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towards Habitat III
a gender perspective

sommario

towards Habitat III. A gender perspective /verso Habitat III. Una prospettiva di genere

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editorial

Reading the New Urban Agenda in a gender perspective

Antonio Acierno

In the last three decades the sustainable development has become the main topic of international discussion in urban planning and it has been defined in many ways. The first definition was given in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, according to which it is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This description refers to a wide range of objectives related to social, environmental and economic concerns regarding the rising decay of human and natural environment. Moreover, it focuses on the poor and the equity justice, at the present and for the future.

Before such definition of sustainable development, the *Limits to growth* report (club of Rome, 1972) fixed the international attention on environmental degradation and related problems of industrial model of growth.

In 1976 there was the first global summit, officially identified as the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, known as Habitat I, first of a bi-decennial cycle of conferences (1996, 2016), in which an international debate about these topics started (fig. 1).

The first conference (Vancouver, Canada 1976) produced a global report on the Human Settlements, Vancouver Declaration, in which many countries recognized the need to address the "uncontrolled urbanization" combining spatial planning with economic and social policies. As outcome of the conference, it was created in 1997 the United Nations Human Settlements Centre, forerunner of ONU-Habitat, focusing on the urbanization in developing countries.

In 1996 the second conference took place at Istanbul analyzing two themes: "Adequate shelter for all" and "Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world". These topics are related to the first conference with the added attention to the entire urban world and the strong urbanization process leading to a rising population living in towns and metropolises. In this second conference many problems were identified and many suggestions and principles were drawn to tackle the negative effects of urbanization, summarized in the Agenda Habitat, a *Global Action Plan,* composed of 241 paragraphs and over 600 recommendations. The five most interesting topics of the plan were: ensure adequate shelter for all; promotion of security of tenure throughout the developing world; support for vulnerable groups, especially women and the poor; provision of adequate and equitable access to basic urban services, and promotion of decentralization and good urban governance.

In these last twenty years up to 100 countries have enacted laws and regulations to improve housing conditions, however the funds invested in urban developments have been reduced. Many countries tried to adopt some elements of the Agenda Habitat in

their policies, however a criticism raised up about the large number of recommendations without a prioritization and the lack of a monitoring mechanism.

Anyway the influence of the Istanbul Habitat Agenda at global level was recognized in many important world summit acts, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000. The latter focused the attention on the poverty and the means to eradicate it from the urban areas and ensure a more sustainable environment.

The third conference - Habitat III - is to be held in Quito on 17-20 October 2016, in which all the members of the Assembly will make a step forward by defining the New Urban Agenda that represents not only a vision for the future but also a strong commitment to act in pursuing the objectives of a more sustainable urban realm. The New Urban Agenda defines a long term strategy for the next twenty years and offers a remarkable opportunity for national governments to address emerging problems, such as poverty, climate change, quality of urban life, defining a shared collective approach.

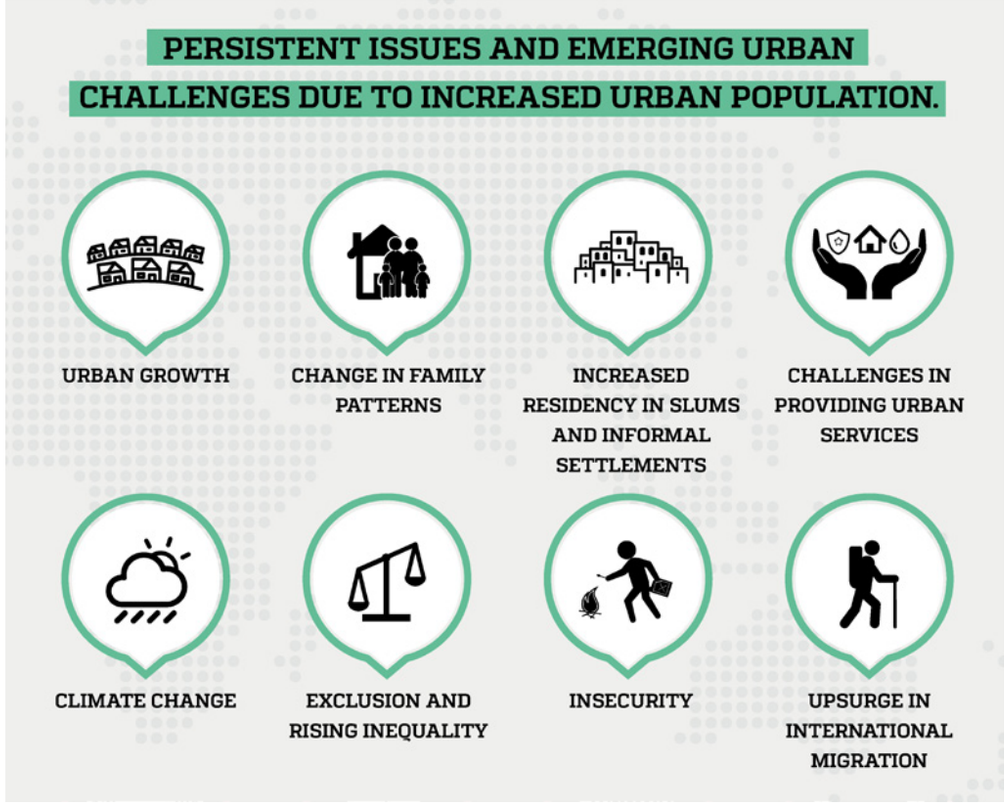
Habitat III starts from the identification of the main issues of the urban development of the last 20 years, such as (fig. 2): urban growth, changes in family patters, growing number of urban residents living in slums and the challenge of providing urban services. However, urbanization is not only the main cause of the global environmental, economic and social problems in the third millennium, but it represents also the potentiality to solve them. In fact, the idea of New Urban Agenda is rooted in the urbanization as engine of development, able to create a sustainable development. In other words, the complex and messy structure of urbanization can be positively directed towards a fruitful growth. All the countries involved have to commit for the improvement of urbanization through the "three legged-approach": local fiscal systems, urban planning, basic services and infrastructure.

Beside these operational tools for governments, the New Urban Agenda represents also a commitment for a democratic development of countries and a driver for social enhancement in the respect of environment and urbanization. It claims themes such as equity, safety and resilience as prior focuses mainly in developing countries and in urban areas.

The New Urban Agenda recognizes that the urban trends worldwide are determin-

Fig. 1 - From Habitat I 1976 to Habitat III 2016 (source: WORLD CITIES REPORT 2016)

Fig. 2 - Emerging urban challenges of urbanization (source: WORLD CITIES REPORT 2016)



ing more and more metropolises, urban corridors and mega-regions where people are increasingly concentrating. Together with the problems originated by the new urban trends, urbanization constitutes in the mean time the solution because the city are the core areas of national economies (fig. 3).

Although the New Urban Agenda will not be a compulsory agreement for the participating countries, it can affect the global thinking about cities and what they will be in the future. It can be seen as a guidance for nation states, regional authorities, academics, foundations and civil society in constructing the future city in according to urbanization.

The New Urban Agenda expresses the need to respond to the emerging challenges with a different approach from to the past. Since the first conference in Vancouver, UN-Habitat has developed policies and programmes but they have proved inefficient respect to the current social, economic, cultural and environmental model. The reposition of the New Agenda seeks to realize also the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and particularly the *Goal n. 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable* (fig. 4).

The Millennium Goals aim to obtain by 2030 a series of concrete objectives: to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services; upgrade slums; provide safe and accessible transport system for all; expand public transport; enhance participatory planning and management; protect world's cultural and natural heritage; protect poor and people in vulnerable situations and case of disaster; reduce environmental impact of cities; provide universal access to green and public spaces; support positive linkages between rural, peri-urban and urban areas; support cities in adopting integrated policies and plans mitigation and adaptation to climate change; support developing countries in building sustainable and resilient buildings.

Fig. 3 - The benefits of a well planned urbanization (source: WORLD CITIES REPORT 2016)

In such a way the goal n.11 can be interpreted as a consequence of what initially set out by Habitat II Agenda (1996) and developed in the last years.

The New Urban Agenda represents the first global document on the city after the declaration of the goals of the Pso-2015 Development Agenda and COP21 in Paris (2015) and an attempt to establish a relationship between urbanization and development.

The last draft version of the New Urban Agenda has been written in New York, as outcome of the Habitat III Informal Intergovernmental Meeting which took place at the United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 10 September 2016.

In the New Urban Agenda there are 175 points which will represent global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities through drawing together cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors at all levels of government as well as the private sector.

The investigation themes where we found reference to gender and/or women, commit to:

– achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (n. 5), ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal rights in all field and in leadership at all levels of decision-making by preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence, and harassment in private and public spaces (n. 13-92);

Box 2.1: Goal 11— Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels
11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

Source: United Nations, 2015a.

Fig. 4 - Goal n. 11 of MDGs (source: WORLD CITIES REPORT 2016)

- promote age and gender responsive planning and investment for sustainable, safe, and accessible urban mobility for all and resource efficient transport systems for passengers and freight, linking people, places, goods, services, and economic opportunities (n. 13-114);
- adopt sustainable, people-centred, age and gender responsive and integrated approaches to urban and territorial development by implementing policies, strategies, capacity development, and actions at all levels, based on fundamental drivers of change (n. 15);
- recognize the need of attention to specific challenges and multiple forms of discrimination faced by women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, etc. (n. 20);
- promote a urban development that is people-centred and gender-responsive (n. 26) including gender housing policies and approaches across all sectors (n. 32);
- promote services that are responsive to the rights and needs of women (n. 34);
- promote increased security of tenure for all with particular attention for women as key to their empowerment (n. 35);
- ensure a safe, healthy, inclusive, and secure environment in cities and human settlements for all to live, work, and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation, taking into consideration that women and girls are often particularly affected (n. 39);
- embrace diversity in cities and human settlements to strengthen gender equality (n. 40);

- encourage effective participation and collaboration among all stakeholders, including women (n. 48);
- commit to promote full employment, decent work conditions for all, and livelihood opportunities in cities and human settlements to acknowledge the needs and potential of women (n. 57);
- recognize the contribution of the informal working poor in the informal economy, particularly women, including the unpaid, domestic, and migrant workers to urban economies (n. 59);
- strengthen the resilience of cities and human settlements, including through the development of quality infrastructure and spatial planning by adopting and implementing integrated, age and gender-responsive policies and plans (n. 77-101);
- promote adequate investments in accessible and sustainable infrastructure and service provision systems for water, hygiene and sanitation, sewage, solid waste management, urban drainage, reduction of air pollution, and storm water management, with special attention to the needs and safety of women and girls (n. 119);
- promote means of implementation such as the strengthening of the capacity of national, sub-national, and local governments, to work with women and girls, enabling them to effectively participate in urban and territorial development decision-making (nn. 148-151-155-156).

As we can see, the New Urban Agenda contains many commitments with attention to women's needs and promote policies and action to remove the obstacles which the women faced in urban environment. It promotes gender equity and empowerment in all the urban activities, as to ensure women's participation in all levels of decision making processes. Particularly, gender responsive urban planning should rely on transport system, services, infrastructure spread off in the city. Another important issue is the security and safety, particularly for women and girls, of the contemporary city where public spaces must be without fear of violence.

The journal TRIA aims to contribute to this debate by proposing some findings about one of core topics of Habitat III e and New Urban Agenda: a city for all in respect of differences such as age, gender, race, etc.

In particular, this issue is dedicated to the gender perspective of New Urban Agenda collecting many interesting papers from over the world in collaboration with the University of Cordoba (Argentina) and the Gender Hub of UN-Habitat. The papers highlight the role of woman in the urban development and help to evaluate what has been done in the last years and what is necessary for the future.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Ana Falù and Teresa Boccia who have proposed the idea of a book on gender and urbanism and spread off the call to the UN gender hub making possible the preparation of this special issue.