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towards Habitat III a gender perspective

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**towards Habitat III
a gender perspective**

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Habitat III: Theories and practices of the women facing the global challenges in cities

Teresa Boccia

The New Urban Agenda has finally been agreed on at the Habitat III (Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development) Informal Intergovernmental Meeting which took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 7 to 10 September 2016, and it will be adopted in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016¹.

During the whole complex drafting process of NUA, with a high participation of women, will lay the groundwork for policies and approaches that will extend, and impact, far into the future, there have also been other important events: in the course of the year 2015, in particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020.

From May 2015 there have been many outputs during the Habitat III process: the agencies from across the United Nations and others published 22 “issue papers”², key elements of various sectors and thematic areas in today’s urbanization trends. From August 2015 to February 2016 a group of 200 experts, known as “policy units”³, came up



with important recommendations for the drafting and implementing of the New Urban Agenda.

A extensive series of official and semi-official events, including Regional and Thematic meetings, have produced specific thematic and assessment documents and declarations⁴.

In this whole process, gender experts and grassroots women leaders have actively taken part and provided a number of statements and recommendations for each of these documents and for all Declarations.

Women have played an active role also in the World Urban Campaign (WUC)⁵ and in the Gender Assembly of Partners (GAP)⁶, giving input and recommendations on key themes to be addressed in the New Urban Agenda that have been collectively released as “The City We Need 2.0”⁷

This women’s mobilization sought to make sure that in New Urban Agenda’s vision explicitly includes women, and gender equality and women’s empowerment and gender-sensitive approaches are consistently applied in the policy recommendations and implementations, because there will never be social justice in our cities if there is not gender justice.

Women are, in fact, the main agents of resiliency and innovation in the territories: the lens of gender and women’s practices are crucial in many contexts for survival and social inclusion.

By the middle of the century four of five people might be living in towns and cities, and urbanization and development are inextricably linked; therefore it is necessary of ensuring the sustainability of growth to find a unusual way and consider all the persons who live there.

Space is not neutral: it is inhabited by sexualized bodies which have different experiences of the city and the territories, with differences in the ways of living and of moving through the city. This difference is evident in all stages of life and according to the different abilities: childhood, adolescence, adults, older persons.

Cities should cherish all their inhabitants, however many times cities are often cruel and violent towards women. Urban spaces are, in fact, frequently places of women’s invisibility, designed and planned without thinking about women’s experiences and use during the day and night. This is a paradox because women are who care more for the cities and who are the protagonists of innovative practices of transformation and development.

Many women have acted and reflected for so long and in so many parts of the world on these issues, and perhaps the time has arrived to listen to these practices and these voices for the full enjoyment of urban wellness and human rights and gender justice.

This special issue of TRIA, produced in collaboration with the University of Cordoba (Argentina), collects the contributions of the PhD Group of the Gender Hub network UNI UN-Habitat.

We think Habitat III is an opportunity for PhD students working on gender and urban issues around the globe to present how their work can contribute to the New Urban

Agenda. For this reason, has been launched a call all for papers where PhDs can present their work. These papers, twelve, are collected in this publication.

The key words that emerge from the contributions are particularly significant: *right to the city, urban environment, public space, urban spaces, fear, violence - women, urban violence, urban planning, feminist approach, leisure activities; young women, older women, everyday practices; gender safety planning, LGBTQ, Queer, identity, discrimination, intersectionality, inclusion, gender, housing, policy, mainstreaming gender, metropolitan dynamics gender, women, industry, urban model, spatial planning, night, mobility, urban quality of life, everyday life.*

These are words that are claiming new reflections and re-conceptualizations in the analysis and in interpretation of urban areas to improve the quality of life for women and men in our cities, in all seasons of their lives. The different ways in which the bodies of all people, men and women, LGBT in different living spaces, brings us concretely to view social and spatial inequalities, barriers, including cultural ones, that do not guarantee “the right to the city” for everyone, for example in the use of public spaces or in access to transport, housing and natural resources.

Dealing with urban problems from a gender perspective and with the lens of the impacts of intersectionality makes visible immediately the inequality within the frame of capitalist urbanization, which tends “to permanently destroy the city as a social, political, livable and common good,” (Harvey 2012).

In this context, the New Urban Agenda promotes more equitable just cities if it identifies how to overcome the structural dynamics of power that generate gender inequality.

In its latest version, the Draft’s framework NUA starts out strong by making explicit mention of the importance of women. In the preamble, “By readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed, and managed, the New Urban Agenda will help to end poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions, reduce inequalities, promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, **achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in order to fully harness their vital contribution to sustainable development, improve human health and well-being, as well as foster resilience and protect the environment** (par. 5).

Other mentions concern: women’s political agenda and representation in urban decision making, women’s economic empowerment, decent job agenda, domestic work and women in the informal economy, cities safe for women: safe public spaces public spaces free from violence against women and girl, securing access to and control over land and prosperity an housing, environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development.

However the reference to women is still a general way -- as one of many marginalized groups and without any distinction of different groups of women. The focus is mainly on women’s marginality and ‘vulnerability’ and not go far enough in recognizing the strength of women in transforming the multiple vulnerable situations to which they are submitted in their daily lives e the capability of women to be as active agents and equal partners in urban prosperity and sustainable development.

In the Agenda implementation that will follow the Habitat III Conference in Quito, it will be necessary then, to go even further and with greater force to continue to work, and putting in practice network theories in order to foster the empowerment and leadership of women at the household, municipal and national levels through public policies and budgets that promote women's equitable participation in development of cities.

This publication is a first step, it proposes elements to think of a new urbanism: those who relate to 'Gender Equality the main key to the sustainability of the development of cities and territories, from the global to the local level, because the side of women is the best part of the world: one that does not give up and not It surrenders, who has the courage to dare and to accept the great challenges for the future of cities.

A big thank you to professor and friend Ana Falú, for her energy, passion, he knowledge and the time dedicated to the Gender Hub and to the young researchers who have started this journey with enthusiasm and who, I'm sure, will soon make many more valuable contributions.

ENDNOTES

1 The Draft of the New Urban Agenda is based on ZERO Draft , released on 6 May 2016 which took several updates : official compilaton of reponses on the Zero draft, 8 June 2016; First revision, released on 18 June 2016; Official compilaton of reponses on the first revision on the Zero draft, 5 July 2016 ; Draft' New Urban Agenda, released on 18 July, Draft' New Urban Agenda post Surabaya, released on 28 July.

2 *Issue papers* : 1.Inclusive Cities , 2.Migration and Refugees in Urban Areas, 3..Safer Cities, 4.Urban Culture and Heritage, 5.Urban Rules and Legislation, 6.Urban Governance , 7. Municipal Finance, 8.Urban and Spatial Planning and Design, 9.Urban Land, 10.Urban-Rural Linkages, 11.Public Space, 12.Local Economic Development, 13.Jobs and Livelihoods, 14.Informal Sector, 15.Urban Resilience,16.Urban Ecosystems and Resource Management, 17.Cities and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, 18.Urban Infrastructure and Basic Services including energy, 19.Transport and Mobility, 20. Housing, 21.Smart Cities, 22.Informal Settlements.

3 *Policy Unit Papers* :1. The Right to the City and Cities for All, 2. National Urban Policies, 3.Urban Governance, 4.Capacity and Institutional Development, 5. Municipal Finance and Local Fiscal Systems, 6. Urban Spatial Strategies: Land Market and Segregation, 7. Urban Economic Development Strategies, 8.Urban Ecology and Resilience, 9. Urban Services and Technology, 10.Housing Policies.

4 *Declaration s of Regional Meetings*: AFRICA: Abuja Declaration : Africa's priorities for the new urban agenda , 24 - 26 february, 2016 ; ASIA: Jakarta Declaration:Sustainable Urbanization to accelerate development, 22 octobre 2015; EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA: Prague Declaration, Habitat, 16-18 March 2016; LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: Toluca Declaration, México, 20 de abril de 2016

Declaration s of Thematic Meetings: ABU DHABU Declaration :Sustainable Energy and Cities; CUENCA Declaration: Intermediate Cities; MEXICO CITY Declaration : Financing Urban Development; TEL AVIV Declaration : Civic Engagement ;MONTREAL Declaration: Metropolitan Areas ;BARCELONA Declaration : Public Spaces; PRETORIA Declaration : Informal Settlement.

5 *WUC* is an advocacy and partnership platform, coordinated by UN-Habitat ,to raise awareness about positive urban change in order to achieve green, productive, safe, healthy, inclusive, and well planned cities. Its goal is to place the Urban Agenda at the highest level in development policies.

6 The City We Need (TCWN) 2.0 present a new urban paradigm for the 21st centur .It is a manifesto prepared through the contributions of more than men and women from 124 countries and 2137 organizations, representing fourteen constituent groups of the GAP (General Assembly of Partners). This global consultation and consensus building process has been made possible through a series of 26 Urban Thinkers Campuses organized from 29 June 2015 to 20 February 2016.The final draft of "The city We Ned" was adopted unanimously by the World Urban Campaign Steering Committee on 16 March 2016 in Prague/Czech Republic.

7 The General Assembly of Partners (GAP) for the Habitat III Conference, conceived as an interim global deliberative devise for non-governmental partners, composed of Partner Constituent Groups.: Local and sub-national authorities ,Research and Academia, Civil Society Organizations, Grass roots organizations, Women, Parliamentarians, Children and Youth,Business and Industries,Foundations and Philanthropies,-Professionals, Trade Unions and Workers,Farmers,Indigenous people, Media, Older Persons