
HRCs	Human Rights Cities
HRE	Human Rights Education
OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner
PDHRE	People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (previously known as the Peoples Decade for Human Rights Education)
RWI	Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SKL	Swedish abbreviation for SALAR
SNHRIs	Sub-National Human Rights Institutions
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UCLG-CIB	United Cities and Local Governments Capacity and Institution Building Working Group
UCLG-CISDP	United Cities and Local Governments Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHRCF	World Human Rights City Forum

*“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”*

**- Eleanor Roosevelt**

# 1. Introduction

Accepting the premises of so-called glocalisation, which is “the simultaneous occurrence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in contemporary social, political, and economic systems” (Blatter, 2013), this thesis is produced as a result of my curiosity and attempt to understand the positioning of the conception of *human rights cities* (HRCs) and its relevance in attempting to address contemporary urban issues, specifically related to social inclusion and participation. The thesis is written in a time when the traditional international human rights (HR) paradigm is experiencing a global backlash, and rapid urbanisation has placed cities and local governments in the forefront as actors for social change. For this reason, it is interesting to explore how new local HR norms and discourses, such as HRCs, are emerging.

## 1.1. *Background and problem area*

Urbanisation is considered one of this century’s biggest trends and drivers of global economic growth (Dobbs et al., 2011), but challenges related to the rise in urban populations, demographic changes in cities and general rapid urbanisation means that the city is not only seen as a space for social advantage, but also a place of disadvantage and a site for social injustices and inequality (Berg & Oomen, 2014; Lee, 2016). Combined with the trend of rising income and wealth disparity there is a risk of profound social instability, which is rooted in, what the World Economic Forum (WEF) calls, *(dis)empowerment* and the continuing drivers of inequality and polarisation of societies (Collins, 2017). These challenges are further recognised by the fact that one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is explicitly dedicated to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG goal 11). It is also emphasised by the recent adoption of the New Urban Agenda, whose approach is to leave nobody behind, expressing a need to address urban concerns such as access to rights and services, gender equality, enhancing civic engagement and participation, and adopting and implementing risk reduction mechanisms to reduce vulnerabilities (United Nations Habitat III Secretariat, 2017). The specific term (Dis)empowerment is defined as the dual process of both an individual empowerment of access to technology, which enables access to information and broader networks for communication and opportunities for organisation; and a sense of individual and collective disempowerment when it comes to accessing normative means of power. It is argued that “individuals, civil society groups, social movements and local communities feel



increasingly excluded from meaningful participation in traditional decision-making processes and disempowered in terms of their ability to influence and be heard by institutions and sources of power.” (World Economic Forum, 2016). This in return means that there is a decrease in trust in such institutions and their legitimacy is being questioned (Harrington, 2017), something which could be seen with the rise of populism and the backlash against the global governance system, including the international HR paradigm (Alston, 2017), culminating with the recent announcement of the US’s decision to withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council (Shugerman & Sampathkumar, 2018).

One of the central frameworks of international governance, which the international community relies on, is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which both the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs rely on as their foundation. However, critiques have been made that “The global governance system is no longer adequate to address the existing challenges the world is facing because these challenges are at the same time more global and local” (UCLG-CIB working group, 2016). Included in this critique is a comprehensive critique of the contemporary HR paradigm, summarised convincingly by Castellino and Bradshaw (2015) who argues that the overemphasis on civil- and political rights rather than social and economic rights has skewed content away from the kind of issues that are of central concern in terms of social inclusion today. They claim that the primary focus on individual- rather than collective rights, neglects the realities of culture and minority rights and they argue that there is an over-reliance on legal advocacy as the only tool to gain rights. Further, they claim that the focussed effort on generating legislative processes is problematic because these processes are often not available to vulnerable groups in societies and they do not work before mainstream participants choose to include these groups. The use of HR as a *naming and shaming* tool is also problematic and so is the articulation of a human rights-based approach (HRBA), which they argue, is too often abused by actors not fully committed to the approach. Finally, Castellino and Bradshaw argue that over-emphasising the role of the nation-state as the primary liable actor results in missed opportunities in terms of holding other actors accountable in times where the state’s role is challenged by neo-liberal tendencies (Castellino & Bradshaw, 2015). Together, these seven critiques form a substantial argument, which questions the effectiveness of the contemporary HR paradigm in forming the framework for addressing key concerns related to social inclusion and combatting vulnerabilities in today’s urban societies.

As a response to many of these profound critiques, an increasing need has been articulated to rethink the assumptions behind HR, to re-evaluate strategies and broaden their outreach, to deal with the “crisis of authority in human rights” (Interview 4: 34). A need has been voiced to “achieve more effective synergies between international and local HR movements and to embrace and assert economic and social rights as HR rather than as welfare or development objectives (Alston, 2017). To do this, it is argued that there is a need to frame HR from new disciplinary angles, such as sociology, to enable a proactive process of seeking solutions instead of relying on the naming and shaming approach that identifies the contemporary HR paradigm. Sociologists has generally been slow to pick up on the study of HR and it did not become a substantial area of focus before the late 1990’s where sociologists started to investigate, for example, how a rights-oriented sociology could contribute to the study of welfare states (Frezzo, 2015: 161). This was done as a response to the rise of neo-liberalism and the trend of *rolling back the state*, a trend that has cleared space for new actors to take central roles in governance structures and welfare service provisions at various levels, which in return has created challenges in terms of accountability and transparency. This way, the study of HR has become intertwined with the study of welfare policy and management through the *framing* of such debates (Frezzo, 2015: 161). One attempt to rethink and broaden the scope of the HR movement, appears to be the attempt to activate local communities, civil society and local governments more actively in the HR discourse, and trying to establish HR responsibilities and commitments at a sub-national level through amongst other initiatives, so-called HRCs.

## ***1.2. Aim, research questions and disposition***

In this thesis I investigate the conception of HRCs by placing their emergence in a historical and contemporary context, and by specifically addressing their potential as progressive tools to address some of the key critiques against the contemporary HR paradigm as described above. The aim of the thesis is thus to consider how the HRC could potentially act as a way to create more meaningful and effective implementation of HR at the local level through an increased emphasis on participation. To focus my thesis, I have formulated the following overall research question, which is divided into three more or less engrained parts: a) How has conceptions of HRCs developed over time and b) in what way does the scope of such initiatives address contemporary challenges of disempowerment, and c) the critiques against the effectiveness and sustainability of the human rights paradigm, as summarised by Castellino and Bradshaw above?

To answer my research question, I have adopted a human rights-oriented sociological perspective, which is an emerging confined sub-discipline within sociology that deals with HR as a dialectic social concept. Sociology of Human Rights is now considered an emerging field and the rapid growth in interest from sociologists has been called ‘an intellectual revolution’ (O’Byrne, 2012: 830). Still, because HR is a relatively new focus within sociology, I will spend a significant time elaborating on the historical emergence of this particular perspective, and its conceptual relevance for my thesis. This also means that the section takes up a comprehensive part of the thesis in terms of page count. This way I aim to show how contributions made by sociology can add value to the study of HR, but also how the study of HR, can contribute to the expansion of the sociological discipline by embracing a more comprehensive analysis of contemporary challenges by e.g. moving from discussions of citizenship rights towards HR. Starting with this aim, I will briefly summarise previous research and in section 3 I will describe and discuss developments of sociological theories of HR, from which I have found inspiration to develop my analytical framework. Moving on to section 4, I will present my epistemological considerations related to my methods as well as reflect upon my personal positionality towards the field and actors. In section 5 and 6, I will conduct my analysis and discussion, attempting to answer the question set out above. I will conclude in section 6, where I will also briefly reflect upon prospects for future research.

## **2. Previous Relevant Research**

The notion of HRCs and the process of localising HR into a sub-national level is a relatively new phenomenon. This means that I have been able to map key writings, books and reports on the topic relatively easy, but it also means that there are limitations to what is accessible in writing on the topic at this point. In this section, I will briefly give an overview of existing academic literature on the topic and in what way the current thesis integrates this literature and position itself up against it. However, because much of the former research on the topic is also the subject of analysis in this thesis, I will not go into depth with its content here but rather present the most relevant material as part of my methods section in section 4.3.1.

### ***2.1. Localising human rights from various perspectives***

*The Local Relevance of Human Rights* (De Feyter, et al. 2011) is a book written to explore the effectiveness of the global HR regime in protecting against abuse at the local level. The book

is written from a legal perspective but attempt to engage with social and political science. In that way the book position itself up against *The Practice of Human Rights – Tracking Law Between the Global and the Local* (Goodale & Merry, 2007), a book which draws on anthropological studies of HR work around the world and sees HR as a practice. In this thesis I have particularly found the first four chapters of De Feyter, et al. (2011) relevant as they contribute with theoretical thoughts on the localisation of HR and how HR law and claims can be approached and formulated strategically from a bottoms-up perspective, utilizing the legal frameworks set in place. In a few of the chapters there are also considerations on the relevance and importance of engaging local government as they are an important gateway to one's realisation of rights. The concept of *glocalization* is addressed in chapter four by Antonie Papisca who also discuss the relevance of governance in relation to HR. The books both discuss the many divergent perceptions of 'localisation' and what this means in different contexts. However, mostly *the local* is translated into a nation-state or regional perception of implementation of HR or discussed in relation to specific vulnerable groups and their struggles against the state e.g. indigenous groups. The books consider 'globalisation' as an important driver of change in how HR are perceived and practiced today. The concluding chapter in Goodale & Merry (2007) and chapter five in De Feyter, et al (2011) are both interesting in terms of their respective focuses on methodologies, concepts and disciplinary entry points for studying HR. Richard Ashby Wilson concludes in Goodale & Merry (2007) with a discussion about the anthropology of HR and the conception of legal pluralism and the development towards looking at HR as a social process. This is interesting to consider as it helps shape and sharpen my own understanding of the lens in this thesis.

## ***2.2. The urban challenge and human rights***

*The Future of Human Rights in an Urban World- Exploring Opportunities, Threats and Challenges* (Van Lindert & Lettinga, 2014) is published by Amnesty International in the Netherlands and is part of a series on the changing perspectives on HR. The book specifically deals with the rise of new HR challenges related to the rapid urbanisation of the globe. Together with the World Economic Forum's annual *Global Risk Report* from 2018 and 2017, this publication has been used in the preparatory stage to identify the challenges faced by the HR institutions in contemporary societies. It also discusses concepts such as *rights to the city* and the *human rights city*. Chapter within the book focusses for example on the rise of mega cities

and their role in geo-politics as well as the relationship between privatisation and HR in cities. Other publications that has been used to frame my problem area are the *New Urban Agenda*, which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and endorsed by the UN in December 2016 and published in English early 2017, as well as documents specifically related to the SDGs.

### ***2.3. The Human rights city and its competing or complimentary conceptions***

The book *Global Urban Justice - The Rise of Human rights cities* (Oomen, Davis, & Grigolo, 2016) is considered the first comprehensive and interdisciplinary academic contribution to the study of HRCs and it features chapters written by more than 15 different scholars and high-level practitioners. The editors of the book Barbara Oomen, Martha Davis and Michele Grigolo are some of the most cited authors when looking through other publications on the topic and both Oomen and Grigolo has a background in Sociology or Sociology of Human Rights. The book has been an important source of inspiration as it introduces the topic of HRCs through a mix of empirical case studies and more theoretically grounded chapters that outline and discuss some of the concepts that are also dealt with in this thesis. The book concludes with an overview of challenges and opportunities for HRCs and a chapter advocating for the advancement of a sociology of HRCs, dedicated to the investigation of the practices and powers involved in defining and leading the HRC (Oomen, Davis, & Grigolo, 2016). The book is useful when attempting to answer my research questions as it brings an overview of different contemporary discussions concerning the process of implementing and considering HR at the local today. However, the book does not explicitly consider the concept in its historical context and it also draws on examples and movements that are not directly related to the HRC concept but more broadly considers HR movements in cities today. Together with two separate case study compilations, which will be introduced in section 4.3.1, this book serves as one of the primary sources of background knowledge for the thesis. Of other publications specifically on HRCs is the recent book *Human rights cities and Regions – Swedish and International Perspectives* (Davis, Gammeltoft-Hansen, & Hanna, 2017) which is published by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) in collaboration with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). In addition to the section on academic articles and case studies, it features a smaller section in Swedish with stakeholder interviews from Swedish municipalities and governmental institutions and a small section with

contributions from Swedish civil society organisations. The publication has come to life as part of a project that the RWI has recently established with SALAR on enhancing and strengthening the capacities of Swedish municipalities and regions in their efforts and work on HR.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The thesis adopts its approach from the emerging field of Sociology of Human Rights and draws particularly on critical theory. Reference is made to the works of first generation of critical theorists, which are hold up against more contemporary second and third generation scholars as well as sociologists that are more broadly positioned. The Frankfurt School is not known for its writings on HR, but according to Rensmann (2017), there is unexplored potentials hidden in the works of for example Adorno and later critical scholars such as Habermas and Benhabib that are worth discussing.

#### ***3.1. The emergence of a human rights-oriented sociology***

Turner articulates in 1993, that the lack of attention to the nature of rights in contemporary sociology could be seen as a result of sociologists' reservations towards engaging in discussions on the ambiguity between the notion of universal rights, the idea of cultural pluralism and an earlier positivistic understanding of the field of sociology. He highlights, however, that in light of recent developments related to the changing role of the nation state, processes of globalisation and the transformation of family life, technology and what has later become known as the *risk society*, the question of HR have been placed centre stage in social and political debate (Turner, 1993).

##### ***3.1.1. From a citizenship-oriented sociology to a sociology of human rights***

Turner argues that citizenship-oriented sociology, which has dominated sociological analysis of the welfare system, is insufficient in tackling contemporary social challenges related to social inequality, social exclusion and marginalisation, and problematizes the approach from several angles. First, there are comparative problems related to the notion of citizenship as a concept to be used at the macro level. The concept emerged “in relation to a specific type of urban development, namely the autonomous city-state.” Which means that it “privileges certain public values, while criticising particularistic and private commitments” in the determination of who ‘the good citizen’ is (Turner, 1993: 497). It is therefore doubtful, according to Turner, how

suitable the concept of citizenship translates into societies with a different urban history or different notions of *the public*. Turner's second analytical problem of the use of citizenship as a frame for analysis, is a historical one. In this regard, Turner argues that citizenship as a concept makes the nation-state the natural boundary of society and is inherently a colonialist construct which "is not necessarily the most suitable political framework for housing citizenship rights" (Turner, 1993: 497). He claims that as a result of both colonialism and globalisation, contemporary issues such as the world refugee problem and questions related to aboriginal rights cannot easily be dealt with through a citizenship frame (Turner, 1993). As a result, more and more citizens and civil society groups are looking towards supra-national entities to achieve their right. Simultaneously, there is also an increase in horizontal mobilisation going on at a subnational and urban level, which pushes alternative local agendas and seek to reconstitute citizenship in cities (Appadurai, 2001). Cities as entities and Mayors across the world are also increasingly demanding direct access and influence at the international arena (UCLG-CIB, 2016). Turners third analytical problem is juridical. He argues that citizenship (understood in Marshall's terms) is understood as a bundle of rights that lacks logical coherence as it for example neglects economic rights. From a legal perspective, Turner argues, it can therefore be argued that this tradition is "unsatisfactory because citizenship is an arbitrary or contingent set of rights." (Turner, 1993: 498).

### 3.1.2. *Generations of human rights*

Traditionally, HR have been conceptualised within three generations of rights: First generation of rights are *Civil and political rights*, which for example includes freedom of speech, rights to assembly and representation in government. These rights are sometimes also referred to as negative rights because they constitute a bundle of rights that protect the individual from abuse perpetrated by other e.g. the state, a company or other individuals (Frezzo, 2015). These rights can often be directly translated into notions of citizenship rights. The second generation of rights, or what is perceived as positive rights, constitute *social and economic* (and sometimes also *cultural*) *rights*, rights that can also be perceived as entitlements and which require active intervention and policy-making to provide equal access to them. This often takes the form of social services such as education, health care or insurance and protection from disasters or unemployment. For this reason, these rights are often contested because the extent, to which, such rights and entitlements can be constructed as HR claims, inherently has to do with the

willingness of people in power and governments to provide compensations for preconditioned social inequalities (Frezzo, 2015). The third generation of rights are also positive rights, but they often refer to rights that specifically target minority groups such as indigenous people's rights to ancestral land or identity and lifeways (Frezzo, 2015). These rights are sometimes categorised as *collective rights* or green rights, as they also include rights to a healthy environment for example.

### 3.1.3. *Human Rights as a cosmopolitan law - or paternalistic ideal*

Based on the arguments presented above, Turner claims that a human rights-oriented sociology, as a supplement to a citizenship oriented one, is better equipped to accommodate for, what he refers to as, the *paradox of precariousness*. This paradox appears through the recognition that humans are ontologically frailty and that institutions in our societies are inherently precarious, thus, in a world where nation states have come to rule, but where their powers are decreasing or destabilised, we need an extra-governmental framework to protect us against prospective state violations targeted vulnerable individuals and in particular minority groups. The assumption, made by Turner, is that there is some kind of inherent *collective sympathy* in the recognition of this societal precariousness and that it is possible to “underpin the idea of ‘human rights’ by asserting a common humanity across cultures” (Turner, 1993: 500). Turner in this way sees HR in a paternalistic manner, similar to the way Rensmann (2017) interprets Habermas. Rensmann, and others, argues that Habermas buys into the idea that empirical evidence of today's developments requires a strengthening of global commitments to international law and existing international HR institutions. This should be done as an aspiration towards the realisation of a liberal cosmopolitan society where citizens would be treated both as citizens of a state and as world citizens through the idea of so-called *legal globalism*, inspired by the philosophical-juridical thoughts of Kant (Zolo 2004: 38). Habermas in this way reconciles critical theory and liberal legal thinking as he sees HR as an “uncontested, and uncontestable, positive legal, moral, political force in global politics that is cooriginal with democracy” (Rensmann, 2017: 643). Rensmann and Zolo argues that advocates of legal globalism challenge notions of cultural relativism, which are presented as nationalistic projects that are used as ways to reject HR on the basis that they are products of Western imperialism (Rensmann 2017: 643; Zolo, 2004: 40;). Habermas' normative assumption about a transnational overarching legal framework that encompasses but transcends the divergences of different



political ideologies is criticised for proposing “extensive transfers of authority to centralized institutions that are based on weak public legitimation chains” (Rensmann, 2017: 645). In doing so, he attempts to “juridify global power and constitutionalize presumably universally valid legal principles from above” which glosses over and fails to “sufficiently appreciate, critical insights about constitutive tensions between democratic legitimation, power, and cosmopolitan human rights.” (Rensmann, 2017: 645).

### **3.2. *A critical sociology of human rights***

Opposing Habermas, who is considered to belong to the second generation of critical theorists, HR are perceived more critically in the first generation of critical scholars from the Frankfurt School. While legal theory has, generally speaking, been neglected – or its legitimacy questioned and criticised, there are exceptions, and some aspects of their work relate specifically to the notion of universal HR.

#### *3.2.1. The dialectics of human rights*

The first generation of critical theorists resonates Marx in their perception that equal rights in law is associated with social inequality and that modern society’s laws lack self-reflexivity about its origin and the societal context, power structures and acts of domination within which they originate (Rensmann, 2017). As such it is argued that also universal rights discourses and formal recognition of HR entitlements, through global HR norms and international law, are actually concealing acts of domination and oppression embedded in the structures of societies. According to early critical theory, “The unconditional idea of freedom, embodied in unconditional and inalienable HR claims, needs to be critically reflected in its historical conditionality if they are not to become pure ideology.” (Rensmann, 2017: 639). This approach resonates with other contributions to the development of a Sociology of Human Rights, where for example Waters (1996) picks up on Turners writings claiming that his theorisations, while ground-breaking, are insufficient. Waters argues that, in character, HR are both universal, because they are not made on behalf of particular social groups, and political, because they are referenced against political authorities. What is indeed imperative for HR to become institutionalised, is genuine empathy with others, but such institutionalisation is a social-construct specific to cultural and historical context and it transpires through the field of politics as “human rights can encompass only those claims and entitlements that a political community

recognises as fundamental to the humanity of its members.” (Waters, 1996: 595). It is argued that by specifying the contextual history of definitions of what HR are, and by distinguishing between HR discourse (claims) and HR institutions (norms), it is possible to recognise and remove such conditional and political constraints. But this is only possible if the claimants manage to apply sufficient pressure and convince the political authorities to institutionalise their claims, which requires access to power through participation. As such, “the institutionalisation of rights is a product of the balance of power between political interests” (Waters, 1996: 595). From this perspective, it is argued that it is the contradictory conditions and meanings of HR, and social reinforcements and implications of HR, that are of particular interest to critical theorists and sociologists. It thus becomes a study of the contestation that HR are, for different groups of people, with various degrees of power. Frezzo argues that the sociological problem related to HR is to explore HR, not only as a legal framework, but as “a form of knowledge, a set of institutions and an array of practices” (Frezzo, 2015: 40). As such, HR are considered fluid, or dialectic, because they “derive from processes of research, debate, dialogue, negotiation, and struggle.” (Frezzo, 2015: 40). HR, understood and analysed as complex and dialectic claims, norms, laws, and institutions, may then either “help advance struggles for justice and freedom, or conceal sociopolitical domination and injustice, and inhibit freedom under formal claims to universal rights.” (Rensmann, 2017: 633).

Woodiwiss follows up on Waters arguments by introducing a theoretical and historical distinction between two different traditions within HR discourse namely the *major tradition* and the *minor tradition*. The classical major tradition follows Habermas’ writings, focusing on individual liberty with a strong emphasis on the legality of HR, and is closely associated with the notion of rule of law. As such, it is reconcilable with the emergence of neo-liberal ideologies and individualism. The minor tradition, on the other hand considers reciprocity rather than liberty, hence it emphasises a re-distributive element targeted power and privileges, and it emphasises the fact that the empowerment of individuals was always meant to achieve social goals (De Feyter et al. 2011: 37). In this way the minor tradition follows more in line with the first generation of critical scholars. Woodiwiss argues in his writings that in order for sociologists, to take HR seriously, and to be able to make a case for HRBAs, one ought to make the case for the later tradition (Woodiwiss, 2009). This is because, according to Woodiwiss, “the most important source of the social dislocation/failures that are the primary cause of abusive behaviour today is the globalisation of the same disruptive capitalism that spawned

rights discourse in the first place.” (Woodiwiss, 2009: 116). This means that the universal discourse of HR needs to be rethought to work under very different social circumstances than from the time within which they originated. If wanting to improve and enhance HR implementation, it becomes important to view HR not only as a set of abstract international laws but also as locally understood discourses and practices.

### 3.2.2. *Human rights as critical emancipatory practice*

Hynes et al. (2010) touches upon the work of Woodiwiss when echoing his argument that the embedded sociological tension between individual HR and social rights need not to be distinguished as separate issues but rather as constructions in a relation between the individual and the structural. It is thus argued that the role of sociology in this regard is to address the “complex relationship between structure and agency that could contribute significantly to better understanding of HR protection, promotion and remedy.” (Hynes et al., 2010: 822). Through empirical studies, sociologists and anthropologists have illustrated the critiques of the first generation of critical theorists, but also shown how HR can be used as an emancipatory tool and discourse by marginalised groups from below, by showing the processes of distinguishing and negotiating what is being institutionalised and accepted as HR and what is not. This work shows that while, as an ideal and as principles and visions, HR are universal and inalienable; indivisible; interdependent and interrelated, it is inevitable that when it comes to implementation, these ideals are being modified into hierarchical structures, based on contextual and political priorities as well as practical, logistical and budgetary constraints of actors and institutions (Frezzo, 2015; Ife, 2009; Hynes *et al.* 2010; Goodale & Merry, 2007; Woodiwiss, 2016). An important perspective related to considering mutually constitutive relationships between actors and structures in HR, and thus for the human rights-oriented sociology, is that it enables a return to viewing values, well-being, uncertainty and change as central concerns for the study of HR (Hynes et al., 2010: 822). In this regard, and in regards to the contributions of the early critiques against HR, it is vital to understand that a reductionist understanding of such critiques, where any critique of HR is understood in absolutist terms or as *trashing* of HR and as immediate calls to dismantle the whole paradigm, is problematic (Rensmann, 2017). According to Rensmann, it is probably due to such reductionist interpretations, that perspectives on HR from e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer has been largely ignored in later sociological engagements with HR and that Habermas’ later contributions have

become more widely recognised. One need to remember, however, that critique of HR should not be viewed necessarily as a wish to dismantle – but rather as an attempt to re-evaluate strategies of HR, and as an attempt to display the chasm between the conceptualisation of universal HR and the actual existence of such rights (Rensmann, 2017). As such, understood as a frame for analysis, critical theory have a sense of embedded optimism, because it strives for improvements and facilitates reflectivity (Sokhi-bulley, 2011). This is particularly true in newer, so-called third generation critical theory where scholars, such as Benhabib, attempt to reconcile competing approaches from previous generations. Benhabib emphasises that because the law acquires meaning through interpretation<sup>1</sup>, “international human rights norms can empower citizens in democracies by creating new vocabularies for claim-making as well as by opening new channels of mobilization for civil society actors who then become part of transnational networks of rights activism and hegemonic resistance.” (Benhabib, 2010: 4). This is possible through the processes of *democratic iterations* which is the “complex processes of public argument, deliberation and exchange through which universalist rights claims are contested and contextualized, invoked and revoked, posited and positioned throughout legal and political institutions as well as in the associations of civil society” (Benhabib, 2010: 6). The term *Vernacularization*, is used in anthropology to understand the translation of international HR discourse into local cultural language and practice (Goodale & Merry, 2007: 357-360). This concept is important here as well, when discussing how different actors conceptualise the meaning of HR in local context, and to explore why some rights claims become institutionalised as HR claims and others do not (Woodiwiss, 2016).

### 3.2.3. *The re-construction of rights bundles*

The notions of the three generations of HR, described in section 3.1.2. is problematic for several reasons. First, it implies some kind of predefined hierarchy, both in terms of importance but also in terms of procedural implementation. In western democracies, it is often the assumption that democracy and the emphasis on individual civil and political rights pave the way for the realisation of social, economic and cultural rights. However, recent examples in Asia, such as

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<sup>1</sup> Benhabib borrows the concept of *jurisgenerativity* from Cover (1983/84), which she interprets as “the law’s capacity to create a normative universe of meaning which can often escape the ‘provenance of formal lawmaking.’” (Benhabib, 2010: 4).

South Korea or Japan, show how an initial emphasis on collective, cultural, social and economic rights seems to have built a framework from which people are starting to demand their political and civil rights, on an informed and educated basis (Ife, 2009). In other places, where HR might be perceived as highly politicised and controversial, e.g. in China or Turkey, it can be a less controversial strategy, to start working with cultural and environmental rights, as these are often considered less threatening for political powers. Another problem of the strict divide between generations of rights is the idea that they can be detached from each other at all. In both practice and theory, the interdependence of all HR is considered a precondition for the realisation of such rights, while of course it might make sense, in some contexts, to prioritise the realisation of certain rights first e.g. the right to food or shelter. Both Frezzo and Benhabib, argue for a reconceptualization of HR into new bundles of rights that moves from hierarchical and generic understandings and concepts of HR towards more applicable and specific conceptions of fundamental rights. Frezzo's three bundles are: 1) The right to longevity; 2) the right to the full development of the person; and 3) the right to peace. However, he also encourages openness for other constellations and constructions of bundles, as he emphasises the need for reconciling universalism with cultural pluralism. As such, the constellations are meant to be culturally sensitive as they are defined to be interpreted in context. A particular emphasis is placed, in both cases, on the deliberative element of constructing such HR bundles, and the role of education is emphasised, drawing lines back to a Freirean approach, to learning as tools for emancipation from oppression (Freire, 2000 [1968]). An important distinction to make is thus the distinction between *procedural-* and *distributive right or justices*. The distinction here is understood in the way that the later indicates a top-down approach of delivering rights, according to a predefined notion of what is considered fair, whereas the former emphasises the importance of rights-holders being engaged, also in the process of defining what is considered fair, thus having a say in how rights should be delivered. The former thus highlights a deliberative approach.

#### **4. Epistemological considerations and methods**

In this thesis, I concern myself with the emerging conception of HRCs, which I explore through the theoretical framework described in the previous section. I position myself within a critical tradition, as I tap into, what appears to be, an example of exactly those imaginative new attempts to rethink HR strategies, which theorists and practitioners have pledged a need for. Concerning

myself with an emerging societal topic means that I am challenged by a lack of empirical data and elaborate theorisation on the topic. This, however, also brings a scientific opportunity as it forces me to consider creative engagements with current literature and it fosters a real opportunity to contribute to the development of knowledge on the topic. In this section, I will elaborate on my epistemological approach, outline the scope of my analysis and discuss specific methods used to analyse and answer my research questions.

#### ***4.1. Reflexivity and positionality in critical sociology***

Practitioners of social science are expected to follow a certain methodological protocol, which for the study of HR prescribes sociologists to analyse “competing interpretations of the human rights canon with a high degree of critical detachment.” (Frezzo, 2015: 44). The challenge is however, that by studying a given subject empirically, you enter into a field of engagement with that subject and it becomes increasingly difficult to stay detached. This is particularly true in a situation like mine, where I do not initially enter the field as a student or a researcher from the outside, because I am in fact already situated as an insider. This is due to my position as a student assistant in one of the major HR institutions working on exactly the topic of HRCs. Knowledge from within this institute form parts of the knowledge base of the thesis and I have gained access to knowledge by using my position and colleagues as gatekeepers. Being an insider in this way means that I have become exposed to customs, norms and languages that might have influenced the way I construct and think about HR, and the work conducted at the institute, which very much focuses on the legal aspects of HR implementation. While this internal positioning might bring me advanced insights and access to knowledge, there is a risk that it might also blind me from recognising certain practices that has become institutionalised and normalised and thus appears invisible. On the other hand, I have also been working with grass-root movements as an activist previously, engaging in work on contested HR issues, such as land-rights and access to water in South Africa, so I am accustomed to navigating the dialectic nature of human rights in this sense. By adopting a critical sociological approach, I also aim to make pre-assumptions explicit, highlighting and discussing different positions, thus entering into a reflexive process and constantly positioning myself as a critique towards the field. The next section elaborates further on this.

#### 4.1.1. *Bridging the gap between theory and practice in critical research*

With reference to Hegel, Adorno refers to the *spiritual bond* as a prescientific concept, describing the conditionality of so-called fact-finding and science into a dynamic historical context (Adorno, 2000 [1993]). Adorno thus argues that science is always situated in context, and he problematizes the notion that certain empirical understandings and observations of a concept, accepted broadly by historically situated and influential actors, can create a false sense of truth, a kind of monopoly on a concept, that is then practised and repeated as reality. In this sense, Adorno is very critical towards the notion of relying on empirical evidence as the foundation of sociological research as he argues that “in placing the concept of experience so far in the foreground in the name of ‘empiricism’ or ‘logical empiricism’, it actually fetters experience.” (Adorno, 2000 [1993]: 51). Adorno’s critical theory is thus situated within a highly theory-driven sociology, which could be weighed up by holding it against Bourdieu’s radically different approach of relying on *practice* as the fundamental starting point for sociology, as suggested by Karayali (2004) and Gartman (2012). Bourdieu introduces the concepts of *doxa* and *habitus* as ways to understand how we produce practice and re-produce certain experiences until they come to form a sense of reality. Doxa, in this sense is the taken-for-granted ordinary things in life that we rarely question. Habitus is a person's embodied disposition towards the world, which is formed through social repetition and reproduction of practices on the basis of doxa. Together they form the basis for what Bourdieu discusses as the prospects of perpetrating acts of *symbolic violence*, which is the process of naturalising certain powerful practices and imposing them onto others as reality (Bourdieu, 1977). To overcome the blindness of one’s own assumptions about reality, Bourdieu considers the role of sociologists and their engagement with their subjects by emphasising the importance of reflexivity. He argues that “A scientific practice that fails to question itself does not, properly speaking, know what it does” (Bourdieu, 2003 [1991]: 389). According to Bourdieu, the only way to affect a rupture of blind reproduction is to investigate ‘doxic experience’ and by emphasising the importance of studying the social history of things. Bourdieu, however, is criticised for not moving sufficiently beyond the scope of internalised self-criticism and thus combining him with Adorno, who perceive reflexivity as only the first initial step in the pursued of conducting critical research is an interesting way to bridge and integrate critical theoretical considerations with the use of empirical material (Karakayali, 2004). The conceptual framework of Bourdieu is useful to position myself in the field and in making my positionality clear by critically

examining my presumptions and striving for a way to retain a critical detachment to the values, norms and practices of the field within which I engage. I am however aware that I can never fully leave, nor represent the field or avoid affecting it by my presence, but as a critical scholar this is also not the intention. Rather the intention is to possibly bring new – or maybe rather historically marginalised alternatives – elements back to the discussion on HRCs, by problematizing the monopolisation of the concept that this thesis's analysis suggests is in the making. The way I have attempted to reflect upon my positionality, has been to critically review my own motivations, limitations and ambitions with the thesis, and the way it links up to the ambitions I have at, for example my job at the institute where I work, and in relation to my personal political stands and assumptions as a former activist.

## ***4.2. Scope of analysis and limitations***

Particularly three sociological sub-disciplinary angles are highlighted by Frezzo as key disciplines from which to draw inspiration in the attempt to develop a sociology of human rights framework, namely political economy/sociology of development; social movement research; and political sociology. By merging these traditions into an analytical framework, Frezzo argues that it is possible to structure a comprehensive sociological analysis of HR. However, within the scope of this thesis, it is not possible to consider the full frame of such analysis, and therefore I have had to abide by certain limitations.

### ***4.2.1. Competing and complimentary concepts***

The local relevance of HR has already been established and the distinctions between different conceptions of interlinkages between HR and the city has been discussed elsewhere, for example by Chueca who discuss the HRC in connection to the differences between *human rights in the city* and *rights to the city* (Chueca, 2016). So while initially intending to also discuss the positioning of HRCs in relation to other such competing concepts, both literature and cases suggested that there, inherently in the conception of HRCs itself, is also competing or contradictory elements that has been left unexplored. The thesis, therefore, does not spend a significant time placing the HRC in its context of other concepts but instead it focuses on exploring the history of the concept itself. This forms a clear analytical limitation as the link between different concepts have been interesting to reflect upon, especially from a political and ideological perspective, but unfortunately, I have not had space to include substantial reflections



on this in my analysis. The thesis thus makes reference to the two concepts above but does not spend a significant time defining them. According to Chueca, the distinction between these concepts is inherently ideological, political, but also geographical as there seems to be drawn an ideological divide between so-called ‘developed countries’ and ‘the Global South’ when it comes to the utilisation of the various frameworks (Chueca, 2016). It would thus be interesting to reflect even more upon how HRC are positioned differently by actors on such scale, something which I only briefly do in this thesis.

#### *4.2.2. The geographical representation of human rights cities*

Related to the limitation above on positioning the HRC on the Global South-Global North map, it is a clear limitation for the thesis that research on HRCs conducted in local languages from cities around the world is difficult to acquire knowledge on remotely. This creates a situation where I am analysing the conception of HRCs primarily through the lens of others and through sources and literature written or conducted in English. When recognising this limitation, I simultaneously shed light on a major challenge, evident in the field of HRCs, namely that there is a potential risk of generating a disproportional bias between where HR practices are taking place locally and where knowledge about HRC discourses and practices are being produced. One interviewee I talked to argued that such disproportion is a result of the fact that studies on HRCs so far has been minor studies conducted “close to home”. As I reference these secondary case studies, I take part in a potential re-production of a certain distorted narrative about what human right cities looks like, based on a number of limited cases and studies that inevitably will create certain ideas and truths, while missing others. Recognising, through my studies, that these cases in no way represent the diversity of cities working with HR means I am able to also reflect critically upon which cases are missing from contemporary literature and this study. The explicit focus on cases and experiences deriving from the Global South for example, is important to have represented in contemporary research, because the transformation of the concept should inherently be viewed in light of the geographical, political and socio-economic spaces within which it is utilised today as opposed to earlier. In the process of conducting research for the thesis however, it has proven a challenge to acquire in-depth knowledge about such specific cases without engaging in more empirically founded fieldwork and without resources for translation.

### *4.2.3. Stakeholders and actors represented in the study*

According to Grigolo (2017) there are five groups of stakeholders to consider in the work and analysis of HRCs. These are: Researchers; International organisations; State governments and agencies; Civil society; Local governments. The stakeholders are represented in different ways throughout the thesis and I have had to rely on a pragmatic approach, which to some extent has also been based on a question of convenience, gaining access to these actors. This means that the thesis does not sufficiently take into consideration all the different views these stakeholder groups might have, but primarily relies on expert narratives and secondary case studies as a way of representation. There is a legitimate critique to be made about the fact that I rely so heavily on experts and their work (see for example Sokhi-bulley, 2011), though by taking a critical approach I relate and position them up against each other, thus, producing knowledge that critically reflects on the re-enforcement of certain discourses and knowledge that such experts might make.

### *4.3. Methods of empirical data collection*

Critical theory does not restrict the researcher to use a specific method but should rather be seen as a reflexive space through which to analyse one's sources (Nielsen, 2010). For this study I have used a variety of sources and I have not followed a rigid research design but instead let the research process guide my next steps. As such I have adopted a rather pragmatic approach to my choice of methods. For my analysis, I have primarily relied on two compilations of secondary case studies, five semi-structured interviews and document analysis of various reports, guiding principles, position papers and public statements made by actors identified to be of relevance to the project. In the following subsections, I will go more in depth with the different methods.

#### *4.3.1. Review of case studies and grey literature*

Grey literature, such as international, regional and local charters, guiding principles, official statements and public reports has been reviewed as part of the analysis. Particularly one report from the United Nations Human Rights Council (2015) on local government and HR has been important as it plays a significant role in stirring the transformation of the HRC concept towards a particular interpretation, which I identify in my analysis. The books introduced in section 2.3. has also been used as a reference, and point of analysis, in so far as to understand how the

concept is understood today. Unpublished material, accessed through meetings and personal interactions are also referenced, always noting that it is work in progress or unpublished material. Particularly two separate compilations of case studies have been used throughout the analysis to get a sense of how the concept has developed over time. In 2008, the PDHRE and UN Habitat published *Human Rights Cities – Civic Engagement for Societal Development*, which is an attempt to capture the work of the PDHRE and describe the Human Right City Program and its methods of which the PDHRE is “the implementing agency of” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 52). The publication is written by three board members of the PDHRE, who are also academics or high-level practitioners. It includes forewords by the PDHRE founder Shulamith Koenig, as well as a preface by Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, who at the time was the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN Habitat. The publication features national experiences from more than 10 cities and local communities from across Africa, Europe and North- and South America (see appendix 7 for a full overview). Each case is described in collaboration with key implementing persons from the various contexts (Marks et al., 2008: 20). The publication also includes an introduction chapter describing in more detail the overall methodology, vision and mission of the PDHRE. As such, the publication is considered in its historical context as being the original or initial conceptualisation of the HRC idea, which later conceptions and models are critically discussed and positioned against. While the publication includes cases from the Global North, it is the cases from the Global South that are particularly interesting to look closer at because they represent a narrative which is not represented extensively across other more contemporary literature. The publication focuses on the contextual background of the specific cities and communities and it describes the process of establishing and maintaining the HRCs by focusing on describing specific initiatives and their effect, while also reflecting upon challenges and future prospects of the continuing work. The cases and general approach of the PDHRE, as described in the 2008 publication, is interesting to compare to later publications such as the collection of cases in *Human Rights Cities: Motivations, mechanisms, implications – a case study of European HRCs* (Berg & Oomen, 2013). Here it is concluded that European HRCs, while diverse, have certain characteristic in common of which some align and some differ from the approach described in the previous publication. The study includes six cities across Europe (see appendix 7 for full overview) and it relies on fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with academics, practitioners and representatives from civil society in each city. The study also

includes an initial section describing its methodology and conceptual assumptions as well as definitions, which are diverging quite extensively from the previous publication, something which became important for me to reflect upon in my analysis. Half of the cases for example, are of cities that does not necessarily self-identify as HRCs but which the study labels HRCs based on the study's definition of what that is (this is the case of Budapest, Goteborg and to some extent Nantes, see appendix 7). From the studies, it is concluded that more research is needed to get a broader understanding of the concept and the way it evolves which gives additional merit to this thesis. Comparing cases across very different geographical and societal differences can of course be problematic, but I argue that because I am looking at the historical conception of the HRC, it is exactly such geographical shift and changed approaches that contribute with important insights as to how the concept has developed over time.

#### *4.3.2. Participation in conferences, lectures and meetings*

In preparation for the thesis I have participated in a variety of conferences, lectures and meetings, partly as part of my job and partly, explicitly to prepare for the thesis. Through these activities, I have gained a good understanding of the actors engaged in developing contemporary understandings and conceptions of HRCs as well as an in-depth understanding of contemporary HR challenges. These observations form part of the knowledge base that this thesis relies on, and throughout the thesis, reference is made to some of these activities. While participating in the activities (listed in appendix 5), I have also had the chance to have informal conversations and meetings with experts and researchers who has been working in the field of HR for many years. Throughout such conversations, I have always made sure to make explicit that I am gathering information for a thesis. However, these conversations were not directly structured to fit the research questions or interview guides of the thesis, and they were not all recorded. In addition, no written consent was given at any point during these interviews and conversations, so the persons are not listed by name, and they are included as part of the broader knowledge base framing the thesis, rather than being presented with direct quotation.

#### *4.3.3. Semi-structured interviews with experts*

Supplementing knowledge and filling out gaps identified throughout my research, I have conducted five semi-structured interviews with experts within the field of HRCs (See appendix 4 for interviewee profiles). Experts in this context are perceived as people with in-depth

knowledge on HRCs either from conducting research or working strategically with implementation of HRCs as representatives of different high-level NGOs. More often than not, the distinction between these categories are blurred as much of the practical work is conducted in consultation with- or by directions of researchers and research institutes.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom, an online meeting and conference tool and took between 40 and 60 minutes each. All interviews were recorded with full consent from the participants (See appendix 2 for concept form template). All of the interviews were fully transcribed using the software NVivo and conducted on the bases of individually tailored interview guides (for example see appendix 3). Where quoting from the transcripts in-text, I have edited the transcripts by correcting spellings and grammaticism, as well as adding descriptive meanings in square brackets for context. Longer quotes are written in italic in accordance with the Sociology Departments thesis guidelines. The interviews were conducted at a rather late stage in the research process, when it became evident that there were some significant gaps in the availability of details on interactions between different actors, and the lack of attention to historical conception of the HRC by newer actors. Expert interviews thus served as a way for me to clarify the role and position of different actors, in context of each other, and in relation to my analytical focus. Secondly, they were used as a form of validation of my analytical hypotheses, which I had drawn from my analysis. The questions were developed to enable me to critically examine the development of the concept over time, focusing on the shift from HRCs *as a way of life*, to HRCs *as a tool for local governance*, as resonating with the particular experiences of the interviewees in their respective capacities. The interviews thus exemplify different entry points and perspectives to the conceptualisation of the HRC, but they are not meant as an attempt to represent the full spectrum of different approaches. This should particularly be emphasised because there is a list of key persons in this regard that I reached out to but with whom I did not in the end succeed to conduct an interview, e.g. representatives from UCLG with whom I have only had informal contact, and PDHREs current executive director and founder. I had also received positive indications initially from a few additional researchers who in the end did not manage to find time to participate. By placing the interviewees in relation- and occasionally in opposition to each other, I create a counter-narrative to the monopolisation of the concept, which I argue is being developed in recent years. Through an active interview style, inspired by Holstein, & Gubrium (1995) I also sought to critically engage with the arguments presented by the participants and I tried to challenge their

perspectives by presenting prospective alternative viewpoints and engage in more direct discussions with them, introducing for example new knowledge to the participants. This is for example true in the two cases where participants did not necessarily know about the initial definitions of HRCs, where I thus spent time describing the PDHREs methodology, asking them to reflect upon how this fits within today's agenda. With such an approach, I aimed at making the interview situation a reflexive space and all participants, willingly, considered my alternative thoughts and expressed an immediate interest in my reflections and perspectives as well as analytical conclusions. Often, participants would also validate the importance of my perspectives, without being afraid to highlight if they disagreed or lacked specific knowledge on a certain point to answer my questions substantially.

#### ***4.4. Processing, coding and analysing material***

Coding is a way to systematise and arrange data in a rigid way that allows the researcher to classify and categorise data from which to draw patterns and consolidate meaning and find explanations, thus it is a process of analysis appropriate for qualitative research (Saldaña, 2009). Coding and analytical memo writing can also be understood as tools to enhance reflexivity and self-awareness in the analytical process (Saldaña, 2009). In this thesis I have attempted to use the software program NVivo as a tool to assist me with sorting and coding my data. I have, however, also used the reference system Mendeley, which allows for easy storage of literature, notes and memos and where it is easy to conduct word searches across large amounts of material. I have also used notebooks and developed a table matrix to keep track of the various information presented in the cases from the two compilations described above.

In the thesis, I used *Descriptive Coding* initially, to read through and identify themes in the PDHRE cases, gaining an understanding of how HRCs initially were considered and understood and which HR discourses were particularly prevalent. After identifying a list of key concepts and themes through the initial coding, I conducted a word search using NVivo and Mendeley across all the literature gathered<sup>2</sup>. Through these tools, it became possible to gain a quick overview over a large amount of material and detect interesting deviating patterns between the use and application of the identified words and concepts. A few interesting

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<sup>2</sup> The word cloud featured as the image on the front page of the thesis is actually the result of an open word search from the PDHRE case compilation in NVivo.

observations were made through this process. An example was the extensive overrepresentation of certain key concepts and themes in certain bodies of literature and cases, while they were more or less absent in others. A quick word search exposed that terms such as *learning* (166/14), *dialogue* (26/3) and *education* (142/72) was overrepresented in the Marks, Modrowski and Lichem (2008) compilation, which deals specifically with the PDHREs HRC program, as opposed to the publication on European HRCs by van den Berg and Oomen (2013). This made me consider if there were distinctive differences in the methodological approaches taken in the different contexts in terms of their approach to the importance of human rights education (HRE), something that came to feature as an extensive part of my analysis. Another interesting thing, which was detected through the initial word search, was the different ways certain themes and concepts were approached differently across the literature and cases. This was particularly true for the concepts of *community* and *culture*, which were applied in very distinctive manners, either in inclusive or exclusive terms.

These kinds of initial observations helped structure my analysis and further coding where I used *In Vivo Coding* because I wanted to preserve the initial meanings of concepts and descriptions in their specific context or by the interviewee. In Vivo coding is meant to “prioritize and honour the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, 2009: 74) and because I am using this method, I have chosen to integrate larger amounts of direct citations and quotes directly into the analysis. I also used *Versus Coding*, which is used to identify conflicting meanings between different concepts, interest groups, individuals or phenomenon’s (Saldaña, 2009: 94). In this way I moved from description to critical analysis as I used Versus Coding to identify and distinguish conceptual differences between different terminologies of the same concept as well as between concepts that were competing or complementary to each other. Because I was interested in addressing certain specific critiques, I later decided to develop some predefined themes to look for with the intention to analyse how, if at all, the HRC, explicitly or implicitly address the critiques put forward by Castellino and Bradshaw. In the end it was interesting to notice how many of these predefined themes, actually ended up fitting nicely as overall categories lumping together many of the other themes and concepts, which had been identified through the coding. It is worth stressing that the idea of using predefined themes and turning them into categories came to me after the initial coding had begun and thus it was not an attempt to force themes and concepts into a narrowly defined categorisation, but rather an organic process that occurred as a result of an open coding process.

## **5. Analysis: Human rights cities in contested time and space**

As with cities in general, HRCs, are not one-dimensional, confined or easily defined. Global institutionalised standards are not, yet, ratified or standardised and there has not been developed comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems or universal indicators for what it means to be a HRC. As such, the concept has been constructed and practiced in different ways around the world, by different actors with more or less interaction, drawing on different sources of knowledge. However, with an emerging academic and international interest in the concept, normative understandings of what a HRC ought to look like has developed over time. In the sections to follow, I will map out and present some of the most prominent new actors pushing the HRC agenda and I will analyse and discuss what a HRC is, by emphasising definitions, models and approaches put forward by the various actors confined in their respective contexts. I will also pin down some of the major historical milestones that have framed the link between HR and the city by introducing relevant policy documents, declarations, charters etc.

### ***5.1. Human rights cities: Human Rights as a Way of Life***

Initially, the HRC was a concept first articulated by the People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE), an association, or network, established in 1989, by Shulamith Koenig, an Israeli born American from Jerusalem, based in New York. Koenig is considered to have been a pioneer in the early days of the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the 1990's, and in 2003, she was one of the recipients of the UN prize in the field of Human Rights. This prize was previously received by prominent figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Nelson Mandela (OHCHR, a, retrieved July 19, 2018). In the early 2000's, PDHRE collaborated with UNDP around HRE, and on a HRC Program, which was funded by the UNDP (UNDP, 2005). Koenigs ambitions with the PDHRE was to establish:

“a new political culture based on human rights—and to enable women and men alike to participate in the decisions that determine their lives, and live in community in dignity with one another, moving from charity to dignity guided by the holistic human rights framework” (PDHRE b, retrieved July 19, 2018).



As part of this ambition, the vision of a HRC was articulated in the late 1990's in conversation with Susana Chiarotti, a lawyer from the city of Rosario in Argentina, who was also a member of the board of the PDHRE. Rosario became, in 1997, the first city to declare itself a HRC at a ceremony where more than 35 organisations, representing a broad variety of civil society and minority groups, signed a declaration to manifest their commitment to build "a human rights friendly community in Rosario" (PDHRE a, retrieved June 28).

### *5.1.1. Human rights learning as the foundation for the human rights city*

The manifestation of developing Rosario into the first HRC, took its departure in the UN Decade for Human Rights Education 1995-2004. As such, PDHRE emphasised the importance for HRCs to be based on a deliberate approach to the learning about HR, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as a tool toward the realisation of HR (OHCHR b, retrieved June 28, 2018). According to Marks, Modrowski and Lichem "The Human Right City of Rosario emerged out of a felt need for a deeper understanding of the duties and obligations related to human rights and on the premise that human rights cannot be exercised if they are not known." (2008: 112). Imbedded in this assumption lies the notion that HR discourse in itself has an emancipatory effect, and the PDHREs approach to learning makes explicit reference to the critical educational scholar and educator, Brazilian Paulo Freire. Freire is well-known for developing a framework for learning and education as a dialogue and a democratic relationship, useful as a reflexive tool to dismantle oppressive power dynamics and structures in society (Freire 2000 [1968]; Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 82). Reflecting this approach, the HRC is by the PDHRE, defined as:

"community-based initiatives, locally conceived and directed by local groups around the world, which combine participation, empowerment and social change within international solidarity based on agreed principles of human rights education and sustainable development" (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 39-40)

As such, the PDHRE's HRC program promoted HRE as a tool for community development through projects initiated across cities and in regions in about 60 locations all across the world, with the vision to make HR *a way of life*. Throughout the case studies, it is described how the initiatives were used to facilitate dialogue between different groups and segments of societies and that its emphasis on learning and creative- and critical thinking is meant to facilitate locally confined problem solving in the communities, and act as a tool for conflict resolution (see case

overview in appendix 7 for examples). This further builds a narrative of individuals and communities as, not only rights-holders, but also duty bearers of HR, claiming that the realisation of HR is the responsibility of everyone and emphasising the role of procedural justice by applying a bottoms-up approach to the process of defining rights in this regard.

### *5.1.2. A community-based initiative with emphasis on social, economic and cultural rights*

It is clear from the case compilation of the PDHREs work that one of the ambitions with the HRC program, is to create awareness about the role of social, economic and cultural rights, as human rights, in the conscience of regular people and communities around the world. Through their approach, they utilise participatory methods to create local awareness around the fact that that these rights are in fact also HR, as it is emphasised that HR are too often perceived only as the so-called first generation rights. It is argued for example, that through the work in Rosario, “civil society became increasingly aware of the possibility of using the human rights framework to claim fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 110). Women learned that “health services should treat them with respect and consideration and that proper healthcare is not charity but their human right”. This leads to the initiative of starting to monitor the realisation of Article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural rights, which deals with the right to health (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 118-19). The approach appears to utilise local commitments to various social justice issues, and social- and institutional infrastructure that are already set in place to tackle these, on top of which, the HRC initiative is being built or incorporated as a frame from which to view these struggles in a holistic and integrated manner (see e.g. case from Korogocho in Kenya, appendix 7). By basing the foundation of their HRC work on “the specific social, economic, historical and cultural dimensions of the community” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 47), the PDHRE confines its model in local historical accounts of war, struggle or civil unrests. The HRC thus builds on top of this narrative, which can give the concept local legitimacy as a tool, resonating local experiences of social injustices and framing these local struggles as HR claims. In this way, the model relies on a bottoms-up approach and utilises the mechanism described as *vernacularization*. An important part of the PDHRE model is thus capacity building and workshops, focusing more broadly on community development. Through such participatory methods, developed in collaboration with local partners, they encourage

groups within the communities to come together to reflect on their place and role in the community in order to create shared visions, values and strategies for the future development of the community. This way, PDHRE also emphasises the procedural aspects of bringing HR into the conscious of people, not only as a set of pre-defined rights to be distributed from above, but as rights that can be constructed from below, to fit the realities of the local context. PDHRE also describes the HRCs as:

“a city or a community where people of good will, in government, in organizations and in institutions, try and let a human rights framework guide the development of the life of the community. Equality and nondiscrimination are basic values. Efforts are made to promote an holistic vision of human rights to overcome fear and impoverishment, a society that provides human security, access to food, clean water, housing, education, healthcare and work at livable wages, sharing these resources with all citizens-- not as a gift, but as a realization of human rights” (PDHRE. 2007: 3)

While it is emphasised that HRCs is a work in progress “being the direct expression of the dynamic process of human rights learning itself” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 47), cities that became HRCs within the framework of the PDHRE, generally followed a model consistent of a five step process. These steps emphasise the commitment to a participatory process, as well as its foundation in locally understood and situated HR challenges and knowledge. The five steps are: 1) Establishing a Steering Committee; 2) Draft a plan of action; 3) Implement learning activities and other actions; 4) Evaluate the work of the HRC; 5) Publicize and expand the effort (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008).

What is interesting, in terms of the PDHRE model is that it does not necessarily rely on strong institutional- or legal frameworks or on the involvement of local governments to precondition the realisation of the HRC. The ambition of teaching and learning about social, economic and cultural rights instead seems to be to encourage people to come together to try to realise these rights in the community, instead of simply accepting the status quo or relying on the local authorities, which in many of the cases is not motivated or not strong enough to address all these concerns in the first place. This is clear especially from e.g. the cases in sub-Saharan Africa, where they work with civil society organisations in illegal settlements, urban slums and rural small communities. People in some of these cases start to form alliances around important issues such as the right to food, to help vulnerable groups’ access these rights, utilizing the resources of local community groups and individuals (see e.g. Korogocho and Kati in appendix 7). Emphasising the role of the community, as an important duty bearer in the process towards

realisation of HR, highlights how the PDHRE views HRCs in line with Woodiwiss minor tradition. The PDHRE model recognises the need to share responsibilities and the need to focus on redistribution and sharing of scarce resources within a community. In this way, PDHREs articulation of HRCs align itself somehow with the *right to the city* approach, as articulated in the World Charter for the Rights to the City. Here, it is argued that the rights to the city approach “implies initiating a new way of promotion, respect, defense and fulfillment of the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights guaranteed in regional and international human rights instruments.” (World Urban Forum, 2005). While the two concepts were conceptualised and practised more or less in parallel during the late 90s, they were both particularly influential in Latin America and as frameworks for working with HR from a bottom up perspective in the Global South (Chueca, 2016). The World Charter for the Rights to the City was signed in 2005, during the World Urban Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, a city that also embraced PDHRE’s notion of being a HRC (appendix 7). So, while there is not necessarily any official connection between the two concepts, initially they do seem to have been practised in close proximity of each other engaging similar actors. Some have also made the direct connection between the rights to the city concept and the methodology used by the PDHRE, but that has been in the attempt to position their work against more prevalent top-down approaches (Interview 5 section 14). What has proven a significant challenge for the model in this regard is however, that because the approach relies on an extensive and long-term commitment, working often in poor areas without a strong institutional foundation, the initiative becomes very vulnerable. Previous research points towards a lack of effectiveness in their theory of change of moving communities from “charity to dignity” through this approach (Buerger, 2016) and their attempt to create a “complete and detailed definition” of the HRC has been criticised for being “rather utopic in nature” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 28). Ife (2009) also emphasises that there are fundamental conceptual difficulties of working with *communities* as it can be perceived differently and both as an inclusive and exclusive term (See appendix 1 section 2 for examples of how community is used as both an inclusive and exclusive term in the case studies). Grigolo emphasises this, saying that we should not be naive, and that working with HR in this way, can still conceal all sorts of embedded power relations (Interview 4: 14). Another challenge that is clearly emphasised – but is not limited to the PDHREs model – is the consistent challenge of securing sufficient funding for the HRC. This issue is echoed all throughout the various cases analysed, as one of the primary concerns and

limitations of the HRC, but it is particularly problematic when local governments or other strong institutions are not committed to the project.

### *5.1.3. The role and legacy of PDHRE in today's human rights city landscape*

The role of the PDHRE today has proven to be rather difficult to identify, but it is clear that they do not have a prominent stand in setting the agenda or steering the direction of how the concept is conceptualised anymore. Their website does not seem to have been consistently updated, and their regional offices, which according to their website, are coordinated in collaborations with local partner organisations in South Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and South East Asia and the Pacific's also does not all seem to be functioning. Attempting to investigate current initiatives by reaching out to representatives of these offices via email addresses listed on the site was in all cases unsuccessful and many of the emails I send bounced back, signalling that the addresses are no longer in use. Attempting to construct some kind of timeline, based on information gathered on the website and in interviews with former associates and across other literature, it seems like their work on HRCs peaked with the collaboration with the UNDP in the early 2000's. As such the PDHRE had, by 2007, trained 100 community leaders, and 17 HRCs were in development (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2015), however, after 2008 not much international work seems to have taken place and there are no follow up reports on the work with these cities. Most of the activities I have managed to trace down hereafter are fragmented activities centred within the US and the founder, Shulamith Koenig and new executive director, Robert Kesten, who is also based in New York and whom I have also been unsuccessful in establishing contact with. According to former Executive Director from 2003-2006, Minar Pimple, who today is the Senior Director for Global Operations in Amnesty International, the PDHRE never managed to professionalise itself and create a strong strategic position from which to promote itself and its articulation of the approach and methods used to conceptualise the HRC (Interview 2: 20). This also speaks to a second limitation, that they did not manage to build a strong network amongst the cities they worked with, and so the communication seemed to have been driven bilaterally instead of facilitating a strong platform for cities to work together (Interview 5: 6). Another problem, identified through conversations and interviews is that it appears to be a very founder-driven organisation and that the board consistent of – committed but very loosely affiliated – prominent high-level academics, UN affiliated persons and government officials, would pick up on

projects and participate in meetings, based on their regional interest and a level of convenience. Key individuals from the board, did take up more prominent roles in the implementation of certain projects, but it was not necessarily very institutionalised (Interview 2: 20). The members are also aging, and many seem to have retired from their current positions and are not that active anymore (interview 5: 4).

*“from the beginning, it is very clear that the founder of the PDHRE, Shulamith Koenig, was the person who was the driver and was the inspiration. Who had elected and gathered all these luminary people around her. But it was always a founder-driven organisation. (...). You see the point about the board. As I said, it was a founder-driven organisation, (...) they would meet once a year and it was more discussion meetings, basically.”* (Interview 2: 4+6)

Grigolo, who has been researching the HRC since 2004, supports this interpretation (Interview 4: 26), and conversations I have had informally with others, who know of the PDHRE and their work in the late 90’s, further confirm this understanding. One said that the impression she got was that the PDHRE was pretty much a “one woman show”. A few have seemed to imply that Koenig had a very strong sense of pride and ownership over the concept, which could complicate the collaboration with cities because they did not necessarily always subscribe to her ideals. In the case of the city of Nantes in France, in the 2013 case compilation, the PDHRE is described as an ‘angliphonique’ initiative. Several of the representatives from the city, which were interviewed for the study, seemed to reject the HRC label all together, because it would mean they would have to be associated with the PDHRE (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 98).

From these critiques and the new understanding of the structure of the PDHRE, in a way, it might be misleading when researchers and others today refer to the PDHRE as an NGO, or a CSO, as it gives a false pretext to their work. The label as a facilitator, or a consulting group advocating for HRCs, or *a movement*, as also emphasised from their name, might in fact be a more accurate description. What is important to emphasise in regard to the PDHRE though, is that it does seem like they played an important and significant role in the development of the work with the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). This laid the grounds for much of the UNs further work with HRE, following also, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, where the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was signed. This declaration emphasised the indivisible, interdependence and inter-relatedness of all HR, and as such, it re-established the importance of social, economic and cultural rights as well as

collective rights. The Vienna Declaration also became the foundation from which the OHCHR was built. In this sense, the legacy, or spirit, of the PDHRE is prevalent and alive in the work with HRE today, and PDHRE is still working more or less consistently with the HRC as a tool. But it does not necessarily represent the work of more contemporary conceptualisations of the HRCs as the next section will consider.

## ***5.2. Human rights Cities: A human rights-based approach to local governance***

Over the years, as discussed above, the concept of HRCs seems to have almost slipped out of the hands of the PDHRE and quickly grabbed by other more prominent actors, who have been able to quickly embrace and formulate new conceptualisations, in light of their own respective agendas and priorities. Despite the critiques against the PDHRE above, Grigolo suggests that the HRC, after all, might have become a “victim of its own success”. It has become such a catchy idea, for both academics and practitioners, that they have started to appropriate the idea and call cities HRCs, without necessarily having any specific connection to those who invented the idea in the first place:

*“What I am suggesting is really that the human rights city has become an idea (...) within which then, people can do whatever they sort of want with human rights, and does not necessarily follow the kind of action plan, the kind of structure that the organisation that actually invented the idea keep suggesting.” (Interview 4: 8)*

This is clear from the realisation that many cities and key actors today do not in fact draw a direct line back to the PDHRE when utilising the concept. Many might not even know about the movements work and the historical origins and methodologies behind the concept in the first place (Interview 1: 12+14 and Interview 3: 2). And while some cities do seem to preserve some of the spirit of the PDHREs initial conception of the HRC, they rely on other sources of inspiration and definitions for developing HRCs. This becomes particularly evident when looking at emerging new actors and the spaces within which conversations about the concept are taking place.

### ***5.2.1. Prominent new actors***

Most prominent cities, working with the HRC agenda today are located in so-called developed countries in the Global North. Resourceful cities in middle-income and high-income countries

has managed to appropriate the concept, and it is not unreasonable to say that the conversation around HRCs has somehow become “a global north, very white, in many respects very middle-class, professional conversations about human rights and cities” (Interview 4: 16). Some of the key cities are Graz in Austria (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008; van den Berg and Oomen, 2013); Barcelona in Spain (Grigolo, 2010; van den Berg and Oomen, 2013); Gwangju in South Korea; as well as cities in the US, where the rights discourse is widely accepted, and where cities are organised in networks such as the National Human Rights city Alliance and other broader US based networks (Neubeck K, 2016 and 2017; Davis M. F., 2016). All of these cities have strong institutional support from local universities and NGOs, and most of the cities' local governments work systematically with human right in various ways.

Graz for example was the first HRC in Europe to embrace the PDHREs framework in 2001 and the work is led very much by efforts of the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) and the Human Rights Council which was developed as the local equivalent to PDHREs notion of establishing a committee for proceeding the work with HRCs. The founder of the ETC, Professor Wolfgang Benedek, was a personal friend of members of the PDHRE and that is how the institute initially got introduced to the idea. Benedek also became a member of the PDHREs board and is still to some extent the bridging link between PDHRE and ETC. However, the collaboration was never formalised and Benedek is now retired (Interview 5: 4). In the late 90's and early 00's the ETC worked closely with the Mayor from the social democratic party in establishing the HRC initiative based on a motivation articulated from civil society “to voice human rights violations and to strive to improve the way of life in the city.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013, p 66). Today, the work is very much led by Klaus Starl, current director of the ETC and the Head of the Human Rights Council's office. Starl has been active in the work since the early 2000s. According to Starl, working towards becoming a HRC was never a conscious process as such, and the ETC and Graz only embraced the idea because they were asked by the PDHRE's founder (Berg & Oomen, 2013). HRE however, was always a priority issue for ETC. While providing trainings and workshops for practitioners such as judges, police officers and teachers, they have also been engaging in more direct work with for example schools, in an effort to create a HR culture (Berg & Oomen, 2013). Unfortunately, Starl says, the municipality has not been consistent in its efforts in this regard and since the mayor in 2005 joined the concept with the efforts of the European Coalition on



Cities against Racism, that has been a more applicable framework for collaboration all across (Interview 5: 4+6+8).

Barcelona has been a frontrunner in the work with developing the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, which was signed in 2000. It was one of the first European cities to label itself a HRC back in 1998, without necessarily having strong ties to the PDHRE or relying on their framework. The International Observatory for Participatory Democracy and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) together with many other local HR organisations have their headquarters in Barcelona and are steering the developments together with the local government which is progressive in its approach. The UCLG is probably the most influential organisation today, working to enhance the role of local governments globally. UCLG was established in 2004, emerging as the central global network representing more than 240.000 towns, cities and regions and more than 150 local and regional governmental associations from around the world. The organisation was a result of the merge of two existing local government organisations, the International Union of Local Authorities and the United Towns Organisations. In addition to the HRC concept, the UCLGs Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (UCLG-CISDP) also work with both the *rights to the city* agenda and the *human rights in the city* agenda as set out in different international charters. They utilise the concepts through different platforms and forums throughout their work in different regions of the world. Barcelona has a strong tradition for working with participatory democracy, but over the years, as Barcelona became a major tourist destination, priorities have changed and increased focus has been placed on economic growth (Berg & Oomen, 2013). Today it is particularly the local authorities that are supporters of the concept, whereas civil society is more critical (Berg & Oomen, 2013).

Gwangju Metropolitan City in South Korea clearly integrates the notion of HR as a way of life through HRE and an emphasis on participatory and empowering processes, to promote direct democracy in the city. Gwangju structures its HR work through the Human Rights and Peace Cooperation Office. Here, they are coordinating focus groups with key populations, HR mainstreaming initiatives across all sectors of local government, teachings for HR in schools and as extra-curricular activities. The city also places great importance on the significance of its history as a moral high ground for struggles for HR and democracy, and there are museums and memorials all over the city to remind its citizens of the importance of HR and keep the spirit of the HRC alive (Viborg, 2017). Gwangju Metropolitan City and Gwangju Metropolitan

Office of Education is the annual host of the WHRCF, which since its first gathering in 2011 has acted very much as the hub for contemporary global dialogues on the continuous development of the concept of HRCs. The forum is today co-organised by the Gwangju International Centre, which is primarily run by volunteers, and the UCLG-CISDP. Recently, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) was asked to take up a role as additional co-organiser of the forum in the future, in what appears to be an attempt to strengthen the forums outreach and capacity (Interview 1: 37+40).

RWI is one of the emerging actors, working with the concept of HRCs today. The director, Morten Kjærum, has worked with HR and local governments since 2008, when he was the first director of the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). According to Kjærum, the concept of HRCs was not always an integrated part of the discussions at the European level:

*"I think it [the human rights city concept] was added later on. It sort of came in and then it sort of ehmm... left again. And for FRA it then very much became an issue of the joined-up governance structures and for the cities and the congress of the regions, it was more of an issue of how to include and incorporate human rights into their work, more than the concept of human rights cities as such."* (Interview 1: 4)

The RWI is a global research and academic institution, with mandate to work in more than 40 countries, with its administrative head-quarters located in Lund, Sweden (RWI, 2017). Through its mandate and strong management figures, RWI has close ties to central international and European governance structures, such as FRA, the European Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and other INGOs (Interview 1: 37+40). The RWI however, is a rather new actor when it comes to working with HR at the local and sub-national level, and it was not before 2015 that the concept of HRCs became part of the working agenda when Kjærum took up the role as the Director (Interview 1: 2). Since then, working with the concept, has been centralised around efforts in Sweden with partners such as the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and the local government in Lund where the institute is located, but also in Turkey where a program was recently launched, working with the Union of Turkish World Municipalities (İnanç, 2017). Currently, RWI is also making an effort to expand its influence, initiating a major study in regional Asia with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and applying for funding for a big research project

in Europe together with academic and non-academic actors across Europe<sup>3</sup>. Today, Kjærum sees the RWI as centrally anchored in the discussions on HRCs, but he simultaneously emphasises that the work is in its very early stages and that there is “an approach of co-creation, together with the cities, and different actors in this way” (Interview 1: 8).

### *5.2.2. Externalizing the human rights city: addressing rising urban challenges*

Rapid urbanisation and the rise of cities means profound pressure- and new challenges, not only for international- and national governmental bodies, but in particular also for local governments, which are responsible for managing the city and are in closer contact with its residents. However, the rise of cities also means new opportunities, as cities are able to demand new and potentially powerful positions and roles in geopolitical questions. As such, cities are starting to organise horizontally across borders in networks such as the Global Parliament of Mayors, the Cities Alliance or through the UCLG. With the adoption of the SDGs and the new urban agenda, HR could appear to have become somehow cornered in terms of being the framework from which to address and find concrete and practical solutions to today’s urban challenges. However, HRCs is being suggested as a tool that could potentially regain the HR discourse some relevance in this regard. RWI for example, is currently exploring how the concept interlinks with the SDGs, as a concept that could possibly qualify the implementation of the SDGs, and UCLG is attempting to push for an enhanced role of local governments at the global governance level.

Through networks and alliances, UCLG and others are demanding a seat at the global governance table, arguing that contemporary urban challenges are cross-cutting and global issues, which local authorities are uniquely placed to provide vital knowledge and democratic legitimacy to confront and solve (UCLG-CIB working group, 2016). At the HABITAT III conference in Ecuador in October 2016, leading up to the adaptation of the New Urban Agenda, 21 Mayors – together with a variety of networks and actors, and with financial support from the European Union – presented a 10-point position paper. Here, the important role of local governments in facilitating a paradigm shift in global governance systems was emphasised (UCLG-CIB, 2016). As such, UCLG argue that HRCs today, through their platform, are acting

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<sup>3</sup> Which I am working on myself, as an assistant coordinator, responsible for communication and negotiations between participating academic and non-academic participants and partners.

as a network, which not only strengthens cities' domestic policymaking capacities, but also enables them to become global advocates of human rights and the right to the city (UCLG-CISDP, no date, retrieved July 29, 2018). Barcelona is leading the way by proclaiming that implementing a HR framework in the city was motivated by the intent to “establish itself on an international platform as well as make local changes.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 55). Kjærum also emphasises the role of international organizations as playing “a very important role as catalysing these developments and creating a space where cities, experts and others can meet and exchange ideas of where to go” (Interview 1: 37). The WHRCF is a clear example of a forum that tries to externalise and frame conversations of HRCs in this way. The forum attempts to be a platform within which more practical experiences of working with the HRC are widely shared, but the lack of direct representation from activists and local governments from around the world prevents it from moving beyond an elitist realm of INGO representatives for now. With the exception of representatives from cities that are already working progressively with the concept and who were invited to share their experiences, the audience and participants at last year’s forum were primarily high-level officials and practitioners from the UN, and other INGOs, as well as governmental and non-governmental actors from regional Asia, and South Korea in specific.

What is interesting in this regard is that the approach of externalizing the HRC concept towards global governance systems, seems to change the initial ambitions with the concept. In this sense, PDHREs ambition, which was to empower local communities through a learning processes, to become their own protagonists and take control over their own development (Interview 4: 24) is less prominent today. Instead it has become increasingly about finding local solutions to global problems and local governments taking responsibility for solving some of the greater global challenges where nation states are failing today (Oomen, Davis, & Grigolo, 2016). According to Grigolo, the externalisation of the concept also has something to do with the fact that researchers are leading conversations in this direction:

*“many of the people who are doing research right now, are very interested and concerned about speaking to politicians, to local governments and presenting the human rights city as something that is not just you know, that kind of particular conversation about learning - but actually something that, you know, has an international visibility and international dignity”* (Interview 4.: 12)

A former representative from the UCLG- CISDP, which I talked too, informally, during the WHRCF 2017, supported this interpretation. She argued that especially academics have picked up the HRC as a concept to study, but that local governments and practitioners are more reluctant to embrace it. She said that the committee had often tried to open up their network to PhDs and researchers, but that they did not often get much in return, in terms of knowledge sharing or concrete ideas out of it. Starl from ETC argues in similar ways and he says that while there is a big consensual agreement around the vital role of local actors in terms of realising and implementing HR on the ground, the conversation has become more dynamic in the last few years. Especially with the adoption of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, as well as the revival of the UNESCO International Coalition of Sustainable and Inclusive Cities, current activities might be difficult to embrace through a concept such as the HRC (Interview 5: 16). RWIs draft for a working paper, on the other hand, does try to embrace today's comprehensive challenges within the HRC concept. It is for example argued that "human rights cities, are a most effective and ready-to-use tool to achieve the SDGs." (RWI, 2018) and it presents how the SDGs are directly articulated in four of the newer charters on HR in cities. Arguing that the HRC, as a concept, is a ready-to-use framework from which it is possible to comprehend the full range of the SDGs seems to expand and stretch the concept to its maximum capacity, moving way beyond its initial intend. A more obvious approach might have been to start out smaller by emphasising how the concept interlinks with the realisation of SDG goal 11 specifically, which is related to the ambition of making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016).

The argument of this section is, that it seems that the externalisation of HRCs, and the ambition to increase the role of INGOs in this regard, demands a certain level of professionalism, and a language that speaks to a certain audience. The process thus seems to have centralised local government, as opposed to civil society, as the primary implementing actor of the HRC. This is the focus of analysis in the next section.

### *5.2.3. The emerging role of local government and the new emphasis on a human rights-based approach*

As a result of the first WHRCF in 2011, where more than 100 participants, representing mayors, city representatives, civil society activists and UN HR experts, the Gwangju Declaration on Human Right Cities was developed under the theme of the forum which was *Globalizing*

*Human Rights from Below - Challenge of Human rights cities in the 21st Century*. The declaration views the HRC in “different contexts mainly from the perspectives of civic participation and human rights education” (WHRCF, 2011, para 1). It also emphasises that the HRC is understood as ‘both a local community and a socio-political process in a local context where human rights play a key role as fundamental values and guiding principles’ (para 3+4). It further emphasises that it also means that all inhabitants and particularly minorities and vulnerable- and marginalised groups in the city “can participate fully in decision-making and policy-implementation processes that affect their lives in accordance with such human rights principles as non-discrimination, rule of law, participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability.” (para 5). The declaration also says that “Establishing a legal basis should be the first step for any human rights city initiative.” (para 11). Davis emphasises in this regard how lawyers, especially, can play the role of translators through focusing on the “nitty gritty details” of developing accountable mechanisms that could possibly enhance access and participation for regular people at the local level (Interview 3: 45). She says:

*“I think there is a group of people like me with a legal background who find that aspect [local governance] of the challenge interesting, and want to think about how a government can in its very structures, be uhm, creating and enforcing accountability to human rights norms.”* (Interview 3: 45)

The declaration also urges the UN Human Rights Councils advisory committee to take up the HRC as a study (para 16), which they did in 2012, however, they framed it, not as a study of HRCs, but as a study of local governments role in the promotion and protection of HR. The study focused explicitly on HR mainstreaming in local administration and public services, and it attempted to compile best practices and identify main challenges (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2015).

The final UN Human Rights Council report was published in 2015 and does include a short section dedicated to the conceptual framework of the HRCs, mentioning however only the work of PDHRE in a single paragraph, as the NGO that launched the concept. The section then moves on, presenting the concept as it is outlined by the Gwangju declaration from 2011, the Gwangju Human Rights Charter, which was developed in 2012, and the Gwangju Guiding Principles for a HRC, which was adopted by the WHRCF in 2014. The study emphasises, in particular, aspects of how the HRC relies on a HRBA to local governance and how it is based

on the spirit of partnership based on international HR standards and norms. It also highlights the importance of “inter-local and international cooperation and solidarity among cities engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights.” (United Nations, 2015, para 43: 12). In this way, the report is in alignment with processes described in the previous section. Nowhere in the section does it highlight the perspective of HRE as having a particular or significant role and half of the section, which is only 1,5 pages in total, is spent briefly outlining the concepts of the right to the city and the HR in the city, by presenting various charters related to these agendas.

The Gwangju documents clearly play an important role in contemporary conceptions of HRCs, and maybe in particular, the 2014 principles have been an important milestone as they outline ten specific focus areas of the HRC. Amongst these are for example: The principle of right to the city; the principle of rights to remedy; the principle of social inclusion and cultural diversity; the principle of social justice, solidarity and sustainability; the principle of participatory democracy and accountable governance; as well as a principle dedicated to HRE and training, which thus is no longer seen as the main perspective, but rather as a principle on equal terms with the others (see WHRCF, 2014, for a full overview of all ten principles and further elaborations). While the Gwangju principles might be available now, and prevalent as a framework for developing a current definition for HRCs, actors continue to construct their own definitions loosely referencing various former definitions. Starl proposes that “a city is a human rights city if its governing bodies explicitly decide to shape and actually implement its policies towards maximum achievable human rights fulfilment (...)” (2016: 203). He also argues that “the definition requires a formal decision and declaration, which express the municipality’s self-commitment”, hereby emphasising the need of accountability from political entities in the city (Starl, 2016: 204). For their 2013 study of HRCs in Europe, van den Berg and Oomen provide a similar definition, centralising local government as the key actor. Here it is argued that “human rights cities come into existence when the local authorities of a city officially state that they will implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and/or other treaties in their local communities”. They further argue that:

“human rights acquire meaning at the local level through the governmental institutions and NGOs that initiate the implementation of human rights in terms of legislation and as value system, and thereby improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of the human rights framework” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 16)

In the unpublished working paper, exploring possible interlinkages between HRCs and the SDGs, RWI similarly, are using a working definition that draws on various charters, without mentioning the PDHRE, placing local or regional governments as the key actor (RWI, 2018: 1)

At the WHRCF 2017, a suggestion to develop a set of *Guiding Principles for Local Government and Human Rights* further strengthens the argument that actors are moving towards a more governance-oriented approach, centralising local government in the process of developing HRCs. During a closed session at the forum, it was argued that the language of local government and HR resonated better with the UN agenda and in accordance with the recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council report, it was thus suggested to develop these *new* Gwangju Principles. Interesting to note is that the draft suggested for these principles closely resembles the Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City, only with few moderations of which one major change created a heated debate, namely the removal of the first principle of *rights to the city*, which was changed to *human rights accountability of local government*. In this new principle, local government commits additionally to implement – as opposed to only respect – all HR, in accordance, not only with the UDHR and national constitution, but also other “relevant laws” (see changes in principle 1 in appendix 6). Other minor changes were the direct replacement of the *human rights city* with *local government* in every paragraph, re-establishing the commitments of local governments to uphold what was previously suggested for the HRC, and a stronger language of governance, an example being that *accountability* was replaced with *accountable governance* in principle 4. The new principles also emphasise local governments commitment to the implementation of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda in principle 5, where the right to the city is now listed instead, as a priority issue to be promoted together with “social solidarity economy and sustainable consumption and production as a means to enhance socio-economic-ecological justice and solidarity among urban and rural communities within the country and beyond” (A. Lee, 2017). Principle 7, which confirms the mainstreaming of HR mechanisms, has also been edited to re-affirm local governments commitment to integrate HR in to “all policies and programs of local government” (A. Lee, 2017), whereas the principles currently recognise more broadly the importance of integrating HR into “municipal policies” (WHRCF, 2014). The new principles and the definitions provided by new actors suggest that the HRC conception is moving away from relying on HRE as its foundation and instead relies on a HRBA to local governance. The



UCLG-CISDP also writes on their website that, despite their differences, HRCs “all tend to share several basic features, which is their commitment to put HR principles at the core of local governance by establishing strong cooperation mechanisms with local civil society and citizens.” (UCLG-CISDP, 2018). This description re-confirms that while committing to collaborating with others in the implementation of HRCs, local government is seen as the primary liable actor. So whereas the PDHRE refers to a broader *holistic human rights framework* and utilises the HRC as a tool for spreading HRE and learning through collaboration with civil society and local NGOs, newer actors seem persistent to rely on a HRBA to local governance, when discussing the HRC. According to the UN Practitioners Portal on Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming a HRBA is:

“a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.”(UN HRBA Portal, no date, retrieved July 26, 2018)

As such, RWI argues that “if a local government embraces a human rights based approach in designing sustainability policies, it will better address the needs and priorities of its residents.” (RWI, 2018: 3). The argument is that “when a local government makes a commitment to bringing human rights to the city and consults individuals, groups, or communities to know what residents need, the local government can more easily find out where to act and come up with solutions that will actually make a change” (RWI, 2018: 3). The assumption, thus, is that if local governments think of individuals as rights-holders it will help identify problems, and if local governments understands the needs of their residents, they will act in accordance with such needs. It is also assumed that “when human rights are localized, people are empowered and included, and policies are consequently better, implementation takes place in the form of better public services leading to more inclusive and sustainable societies.” (RWI, 2018: 3). The study from 2013 also found that, rather than following PDHREs five-step process, most of these cities follow a four steps process: 1) Cities become party to an international agreement or set up a charter, referring to national legislation; 2) Municipalities identify most important HR related issues relevant to the local community; 3) HR are brought to the local community; 4) Municipalities work to establish a network for more effective HR protection (Berg & Oomen, 2013: 177). These steps do not, to the same extent as the PDHREs 5 step model, emphasise the

importance of an inherent participatory processes from below, but seem to rely more heavily on approaching the work from an institutionalised process focusing on *bringing* or *delivering* HR to the community within a predefined framework of HR. Within such approaches, the element of participation is often discussed in generic and broad terms, and might be confined to *consulting* other actors throughout the implementation phase or creating awareness campaigns that risk becoming more of a branding strategy than an attempt to reach vulnerable groups in societies (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 38+175). As a strategy, consultation has been criticised for being an act of tokenism rather than real participation, which requires partnerships, delegation of power and citizen control (Arnstein, 1969).

#### *5.2.4. Limitations to contemporary conceptions of the human rights city*

While institutionalising HRCs within local government through a human rights-based approach could possibly address some of the challenges of the PDHRE model, there are also arguments against such process. These primarily focus on the limitations of the HRBA, as well as a critique against the professionalization of social movements and the limited capacity of local government. Grigolo argues, with reference to Stammer (2009), that while “institutionalisation is the more or less implicit and somewhat necessary horizon of any process of mobilisation of human rights” it is also “a process that tends to constrain more emancipatory and social movement- driven notions of human rights.” (Grigolo, 2016: 280). Pimple, in this regard, articulates a problem of relying too heavily on a HRBA:

*“You know, I still believe very strongly that human rights education and its transformative potential should be at the core. Because the human rights based approach unfortunately is what I call a tick-mark exercise, for example: are the laws of local authorities in alignment with international human rights law? Yes / No. Is the participation in project making in local planning happening or not, yes / No? What I call that is a tick-mark process. Without the philosophical basis.” (Interview 2: 18)*

Starl, in line with Pimple, draws a line between the PDHRE's initial model and the more prevalent approaches today, which he argues is largely a top-down approach, where governments get the idea and then sometimes more or less “give order of a culture of human rights in the stricter sense, and then convince their populations that its good for them as well” (interview 5: 14). Castellino and Bradshaw, also argue that a generalised or loose interpretation of what it means to adopt a HRBA “risks diluting the relevance of human rights as a functional

tool” and “risks legitimizing historical inequalities and injustices perpetrated against the poor” (Castellino and Bradshaw, 2015: 464). It is further argued that it is often being abused as “a cloak of legitimacy to existing structural exploitation of vulnerable communities.” and that powerful INGOs, in the name of HR, “perpetrate or tacitly endorse this approach to affirm their hegemony” (Castellino and Bradshaw, 2015: 464). Pimple, as well as Castellino and Bradshaw seem to articulate critiques, similar to that which the Frankfurter School posed against Habermas, arguing that the international HR paradigm relies on a thin democratic foundation which lacks a sense of self-reflexivity and a critical awareness of its own role in upholding current power structures. This leads to what Grigolo calls a *crisis of authority of human rights* (Interview 4: 34). With this, he directly refers to the fact that HR today are perceived as being something that is attached to the elites and the powerful, and as something which is imposed or delivered from above. For Grigolo, thus, it becomes about moving the conversation, away from the abstract, legal and often elitist spaces within which the conversation takes place today, and to make it directly relevant for people’s everyday life and struggles. The idea of a HRBA to local governance is clearly a suggestion- and an attempt to do exactly this, but there seems to be a lack of recognition to the fact that local governments and other actors are driven by various interests which sometimes conflict with each other. Starl in this sense argues that the HR discourse, with its focus on governance, to some extent has moved towards a utilitarian and neo-liberal approach to HR in the city. He argues:

*“It changed a little bit towards uhm... government driven, to some extent utilitarian and neo-liberal approaches to human rights in the city and the culture of human rights. (...) but I don’t know whether this is, uhm, the intention of city governments, I don’t think so, but its, just the times are... it’s the atmosphere. Like we didn’t think about times coming back where we discuss death penalty, or to re-defining human rights. But this is a bit of the uhm, a bit of the now a days general thinking. I think human rights cities are still a concept holding against this development, but of course it is not, it is not, I mean the rights to the city and human rights of a way of life, critical pedagogics... is not very fashionable at these times. But I would say all of us should focus a little bit more, or re-focus on these issues”* (Interview 5: 10)

The report from the United Nations Human Rights Council on local governments and HR identifies particularly lack of political will, as well as economic constraints and institutional capacity as challenges for local government when it comes to their HR work. From a round table session in 2016, at the RWI, where representatives from local governments and NGOs in the Nordic countries were gathered, the benefit, or added value, of approaching local

governance from a HRBA was raised as a concern as well. It was discussed how the HR discourse was not necessarily perceived as relevant to the work of many local practitioners as it is still perceived, mostly as international law, with little relevance to the practical work of public employees in the municipalities. Kjærø further describes how the perception, particularly in Northern Europe, is that people “per definition knows their rights”. This however, is clearly not the case, and even if they do, they would not know where to turn if they felt that their rights were being violated (Interview 1: 33). The UN report also identifies lack of sufficient knowledge about HR amongst people in local governments (para 34). Almost as a response to this realisation, the way HRE is considered today, Kjærø says, is that emphasis is much more about training officials, and making policy-makers understand their HR obligations, rather than viewing it as a bottom-up approach and reaching out to regular people, prevailing a notion of a top-down approach to HR implementation.

Grigolo suggests that “once human rights start a process of institutionalisation inside the local government, the local government will acquire a stronger control over them” and that “It can be argued that local governments appropriate and use human rights from the viewpoint of how much they enhance their capacity to govern the city.” (Grigolo, 2017). In this sense, when relying heavily on an approach centred around local governments and emphasising legal and political governance structures, the division of power remains unequally centred around normative powers. These then get to make decisions of who to include in the conversation, which rights to identify as HR, and how to allocate resources and distribute rights. And while the ambitions of creating accountable, transparent and inclusive governance structures are clear throughout definitions of the HRC, the methods and tools to securing inclusive and participatory process, in recent definitions are not always clear. As mentioned previously, there is a risk that the inclusion of non-governmental actors becomes confined to merely an act of consultation or tokenism. There is also the risk of the HRC becoming simply a label, from which local governments capitalise or that they indulge in cherry picking based on convenience (see e.g. Nantes and York in appendix 7 and Grigolo, 2017). Grigolo further explains:

*“I have seen lots of situations in which local governments, (...) are saying ‘oh yeah, human rights cities oh, the declaration has been signed’. And then you have the mayor going around saying ‘oh this is now a human rights city’, and even academics repeat and legitimate too much this institutional steps - which can be very important in symbolic terms to open up this space about human rights - but then, if it becomes just a space that is empty, you know, not very meaningful from the point of view of what we call the spirit of human*

*rights, something has to be done. We need to say no, as academics and also as practitioners, that no, that is not human rights. This is human rights” (Interview 4: 34)*

The centralisation around local governments, and the fact that researchers are increasingly interested in exploring local governments and issues related to decentralisation of policies, make the HRC initiative vulnerable to exploitation, through the process of symbolic violence, in the sense that it is being constructed within a false sense of consensus around the approach taken to the concept.

### ***5.3. Addressing contemporary critiques and the ‘crisis of authority’ through the human rights city***

As I have identified in the sections above, a shift of the conception of HRCs has occurred, as new actors have taken up- and appropriated the concept. While certain visions and focus areas remain the same, there seems to be a change in the way different actors approach the concept today as opposed to earlier, primarily in relation to the HR mechanisms that form the basis of the concept when utilised in practice. A shift towards greater institutionalisation of the HRC seems to have resulted in a broader – and at times more generic or loosely defined – methodology when it comes to facilitating participation, as it has become largely about establishing the grounds for local policy development, and implementation of broader international HR conventions and ratification of law at the local level. Addressing possible contradictions and debates in the historical emergence of the concept, this section highlights more explicitly how the HRC addresses the critiques put forward against the contemporary HR paradigm, and the crisis of authority, which Grigolo articulates.

#### ***5.3.1. Shifting the focus towards social, economic- and collective rights***

According to Castellino and Bradshaw (2015), some of the fundamental challenges of the contemporary HR paradigm relates to the issue of right bundles. They argue, first of all, that the overemphasis on civil- and political rights, as opposed to social and economic rights has “skewed content away from the kind of issues that are of central concern in terms of social inclusion” today (Castellino and Bradshaw, 2015: 467). They further argue that the primary focus on individual rights, rather than collective rights neglects the realities of culture and minority rights and continues to frame HR within a “Western laissez fair governance model” (Castellino & Bradshaw, 2015: 465). The various conceptions of HRCs clearly address both of

these critiques with a vision of creating equal and inclusive societies, free from discrimination and where everyone has rights to remedy and access to services. However, when it comes to practice, as described in the case studies I have analysed, the degree to which attention is paid to these different rights vary. As presented in section 5.1, especially the definition and work of the PDHRE seem to emphasise the need to re-focus the HR discourse towards social and economic rights and the development of new rights bundles, relevant to the local communities. Newer definitions, which tend to emphasise legal and political procedures or outcomes based on initiative and efforts coming from local governments, as explored in section 5.2, do not seem to focus, to the same extent on these rights explicitly. They instead seem to focus more broadly on all HR as set out in the UDHR and various guidelines and charters. One argument that is made in regards to social and economic rights in the European context, is for example that many urban policies are already social policies, which are mostly linked to socio-economic rights, and thus are easily reframed to fit within HR (Berg & Oomen, 2013: 28). This realisation, however, does not necessarily say much about the extent to which the HRC enhance such rights. Rather it seems to suggest the idea to simply reframe existing socio-economic policies within the discourse of HR, almost as a shortcut to frame initiatives in light of HR. Such approach could possibly enable local officials and practitioners to gain a better understanding of the value of HR at the local level, but it would not necessarily go beyond the level of recognition. On the other hand, there is a risk that, unless a HRBA evidently leads directly to better socio-economic service delivery, it could be deemed as yet another redundant management tool for many practitioners as well as the people inhabiting in the HRC who do not get better services out of being a HRC. This is the case, in particular in those contexts where working with socio-economic policies is already taking place, because the benefit of framing such work within a HR discourse is still uncertain or unclear for many practitioners. Even if some cities are explicitly focusing on social- and economic HR today, and even if activists' intentions in the long run might be to use the HRC framework to expand these rights, generally speaking, local governments still tend to over-emphasise civil and political rights (Berg & Oomen, 2013; Interview 3: 57). This could be due to a prevalent understanding of these rights as the *real* HR. But another element could be that, with its broader emphasis today, demanding local authorities to implement *all* HR into *all* policies, the work with HR becomes so comprehensive that many cities simply has to start somewhere, and it thus becomes a matter of convenience to start with civil and political rights. A third reason could be ideological, as emphasised by Arat (2008:

919), the enhanced emphasis of social- and economic rights, if not the whole HR paradigm, is understood to require a strong and interventionist public system, which collide with contemporary neo-liberal ideals.

Many HRC initiatives start out with a baseline study, conducting needs-based assessments or broader surveys and meetings, which helps identify priority areas for the local community and partners to include in the work (e.g. Bongo and Walewale or Edmonton in appendix 7). Depending on the context, different challenges are highlighted, but all throughout the cases reviewed, it seems that anti-discrimination initiatives, targeting the integration and protection of minority groups such as indigenous people, sexual minorities, religious groups or migrants and refugees, are often identified as key priorities for the HRC. As such, campaigns and trainings are often initiatives utilised to decrease discrimination of certain vulnerable groups. At the same time, the cultural and historical context of cities are often utilised to frame HR initiatives as a process of healing divides of the past and create social cohesion across differences (e.g. Musha in Rwanda or Bihac in Bosnia, appendix 7). This approach is particularly prevalent in the cases embracing the PDHRE framework. It is argued that: “An effective culture of human rights becomes the defining quality of a community, making it inclusive and providing it with a sense of shared purpose and future.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 38). Whereas anti-discrimination initiatives are a general focus area across the conceptions of HRCs, there might be a tendency today to rely on legal and political notions of equal treatment on the basis of individuals, again highlighting civil- and political rights, instead of affirmative action and a notion of equity. This point towards a reliance on what Woodiwiss conceptualises as the major tradition in the way of understanding HR. Relying too extensively on a legal approach to HR implementation can, according to Castellino and Bradshaw, result in a less inclusive process, as vulnerable groups in societies rarely have access to participate in such very formal procedures. In the following section, this will be the focus point, as I am discussing more concretely how Woodiwiss’ conception of a major and minor tradition of human right further influences how HR might be perceived in various conceptions of the HRC.

### *5.3.2. Re-appropriating the human rights city as a tool for social mobilisation by moving beyond the scope of the legal approach*

Several of the sources I have relied on throughout the analysis support Castellino and Bradshaw in the critique of the over-reliance on legal advocacy and the extensive efforts of generating

legislative processes as a step to formalise the HRC within the frameworks of international HR law. Not only are such legal procedures of seeking justice often not available to vulnerable groups, but the language of such approach is also not very accommodating to local interpretations of how to work with HR in practice by non-lawyers. With its emphasis on legal procedures, the contemporary HR paradigm has also been identified through its *naming and shaming* approach which, instead of providing effective solutions, “often result in confrontations and contestations, usually between states and civil society, resulting in subsequent adoption of defensive postures by states and a failure to derive and focus on implementable solutions.” (Castellino and Bradshaw, 2015: 467). Relying too heavily on a predefined international legal framework, and simply downscaling responsibility from the state to local authorities, would risk re-producing a framework that is criticised for not resonating with the lived experience of people, and which is criticized for being largely exclusive and not equipped to develop creative and collaborative solutions to concrete HR challenges. As such, it is argued that “If human rights are not translated to local problems and solutions in the city, it becomes harder to implement. There is a need for translation of human rights in order to make it more relevant to the own territory, be it either on a political level, or on a civilian level.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 54). The initial conception of HRCs was exactly developed with this in mind, and as an attempt to root HR in the language and cultures of local communities. Unfortunately, the pursuit of externalising the concept and empowering local authorities to take a central stand in a new glocalised international governance structure, means that the language and practices of the HRC today, to some extent, prevail to rely on legal approaches put forward by the elites. A risk in this sense is that the human right city will cease to be a meaningful and usable tool to the realisation of HR, as the direct relevance of it, in the day-to-day practices of both local government and local communities, become increasingly unclear as the concept expands.

According to Pimple, the articulation of HR as a legal concept is exactly one of the problems with HR today. HR, he argues, has been captured, or co-opted, by lawyers, which means that it, as a framework, has largely lost its transformative potential as a process of “mobilising people, to bring about change in their own situations and in those situations that govern them.” (Interview 2: 28). Re-confirming this point, Grigolo argues that from a legal perspective, local governments have always been perceived as having certain competences and powers to implement HR, but that the tendency has been to see a strict correlation between how



a local government acts within, and in accordance to, the international HR context. He argues that it almost becomes “more about checking the state of human rights rather than actually seeing how human rights work more concretely.” (Interview 4: 14). This is very similar to the critique posed by Castellino and Bradshaw when they problematize the role of the state as the primary liable actor, and how the international HR institutions have come to play a role primarily as monitoring bodies that apply a naming and shaming approach towards the state. If local governments come to play the role of the state in localising HR, there is a risk that civil society comes to play a marginal and monitoring role instead of a more active role as co-creators of the HRC.

There is also the risk, when relying heavily on local governments, that in the end they choose to reject the need for a concept all together. This seems to have been the case recently at a high level meeting in Vienna where there was a discussion amongst various city representatives and practitioners about what a HRC is. According to Starl, this discussion was over very quickly because “as they [the city representatives] say, it doesn’t matter for us, whether there is a concept or not. Important is that we base our politics on respect, and promotion for human rights” (Interview 5: 16). This notion erases the relevance of the HRC concept all together and with it, its prospects for a deliberative approach, adopting instead a simpler language of HR and local governance where it becomes all about policy development and not about empowerment. Starl, in this way directly emphasises the important role of researchers in reminding practitioners and policy makers about the importance of concepts:

*“politicians, they have no time to think too much about these things. So it's important to have a kind of task sharing and uhm, if it's reflected by you for example, then we can sort of take it up, and we can package it into packages, which can be taken up by politicians and to be implemented by them. Because usually concepts and things that are very systemic issues, they have no time for. Especially at the local level they have no time.” (Interview 5: 24)*

For Grigolo, who in his work has prevailed much of the initial definitions from the PDHRE, the added value and the potentials of the HRC are, essentially, directly linked up to the prospects of people getting a direct sense of ownership over HR, and for this it is important not to rely on a top-down approach:

*“it is that level of appropriating of human rights, you know, by people and for people, that is the added value of this idea. And I think it is becoming increasingly important and strategic, because what we are seeing is actually, in a sense a situation where people are becoming indifferent to human rights. (...) It is, basically, the idea that unless people really appropriate human rights for themselves, they [human right] will die.” (Interview 4: 32)*

The HRC concept should thus not necessarily be based on an international perception of what HR are, but rather on local practice. Grigolo argues in this sense also that this is exactly where sociology as a discipline becomes useful in transcending the experience that:

*“it doesn’t really matter what the international human rights framework is saying, about a particular problem as far as, (...), local governments and people’s behaviour in the city, is actually aligned with some kind of you know, human decency in a sense” (Interview 4: 14)*

In this way, what becomes important is “that people and local governments learn to reflect upon their actions on the basis of the values of HR and it becomes less important whether those practices are exactly matching a particular convention or a particular document” (Interview 4: 14). Instead of validating HR through its international legal framework, Grigolo thus suggests that there is an increased realisation of the need to internalise HR, inherently as a way of life, and he claims that this is exactly what the HRC is, or should, still be about. If we understand *that*, “not only would human rights be rescued” but they would “become something meaningful for people” (Interview 4: 32). Grigolo further emphasises how this process could lead to processes of generating new ideas and concepts about what HR are, breaking the monopoly of having them being bundles of rights granted from above, which leaves the local context to simply being a space for implementation rather than a space for co-development and ownership.

### *5.3.3. Politicising the human rights city*

The general critiques posted against the legal approach to HR are in line with other critical sociologists who argue, that the practice and implementation of HR is, inherently, a political process and a constant negotiation of power. However, the recognition of the political nature of HR is contested and the articulation of HR as an instrumental- and legal concept, free from political or ideological interference, continues to be prevalent within what Woodiwiss conceptualises as the major tradition of HR.

The understanding of HR, within the major tradition, seems to be particularly prevalent in relation to the rising articulation of HRCs as relying on a HRBA. As described previously, this approach is articulated as a normative framework for implementing international HR conventions, laws and charters at the local level through local governance structures. Such understanding is also supported by Kjærsum, who argues that HR should be detached from political ideology and particular economic approaches. He elaborates, in relation to a presumed controversy over the more politically left-winged concept of the rights to the city, that:

*“(...) from a human rights perspective we need to be careful, but that is of course also the limitation of human rights. And it is not that human rights can solve all problems. There are so much to be left for the political spectrum and political decisions and different points of views of where do we want to go. So, the human rights city in a way, its a more limited approach, than the right to the city approach.” (Interview 1: 23).*

Grigolo on the contrary, argues that there might be a need to re-politicise HR, recognising that state governments, as well as many local authorities today are moving strongly to the right, which means that there is a possibility that “the whole thing [human rights discourse and norms] collapses” (Interview 4: 32). In his writings, Grigolo (2017) thus also highlights the paradox of having public powers being simultaneously the guarantors and potential violators of HR. As such he also confirms Woodiwiss’ argument that it is necessary to rethink HR to work in today’s context, which is significantly different from the time within which they were articulated through the UDHR. He suggests that the HRC could be “a city which is organised around norms and principles of human rights” but he refrains from tying the definition to international HR or HR as laid down in international treaties (Grigolo, 2017). To address the crisis of authority of HR, Grigolo suggests that we have to “re-assert the connection between human rights and people” but that it is vital that in this process, “we re-humanise people through human rights” (Interview 4: 34). Re-emphasising the role of HR learning and education at the local level, might be a way to bring back some of the transformative potential of the HRC by reinstating the importance of empathy and developing a set of collective moral values around HR. The notion of bringing back the role of HR learning in today’s conception of HRCs is thus the focus of discussion in the next section.

## **6. Discussion: Re-emphasising human rights learning in today's human rights city**

While the critique of the articulation of a HRBA has already been discussed in section 5.2.4, reaffirming the importance of critical HR learning into the contemporary conception of HRCs, is here suggested as a way to address some of the limitations and critiques of the contemporary HR paradigm. The argument I make, with support from the interviewees, is that by enabling regular people to engage more actively in the realisation of their own HR, they are able to engage in the process, which Benhabib describes as *democratic iteration*. The re-emphasis on HRE is important as a way of facilitating this engagement, because it takes an educated civil society to participate in public argumentation, countering prospective problematic discourses or practices by increasingly strong neo-liberal voices from the business community or populist and authoritarian voices from within certain governments. It is clear from my analysis, that local authorities have varying degrees of interests and capacities when it comes to working with HR, and local authorities are not necessarily motivated to promote activities that could decrease their ability to govern or control, unless they are explicitly pressured to do so. It has also been evident, through the case studies and literature reviews, that political commitments to HR, and the HRC concept, at the local level – but increasingly also at national level – are very dependent on election cycles, and who is in power. Shifts within local governments can thus have a great influence on commitments to the HR. In such scenario it is important that civil society is capable of engaging in negotiations, apply pressure and take on responsibility when necessary, to secure accountability. As such, the HRC, approached from a learning and community development perspective, as conceptualised initially by the PDHRE, is, not only relevant in developing countries, where relying on local governments and formal institutional frameworks is not an option. It is equally relevant in highly institutionalised or technologically developed countries, which today are subjected to new social risks and where people and civil society is increasingly finding it difficult to engage with and access normative powers. In the Nordic welfare states for example, the underlying assumption that *the system* is the caretaker and guarantor of all rights and services has proven increasingly difficult to uphold with massive restructuring of societies, as a result of globalisation. Approaching HR from a learning and community development perspective, in line with Woodiwiss' notion of the minor tradition of HR, could be a way to re-engage people, addressing feelings of disempowerment, which are preventing people from

actively seeking influence in decision making processes. Re-establishing a sense of collective responsibility for developing locally confined understandings of human right bundles, and coming together around the moral values and empathy, fostered through HR learning, could possibly challenge the sense of fatalism in societies otherwise influenced by high levels of individualism. In this way, what I am suggesting is to reconsider how HRE and learning become a more integrated mechanism in today's conception of the HRC concept, and the HRBA. While Kjærsum argues that it has always been a challenge to get the two mechanisms (the HRBA and HRE), to talk to each other in the past, he emphasises the potential of such suggestion:

*“I think it [human rights education and PDHRE methodology] falls completely within [today's agenda], (...). This local engagement and local ownership to human rights, I think that is also where the human rights city movement, and the local communities have an enormous strength in, in you could almost say, in rescuing our democratic societies, by re-engaging people in decision-making at the different levels, at the local level. We can see now, (...) that trust in local government structures are slowly raising whereas the trust in national structures are declining. So there may be something on the move here, that cities are realising that they can, by engaging people, and engaging them from an outset of some key values, can help to re-gain trust in our democracies,”* (Interview 1: 14)

Davis further emphasises that she does not see the two approaches as mutually exclusive. When asked about how PDHREs methodology fits within today's HRC work, she reflects about her own experience from the US:

*“I think it's completely necessary, so I think it fits well in that sense. You know I got the sense from a conference a couple of years ago that there was some tension that members of that group [PDHRE] felt about a more governance focused agenda. But I don't see that as being a real tension, you know. It's different aspects of the same project as far as I can tell.”* (Interview 3: 6)

She argues that the demands for HR claims, articulated by civil society, require a response from authorities, which inevitably makes it a governance question about balancing resources and making certain trade-offs. In this sense she highlights that there are hard questions about priorities that need to be made through governance structures, priorities that need to be weight “in a fair way, that is transparent, and which provide access to participation. She simultaneously highlights the ambiguous realisation that you are not going to have a governance structure that is able to give everyone all the rights in the city that they want (Interview 3: 47). She also emphasises that it is very much about the “nitty gritty” of figuring out exactly how these

various rights and policies should look like that is important in terms of accountability in the end (Interview 3: 45). In this sense, she places emphasis on the interlinkages between distributive and procedural justice. However, by emphasising the aspect of procedural justice, it might be possible to enhance participation from civil society in these governance structures, making the trade-offs resonate better with local understandings of HR claims and enhancing the level of participation. However, Davis questions if it is in the interest of non-lawyers to really dig into such details (interview 3: 45). At the WHRCF 20217, I participated in sessions where experiences with participatory budgeting from Madrid, and testing's of online participatory governance platforms were shared and discussed as examples of ways to enhance more deliberative and direct democracy. Local South Korean high school students for example, had made projects looking into how such initiatives worked and how they could be improved to fit specific societal structures in South Korea. They presented such work at the conference, actively giving these young people a platform for engagement. Starl also emphasises that HRE ought to be a vital pre-condition for even beginning to talk about a HRBA. While he recognises the picture drawn by Kjærum, that it has been difficult in the past to bridge the two mechanisms, he also emphasises that there should not be a competition between them. He emphasises that, engrained in the HRBA, there ought to be an explicit commitment to facilitate or provide for HRE, which is currently not always the case (Interview 5: 22). As articulated in the quote in section 5.2.4. he thus agrees with my analysis, recognising that there is a need today, to reinstate the relevance of HR learning. Davis argues in that sense as well that, because of the close proximity between people and local governments, and because it is often that level of government, which is directly responsible for social and economic rights, there is a real potential in responding to some of the critiques against the HR paradigm through such processes. Davis argues that if there is a strong civil society, organised around HRE, as well as responsive and transparent local governance structures it is the ideal situation to respond to the claims about the illegitimacy of HR (Interview 3: 65).

## **7. Conclusion: Progressive potentials of human rights cities**

This thesis contributes to existing literature by explicitly focusing on the need to bridge the gap between former and contemporary conceptualisations of the HRC as a way of breaking the

monopolisation of the concept which section 5.2 suggest is in the making. The thesis does this by analysing the historical transformation of the concept, on the basis of its usability to confront what has been described as, a crisis of authority in HR, and by emphasising how the HRC could potentially address some of the most prominent critiques against the inclusiveness of the contemporary HR paradigm. Through a critical review of two compilations of secondary case studies, academic studies, official reports and expert interviews, the thesis has identified a shift in the way the HRC is conceptualised today as opposed to earlier, relying more consistently today on a HRBA which centralises local authorities as the primary liable and accountable actor. As such, over the last 20 years, the HRC concept has developed from being the brain-child of the founder of the PDHRE, Shulamith Koenig to becoming an emerging global concept, activated by a variety of actors and increasingly externalised as part of an attempt to strengthen local governments position in the global governance system. As oppose to actively engaging civil society as co-developers of the HRC, through participatory bottoms-up community development processes – which was the initial approach promoted by the PDHRE – such approach often instead takes a more top-down approach, which risks minimising civil society’s engagements with the concept to become merely a matter of consultation or monitoring. The thesis explores how this development is caused, partly due to PDHREs inability to professionalise its activities, and strengthen their strategic vision of the HRC, as a way of life, but also because new stronger actors have appropriated the concept in accordance with their own agendas. This has sometimes been done without necessarily familiarising themselves in depth with the methodologies promoted by the initial definition. As the aim of the thesis initially was to understand how HRCs could potentially be utilised as a way to address an emerging sense of disempowerment felt by people today – and in the process bring back legitimacy to a HR paradigm under severe pressure – this development is concerning. Because there is an almost unanimous agreement amongst actors today that the local level is vital in terms of HR implementation, the concept has become a popular subject, picked up by both academics and high-level practitioners. Their attempts to institutionalise and externalise the concept, means that today it appears as part of a dynamic, but elitist, conversation, where it is being discussed as one out of many solutions and ways to approach urban challenges. This, in return, unfortunately, risks in the end to decrease the concept's progressive potential as a practical tool for local communities, social movements, civil societies and even local governments. This is because externalising the concept seems to demand a certain generalised discourse, which these

actors are not necessarily accustomed too or find useful, making the concept seem less approachable. This means that the concept in itself seems to have come to mean more to academics and high-level practitioners, than to local governments themselves, who might not be so concerned about framing their practices within a specific conceptual framework. To re-establish its relevance on the ground and bring back some of its progressive potential, it is thus suggested in the discussion that there might be a need to reinstate the role of critical HR learning in today's conceptualisation of the HRC. This should be done as a way to bring back agency to civil society and as a way to re-claim the HR discourse as not just a legal discourse, but a social justice discourse, creating a common sense of collective empathy around the values of HR, understood in their local social contexts. So instead of trying to conform local governments to speaking the language of international HR law, detaching such institutions further from local populations, it is suggested to conform the HR discourse to get closer to local communities and their way of life, also embracing the notion of cultural relativism by enabling alternative conceptions of human rights bundles.

By establishing the connections between the two mechanisms; *HRE* and HRBA as different foundations for building HRCs, the thesis activates its theoretical foundation in critical sociology by connecting the two mechanisms respectively with Woodiwiss' distinction between the major and minor tradition of HR and the different generations of critical theory. Identifying the distinctions in the ways HRCs has been conceptualised differently enables a reflexivity towards the way the concept is being utilised today, which the thesis identified was not necessarily present before. This realisation provides grounds for studying further, the interlinkages and prospective conflicts between working with these two mechanisms at the local level as it was identified that they have been difficult to combine in the past – possibly exactly because of the difference in the way HR is perceived through different disciplines, traditions, practices and as ideology.

For further studies, it would also be relevant to look more into the geographical shift of where HRCs are conceptualised today as opposed to earlier. While the thesis, on the basis of available literature, does suggest that there has been a shift, also in this regard, towards increasingly conceptualising HRCs within a Global North context, this needs to be further investigated as also reflected upon in section 4.2.2. In the city of Bandung, in Indonesia, for example, there appear to be interesting developments going on, as the city announced itself a HRC in December 2015 with the development of its own charter (Human Rights City Center,



2016). This work has been led by an actor called The Association for International Human Rights Reporting Standards (FIHRRST), which is an association registered in Brussels that has developed a Human Rights City Centre initiative and website, based on experiences from Bandung. FIHRRST and the Human Rights City Centre website does not show up in connection to any of the other actors or in conversations or literature in any of the material I have analysed and thus it serves as a novel case for further investigation which I intend to pursue when visiting Indonesia in the spring of 2019.

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# List of Appendixes

## *Appendix 1: Themes and examples*

The table below show the most important themes identified throughout my analysis and coding and provide examples of how they are used in the case compilations. Each theme is structured in a way that it implicitly relates to, or address, one of the seven critiques from Castellino and Bradshaws article from 2015.

Section	Themes and critiques they address	Description and/or quotations for examples
1	<p><b>Civil- and political rights vs. social and economic rights</b></p> <p><b>Critique 1</b> The overemphasis on civil- and political rights rather than social and economic rights has skewed content away from the kind of issues that are of central concern in terms of social inclusion</p>	<p>“As human rights were perceived in this community as guarantees of political and civil rights only, much of the discussion focused on the place and local significance of economic, social and cultural rights. Groups began to see that human rights were interconnected and mutually supportive rather reflecting competing interests.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 104)</p> <p>“They see human rights as only civil and political rights and placing obligations only on the national government.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 111)</p> <p>“however, civil society became increasingly aware of the possibility of using the human rights framework to claim fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights, which rights had been eroded by the effect of neoliberal policies implemented by the dictatorship and not easily severed.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 110)</p> <p>“so far students have expressed in their own way the universal Declaration of human rights and three treaties, including, CeDAw, the Convention on the rights of the Child and the international Covenant on economic, Social and Cultural rights. (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 117)</p> <p>“for example, they took measures to monitor Article 12 of the international Covenant of economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR) dealing with the right to health.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 118)</p> <p>“Perhaps one of the most significant lessons learned was that women understood that health services should treat them with respect and consideration and that proper healthcare is not charity but their human right.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 119)</p>



<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Community and collective rights</b></p> <p><b>Critique 2</b> Focus on individual- rather than collective rights, neglect the realities of culture and minority rights</p>	<p><i>Community</i> appears to be used in two distinct manners, as an exclusive form, primarily evident from cases in van den Berg and Oomen (2013) and an inclusive form, primarily in the book describing the work of the PDHRE (Marks et al., 2008). The term is also often used in a generic manner, referencing to the <i>international</i> community or the <i>local</i> community without necessarily specifying further who constitute these communities.</p> <p><b>Community as an inclusive concept</b> “Adaptation of migrants to horizontalization of social relations requires, however, new skills and capacities of solidarity and community-building rather than blind obedience to authority.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 32)</p> <p>“An effective culture of human rights becomes the defining quality of a community, making it inclusive and providing it with a sense of shared purpose and future.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 38)</p> <p>“A human rights city is a community, all of whose members--from ordinary citizens and community activists to policy-makers and local officials--pursue a community-wide dialogue and launch actions to improve the life and security of women, men and children based on human rights norms and standards.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008, p. 45)</p> <p><b>Community as an exclusive concept</b> “Another current issue that the OND has been involved in concerns the Roma community in Barcelona. In an attempt to protect the rights of the Roma community of Barcelona, the ‘Consejo del pueblo Gitano’ project was created, which is meant for Roma entities to meet and discuss their human rights issues with the OND in an attempt to foster their inclusion in society.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 45)</p> <p>“An example of the positive effect of raising awareness was the perception and acceptance of the LGBT community. Since 2006, the city has been focusing on improving LGBT rights, which has had positive results until now ( Jacobson, 2013).” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 140)</p> <p>“The effects of this dramatic event are still visible today, as the Jewish community of York is still small and the city has no official synagogue (Khan, 2013).” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 152)</p>

		<p>“The main barriers are the disconnection between the academic community and the local community in the city, which is related to venue choice, and issues of funding and permanence.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 164)</p> <p>“A human rights city is a community, all of whose members--from ordinary citizens and community activists to policy-makers and local officials--pursue a community-wide dialogue and launch actions to improve the life and security of women, men and children based on human rights norms and standards.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 45)</p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Human rights education, learning and dialogue</b></p> <p><b>Human rights and culture + human rights to culture</b></p> <p><b>Participatory approaches</b></p> <p><b>Critique 3</b> Over-relies on legal advocacy as the only tool to gain rights</p>	<p>“The human right City of Rosario emerged out of a felt need for a deeper understanding of the duties and obligations related to human rights and on the premise that human rights cannot be exercised if they are not known.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 112)</p> <p>“Through interviews, a dialogue was established between the young boys and girls to discuss their needs with decision makers and public officials.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 118)</p> <p>“monuments, street names, public holidays need to reflect better a human rights based societal culture and contribute jointly with other public and private structures to a socialization into human rights related values, capacities and behaviors.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 38)</p> <p>“human rights education, learning and socialization are to create a culture of human rights, a human rights related ‘way of life.’” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 38)</p> <p>“A human rights based culture will provide the direction for societal development.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 38)</p> <p>“The resolution calls on the UN, “to increase its efforts to promote a human rights culture worldwide through education and learning.” How is this human rights culture to be created and fostered? The peoples movement for human rights learning (PDHRE), among other civil society initiatives, has endeavored for more than a decade to work with local communities to answer that question.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 42)</p> <p>“indeed, if people everywhere commit to building a political culture based on the right and responsibility of everyone to respect, ensure, and fulfill human rights for all, the space for abuse of public trust,</p>

		<p>violence against the physical and mental integrity of others, and exploitation of the vulnerable will contract.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 42)</p> <p>“During the celebrations that took place when Graz was named an EU Cultural Capital, ETC contributed a project on the “Culture of human rights” by holding numerous participatory activities focused on human rights.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 99)</p> <p>“it is a challenge to successfully enable the groups from different social sectors to debate, reach a consensus and commit themselves to building the foundation for a true human rights culture in the daily life of Rosario and to contribute to a process of cultural change based on the modification of attitudes.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 115)</p> <p>“The program operates on the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and responds to the urgent need to create a culture based on the knowledge, enjoyment and respect of the principles and values of human rights, conceived from a gender perspective.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 119)</p> <p>“The city is signatory to the 2000 European Charter on the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (ECSHRC) and therefore committed itself to the principles set forth by the Charter, such as the protection of the most vulnerable groups and citizens and the right to culture, education, and work (UCLG, 2012).” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 106)</p> <p>“Following the assessment of Keresztely &amp; Szabo (2006) of the way in which cultural groups can be distinguished, groups like the Roma constitute national minorities that stand opposed to the dominant groups, in this case native Hungarians. That stand in contrast to the main culture.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 115)</p> <p>“Currently, there is also a Roma exhibition going on in the Gothenburg museum, which is called ‘We are Romani people’ and is there to present their history, culture, and individuals (Kendall, 2013).” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 140)</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Human rights as law versus practice</b></p> <p><b>Critique 4</b> Over-rely on generation of</p>	<p>“With a history of opposition to dictatorship and authoritarian government, the members of human rights and other civil society organizations needed to develop new skills and strategies to initiate a dialogue with these new state institutions. Most membership human rights organizations grew out of opposition to the state. in most cases opposition entailed great risks and the political discourse of the organizations was one of critique and confrontation. from this</p>

	<p>legislative processes which often are not available to the vulnerable groups and does not work before mainstream participants choose to include these groups</p>	<p>perspective, engaging in dialogue with the state could be seen as treason to progressive positions or to human rights.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 111)</p> <p>“The city of rosario and activists in the human rights movement had to learn a difficult lesson about how to advance human rights locally, where formal remedies are not always available.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 111)</p> <p>“enacting change in representation and the dynamics of governance that will reflect the city’s demographics requires igniting the will of Rosario’s inhabitants, government officials and organizations.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 115)</p> <p>“equality and non-discrimination are protected by law but getting these laws recognized and acted upon by the general public will take much more in-depth human rights education.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 124)</p> <p>“Implementing international human rights law locally can therefore be considered a way to effectively reach the local population.” (van den Berg and Oomen, 2013: 27)</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><b>Human rights as problem solving</b></p> <p><b>Human rights as conflict prevention</b></p> <p><b>Critique 5</b> The use of human rights as a ‘naming and shaming’ tool</p>	<p>“Others shared Karamira’s idea that bringing human rights learning to all people in the community was quite simply the only way to draw upon the existing resources to restore the tattered social fabric that remained following the genocide.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 73)</p> <p>“in addition programs emphasizing the advances made through the national process of unity and reconciliation—ongoing since 1999—were incorporated into the Human rights city along with training in conflict resolution and mediation. A warning system of potential conflicts was set up to sensitize the members of the community to any threatening symptoms. In” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 77)</p> <p>“by offering various groups the opportunity to have an honest dialogue about the need that each group and each person has for achieving their human rights has led to a better understanding of tensions in the community and the circumstances that could spark a conflict. Where” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 78)</p> <p>“The experience of the struggle against the dictatorship and the use of human rights as an organizing tool and a vehicle for claiming justice are central to understanding the development of rosario as a human rights city” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 108)</p>

		<p>“Conflicts and tensions are common to the urban landscape. These areas of conflict and the way that they are resolved become the entry points for creating a human rights culture because they permit the dynamic reinterpretation of life and reframing of critical issues within a human rights framework.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 115)</p>
6	<p><b>Human rights based approach</b></p> <p><b>Holistic human rights framework</b></p> <p><b>Critique 6</b> The articulation of a ‘human rights-based approach’</p>	<p>“They embark on highly motivated voyages, led by local groups and organizations concerned with economic and social justice, and plan, reconstruct and advance their goals step-by-step, guided by the wisdom, norms and standards of the holistic human rights framework.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 10)</p> <p>“The steering committees in these cities were able to begin activities as soon as they integrated the holistic human rights framework into their perspective.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 92)</p> <p>“Creating the “basket” of the human rights initiatives gives these many endeavors a common space to find one another, know one another, build synergy and cooperation, partnerships and collaboration, and define and pursue common goals within the holistic human rights framework.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 133)</p> <p>“These seminars grounded community-based facilitators in the holistic human rights approach.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 134)</p> <p>“Thinking of individuals as rights-holders helps identify where the problems are. This encapsulates the <b>analytical</b> stage of the process, where priorities are set within an HRBA.” (RWI 2018: 3)</p> <p>“The background logic is that the failure of many good projects, be they regarding environment, climate change, or human rights, is due to the absence of long-term political commitment. In response to that, n HRBA to local governance contributes to better public services, better governance, lower levels of corruption, and consequently a higher level of trust.” (RWI 2018: 8)</p> <p>“Recognizing that human rights city is an urban community that applies the human rights-based approach to urban governance” (WHRCF 2014: 1)</p>
7	<p><b>Human Rights as Local governance</b></p> <p><b>Critique 7</b> Over-emphasising the state as the</p>	<p>“enacting change in representation and the dynamics of governance that will reflect the city’s demographics requires igniting the will of Rosario’s inhabitants, government officials and organizations.” (Marks, Modrowski and Lichem, 2008: 115)</p>

	primary liable actor results in missed opportunities in terms of holding other actors accountable e.g. the corporate sector	
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## *Appendix 2: Template for expert interview consent form*

### **Consent to take part in**

**research:** Master thesis on Human

rights cities by Sofie Viborg Jensen

Lund University, Department of Sociology,  
2018

- I, \_\_\_\_\_, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time during the interview or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within a week after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I understand that extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis directly and that I have been offered the chance to review any such direct representation of my contribution, in context of the final text, with the option to clarify, comment or ask for the quotes to be removed, should I feel misrepresented by the context.
- I understand that due to the nature of the research, it is difficult to fully conceal my identity as well as the identity of people I might talk about during the interview and that my full name and affiliation will be enclosed in the final thesis either in-text and/or listed in an appendix.
- I confirm that what I say during the interview will in no way harm individuals referenced too during the interview.
- I understand that signed consent forms, interview guide and original audio recordings will be retained in a folder accessible only via log-in by the researcher, for the specified period from the day of the signed consent form and a year forward, after which the researcher will delete the material or present a new consent form for the continuous storing of the information.
- I allow the re-use of information disclosed during the interview, only after being consulted and presented with a new consent form representing the new context within which the information will be used.

**Full Name of Participant**  
Occupation of participant

*Signature of research participant*

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Signature of participant

Date

*Signature of researcher*

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher

Date



## *Appendix 3: Example of Expert Interview Guide*

### **Interview Guide: Morten Kjærum**

- Go through consent form
- Confirm that he has read abstract or read it allowed
- Describe frame for interview and estimated time frame

RWI is a rather new actor when it comes to working with human rights cities, and it is my understanding that it is something that has become a priority area for the institute as part of your arrival as the new director of the institute in 2015 and the development of the inclusive societies theme. You have previously held prominent positions in human rights organisations and agencies and I am therefore interested to know

*1. When you were first introduced to the idea of human rights cities?*

Doing research on the topic now, one of my clear limitations is the availability and access to local knowledge from outside of the Anglo-Saxon countries. This forms an impression that the work on human rights cities has developed into a rather confined field today, but on the other hand it is my impression that many things are also happening around the world that is just very difficult to gain access to and study remotely either because they are not reported on or because the human rights city agenda have become centralised around certain key actors.

*2. Where do you see the developments of human rights cities take place today?*

*3. As a global human rights institute, working with different stakeholders and layers of governments around the world, how do you see RWI position itself in the future in the continuing work on human rights cities?*

I have previously heard you emphasise, that for you it is about reaching the governmental level closest to the individual

*4. Do you see the conception of human rights cities as a tool in this regard?*

Trying to construct a map of actors engaged in the work on human rights cities, an actor that keeps coming up – especially as a historical reference - is the **Peoples Movement for human rights learning**, formerly known as the Peoples Decade for Human Rights Education)

*5. Are you familiar with their work?*

If no:

The PDHRE is an NGO established in 1989 by Shulamith Koenig. They have initiated human rights education in more than 60 countries around the world and in the late 90's they were the first to conceptualise the vision of

human rights cities, as community-based initiatives for human rights learning and *human rights as a way of life*. Their work is based on critical pedagogics and a mission to empower individual and communities to become human rights duty bearers while also empowering them to construct and voice human rights claims based on local need assessments.

6. *How would you say that their methodology of relying on participatory community development, and 'Human Rights as a way of life' fits with today's agenda of localising human rights into the local level?*

When looking at their organisation, their board is full of high level UN officials and academics from all over the world. Thus it surprises me that when I try to seek knowledge about the organisation, very little substantial knowledge is available on their organisational structure or on their recent activities.

7. *Do you know anything about their participation in forums today?*

Their methodology has been to work also very much in communities such as urban slums or poor neighbourhoods in places with limited access to formal institutions and legal frameworks or in emerging democracies. This is evident from a 2008 book which describes their work in cities for example in Ghana and Mali. What is interesting is that it has proven difficult to access contemporary knowledge on these areas – again probably due to the proximity between me and the location, but maybe it also bears witness to something related to their theory of change. I am interested to know:

8. *Do you know of anywhere where the human rights city concept is utilised in such context today?*
9. *Where do you see the greatest potential of utilising the concept of human rights cities?*

Through my research, I have come to understand a perceived controversy over the term of *right to the city* in the discourse around human rights cities. I remember this to be a discussion amongst RWI staff at the WHRCF last year as well and seemingly it is because, some actors, especially actors from Northern Europe, consider the term “too radical” while it is a concept embraced by many other actors. Realising that *the right to the city* is in fact the first article of the European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City, the controversy over the use of the term seems counterintuitive.

10. *Is this controversy something you recognise from your own experience of engaging globally and locally with actors on the topic, and if so, why do you think the concept is perceived problematic in this way?*

## ***Appendix 4: Interviewee Profiles***

### **Interviewee 1: Morten Kjærum**

Morten Kjærum, Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, an International Human Rights Institute with headquarters in Lund, Sweden but with mandate to operate in more than 40 countries. Kjærum was the founding Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, and the first director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency

<http://rwi.lu.se/staff/morten-kjaerum/>

### **Interviewee 2: Minar Pimple**

Minar Pimple, former Executive Director of the PDHRE from 2003-2006, where he run the Human rights city Program with the UNDP. He was the Regional Director of the UN Millennium Campaign for Asia Pacific. Currently Pimple holds the position as Amnesty International's Senior Director for Global Operations. Pimple founded and ran, for 20 years, the Indian organisation Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action. Pimple also worked for Oxfam, of which he is a Founding Chair.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/about-us/secretary-general-and-senior-leadership-team/>

### **Interviewee 3: Marth Davis**

Martha Davis, Professor of Law and Associate Dean of Experiential Education at Northeastern University School of Law in the US. Professor Davis is an appointed member of the Massachusetts State Advisory Committee of the US Commission on Civil Rights. She was the distinguished chair of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Fulbright) at the RWI in 2015-2016. Professor Davis is one of the editors of the 2016 publication on the rise of human rights cities which is referenced substantially throughout the thesis. Much of her work is focused on the topic of bringing human rights home, including co-editing a three-volume work chronicling on the US human rights movement and editing a law professors' blog on US human rights.

<https://www.northeastern.edu/law/faculty/directory/davis.html>

### **Interviewee 4: Michele Grigolo**

Michele Grigolo, Dr. and Senior Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University in the UK. Grigolo is a sociologist working particularly on the development of public sociology on issues related to human rights and the city. Grigolo has worked with human rights cities since 2004. Grogolo is one of the editors of the 2016 publication on the rise of human rights cities and has also contributed to other books and published articles in journals, particularly on the work of cities in the US and Barcelona.

<https://www.ntu.ac.uk/staff-profiles/social-sciences/michele-grigolo>

### **Interviewee 5: Klaus Starl**

Klaus Starl, recently appointed Director of the ETC in Graz and the head of the human rights Council in Graz. Starl is a high-level practitioner who has worked with human rights cities since the early 2000's

as the project manager of the human rights city project in Graz. Starl has contributed to several publications on human rights cities, focusing on presenting case studies from cities in Austria. Starl has a background in economics.

<http://www.etc-graz.at/typo3/index.php?id=693>

## ***Appendix 5: Participatory observations in meetings and lectures***

<b>Date</b>	<b>What</b>
	<b>World Human rights city Forum 2017</b>
14.09.2017	Plenary session on Citizens, Participatory democracy and human rights cities
15.09.2017	Thematic Session on Social economic and community vitalization
15.09.2017	Meeting 4th Expert workshop on Local Government and human rights
15.09.2017	Meeting 2nd workshop of Local Democracy and Human rights city Asia Network
16.09.2017	Thematic session on Village Democracy
16.09.2017	Informal lunch with UCLG-CISDP representative
20.09.2017	Interview with representative from the Human Rights and Peace Cooperation Office in Gwangju
	<b>RWI activities</b>
28.02.2016	Nordic Round Table on HR Cities
16.06.2017	Workshop on HR cities at staff week
04.04.2018	Internal meeting on HR cities at RWI
9-11.11.2017	<b>Swedish Human Rights Days in Jönköping 2017</b>
	Panel discussion: Who will protect our human rights in the future?
	Panel discussion: MR i motvind – utmaningar för svensk diplomati och bistånd
	Panel discussion: How to work with Human Rights in the EU
	<b>Other</b>
19.02.2018	Lecture: Cities and Human Rights with Martha Davis, International week at the Law Faculty, Lund

## *Appendix 6: Changes to the first Gwangju Principle*

### **Principle 1: The Right to the City (in Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human rights city):**

- The human rights city respects all human rights recognized by the existing relevant international human rights norms and standards such as the United Nations Declaration of human rights and national constitutions.
- The human rights city work towards the recognition and implementation of the right to the city in line with the principles of social justice, equity, solidarity, democracy and sustainability

### **Principle 1: Human Rights Accountability of Local Government (In Gwangju (draft) Guiding Principles for Local Government and Human Rights):**

- 1.2. Local Government respects and implements all human rights recognized by the existing relevant international human rights norms and standards such as the United Nations Declaration of human rights and national constitutions and relevant laws
- 1.3. Local government works for the promotion of local democracy to ensure its accountability to the people in line with the principles of social justice, solidarity and sustainability
- 1.4. Local government participates in the UN human rights mechanisms such as human rights treaty body and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in coordination with national government.

*Appendix 7: Case compilation overviews*

PDHRE case compilation					
Ghana: Nima, Maambi and Newton, 2001					
Context Description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
Urban slum ainitially intended as temporary accommodation but now acts as permanent homes. Amongst the poorest in Ghana	Substantial HR claims, access to services and water; police brutality and violence, access to justice, water and sanitation, slum upgrading and access to housing and property rights, access to health, access to education, women’s rights	The Legal Resources Centre took on the initial role of initiating the HRC program with PDHRE and initiated HRE and opened up for developing steering committee with broad representation of chiefs, womens and youth groups, members of parliament, young layers and academics, and other CSOs. LRC provide space and logistical support.	LRC work with RAAS (Research, Advocacy, Advisory services). This became the frame of their role in HRCs. Initial capacity building at the community level and human rights education in communities; Attempting to bridge the gap between grassroot movement and their governance institutions on the ground and the national level gov LRS use a strategy called soliciting community-based organisations (CBO) asking local CSOs to join in HRE training for broad representation. Steering group representing these CSOs and more works with participatory approaches to problem solving where identifcaiton of problems, needs and strategies are identified to confront and engage in direct contact with government functionaries to pursue their interests. Recognising the need to work both through formal and informal structures trying to utilise the courts only as last resort by engaging in mediation and negotiations.	LRC provide a physical space for the community to engage and work strategically with HRE. Community Leaders Foru, for students, academics, community leaders and ordinary citizens to promote dialouge and knowledge charing; Meetings with police and local officials to confront issues of police brutality towards young boys.	Steering committee members lack of time for long-term planing; youth needs more training;

Ghana: Bongo and Walewale, became HRC in 2005					
Context Description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
Rural communities	Substantial HR claims, cultural practices of widowhood rites and female genital mutilation, early marriage and more.	Local communitiy groups representing HR activists, womens organizations and religious leaders asked the Legal Resources Centre to expand its work to these areas as well. LRC conducted research to map local knowledge on HR and good governance. HR learning was almost non-existing	^^trainings and introducing HR to community to establish grounds for identifying problems and needs	Alternative dispute resolution centre established to provide training and change the way ordinary community members sees themselves and itneract with local authorities; Establishemnt of a HRC office; Advocacy against degrading widowhood rites which was argued to be against te widows right to dignity. resulted in 2008 in an abolichment of the rites in the Bongo district. Bongo HRC also preassured local gov to focus on public health and it lead to pursue preassure at national gov. in bigger movement leading to advancing pro-poor national health insurance schemes for the community through extensive registration of people;	



Kenya: Korogocho, 2006					
Context Description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
Low income, informal urban settlement. Not recognised by gov. Divided into 9 vilages . Migrant communities with diverse cultural practices. Over 100.000 recidents. Big youth population	Substantial HR claims, Police harassment, domestic violence, child abuse, lack of education, malnutrition, lack of proper shelter and sanitation, maternal health issues, personal security, participation and decision making	With inspiration from Ghana; Youth initiative based on the work of the Miss Koch Initiative against violence against girls formed in 2001 by youth in Korogocho. Miss Koch is now a self-help group registered under the ministry of social services. The HRC was initiated at a two day HRE workshop for community leaders	Adding HR perspective and training to existing initiatives + adopting local methods; Local problem solving; capacity building; peace dialogue and facilitation strategies for peace building; Trainers of trainers initiative. Steering group with elders, community leaders of various ages, CSo representatives and religious org. united under the shared belief that "Knowledge is power". Steering group also engage in fundrasing and grant proposal writing to get access to better welfare services, but educaiton is emphasised as the most important for the group.	Community learning forums; Cultural approach e.g. Radio, music dancing; Culture centre; Street security guards and training of youth - initiative to confront violence and simultaneously get youth to become part of the solution instead of the problem; Womens committee for food distributions to HIV affected persons; De-centralised HR cafes at remote places for accesability; Investigating access to water and confronting corruption in the process of delivering water to community. Active in promoting fair elections and during violent uprisings at election time the communities were largely spared from violence because HRC group members peace dialogue and strategic planning.	Violence and uprisings threatens the stability but the HRC initiative seems to contribute positively.

**Rwanda: Musha, 2007**

<b>Context Description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Small community where recovery from the genocide was slow to pick up.	Substantial HR claims, extreme poverty other, violence, elevated rate of illiteracy, violence against women and children, child labor and prostitution, inadequate healthcare and discrimination.	initiative by Individual consultant from gov. from within PDHRE network inspired by the Mali case. PDHRE established local division as many say the need to work with conflict resolution at the local level in light of the violent history of the genocide. Greatly supportive local authorities.	HR community training; unify efforts through existing projects and methodology to be cost efficient; dialogue across social groups about; Good governance; HRC as link in the national process of reconciliation and development by local officials, without this support it would be difficult to move forward	trainings about rights of minorities and discrimination; training in conflict resolution and mediation; warning system of potential conflicts was set up; legal registration of birth;	extrem poverty, violence against women is still high. Unspoken tensions from history of violence are still unspokenly present and trust needs to be build.

<b>Mali: Kati, initiated 1997, official in 2000</b>					
<b>Context Description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
	Issues representing initiators interests? health, education, income disparity and employment	Initiated by rep from ministry of education linked personally to the PDHRE and established a PDHRE Mali branch. Working with local branches of high level INGOs like UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, Malian National Commission for UNESCO, the Canadian Embassy and the ministry of justice. Expanded to several areas in Mali with the ambition to make Mali a HR country. Implementation in Kati happened in coalition with broad societal representation and groups such as Unions, CSOs local gov etc. Support by mayor and local admin. 32 members, selected by the community formed the working committee	Longer process of developing local strategy as oppose to just replicating. Neighbour human rights committees holding workshops and trainings; Post-conflict resolution method used to deal with country heritage	Human right clinic open on market days started as a designated place for questions about human rights conflict mediation based on human rights principles; Interreligious collaboration and religious leaders are called to support HR; Community mapping with support from external consultants resulting in identification of health-risk areas around a local food market resulting in broader discussions on how to solve the issues together with local gov.	A women was elected as the head of the group which created problems amongst traditional leaders, and an advisory committee to the steering group was made where these older men could instead sit. Maintaining momentum is identified as a challenge.

<b>Austria: Graz, 2001</b>					
<b>Context Description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
University city with 250.000 inhabitants and a large student population	Needs of women, of children and youth, of persons with disabilities, of migrants, of the elderly and of socially disadvantaged people. Access to housing and employment for migrants	Initiated through passionate individual from ETC with PDHRE and local gov. As a result of a seminar on human security, human rights and human development	External outreach and capacity building of other cities and actors; Organises human rights learning seminars and workshops to support other human rights cities;	Anti-discrimination activities related to procurement; Business engagement and requirements set out; Laws under review; establishment of Human Rights Council in 2007; A 'culture of human rights' project, in relation to Graz as the culture capital of Europe (2003); Human rights walk through the city; Human rights prize - Human rights trail;	

<b>Bosnia: Bihać, initiated 2006</b>					
<b>Context Description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
100.000 populaiton mixed populaiton of religious groups	Issues represented by participants at the initial workshop:	inspiration from ETC and Graz + PDHRE. No municipal support. women's organizations, teachers' union, youth organizations, hospital workers, people with disabilities, children's rights advocates, war veterans, police employees, the roma minority, jurists, university professors and urban planners.	HR education and workshop; Training sessions in schools on minority rights as human rights	Human rights mapping of the city; Community forum on religious tolerance; Celebrate the international human rights day as a way to create human rights awareness; trainings on minority righs as HR; training sessions in schools	limited resources; internal conflicts in the sterring group

<b>USA: Washington D.C. Initiated in 2007</b>					
<b>Context Description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
City of great contrasts and disparity. International hub makes a challenge for local recidents	Lack of represtnation in political desisionmaking; violence and crime, poor quality of schools and educaiton	Started with youth involvement and a challenge posed by an international foundation to PDHRE about making it a HRC. In 2007 members of PDHRE began having meetings with educators, community groups, youth groups etc. Several conditions slowed he process: There was no partner initiating the idea so mapping suitable partners took a long time. Youths availability and long.term commitment. Regional Director of the American Friends Service	35 youth participants participated in a 3 day retreat to discuss HRE; youth priorities and program planning. HR was tought within the frames of what was identified as they key issues. Youth then selected three key issues to work further on: immigration, education and violence in the streets and discussed how they oculd be framed as HR issues especially by focusing on Social and economic rights. Youth began a program of dialouge around these three key issues with local leaders. The focus is on teaching youth about social, economic and cultural rigths as HR in this	Informaiton and outreach programs targeting communities with trainings and after school volunteer programs. Youth mentorship program to support youth in their attempts to pursue HR. Work in schools and integrating HR learning into service learning utilising student centred learning methods in lign with HR educaiton principles.	More difficult to establish grounds here than elsewhere. The HR language does not ressonate here as it does elsewhere. Wieved as civil and political rigths only. Rigts and opportunities for juridical and administratiove enforcement of rights are not framed with the HR discoruse specifically.

	Committee (AFSC) took charge finally.	contact can have wider impact across the country	
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Canada: Edmonton, 2002					
Context Description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
over 1 mil. People. Migration hub due to good job opportunities	The issues cited in a feasibility study included poverty and exclusion experienced by marginalized groups, continued use and perception of ethnic and racial stereotypes and the need for greater understanding and empathy to be exercised by the population of edmonton as a whole.	The human rights City concept was brought to edmonton by Walther Lichem, Austrian Ambassador to Canada from Austria and member of the PDHRE board of Directors, when he spoke at a human rights conference in edmonton in September 2002. In April 2, 2003, the initiative to make edmonton a human rights City took off, facilitated by the john humphrey Center for Peace and Human Rights (JHC).	Survey to identify key concerns; A series of focus groups were held to tap into the needs and ideas of citizens as to how the human rights City ought to function. Main suggestions from participants in the focus groups identified four main areas of need: (i) building and improving partnerships so that groups and organizations could enhance communication and cooperation around human rights issues; (ii) spreading human rights learning throughout the community and among organizations so that all citizens would know human rights and would become actively engaged in the human rights city; (iii) providing the opportunity and the space for those citizens who are marginalized and often “voiceless” to have their say in the planning and advocacy role in the hr City and , finally, (iv) providing physical and virtual space that will be the human rights City center and will testify to edmonton’s commitment to the program.	Surevey and focus groups to identify key concerns; Issues of concern for vulnerable groups are percieved more as issues of capacity building and empowerment than symptom treatment and building shelters merely. Engaging those affected in the solution making. Facilitators training programs. Community training through representatives from various local organisations. Celebration of the International Human Righths Day with rep from LGBTQ groups, aborigilan groups; youth at risj and disability groups. HR awareness at local art gallery; Annual HR city award was launched.	^^ + issue of people expecting fast and visible outcomes.

Argentina: Rosario, 1997					
Context Description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
Large economic and social hub. Capital of unemployment. First HR city in the world, established in 1997.	Indigenous people social exclusion and violation of basic human rights. Urban violence, environmental concerns	Civil society needed to develop new skills and strategies to initiate dialogue with authorities in new democratic state-institutions after the era of dictatorship was over. HR has high importance in national law after the dictatorship was abolished. HR city as part of the general democratisation process of the city and country where many CSOs and social movements were created. Debates to discuss urgent urban issues and learning the lesson of how to advance HR when formal remedies are not available. Initiator of HRC in Rosario was the Institute for Gender, Law and Development (INSGENAR) who saw the need to strengthen the link to other social movements through HR to promote holistic approach to HR. INSEGNAR was from the beginning affiliated with PDHRE. Steering group members consist of gov+non-gov representatives, academics from various institutions and disciplines, members of the police academy and other public and civil society agencies, and organisations.	Addressing misconceptions about what HR are and who is responsible but creating HR learning programs which identify obligations of each sector of society. Trainers of trainer approach for HR learning; explicitly focusing on integrating and including voices of women and indigenous groups in dialogue with policy makers.	Urban problem solving through a HR lens which gives merit to solve and prioritise issues in the city. Issues of displacement amongst sex-workers and sexual minority groups to a designated "red-light district" was stopped as it was based on others perception and concerns for property values which by the HRC was argued to be acts of discrimination. Plan of action reflecting the voices in the steering group. Training and capacity building. Police academy now have HR program as permanent content in their curriculum thus making the HR efforts self-sustainable. Competitions for primary school students about re-creating what HR meant for them and emphasising specific HR conventions important for children. Participatory monitoring of health initiatives; 300 women participated in writing a HR report denouncing violent abuse, sexual assault and torture which reached the media	Some officials in municipalities still see HR as something belonging to the international arena and only as civil and political rights.

<b>Brazil: Porto Alegre, 2004</b>					
<b>Context Description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Provins of Rio Grande do SulEconomically vibrant big city	the most critical issues facing the community were racial and gender discrimination, domestic violence against, women, children and elders, and police violence. The lack of parliamentary representation of women, black and indigenous people was felt to be a major obstacle to	Considered to have very favourable conditions because if its vibrant civil society which was also involved in developing the World Social Forum that was held in the city and where the rights to the city was a big thing. Progressive local government that favours participatory democracy. HRC initiative was initiated through a meeting between the director of a local feminist organisation and representatives from the HRC of Rosario	participatory budgeting was already installed and direct democracy initiatives; Information sessions and trainings to various groups in society;	Full-day learning celebration - or HR fair - with rep from various CSO and NGOs at the central market illustrating how HR was a central part of every day life. Learning sessions about the MDGs - connection HR to issues close to home such as water, security, clean air, access to health care and jobs. Essay competition for youth; Participated in the World Conference on Development of Cities in 2008.	Challenges of funding as HR was considered too abstract and others offered something more concrete in terms of life skills - impact of HR training was difficult to measure so funds were difficult to get. Collaboration with local gov became a challenge after elections that changed after which the idea was stagnating until 2006. Key NGO was not keen to continue and so the lack of a physical space for admin etc made it difficult to continue the work

European case compilation					
Spain: Barcelona,					
description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
International hub and big city with many org. working on HR.	Divide between the view of municipality rep and civil society sees as the primary role. Municipality: equality for groups having issues finding employment or equal opportunities in the group e.g. Migrants, minorities, LGBT groups.	Lead on developing the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City signed in 2000. Former Mayor Pasqual Maragall i Mirá (1982-1997) was the initiator of these activities. He served also as the president of the Council of Municipalities and Regions of Europe the president of the Committee of the Regions and as Vice-President of the International Union of Local Authorities which gave Barcelona its international outlook when it came to these priorities. One of the first cities to label itself a HRC and took up a leading role in international politics promoting the charter.	aim to create a city of rights where international rights become apparent at a local level. Concept primarily utilised by local gov- and municipality. Working from the jurisdiction of city council; early detection of HR issues and working with citizens are considered key. Three phases: develop HR services such as offices where citizens could come with complaints; Official recognition of HR framework and establishing of network; elaborating city regulations with regards to LGBT rights in 2004. Many different initiatives and not clearly one approach. International outlook and putting Barcelona on the map has been a key motivation. There is not a confined steering group or working group but multiple actors working with HR in various ways	Created network of Towns and Cities for Human Rights in the provinces around Barcelona; Signed the ECHR in 2000; LGBT council; Human Rights Observatory was created in 2008 developed out of several local NGOs and CSOs coming together to publish reports on the status of HR; office of non-discrimination and religious affairs office assist with clarifying prospective misunderstandings or HR violations. Religious tolerance promotion and trainings. Difficult HR documents are translated into easier language; Film festival; Diversity day aiming at educating young people about fundamental rights; ombudsman; Trainings, policy advice and research. Specific focus on services makes the HRC in Barcelona so successful on the ground. Financial crisis has refocused on rights to the city and rights to housing for example	Division between municipality and civil society in terms of how usable HRC is as a term. Not progressive anymore. Political parties commitment is part of determining a declining effort and prioritisation. BUDGET is key but it is decreasing! Difficult to measure impact and without visible results it is difficult to maintain political interest and commitment.



Austria: Graz, 2001					
description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
<p>Second largest city in Austria. Population of aprox. 300.000</p> <p><b>NOTE: only city mentioned both in this case study and the PDHRE.</b></p>	<p>Needs of women, of children and youth, of persons with disabilities, of migrants, of the elderly and of socially disadvantaged people. Access to housing and employment for migrants.</p>	<p>Initiated through passionate individual from ETC with PDHRE and local gov. ETC worked for strengthening HR networks and efforts and to develop reactions against HR violations. Historically the Bosnian wars and Mayors experience from the second world war had influence on the motivation. HRC initiative was a result of a seminar on Human security and more where ODHRE representative was present and made the suggestion. See also in text description. Graz did not fully follow the PDHRE as the steering committee in 2002 lost official sponsorship by the local gov. after which ETC took over the primary role of moving forward with the work. In 2007 the Human Rights Council was established, members are appointed by the mayor.</p>	<p>Institutionalisation and legal measures to create accountability; External outreach and awareness raising; ETC: capacity building of other cities and actors; Organises human rights learning seminars and workshops to support other human rights cities. ETC representatives tried to secure legal content in the speech declaring the HRC to secure accountability. <b>NOTE: authors of section refers to PDHRE as something that Graz signed. This contradicts with interview details where Klaus says that the collaboration with PDHRE was never official. Authors also seem to refer to the PDHRE as some kind of declaration in alignment with the ECSHR which is not the case.</b></p>	<p>Anti-discrimination activities related to procurement; Business engagement and requirements set out; Laws under review; establishment of Human Rights Council in 2007; A 'culture of human rights' project, in relation to Graz as the culture capital of Europe (2003); Human rights walk through the city; Human rights prize - Human rights trail; Awareness raising and campaign monitoring results in less discrimination. <b>NOTE: Human rights education is emphasised as taking up great significance. This however is not necessarily in alignment with my interview where Klaus who emphasises that the City is not strong on HRE but that ETC and others do try.</b></p>	<p>Local gov is more interested in working with other concepts and HR is not necessarily a key priority + HR education is not institutionalised as part of local gov regular procedures. Speaking too critically out against local gov. complicates processes and can influence the work negatively which puts limits on the work of the HR council. Media is difficult to work with and are portraying the work with HR in a negative way</p>

<b>Austria: Salzburg, initiated in the 1990's</b>					
<b>description</b>	<b>HR concerns</b>	<b>Initiation process and actors</b>	<b>Method/ approach</b>	<b>Special initiatives and results</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Small city bordering to Germany, was a refugee camp during WW2 and the Balkan wars. Student city. Historical city focusing on art.	Large refugee population and 22% of inhabitant are without Austrian citizenship. Integration and access to services by foreign citizens. Racism and discrimination against religious minorities.	The initiatives was NGO driven as an attempt to oppose political populist movements in the late 1990s. Became a HRC in 2008 by signing the ECSHRC. Creation of a "Round Table for Human Rights" in 2011 through a Platform of Human Rights which made the link to the HRC table.	Bottoms-up approach as one of the only recent examples. HR standards and discrouse is used in political debate; Round Table of HR with 13 citizens and experts which act in a consultational manner to the Municipality and in accordance with the platform (steering committee) when there are HR complaints or issues. Awareness raising in schools to create early awareness on HR amongst the children which will bennefit them later. Workshops and start-up campaigns to create awareness.	Platform for Human Righths and the round table for HR; Material targeting schools; Police show increased interest in HR due to workshops on anti-discrimination behaviour. Annual booklet publication on HR issues and debates over the last year including articles from UDHR. ROund Table won in national court on case of begging. Matrix to try to eliminate overemhasis on certain groups over others.	Local gov. is not willing to prioritise funds towards monitoring of HR. Future is unclear as initiativse are on very low budget or volunteer basis. Another issue identified is the overemphasis on one specific group instead of HR claims more broadly

France: Nantes					
description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
	Social inclusion and immigration as key focus areas. Environmental concerns and disabled persons.	Initiated the work in 2001 when establishing the Equality, Integration and Citizenship department from within the municipality Another institution is the committee for disabled persons. Permanent International Secretary for HR and Local Government (SPIDH) is relevant. Colonial history is important factor of how the work began as the city was the largest slave port in France the legacy sticks. Also the historical legacy of signing a document to end a religious war in 1598 is part of the legacy of self-identifying Nantes as a HR city. UCLG became the reference link rather than PDHRE	Emphasis on historical relevance of HR. Policies on integration and equal access for disabled persons. Working currently within a different framework "Inclusive cities" and does not want to follow HRC initiatives set out elsewhere. Inspired by Barcelona model and working with UCLG. Wants to become a model for other cities to follow.	<b>NOTE: it is emphasise din the study that no substantial results have been found through the study or looking through previous research on the municipality.</b> Local Gov work with projects specifically with migration and disability; Host the first World Forum on HR in collaboration with UNESCO, SPIDH and UCLG. Bi-annual festival that is perceived more as a marketing scheme. Ambition to make a broader HR network amongst other cities like in barcelona. Developing their own charter but it is not yet clear what it entails and the process is stalling under other work.	HRC is perceived as a marketing label and actors are reluctant to relate to the label anymore because of its association to PDHRE which is not considered in positive terms by participants in the research from the city. There is no specific budget allocated HR initiatives in local gov.

Hungary: Budapest					
description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
capital of Hungary, 20 % of all populaiton live here. Decentralise d structure inside the city		Municipality, Budapest Chance Nonprofit, the Equal Opportunities Office, and local, national, and international organizations. <b>NOTE: Does not self-identify as a HRC even though it signed the ECSHRC in 2000 so the city is labled a HR city by the researchers based on their working definition of what a HRC is</b>	HR approach stands in opposition to national gov policy. Extensive HR engageemt. Most of the work is project based. Equal opportunities" approach.	/	no self-identification as a HRC

Sweden: Goteborg					
description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
Large port city with 526,000 inhabitants. University city.	Exclusion and gentrificaiton, enviourmental concerns, issues of social fragmentation in the city due to socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods. issues or segrigation and unemployment.	<b>NOTE: Internal approach and has not declared itself a HRC or signed the ECSHRC. Still, it works with HR in substantial ways which is why its included as a case. The city is this labled a HRC by the researchers conducting the study even if it does not live up to their initial definition of what a HRC is.</b> Actors are national gov. local gov + university and to a lesser extend civil society. Municipality politisian contracted the University to seek advice on HR.	Top down objective of Sweden to have municipalities adopt a consious approach to operationalising HR in their work. Set out in action plan for HR for 2006-2009.	Focus on urban planning and creatung attractive inclusive neighbourhoods through a HRBA to the design process. Different units within the municipality to consider diversity and minorities or migrants within society to provide them with equal opportunities.	no self-identification as a HRC

England: York					
description	HR concerns	Initiation process and actors	Method/ approach	Special initiatives and results	Limitations
<p>York consist of a urban city with smaller vilalges which are also within administatio n. It is rather homogeniou s and traditional with the university as its progressive force. Student city, but they dont integrate beyond a "student bubble".</p>	<p>City council has five priority objectives prior to being a HRC: economic growthand creation of jobs, improvement of the transport system, stronger community cohesion, protection of vulnerable people, and protection of the environment. Low crime rate and fewer problems than across the UK in general. Low immigrant rate as housing prices are amongst the highest in the UK - minority groups are vulnerable and</p>	<p>Hostility towards HRA in general UK populaiton due to the way the media has positioned it and its use to "protect the wrong people" in anti-terrorism meassures. HR are associated with the rights of asylum seekers and terrorists instead of e.g. The elderlys right to diginity or disabled peoples access to services and so forth. HRA was suggestd replaced with a British Bill of Rights, emphasising the domestic relevance of HR. Professor Paul Gready, founder of the Centre for Applied Human Rights at York University initiated the HRC of York prohecy in the middle of this debate, inspired by PDHREs guidelines. Set up a steering committee with rep from main sectors of society such as local community groups for refugees, Amnesty internationals local division, local gov., police as well as pasionate individuals which set up a low key year long pilot HRC project as to not declair the city a HRC rigt</p>	<p>Activities happening in York are not nessesarily directly related to the HRC initiative. Fairness Commision focusing on fairness in the city; HR award set up by York based NGO - but it is no longer called HR award because social justice language and equality ressonated better with local actors. HR centre for applied HR at the unviersity has a protective fellowship scheme for HR defenders. HR educaiton occationally for police and civil servants. HRE prgorams at University offers HRE to schools in York. HRC trying to pull all these initiatives together. Approach is two-fold: 1) focus on organising events to create a different consiousness in the community through festivals, lectures and debates, workshops etc. which play into the local context famous for its public events and 2) promoting protection which attempt to create sympathetic enviorment by uniting several existing protection initiatives. In pactice the first approach is the most evident mechanism. The limited</p>	<p>HRC as umbrella to tie together various initiatives and enhance visibility. Festivals, lectures workshops.</p>	<p>HR language does not ressonate well and another vocabulary have been used focusing on fairness. City council is supporting other HR realted initiatives and is not supporting with monitary means due to severe budget cuts. City council supports could be percieved as marketing purpose. The University as primary initiateer and venue for activities can isolate the HRC initiative from regular citizens and vulnerable groups and risks making it an elitist initiative instead of a bootoms up aprpoch. "gap between town and gown". Founder-based initiative and personal network.</p>

	<p>isolated and experience cultural tension with other inhabitants. Inequality.</p>	<p>away. City has a history of social justice issues and citizenship lead welfare initiatives. HRC was set up with the mission to tell a different story about HR and thus create a new understanding of the relevance of HR in the local community. Key motive is also to get York recognised as first HRC in UK.</p>	<p>involvement of the city council seems to be deliberative to approach the initiative from a bottom-up movement attempting to establish ground in local community before engaging the council. However, it is still an elitist initiative due to the actors engaged in the steering group, though they could push a direction for more bottom-up work.</p>		
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*Appendix 9: Generalised changes in conceptions of human rights cities*

