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Problematizing the global urban agenda

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of the United Nations' 2016 *New Urban Agenda*

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# FOREWORD

My interest for the topic of this master thesis does not originate from a single event such as a particularly enthralling or motivating research seminar, but emerged gradually from a sequence of contingent professional and intellectual experiences that put together led me to the decision to research and reflect on the phenomenon of international/global urban policy with a critical perspective.

The first of those was perhaps the learning of critical thinking during my master studies on the one hand in urban studies and on the other in political science. These opened my intellectual horizons and I internalised a critical attitude not to take social phenomena for granted, in particular in their spatial and political dimensions.

In 2014-2015, I spent one year in Istanbul working the half of it at the Istanbul Urban Observatory of the French Institute for Anatolian Studies. There, among others, I had the chance to take stock and archive the Observatory's large collection of documentation about the United Nations Habitat II conference that took place in the city almost twenty years earlier. Already a bit familiarised with the global urban agenda thanks to the reporting of the *The Global Urbanist.com*, the time spent in Istanbul was a great occasion to dive into the policy phenomenon's past and try to put things in perspective.<sup>1</sup>

Last but not least, early 2016 I got perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work for almost one year very very closely to the making of the global urban agenda. Hired by the French government as policy officer to assist the French Co-Chair of the UN Preparatory Committee in the organisation of the Habitat III conference as well as the drafting of its outcome document, it was a very rare and rich experience to understand—and shape—the inner workings of global policymaking on urban issues. One conclusion of this experience then became the outset of this master thesis. During the time of my assignment, I was very surprised about the dramatic lack of knowledge on the Habitat policy process and in particular about its political history, even in international civil service circles. As a result, I decided to devote my master thesis in political science to the study and analysis of Habitat III and in particular its *New Urban Agenda* to better understand what exactly I was doing there as a policymaker as well as the political implications of my decisions and recommendations.

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1 See Floret, Matthieu (2015): Le fonds de documentation de la Conférence mondiale Habitat II, Istanbul 3-14 juin 1996, OUI hypothèses <<https://oui.hypotheses.org/3074>>.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIAM	Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (International Congresses of Modern Architecture)
C40	Cities Climate Leadership Group
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
GAP	General Assembly of Partners
GTF	Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments
GUA	global urban agenda
Habitat I	<i>Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements</i> , Vancouver, Canada, 1976
Habitat II	<i>United Nations Conference on Human Settlements</i> , also called <i>The City Summit</i> , Istanbul, Turkey, 1996
Habitat III	<i>United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development</i> , Quito, Ecuador, 2016
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
ICLEI	Local Governments for Sustainability, founded as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IGO	inter-governmental organisation
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
LoN	League of Nations
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NUA	<i>New Urban Agenda</i>
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PR	problem representation
SC	sustainable city/cities
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SU	sustainable urbanisation
SUD	sustainable urban development
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	Organization of the United Nations
UNCHBP	United Nations Center for Housing, Building and Planning and United Nations Commission on Housing, Building and Planning
UNCHS	United Nations Commission on Human Settlements
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHHSF	United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation
UNHSP	United Nations Human Settlements Programme better known as UN-Habitat
UI	Urban Internationale
WB	World Bank Group
WPR	Carol Bacchi's What's the Problem Represented to be approach



“Critique does not consist in saying that things aren’t good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based.”

(Foucault 1994 [1981]: So is it important to think? In J.D. Faubion, (Ed.), *Power: Essential works of Foucault 1954–1984*, vol. 3, Hurley, R. and others. London: Penguin, p. 456).

“... effectively, we are governed *through* problematisations.”  
(Bacchi 2009: 263)

“We live in a world where the ‘urban’ has become a common trope just as ‘global’ was twenty years ago, or ‘modern’ before that.”  
(Boudreau 2017: 11)

## Chapter 1

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Opening

For about a decade, cities, urbanisation and urbanism have clearly taken centre stage in international discussions about solutions regarding the management of human societies' transformation towards global sustainability. In April 2012, two months prior the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set the tone making the following remarks:

“Let there be no doubt: we live in an urbanized world. [...] Our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities. [...] By prioritizing sustainable urbanization within a broader development framework, many critical development challenges can be addressed in tandem. [...] Our goal is a fundamental “reset” of the global development agenda. [...] Cities have a central role to play in making this paradigm shift a reality. [...] Sustainable cities are crucial to our future well-being.”<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, next to other global issues such as poverty, hunger or climate change, “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” became in 2015 the eleventh out of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: “Transforming our world”. Through this stand-alone “urban SDG”, the urban problematique gained a position and importance as never before in the history of international politics (Parnell 2016).

Indeed, since the UN officially announced in 2007 that “[f]or the first time in history, more than half [of the world’s] human population [is] living in urban areas” (UNFPA, 2007: 1), the urban question, most often put in a planetary perspective, has also caught Western media’s attention, in particular those mainstream newspapers as well as specialised magazines with international readerships. Participating in the making of informed public opinion, their editorial activity have since then addressed in the columns of special issues on the one hand the urban dimension of international affairs and on the other the

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2 Remarks to the High-level Delegation of Mayors and Regional Authorities, New York, 23 April 2012 <<https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sgsm14249.doc.htm>>

international dimension of urban affairs while reporting on the conditions of global urbanisation as well as the increasing economic and political role played by cities in international relations. For instance, the US-American weekly *Time* ran in 2008 the headline “Ny·lon·kong: How three connected cities drive the global economy” on its front cover.<sup>3</sup> The US-American bimonthly *Foreign Policy* published in 2010 a thirty pages long special section on global cities and in 2012 a twenty pages long special report on the rise of Chinese cities, respectively headlined “Metropolis Now” and “The Cities Issue”.<sup>4</sup> The French edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique* published in 2010 in its bimonthly *Manière de voir* a hundred pages long special issue titled “L’urbanisation du monde”, and the German quarterly for architecture, urbanism and design *ARCH+* (whose issues are written in German and English) issued two book-length numbers: “Politische Empirie: Globalisierung, Verstädterung, Wohnverhältnisse” in 2012 and “Planetary Urbanism: The Transformative Power of Cities” in 2016.<sup>5</sup> The website of the British daily newspaper of record *The Guardian* hosts since 2014 a popular “Cities” section supported by the Rockefeller foundation “to create a fresh and engaging hub for reporting and discussing urban life and the future of cities around the world”.<sup>6</sup> Another type of communication technology with worldwide outreach, the Shanghai 2010 World Expo was themed “Better City, Better Life” and welcomed more than 70 million visitors.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the internationalisation/globalisation of urban policy ideas and practices has thus probably led the way in the twenty-first century to the urbanisation of international/global politics and policies (see Boudreau 2017 and Magnusson 2011).

However, although from the neolithic ‘urban revolution’ (Childe 1950; Smith 2009) to the industrial ‘urban revolution’ (Lefebvre 1970, 2003) urbanisation has long been seen as a force of profound social change and transformation, the question about the place and role of cities, urbanisation and urbanism in the maintenance of international political order in a world in perpetual transformation has hardly been asked. This is why this master thesis proposes a critical analysis of the strategic/instrumental use of cities, urbanisation and urbanism to achieve global sustainability.<sup>8</sup>

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3 “Ny·lon·kong”: *Time*, Vol. 171, No. 4, January 28, 2008. See <<http://content.time.com/time/covers/pacific/0,16641,20080128,00.html>>

4 For “Metropolis Now”: *Foreign Policy*, No. 181, September/October 2010, pp.119-152; and for “The Cities Issue”: *Foreign Policy*, No. 195, September/October 2012, pp. 62-86.

5 For “L’urbanisation du monde”: *Le Monde Diplomatique*’s bimonthly *Manière de voir*, No. 114, December 2010/January 2011. For “Politische Empirie: Globalisierung, Verstädterung, Wohnverhältnisse”: *ARCH+* No. 206/207, July 2012 and for “Planetary Urbanism: The Transformative Power of Cities”: *ARCH+* No. 223, June 2016.

6 See <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/jan/27/cities-about-this-site>>

7 See <<https://www.bic-paris.org/site/en/2010-shanghai>>

## 1.2 Research object

The research object of the master thesis is the *global urban agenda* (GUA). This international policy phenomenon refers to the presence on the agenda of international and global politics of a problematique of urbanisation, cities and urbanism. The GUA is materialised in a series of written outcome documents containing statements about problems and solutions and endowed with universal authority and legitimacy (either agreed-upon/acknowledged or claimed/intended). These documents are “concrete manifestations of policymaking and politics” (Brand 2013: 434), guiding the perception and action of actors around the world in matters relevant to international/global urban policy. The GUA is thus the formalisation of global debates about urban/cities/spatial problems worldwide and therefore a crucial element of how urbanisation is governed globally.

This master thesis primarily focuses on the GUA’s most recent occurrence: the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA). The NUA is the agreed-upon outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) which took place in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. The stated policy objects of the NUA are “sustainable cities” (SC), “sustainable urbanisation” (SU) and “sustainable urban development” (SUD).

## 1.3 State of the art

The literature review hereinafter proposes to outline the research object by highlighting its main features and offers a critical overview of the current state of knowledge on the GUA/NUA. Two questions guide this review: what do we know about this policy phenomenon and how do we know it?

To begin with, to my knowledge, the term “global urban agenda” appeared first in a post-conference paper commenting in 1997 the Habitat II summit in Istanbul:

“It is clear that many of the documents, programs, and ideas of the Habitat process are embedded in the paradigm of globalization [...] and that, indeed, many of the key elements of the *global urban agenda* as articulated by the Habitat process derive from the basic presumptions of this paradigm” (Leaf and Pamuk 1997: 75; emphasis added).

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8 For a distinction between a strategic meaning and an analytical sense of the term “transformation” in international political economy and ecology, see Brand 2016a. For an urban version of it, see Bruns and Gerend 2018.

The 1990s is the time when international problems underwent a formal semantic transformation and became global issues (Mazower 2012; Schechter 2005).

However, how does more recent literature conceive and describe the GUA? “[T]he *global urban agenda* [is] the common set of priorities that most cities around the world must address to varying degrees” (Datu and Lashermes 2012; emphasis in the original). It is also “the gradual emergence of a shared utopian urban vision and its adoption as a developmental directive by the international community” (Parnell 2016: 530) as well as “a global consensus on the significance of human settlements, their challenges, and criteria by which to recognize successful policies and programmes” (Cohen 2016: 36). “[A] consensus about the importance, perhaps even the centrality, of urban processes to securing sustainable futures in a range of fields including climate change, economic growth, poverty eradication, public health and food security. The assertion of a “new urban agenda” in global policy reflects a long campaign to locate cities at the centre of development debates” (Barnett and Parnell 2016: 87). Presented as “global debates about urban policy and planning in multi-lateral governance forums” (Barnett & Parnell 2018: 25), the GUA is as well a “guide [for] nation states in the formulation of policies and programmes intended to manage human settlements” (Cohen 2016: 36). Likewise, the GUA can succinctly be described as an “international agreement on urban issues” (Parnell 2016: 530) or a “universal agreement on urban development” (ibid: abstract), the “alignment and repositioning of urban development in [... an] outcome document” (Birch 2016: 398), or more analytically as the political visibility of the urban question at the international level (Saunier 2001: 392). Even though these descriptions slightly vary from one another, they share common constitutive categories: (i) *global*: “world”, “international”, “global”, “multi-lateral governance”; (ii) *urban*: “urban”, “cities”, “human settlements”, “urban question”, “place-based”; and (iii) *agenda*: “common set of priorities”, “shared vision”, “agreement”, “guide”, “consensus”, “political visibility”, “ideal”.

Second, The GUA is inherently linked to the practice of conference diplomacy (also known as summitry) which is a policy instrument with agenda-building function oft-used in the international management of “global issues/problems” as performed by organisations of the UN system. In the literature, the GUA is the direct outcome of the three Habitat conferences, major policy events of the Habitat process (Biau 2014; Birch 2016; Cohen 2016; Emmerji et al. 2001; Holden et al. 2008; Parnell 2016; Rudd et al. 2018; Satterthwaite 2016; Schechter 2005; Schindler 2017). On the one hand, the Habitat I, II and III conferences are ad hoc action-oriented UN-sponsored global conferences which took place in a bidecennial cycle in 1976, 1996 and 2016, and which have redefined every twenty years the normative terms and conditions of global policy in regards to issues of urbanisation and human

settlements.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the Habitat process is a UN-coordinated multilateral policymaking process engaging together a multitude of parties and actors (national and local governments, IGOs and INGOs, academia, the private sector, CBOs and grass-roots, etc.) and which has dealt with and institutionalized since the 1970s the issues set on the agenda of the Habitat conferences at a global scale.

Third, the GUA is foremost understood as an urban *development* agenda, embedded in the discourse of development as practiced by various international organisations since the 1950s such as those of the UN system, including the World Bank, and qualified as *sustainable* urban *development* since the 1990s (Biau 2014; Birch 2016; Cohen 2016; Emmerij et al. 2001; Parnell 2016; Ramsamy 2006; Rudd et al. 2018; Satterthwaite 2016; Schechter 2005). Susan Parnell describes this as the “development debates on cities” (2016: 530). Habitat I (1976) was thus convened due to rising international concerns regarding the terrible environmental and social consequences of rapid, unplanned and mismanaged urbanisation of human settlements in “Third World” countries, in particular regarding the tremendous demographic and spatial growth and concentration of poverty materialised by so-called “slums” and “informal settlements” in Latin American, Asian and African urban areas (Scott 2016). Since the identification as problem of these forms of urbanisation has persisted over the following decades, Habitat II (1996) and then III (2016) took place as follow-up meetings to take stock of the evolution of urbanisation, assess the effects of previous policy measures, conceive and decide on future solutions as well as putting urban issues again at centre stage of the world's public sphere by attracting media's and citizens' attention.

However, between Habitat I and III, the political message of the GUA has changed in two different ways. In forty years, the GUA's position not only shifted from a rather negative to a rather positive conception of urbanisation and cities, but also from an assertion of cities and human settlements as sites of developmental intervention divided in sectoral issues to cities and urbanisation as agents of sustainable transformation underpinned by a holistic and systemic approach (Biau 2014; Birch 2016;

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9 The first conference, taking place in Vancouver, Canada, from 31 May to 11 June 1976, was formally called “Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements”, nicknamed “Habitat’76” at the time and is known a posteriori as “Habitat I”. Its outcome documents are the *Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements* and the *Vancouver Action Plan*. The second conference, convening in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 14 June 1996, was formally named “United Nations Conference on Human Settlements”, also known as “The City Summit” at the time and more generally as “Habitat II”. Its outcome documents are the *Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements* and *The Habitat Agenda*. Hosted in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 to 20 October 2016, the third and last conference to date was formally called “United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development” and more commonly known as “Habitat III”. Its outcome document is titled *The New Urban Agenda* and is composed of the *Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All* as well as of the *Quito implementation plan for the New Urban Agenda*.

Parnell 2016). Allan Cochrane suggests that this shift occurred in the context of neoliberal globalisation when “instead of being the locus of decline, decay, and disorder, cities become potential (and actual) sources of growth and development” (2011: 739) and was influenced by the OECD and the EU.

Fourth, neither the recommendations of the *Vancouver Action Plan* or the *Habitat Agenda* had much impact on urban and rural areas in low- and middle-income countries in forty years (Cohen 2016; Satterthwaite 2018; Schechter 2005). Therefore, the weak results of the GUA to change living conditions are remarkably disappointing and they blatantly show the limited power of the GUA to solve global urban problems. The fact that the GUA is a policy process without single, clear and internationally agreed-upon definition of what its policy object is might probably have not helped much (Barnett and Parnell 2016, 2018; Biau 2014; Parnell 2016). Nonetheless, if the GUA has not significantly transformed the life of slum dwellers at the local level, at least it has organised and institutionalised at a global political level debates about the urbanisation of the world (Parnell 2016). The funding of urban development projects by the World Bank in “developing countries”, the existence of UN-Habitat and its function as “urban” focal point for the UN system, and the formal participation of subnational and non-state-actors along national governments to what is still an association of only states are perhaps the most tangible outcomes of the Habitat conferences and process (Biau 2014; Birch 2016; Parnell 2016). In addition, it is worth highlighting that since Habitat II the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living is acknowledged by the international community.

Fifth, the quantity of academic and scientific literature on the GUA is surprisingly limited. Online queries using Scopus or Google Scholar and searching for “international/global urban agenda”, “international/global urban policy” and “international/global urban governance” deliver poor satisfactory results (if you exclude research related to European integration; at the date of December 2018). No reader, monograph or book-long study, either recent or older, dealing comprehensively with the GUA could be found; however, Susan Parnell’s 2016 journal article “Defining a Global Urban Development Agenda” is perhaps the single most comprehensive piece so far on the GUA. In spite of these few exceptions, literature covering aspects of the GUA nonetheless exists. There are for instance Edward Ramsamy’s *The World Bank and Urban Development: From Projects to Policy* (2006), Felicity Scott’s *Outlaw Territories: Environments of Insecurity / Architectures of Counterinsurgency* (2016) and Lindsay Brown’s *Habitat '76* (2018) as well as a couple of short texts by Allan Cochrane about global urban policy (2007, 2011). Furthermore, unsurprisingly this time, most journal articles related to the research object deal with the Habitat conferences whose biennial cycle sets the tempo of these journals’ publication

activity;<sup>10</sup> in between, radio silence. Regarding Habitat III, it is also important to cite the work done by The Global Urbanist and Citiscope, two online specialised news magazine respectively based in London at the LSE and in Washington D.C. who closely followed, regularly reported and actively commented the Conference's preparation and proceeding as well as the making of the UN's new global urban agenda respectively from 2010 to 2014 and from 2014 to 2017.<sup>11</sup>

Sixth, the knowledge reviewed in the literature can be divided in two ideal-typical categories: (i) knowledge *for* policy, and (ii) knowledge *on/about* policy. The first type, by far the most prevalent one, is characterised by the following features: it is practice-oriented knowledge; it looks for urban development problems and asks questions about how to best deal with them making use of economics, planning, geography or ecology disciplines to find answers to solve the identified urban problems and improve the management of policy processes; it mainly focuses on sectoral (e.g. housing, transportation, environment, water and sanitation, public participation, finance and taxes, business and enterprises, gender, governance, etc.) and/or regional (in particular Asia, Africa and Latin America) issues; it is made by development and planning experts, employed either in the international civil service (typically the World Bank and UN-Habitat), academia or consultancies in First World knowledge production centres; and it deals with the Habitat conferences' preparation, proceedings, outcome, implementation and follow-up. On the other hand, the second ideal type, very marginal, can be described as research-oriented knowledge. It is equally interested in the Habitat conferences, yet takes a more reflexive and critical stance towards the GUA (see for instance Barnett and Parnell 2016; Parnell 2016; Rodríguez and Sugranyes 2017). In parallel, there are also meanwhile a relatively well-established histories of the transnational municipal movement literature as well as a relatively new urban policy mobility literature emerging within geography (see Clarke 2012) that covers aspects of the GUA.

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10 For Habitat I (1976), see the journals *Ekistics*, in particular Volume 42, No. 252, November 1976 "Perspectives On Habitat: the United Nations Conference On Human Settlements"; and *Habitat International* (launched at the Conference), in particular Volume 1, Issue 2, September 1976 as well as Volume 3, Issues 1-2 and 3-4, both 1978. For Habitat II (1996), see the journals *Environment and Urbanization*, Volume 8, No. 1, April 1996 as well as No. 2, October 1996; in *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, Volume 16, Issues 4-6, July-November 1996, Special Issue "Managing Urban Sustainability, Section "Habitat II"; in *Cities*, Volume 14, No. 1, February 1997; and in *Urban Studies* see Volume 34, No. 10, October 1997. For Habitat III (2016), see in the journals *Environment and Urbanization*, Volume 28, Issue 1, April 2016; in *disP - The Planning Review*, see Volume 52, Issue 1, April 2016; in *Nature*, see Volume 537, No. 7622, pp. 585-706, September 2016; in *Journal of the American Planning Association* see Volume 82, Issue 4, September 2016; in *Habitat International* see Volume 53, April 2016 and Volume 69, November 2017; in *World Development* see Volume 78, February 2016; in *Planning Theory* see Volume 15, Issue 4, November 2016; in *Urban Research & Practice* see Volume 10, Issue 3, 2017; and in *Planning Theory & Practice* see Volume 19, Issue 1, 2018.

11 See <<http://globalurbanist.com>> and <<http://archive.citiscope.org>>



To conclude, two main lessons can be learned from this literature review: (i) there is an obvious knowledge deficit about the GUA, and (ii) the prevalent understanding of the GUA is biased/framed by practice-oriented knowledge of international development institutions.

Compared to parent global issues such as the environment and despite a century of inter/transnational policy-related activities on urban issues (see Meller 1995; Saunier 2001; Wagner 2016), the GUA in particular and international/global urban policy in general curiously but clearly appear as under-researched phenomenon and field of activity. This is perhaps due to a lack of interest from the main centres of academic knowledge production—which are predominantly located in First World/Global North countries—for issues that they do not feel directly concerned with, since UN-Habitat has had “a reputation of a housing agency for the Global South” (Birch 2016: 399). Some authors have also expressed scepticism about the existence of an international/global urban agenda (see Biau 2014 and Gilbert 2011), which might be a consequence of that situation.

Beyond this general deficit in knowledge, three specific points are particularly striking: lack of historical, political and ontological-epistemological knowledges. First, Susan Parnell points out that “[t]he place of the urban question in global policy making is an especially poorly understood vein of historical enquiry” (2016: 529). In addition, she remarks that “there are surprising gaps in the most basic information about how the embryonic global urban agenda we have now was reached over the last decades, who was involved in its design, how effective it was” (ibid.: 536).

Second, the virtual absence of consideration of the political nature of international urban development and of political science among the disciplines dealing with the GUA must be particularly underlined. At least since the work of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), we know that ‘space is political’ (Elden 2007); and at least since the research of James Ferguson (1994) and Arturo Escobar (1995), we know as well that development is above all a political question and that the way development is done tends to depoliticise its action. Questions—and answers—regarding power, authority, domination and other political phenomena are therefore lacking of political scientific theoretical and methodological underpinnings. Consequently, international urban development is still foremost seen as a technical issue of technocratic management, rather than a political phenomenon with political implications for billions of people.

Third, for Clive Barnett and Susan Parnell (2016), there is a fundamental lack of scholarship about the ontologies and epistemologies defining the GUA. For them, “taking stock of the intellectual foundations and assumptions behind the apparent shared embrace of the new urban agenda is

important” (Barnet & Parnell 2016: 90). Thus, “there is an urgent need to identify the multiple forms of knowledge that are shaping how urban processes are understood and why cities are seen as important for sustainable development” (Barnet & Parnell 2016: 88) in the GUA.

The lack of onto-epistemological research echoes on the other hand the second main issue of this conclusion. The understanding of the phenomenon of the GUA is based on off-the-peg ideas, concepts and categories and modes of thinking provided by practice-oriented knowledge of experts and institutions who work on a day-to-day basis in the realm of international cooperation. This situation is not without consequences. First, the “embedded” position of these knowledge producers might not leave much space for casting doubts and criticism as well as distance for reflexivity, thereby preserving taken-for-granted policy “problems” and “solutions” from interrogation. Second, this might also mean that in practical terms policymakers may be mal-informed about the intellectual assumptions, the origins and political implications of their policy proposals, for instance when drafting Habitat III’s *New Urban Agenda*.

#### 1.4 Problematisation, research question and hypothesis

The problem-solving capacity of Habitat I and II has proven being to a large extent ineffective (Cohen 2016; Satterthwaite 2018; Schechter 2005). And yet, the GUA has not be abandoned but followed up and updated twice since Vancouver, gathering every twenty years since 1976 hundreds of states and tens of thousands of people. Then, how can this phenomenon—and by extension that of global urban policy—be appraised without focussing on the problem-solving function of policy? Two authors provide some hints.

Allan Cochrane’s advice that “[u]rban policy [e.g. global urban policy] cannot just be taken for granted as an organic outcome of some shared understanding of the problem” (2011: 744) is a useful starting point. He further proposes that “any consideration of urban policy makes it necessary to actively explore what Foucault calls the process of “problematization,” that is how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a *problem*” (2007: 2; emphasis in the original). Following this constructivist line of thought, we can draw inspiration from Pierre-Yves Saunier’s sketch of the ‘Urban Internationale’ which considers that the early internationalisation/globalisation of the urban question between late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century “was not a simple consequence of a universal object ‘appearing on the scene’ [but] made a powerful contribution to defining the themes or problems

concerned, making them into objects worthy of interest and determining how they would be approached, perceived and resolved” (2001: 380). Indeed, citing Thomas Osborne, Carol Bacchi reminds us that “policy cannot get to work without first problematising its territory” (2009: 263).

Carl Death (2010, 2011) recommends to draw inspiration from Michel Foucault’s notions of governmentality and discourse as well as Clifford Geertz’s concept of theatre-state, the three of them based on a relational and productive conception of power, in order to understand the role, effects and implications of UN global conferences—including their outcome documents—beyond their apparent failures to solve global issues and international problems. Death’s analysis of the series of global environmental conferences from Stockholm’s UNCHE in 1972 to Copenhagen’s COP15 in 2009, with an emphasis on the Rio and Johannesburg Summits of 1992 and 2002, shows that through their very theatricality and ‘thespian art of statecraft’ they have structured, organised and codified a specific discursive formation of sustainable development in order to render the notion governable in global politics and policymaking (2010, 2011). “[T]he emergence of the discourses of sustainable development and climate change are bound up with the emergence of mega-conferences as a distinct technology of government in the 1990s” (2011: 4). In this respect, policy objects and policy problems “do not exist a priori, but are constructed as sites for intervention and governance through formations of scientific knowledge, calculative measurement and governmental technologies” (2011: 4). Furthermore, in Death’s account, the global policy discourse of sustainable development is “an assemblage of practices of government which produce their own particular ways of seeing, knowing, acting and being” (2010: 2), subsequently governing international/global political discursive practices.

Therefore, instead of identifying and evaluating gaps between the terms of the GUA/NUA and what is actually delivered, and arguing about the effectiveness (or lack of it) of the NUA/GUA on improving concrete living conditions of the regions and people it targets, it can be politically more relevant to ask:

**How does the global urban agenda, as instantiated in the *New Urban Agenda*, problematises sustainable urban development, sustainable cities and sustainable urbanisation? How is the urbanisation of the world thereby rendered governable and acted upon through global policymaking’s discursive practices?**

The following sub-questions are useful to guide the research:

- What problematised “problems” have made it into the NUA? How have they made it into there?
- How have these problematised “problems” been produced (i.e. problematised)? What are they made of?
- What implications might they have?

Asking these questions, I formulate the hypothesis that the NUA/GUA constitutes a discursive practice affecting the ways of seeing, knowing, acting and being “urban” in global politics and policymaking rather than an actual spatial development “implementation plan” waiting to be carried out. By providing answers to these questions, I thereby hope to bring partial responses to some related questions:

- do the recommendations of the GUA/NUA maintain or challenge existing power relations and conditions of unsustainability? By extension, to what extent is the (discursive) order of the international system maintained—or perhaps challenged—by the problematisation in the NUA of the phenomenon of worldwide urbanisation?
- what kind of universalisation project is the NUA?

## 1.5 Onto-epistemological position and methodology

In his seminal 1981 paper “Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory”, political scientist Robert W. Cox (1996) elaborated about the usefulness to distinguish between problem-solving theory and critical theory in political science. Therefore, in order to move the analytical lens from a problem-*solving* to a problem-*questioning* conception of theory, politics and policy, the present master thesis draws from the particular approach of critical political science and critical policy studies.<sup>12</sup>

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12 See for instance Ulrich Brand and Helmut Kramer, “Für eine kritische Politikwissenschaft”, in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* (ÖZP), Volume 40, 2011, Issue 3, pp. 315–323; as well as Bradley J. Macdonald, “Traditional and Critical Theory Today: Toward a Critical Political Science”, in *New Political Science*, Volume 39, 2017, Issue 4, pp.511–522. See also Frank Fischer et al. (eds. 2015): *Handbook of Critical Policy Studies*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

More precisely, the master thesis adopts a policy-as-discourse approach (Bacchi 2000) also known as discursive policy analysis (Hajer and Versteeg 2011; Durnová and Zittoun 2013; Torfing 2011). Discursive policy analysis is a form of critical policy analysis focusing on discourse and discursive practices in policy processes and which puts notions of knowledge, language and power in relation. It asks questions about the formation, evolution, direction, domination and contestation of meanings in policy constructs. There are several approaches and traditions within the field. However, they all share in common an anti-essentialist and anti/post-foundational ontology as well as a post-positivist and constructivist epistemology of political science (see Marsh et al. 2018) and of policy: “policy problems, policy solutions, and governmental rationalities are discursively constructed and therefore contingent. [They] aim to uncover the power struggles and political conflicts that shape the discursive conditions for the formulation and implementation of public policy (Torfing 2011: 1881).

To operationalise the research question, the master thesis applies Carol Bacchi’s particular analytical strategy for discursive policy analysis: her *What’s the Problem Represented to be?* (WPR) approach (1999, 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). Bacchi’s critical method is based on a Foucault-influenced poststructuralist approach to political science (see Wenman 2018) and applied to the subfield of policy analysis.

“The WPR approach brings together several Foucauldian modes of inquiry, including archaeology, genealogy, and problematization, to generate a range of new questions for policy workers/analysts. These new questions provide guidelines for thinking about policy development at a level uncommonly probed—the deep-seated presuppositions and assumptions that underpin policies and the ways in which policies actively produce, or constitute, “problems”, “subjects”, “objects”, and “places” in specific contexts. This innovative approach to policy analysis puts in question the taken-for-granted view prevalent among many who develop, implement, and analyze policies that policy problems are self-evident, and that subjects, objects, and places simply exist. It facilitates critical policy analysis through creating the possibility of thinking otherwise.” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 107-108)

The master thesis is thus a qualitative social research based on a single case study and using a corpus of written texts as primary and secondary sources for empirical material. It is also situated at the intersection of several academic interdisciplinary research fields: international studies, policy studies, urban studies, planning studies and development studies; as well the professional fields of international cooperation and urban planning and development.

## 1.6 Structure

The master thesis is divided in six chapters. First, the present introductory chapter laid the foundations of the master thesis. Second comes the theory chapter with several concepts which frame the master thesis. The methodology and methods are presented in the third chapter. The fourth chapter contextualises the research object. The fifth chapter is the empirical analysis and the sixth and last chapter concludes the thesis.

## 1.7 Aim and limits

The aim of the master thesis is to explore the social construction of policy problems represented in the GUA as instantiated in the NUA. By asking what exactly is produced in the NUA, how is it produced and, with what effects, the intention is to identify, reconstruct and interrogate these problematisations and thereby to make the politics involved in these productive practices visible. By doing this, the research also aspires to shed much needed light on the historical, political and onto-epistemological knowledge deficits brought out in the literature review. Finally, the master thesis is an attempt to adopt a poststructural analytical framework—Carol Bacchi’s WPR approach—for an exploration of how global urbanisation is governed in terms of discursive practices.

This research work aims at the identification, reconstruction and interrogation of the problematisations of the GUA/NUA within the scope of a master thesis and therefore the results remain incomplete. The theoretical framework would need to make the theoretical concepts better fit the research object, requiring more theoretical work. The contextualisation remains also limited due to the general lack of knowledge. Limits of the master thesis are most seen in the empirical analysis; the development of each analytical steps in Bacchi’s WPR approach could be at least a master thesis in their own. Thus, the master thesis should better be seen as an attempt to open up the phenomenon of the GUA and the field of global urban policy/politics to the scrutiny of critical theory. The analytical framework of the thesis and the elements of answers provided therein could serve as basis for extended research.

# HOW GOVERNING TAKES PLACE: GOVERNING THROUGH PROBLEMATISATIONS

This second chapter sets the theoretical framework of the master thesis based on the description of half a dozen theoretical concepts. “Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose. All theories have a perspective” (Cox 1996: 87, emphasis in the original). Therefore, by taking a different perspective on reality, “[t]heory allows us to see things we wouldn't otherwise see” (Lowndes et al. 2018: 3). We are here particularly interested to understand how governing takes place and how order is maintained (or changed) in a Foucault-influenced poststructural perspective. In this regard, the notion of problematisation plays a key theoretical role (see Bacchi 2012b, 2015a; Barnett 2015; Foucault 1984). In a first step, poststructuralism is outlined and its main features regarding political analysis are highlighted. In a second step, Foucault-influenced poststructural concepts of problematisation, discourse, power and governmentality as well as the concept of policy redefined in a Foucault-inspired poststructural fashion are presented.

## 2.1 Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is not a clear-cut academic tradition with a unified body of theory and a precise methodology. Above all concerned with the production of meaning in the interplay of power relations, it is for David Howarth rather a “particular style of theorising and a specific way of doing social and political theory [...] informed by a distinctive ethos” (2013: 6; cited in Wenman 2018: 126). Poststructuralism emerged as an intellectual movement in France in the late 1960s as the events of ‘May 1968’ erupted in the streets of Paris as well as of other cities in the country and around the world, pushing to the fore questions of contingency, unpredictability as well as diversity/difference beyond the rigidity of class-based politics of the Fordist class compromise and against the surety of modern Western norms and values (Angermuller 2015; Wenman 2018). Key thinkers of that time such as for

instance Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Julia Kristeva (1941-) and Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) undertook to “reform” the French structuralist traditions that extended from (structural) linguistics (e.g. Ferdinand de Saussure) in the early twentieth century to adjacent disciplines in the 1950s-60s such as anthropology (e.g. Claude Lévi-Strauss), psychoanalysis (e.g. Jacques Lacan) and marxism (e.g. Louis Althusser) (ibid.). Whereas structuralists, interested in the role of background structures in conditioning the behaviour of social and political actors, asserted that meanings came to be at any given time in fixed and closed environment of linguistic structures of arbitrary relationships between different signifiers and signified, coming of age poststructuralists introduced a temporal/time dimension to the analysis of these linguistic structures which implied instead to take into account the changing and unstable character of meaning under conditions of historical contingency and context, openness to disruption and instability and creative re-appropriation (Wenman 2018). While structuralists, in a very modernist fashion, controlled the inherent uncertainty of life by ignoring and keeping it out of their analytical schemes, poststructuralists instead integrated life’s contingency in their projects. In *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*, both published in 1967, Jacques Derrida “linked the emphasis on the fixity characteristic of structuralism to a more general concern with surety, grounding and closure running through the entire Western tradition [...] seeing an underlying need for certitude expressed in Western modes of thought” (ibid.: 129), including in philosophy (anthropo/androcentrism of humanism), religion (fixed presence of God) and modern human and natural sciences alike (predictability of natural and scientific laws). Thus, “one major impulse behind poststructuralism has been to draw into question the high status attributed to the court of ‘Reason’ in the Western tradition” (ibid.: 138).

Poststructuralism is a way of thinking or theorising, of approaching social and political reality shared by a variety of different projects with distinct renditions of the operations of power and understandings of the role of discourse (Wenman 2018). There are virtually perhaps as many poststructuralisms as research questions and authors. According to Mark Wenman (2018), despite disagreement between different strands of poststructuralism there is however some basic shared ontological and epistemological positions. First, ontologically, for poststructuralists there can be no theoretical account independent of what is really out there. “Reality” is ambiguous because mediated through concepts and linguistic structures whose meanings are shifting and different over time, hence preventing us from ever fully capturing the “reality” as it really is, that is, in its “essence”. Poststructuralism’s ontology is thus post-foundational as it recognises the need for a priori philosophical claims—or foundations—about the nature of reality, yet for them these foundations are not fixed but have inherently ambiguous, shifting and essentially contestable status. Second, again for Wenman (ibid.), Richard Rorty,



summarising Nietzsche's position, put poststructuralists' epistemological position in a nutshell: truth is made and not found. "Poststructuralists do not deny that there is a world out there to be known and talked about [...], [t]hey simply maintain that none of our various forms of knowledge will ever map onto or correspond with the world. And in the absence of any pursuit after truth with a Capital T, poststructuralists focus instead on analysing the material 'effects of truth' generated by various historically contingent forms of knowledge" (ibid.: 135). Thus, they "draw into question notions of system, unity and closure, in the name of contingency, openness and disruption, and this in part brought about through a strategy of tenacious questioning" (ibid.: 126). Although "an admittedly complex and problematic epistemological foundation" (Ziai 2016: 10), "only this foundation is able to adequately accommodate the construction, complexity and historicity of social reality. Essentialisms reducing the complexity of reality are not accepted as explanations in the perspective of poststructuralism" (ibid.).

Since the work of Michel Foucault in France between the 1960s and mid-1980s, poststructuralism has gained worldwide significance in the study of politics (Angermuller 2015; Wenman 2018). Between the mid-1980s and the end of the century, political thinkers such as Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Judith Butler, William Connolly, Der Derian or Shapiro, foremost located in the Anglosphere, significantly developed the approach theoretically and thematically (ibid.). Since the 2000s, a third generation of researchers have taken up the expansion of poststructuralist political science to a wider range of issues as well as theoretical reworking (e.g. Essex School) (ibid.). According to Wenman (2018), "poststructuralists reject the idea that we can delimit 'politics' to a self-contained area of activity, associated for example with the activities of the government or the state, or with various inputs into the 'political system'. Like Marxists and feminists, poststructuralists have maintained instead a more extended conception of 'the political'" (ibid.: 130). In addition, "poststructuralists see power and resistance (that is, politics) in the prevailing frameworks of meaning, that is, in the dominant 'discourses' that shape our identities and sense of who we are. This suggests a very broad conception of 'the political'. Politics can be found more or less anywhere" (ibid.). Eventually, "poststructuralists have developed sophisticated analyses of 'the political' and, in particular, they have generated novel insights into the operations of power" (ibid.: 140).

## 2.2 Problematisation

The concept of problematisation takes various meanings, depending on the research traditions that uses it (Bacchi 2012b, Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). In Foucault-inspired poststructural analysis, however, problematisation is understood in two different ways:

- on the one hand, *problematisation* is a critical strategy—“thinking problematically”—which describes Michel Foucault’s method of analysis and “where the point of analysis is not to look for the one correct response to an issue but to examine how this issue is ‘questioned, analysed, classified and regulated’ at ‘specific times and under specific circumstances’ (Deacon 2000: 127; cited in Bacchi 2012b: 1). *Problematisation* is thus “a description of thinking as a practice” (Bacchi 2012b: 1) and “the putting into question of accepted ‘truths’” (ibid.).
- On the other hand, *problematizations* are “the social practice[s] of problematization that establishes a certain view on social phenomena as ‘true’ and ‘real’” (Barbehön et al. 2015: 251). More precisely, *problematizations* are a “two-stage process including ‘how and why certain things (behavior, phenomena, processes) become a problem’ (Foucault 1985a: p.115), and how they are shaped as particular objects for thought (Deacon, 2000: p. 139; see also Deacon, 2006: p. 186 fn 2)” (ibid.); i.e. how these problematised behaviour, phenomena or processes become *problematizations*.

Problematizations do not appear out of thin air but emerge within social practices (Bacchi 2012b). “Foucault describes “practices” as “places” where ‘what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect’ (Foucault, 1991b: p. 75). They have a judicative component, establishing and applying norms, controls and exclusions (“rules imposed”), and a “veridicative” component, rendering “true/false” discourse possible (“reasons given”) (Flynn, 2005: p. 31)” (ibid.: 2-3). In his studies of sexuality and madness, for example, Michel Foucault shows that these phenomena only exist as particular kinds of objects for thought—i.e. as forms of pathology, illness—because they have been made/problematised as such by the productive relationship forged by forms of knowledge (e.g. psychoanalysis, medicine) along with political structures, laws, requirements and regulations surrounding practices dealing with pathologies (ibid.). Without these pathologising/problematising practices, these phenomena would exist but not made/problematised as pathological objects for thought to act upon. In a sense, problematisations are productive strategic relations articulated around forms of knowledge, political structures, moral/ethical attitudes and contingent events, yet without leadership.

Problematizations as foci of study in political science are pertinent objects of research for two reasons. First, because they produce forms of truth which have effects on how we live (ibid.). “Foucault’s particular concern is how governing takes place: ‘My problem is to know how men (sic) govern (themselves and others) by means of the production of truth’ (Foucault, 1980b: p. 47 in Castel, 1994: p. 238)” (ibid.: 2). “Problematizations are framing mechanisms; they determine what is considered to be significant and what is left out of consideration” (2009: 263). Second, putting into question—i.e. problematising—the problematisations allows us to show the social construction behind the apparent naturalised, taken-for-granted (i) objects of thought in forms of knowledge as well (ii) of modes of thinking in forms of rule (or government rationalities) such as governmentality as a style of problematisation, and thus reveal the processes by which these were made. Studying “problematizations opens up innovative research strategies that make politics, understood as the complex strategic relations that shape lives, visible” (2012b: 1).

## 2.3 Discourse

Discourse is a high-profile yet ambiguous term with a variety of meanings within social theory and a diversity of usage in the humanities and social sciences. In its most common sense it refers to language use and linguistic practices in social context.<sup>13</sup> In a Foucauldian poststructuralist perspective, however, “discourses are socially produced forms of knowledges that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a ‘given social object or practice’” (McHoul and Grace 1993: 31, cited in: Bacchi 2009: 35 and Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 35). The focus here is therefore on discourses as knowledges (in the plural) rather than discourse as language (in the singular). In this sense, discourses must not be confused with ideology.

Discourses as forms of knowledges, also named discursive formations and discursive practices, are social practices producing statements with commonly accepted truth status; e.g. scientific disciplines, professional expertise, common sense, conventional wisdom, etc. (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016).

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13 See for instance John Flowerdew and John E. Richardson eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (Routledge, 2018); Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland eds., *The Discourse Reader* (Routledge, 2006, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition); and Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* (Sage, 2016, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

Because these truth claims appear to be ‘in the true’, they are often left unexamined. For Michel Foucault:

“Each society has its régime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault 1980: 131, cited in: Bacchi 2009: 35 and Ziai 2016: 101-102).

Forms of knowledges or discursive practices have unequal relationships. Some enjoy a higher, dominant truth status and others are ‘subjugated’. While the former “tend to be discourses that are institutionally sanctioned, the products of the institutional (non-discursive) practices that sustain them” (Bacchi 2009: 35) such as those of the dominant political-economic system, the latter are “subjugated knowledges”, referring to those ‘knowledges’ less likely to be sanctioned [... such as] erudite knowledges that have been silenced, and ‘indigenous knowledges’, that survive at the margins. [...] For Foucault, these knowledges provide points of rupture to challenge conventional ‘knowledges’” (ibid.: 36). In addition, discursive formations “are not homogeneous but contain internal tensions and contradictions, which leave them susceptible to challenge and reshaping” (ibid.: 37).

Discourses have effects, “[t]hey make things happen, most often through their truth status” (ibid.: 35) and “make it difficult to speak outside the terms of reference they establish for thinking about people and social relations” (Bacchi 2018a). “Discourses do not represent nor depict reality. Discourses (re)produce our understanding and conception of reality. [...] Discourses govern the sayable, the conceivable/thinkable and the doable/feasible. They organise reality” (Landwehr 2008: 21; my own translation). They “operate through “enunciative modalities” that specify the spaces—the “subject positions”—that can be taken up. Because discourses are plural, complex, and inconsistent practices, “subject positions” are neither mandatory nor determinative” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 37).

## 2.4 Power

In everyday speech as well as in social and political theory, power is a polysemic word whose meaning(s) everyone grasps yet defines only with difficulty. A classical definition is provided by German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920): “‘Power’ (*Macht*) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (Weber 1978: 53, cited in Pasquino 2011: 2100). Power is thus

understood as power *over* in which some people (those *with* power) prevent other people (who *lack* power) from doing things they may wish to do or compel them to do things they may not wish to do; power is therefore perceived here as either “good” or “bad” (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). In this coercive/restrictive perception of power, power homogeneously emanates top-down from the sovereign position of powerful individuals (e.g. the elites) who possess it as if it were a thing but at the same time is separated and independent from them (ibid.; Wenman 2018).

By contrast to this conventional view, for Foucauldian poststructuralists power is conceived as “decentred and diffuse networks of power relations” (Death 2011: 4) which are “heterogeneous strategic relations” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 31). Power is relational; it is defined by and in every relation. “The language of *power relations*, therefore, replaces references to power *tout court*” (ibid.: 28). “For Foucault (1990a: 92, 94), power is ‘exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations’ and involves ‘ceaseless struggles and confrontations’” (ibid.). “[T]here are various types of power relationships—ranging from fluid, shifting relationships between individuals, to situations where power relations “congeal” in “states of domination” (Foucault 1987: 114, cited in ibid.: 28).

Most importantly however, power is not normative, it is neither bad or good, it is productive. “[P]ower relations make “things” come into existence:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him (sic) belong to this production” (Foucault 1984a: 204–205, cited in ibid.: 29).

Power relations produce forms of knowledges, discourses and objects of thought; it produces also identities and subjects/subjectivities as well as particular codes of conduct and behaviour, objects (e.g. nation-states), places (e.g. developing countries), etc. “[T]o a considerable extent, who we are, is an *effect of power*. Power shapes our conceptions of ourselves and of the world at the very deepest levels” (Bacchi 2009: 37-38; emphasis in the original). According to Carol Bacchi, “[Nikolas] Rose (2000) offers a useful example of this understanding of power. He explores the conception of freedom in democratic liberal regimes. In his interpretation, liberal governance takes place through *producing* political subjects who imagine themselves to be free and who act accordingly” (ibid.: 38).

In regards to the relationship between power and knowledge, for Michel Foucault “[t]echniques of knowledge’ and ‘strategies of power’ are ‘joined together’ in *discourse* [...], forming “local centres’ of

power-knowledge' (Foucault 1990a: 98, cited in Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 31). The power-knowledge nexus is a mutually influencing relation: "power is involved in producing forms of knowledge, and [...] knowledges exercise power or influence in shaping people's lives" (Bacchi 2009: 276, Glossary).

In a relational and productive/performative conception of power, resistance to power has not only very similar characteristics to power but they are both mutually reinforcing. "[P]oints of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (Foucault 1990a: 95). This resistance operates at the microlevel: 'in the transgression and contestation of societal norms; in the disruption of metanarratives of humanism; ... in the 're-appearance' of 'local popular', 'disqualified', and 'subjugated knowledges'; and in the aesthetic of self-creation' (Kulynych 1997: 328). Moreover, because there is no outside to power, resistance is necessarily implicated in methods of governing and 'networks of governmentality'—'the processes implemented for conducting others' (Foucault 2009: 268). For example, counter-conducts, a term used to describe struggle against forms of governmentality, simultaneously challenge and reinforce dominant power relations (Death 2010: 239)" (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 31). Thus, "[w]ith power understood to be both productive and dispersed, resistance becomes possible (see Death 2006 cited in *ibid.*: 43).

In Foucauldian poststructuralism three different forms of power/rule coexist with each others: sovereign power, disciplinary power and governmentality. They form together a triangle of rule of sovereignty, discipline and government. Sovereign power is the form of rule "where the problem is how to perpetuate one's rule over a given territory and its subjects' (Walters and Haahr 2005, p. 9), and where the 'privileged instruments' are law, violence and pageantry" (Bacchi 2009: 26-27). Disciplinary power "targets individual bodies and uses the techniques of surveillance and normalisation 'to produce useful, calculable subjects' (Walters and Haahr 2005, p. 10)" (*ibid.*: 27). Governmentality is the government of the collective body of the population. These forms of power not only coexist next to each other but also intersect. Foucault "speaks about two poles 'around which the organization of power over life was deployed' (Foucault 1979, p. 139): biopower (or biopolitics), which looks at society in its entirety as a ('species') body, and anatomo-politics (or discipline), which targets individual bodies" (*ibid.*: 28). Social institutions such as prisons, factories and schools are famous analytical examples that showed how "certain forms of knowledge come together with more physical strategies and techniques to produce forms of discipline, norms or modes of 'bio-power' that are 'intimately related to our bodies and [seek to shape and direct] our everyday behaviour'" (Gordon 1980: 142 cited in Wenman 2018: 132-133). In the modern state, biopower and anatomo-politics fulfill an essential power function: normalisation. Foucault names it the 'normalizing state' (Bacchi 2009). This goes even further, when normalisation reaches self-regulation. Indeed, "[o]nce norms of desirable behaviour are set, people as

political subjects become involved in self-surveillance and self-regulation. The government (in the narrow sense) ‘enlists’ other groups (doctors, psychologists, social scientists) in the task of setting those norms through the knowledges they produce. The argument here is that, due to self-regulation, the arm of the government can rest lightly. Theorists (Miller and Rose 1990, p. 9) working in this tradition – studies of governmentality – refer to government taking place ‘at a distance’. According to Foucault, liberalism and neoliberalism are forms of rule (governmental rationalities) that display this character of ‘government at a distance’” (ibid.: 29).

## 2.5 Governmentality

Governmentality is a neologism created by Michel Foucault combining the words govern and mentality and originating from his lectures titled *Security, Territory, Population* at the Collège de France during academic year 1977-78.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the study of governmentality has developed into governmentality studies, a social scientific field of investigation in its own right providing ‘analytics of government’ which include but beyond the state and its agencies and present among others in (economic) policy studies, cultural studies, feminism and gender studies and postcolonial studies.<sup>15</sup> “It offers a rethinking of many of the assumed categories and concepts in policy studies. Specifically, it eschews grand theory based on the role of “the state” or “ideology”, turning instead to the routine and mundane practices involved in the “shaping of governable domains and governable persons” (Rose et al. 2006: 101; cited in Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 42).

According to Carol Bacchi (2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016), governmentality has two meanings: a generic one which is the abstraction of a specific one. Specifically, it describes a particular form of government/ruling that emerged in Western Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth century in which the security, reproduction, productivity, and stability of nationally defined “populations” became concerns of the state. In the view of Foucault, “the growth of population [...] considered within national borders, and the growing complexities of social relationships posed new challenges to governments. Securing the life and health of populations became a social imperative, a kind of social

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14 See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

15 See for instance Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (University of Chicago Press, 1991) as well as Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann and Thomas Lemke eds., *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges* (Routledge, 2011)

unconscious, within government” (Bacchi 2009: 26). Novel ways of thinking and forms of knowledge about wealth generation (e.g. political economy) and new governing practices and technics (e.g. statistics, census, police, etc.) emerged in parallel and unintentionally combined together providing answers states could take advantage of to deal with the “problems” they faced (i.e. groups of human beings problematised with the concept of population) and effectively maintain order within “populations”. “Population” thus became both means and end of government:

“One of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of “population” as an economic and political problem; population as wealth, population as manpower” (Foucault 1979. p. 25; cited in *ibid.*: 27).

Foucault named this particular mode of thinking ‘biopower’ or ‘biopolitics’, referring to “a form of politics entailing the administration of the processes of life of populations” (Dean 1999, p. 98; cited in *ibid.*: 28).

Deriving from his historical observation and analysis, Foucault further proposed a more generic meaning to governmentality as different ‘modes of rule’, or more precisely as “*styles* of problematization, described variously as “grids of intelligibility”, “interpretive grids”, “governmentalities” or “political rationalities”. Rationality in this context refers not to the exercise of reason but to the rationales and logics for rule that make the activity of government both thinkable and practicable” (Castel 1994: 148 and Gordon 1991: 3 cited in Bacchi 2012b: 5). However, “it is important not to think of these ‘mentalities of rule’ as planned and intentional. Rather, they emerge from a complex array of developments. To say that ‘mentalities of rule’ are unplanned, however, does not mean that some groups do not benefit more than others from their deployment” (Bacchi 2009: 155).

The study of contemporary govern-*mentalities* directs analytical attention “to ‘rationalities’ and ‘technologies’ [of governing] in both conventional political institutions and the multiple agencies and groups (academics, professionals, experts) which contribute to societal administration” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 42). “Problematizations play a prominent role in the study of governmentality. As Dean (1999: 27) describes, the key starting point of an analytics of government is a ‘problematization’, the action of calling into question some aspect of the ‘conduct of conduct’. [...] A critical analytic task becomes discerning ‘which of these problematizations indicate lines of fracture and transformation and which indicate a consolidation of regimes of government’ (Dean 1999: 44; cited in *ibid.*: 45). First, governmental rationalities are divided in two broad families: ‘*social* rationalities of government’ on the one hand, and ‘*postsocial* or advanced liberal rationalities’ on the other (Rose et al. 2006: 98; cited in *ibid.*: 43). Governmental rationalities are neither static nor ideal-typical, but are always undergoing



modifications and are characterised by singularity (ibid.). Outcomes of government rationalities are never determined, but contingent (ibid.). Rationalities of government draw on vocabulary, theories, ideas, philosophies and forms of knowledge in which we live and by which we mostly think (ibid.), broadening and including thereby governing practices to non-state practices. “Identifying and analyzing governmental rationalities, therefore, encourages a questioning of forms of thinking (‘unexamined ways of thinking’; Foucault 1994a: 456) that guide and shape how governing takes place and what it is possible for us to become” (ibid.: 43).

Second, governmental technologies “encompass the mechanisms through which governing takes place, including specific instruments such as censuses, league tables, performance data, and case management, and the vast array of programs and policies produced to shape the conduct of individuals and groups” (ibid.: 44). They “tend to reflect specific political rationalities” (ibid.). However, like information and communication technologies, they also “shape what it is possible to think and hence plan or organize in the way of governing. Technologies, thus, form part of an ontological politics (Mol 1999) that enables some realities and disables others” (ibid.). Governmental technologies constitute a very material dimension of discursive practices.

## 2.6 Policy

Public policy is a central political phenomenon and research object in political science. Needless to say that there are a variety of approaches and conceptions of policy in policy studies and policy analysis. Yet, according to Carol Bacchi (2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016) there is a prevalent view among them that describes policies as follows:

- policies address fixed and identified problems existing out there and waiting to be solved;
- governments react to problems and policy analysis is limited to competing ways of solving policy problems;
- Policies are rational, orderly, and capable of producing objective solutions to problems.

By contrast, the policy conception of the particular Foucauldian poststructuralist approach taken in this master thesis differs in several ways. First, policies are considered as governmental practices of problematisation or problematising activities that do not *solve* or *address* “problems” but instead *produce* them and *give shape* to them (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). In this view, “‘problems’ are **endogenous**—created within—rather than **exogenous**—existing outside—the policy-making process

(Bacchi 2009: xi; emphasis in the original). Accordingly, I suggest that policy agendas—like the NUA/GUA—are moments or occurrences of stabilisation or crystallisation/solidification of ongoing problematisations.

Second, “[p]olicy in this view refers to how order is maintained through politics, understood as the heterogeneous strategic relations that shape lives and worlds. An important part of this “order maintaining” activity involves categorization: of “objects” (e.g., “traffic”, “addiction”, “literacy”); of “subjects” (e.g., “citizens”, “low SES”, “asylum seekers”); and “places” (e.g., “the state”, “Europe”)” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 5-6). Finally, since “we are governed through problematisations rather than through policies [...] we need to direct our attention away from assumed ‘problems’ to the shape and character of problematisations” (Bacchi 2009: xi).

Accordingly, policy is thus:

- a social and cultural phenomenon, not merely the technical/mechanical output of polity and politics;
- a phenomenon in correspondence/contingency with wider social and political processes;
- a phenomenon situated/embedded in particular historical, geographical, cultural, social, economic and material contexts.

# CAROL BACCHI'S 'WHAT'S THE PROBLEM REPRESENTED TO BE?' (WPR) APPROACH: A POSTSTRUCTURAL METHOD IN DISCURSIVE POLICY ANALYSIS

To be politically relevant, the analysis of discourses in a Foucauldian poststructuralist approach must on the one hand study the rules of formation of discourses and on the other hand analyse their concrete social and political effects. Regarding the formative process, the analysis starts with ‘*what* people said’ in statements (not ‘what *people* said’, like in language use-oriented discourse analyses) and asks “how it is possible for “*what* is said” to be “*sayable*” (Foucault 1991a: 59; cited in: Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 36; emphasis in original). Since “[t]he ‘rules of formation’ of discursive practices mark the meeting point of discourse ‘with the nondiscursive domains of institutions, political events and economic processes’ (Bernauer 1992, p. 92; cited in Bacchi 2009: 37), their analysis must address “the conditions of exercise, functioning, of institutionalization of [...] discourses (Foucault 1991c, p. 65; cited in *ibid.*) and asks the following guiding questions: “What individuals, what groups or classes have access to a particular kind of discourse? How is the relationship institutionalized between the discourse, speakers and its destined audience? How is the relationship of the discourse to its author indicated and defined? How is struggle for control of discourses conducted between classes, nations, linguistic, cultural or ethnic collectivities? (Foucault 1991c, p. 60; cited in *ibid.*).

On the other hand, in regards to the implications of discourses, with the mapping of the mechanisms, processes and procedures of discursive practices “it becomes possible to reflect on the limits imposed on what *can be* thought or said about the issues under consideration. Further, through exposing the discursive practices at work the prospect of articulating the “unspeakable” and thinking the “unthinkable” is opened up. Mapping a discursive practice also facilitates identification of the mechanisms at work in the production of “subjects” and “objects”” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 37).

### 3.1. Creator and origins

Drawing upon the intellectual traditions of social construction theory, poststructuralism, feminist body theory and governmentality studies (Bacchi 2009: 264), the “What’s the Problem Represented to be?” (WPR) approach is an analytical tool that facilitates the critical interrogation of public policies, commonly accepted categories as well as other governing practices and techniques. It offers a way to think how we are governed, how governing takes place, how we are produced as subjects within governing practices and with what implications for those who are so produced. It was developed from the late 1990s to the mid 2010s by Carol Bacchi (1999; 2000; 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2015; 2016; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016), an Australian historian and political scientist, now Professor Emerita of Politics at the University of Adelaide Faculty of Arts.

Building upon her engagement with feminist thinking in interrogating politics of knowledge and practices in policy research since the 1980s, an earlier version of the WPR analytical strategy appeared in Bacchi’s 1999 book *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems* which examines different policy areas associated with so called women inequalities. Drawing on her research work focussing on Australian and international gender and health policy, she elaborated her approach ten years later in *Analysing Policy: What's the problem represented to be?* (2009). Together with Susan Goodwin (2016) they recently updated it in *Poststructural Policy Analysis: A Guide to Practice* which includes results from other scholars’ experience with the application of the WPR tool in their own research fields and projects.

### 3.2. Premises, objective and proceeding

Bacchi’s “critical mode of analysis” (2009: xv) revolves around her notion of ‘problem representation’. To avoid confusion when using the term problematisation, Carol Bacchi prefers to employ ‘problem representation’ which for her has the same meaning as the former. Problem representation thus refers to the understanding of the “problem” implied in any policy or rule (ibid.: xii) and which appear either explicitly or implicitly in policy proposals or solutions. “Foucault specifies that problematisation ‘doesn't mean representation of a pre-existing object’ [...] Shapiro (1988, p. xi) says ‘representations do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value ...’. A problem representation therefore is the way in which a particular policy ‘problem’ is constituted *in the real*. Problem representations are elaborated in *discourse*” (ibid.: 35). Problem representations are also

performative/productive since they produce effects; they “affect what gets done or not done, and how people live their lives” (Bacchi 2012b: 22). The analytic emphasis is put on problem-*questioning* instead of problem-*solving*. Nikolas Rose (2004) proposes a similar understanding with “answers” and “questions”, instead of “proposals” and “problem representations” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 2):

“If policies, arguments, analyses and prescriptions purport to provide answers, they do so only in relation to a set of questions. Their very status as answers is dependent upon the existence of such questions. If, for example imprisonment, marketization, community care are seen as answers, to what are they answers? And, in reconstructing the problematizations which accord them intelligibility as answers, these grounds become visible, their limits and presuppositions are opened for investigation in new ways.” (Rose 2004: 58)

The purpose of Bacchi’s WPR strategy is to reconstruct the problematisations that accord (policy) proposals intelligibility as answers. It is to examine the problem representations and what Foucault call the ‘unexamined ways of thinking’ contained in policy proposals and on which they rely. The intent is to problematise the problematisations on which the problem representations rest upon. A WPR analysis starts from the policy proposal and “put in question their underlying premises, show that they have a history, and insist on questioning their implications” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 16). Hence, “the point of analysis is not to look for the one correct response to an issue but to examine how it is “questioned, analysed, classified and regulated” at “specific times and under specific circumstances” (Deacon 2000: 127 cited in Bacchi 2018b). By “identifying, reconstructing, and interrogating problematizations” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 19), the underlying goal is to make visible the politics involved in problematisation practices (Bacchi 2012b). In this respect, Bacchi’s “expansive understanding of politics extends well beyond political institutions, parties, and so on to include the *heterogeneous strategic relations and practices* that shape who we are and how we live” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 14).

“A WPR approach has an explicitly normative agenda. It presumes that some problem representations benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others. It also takes the side of those who are harmed. The goal is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects. However, there is no presumption that patterns of harm and benefit are predictable and even in their distribution” (Bacchi 2009: 44).

To sum up, Bacchi's WPR analytic strategy rests on three key premises (2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016):

- You can 'read off' how the 'problem' is represented from examining the proposal or proposed 'solution'. What we propose to do about something indicates what we think needs to change or to be done, hence what we assume as problematic, and hence what the problem is represented to be;
- the analysis therefore *starts from* proposals or proposed solutions (policies) and not from stated problems, and "works backwards" to see how "problems" are produced as particular sorts of problem within them;
- there are no problems *separate* from the proposals purported to address them. The (policy) problem representation is implicit *within* the (policy) proposal. No need to go outside the policy to find the problem representation.

The application of Bacchi's WPR approach consists in asking six interrelated questions to policy proposals. This sequence is enhanced by a seventh step which is an accompanying undertaking to apply the questions to one's own proposals for change in order to foster self-reflexivity (Bacchi 2009: 263–4; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 20):

1. What's the problem (e.g., of "gender inequality", "drug use/abuse", "economic development", "global warming", "childhood obesity", "irregular migration", etc.) represented to be in a specific policy or policies? What is assumed to be the 'problem'?
2. What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem' (*problem representation*)? Which meanings and presuppositions are necessary for this representation of the 'problem' to make sense or to be coherent?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about? How has this representation of the 'problem' come to prominence?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be conceptualized differently? What does this representation of the 'problem' take for granted and leave unquestioned?

5. What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’? How they affect our lives and the lives of others? How they influence who we are and our views of others?
6. How and where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced? Who supports these problem representations, and how they could be challenged, if we are unhappy with them?
7. Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations.

### 3.3. Benefits and usefulness

For Carol Bacchi, although the ‘reading off’ of problem representation from a proposal might appear at first a truism, it has in fact a tremendous potential for thinking at policies and other political phenomena. By opening up governing practices of problematisations to critical scrutiny, the general value of the WPR approach lies in its capacity to uncover problem representations contained in policy proposals and to examine these for their effects as well as to demonstrate how policy “problems” and issues as well as specific categories such as objects and subjects were made, and therefore can be unmade (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). It also “draws attention to tensions and contradictions in problem representations, again highlighting limitations or inadequacies in the way the ‘problem’ is being represented” (Bacchi 2009: 13). Bacchi and Goodwin further suggest that the WPR approach “enables policy workers to reflect critically on governing practices, to theorize their location within those practices, and to resist practices deemed to have deleterious consequences for specific people and groups” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 9).

In addition, the WPR approach suits well the study of continuity and change in policy discourse. “In this form of analysis, what is of most interest and concern are continuities within policies” (Bacchi 2016: 11). By comparing across time and space the development of the deep-seated premises on which statements of problems and solutions rest upon, it becomes not only possible to track the journey of ‘travelling ideas’—or more exactly of travelling problem representations—(Bacchi 2009), but also “to identify the particular combination of practices and relations that give a ‘problem’ a certain shape in a specific context, and indicate that different practices can produce contrasting problematizations” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 22–3). In this sense, a “critical analytic task becomes discerning ‘which of these problematizations indicate lines of fracture and transformation and which indicate a consolidation

of regimes of government' (Dean 1999: 44)" (ibid.: 45). Finally, "[o]f particular interest [in a WPR analysis] are the roles of experts and professionals in the process of governing" (Bacchi 2009: ix).

### 3.4. Reception and usage

According to Angelique Bletsas and Chris Beasley who edited a book dedicated to Bacchi's scholarship, the WPR approach is considered to be "perhaps her most crucial contribution to intellectual inquiry and certainly one of the most innovative analytical frameworks developed in recent times" (2012: 1). Bacchi's work is also referred to in three chapters of the *Handbook of Critical Policy Studies* edited not long ago by Frank Fischer, Douglas Torgerson, Anna Durnová and Michael Orsini (2015).<sup>16</sup> Although WPR is especially intended as an hands-on tool for policy workers and analysts, it is also particularly relevant for policy students and scholars (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016; Bletsas and Beasley 2012). It has meanwhile quite successfully been taken over and adapted by a growing number of policy researchers and analysts and continues to be discovered by theorists and practitioners working in diverse fields of social policy at large such as welfare, migration, criminal justice, equality, obesity, education (ibid.). However, to date, applications to the fields of international policy and urban policy seem to be respectively either rare or non-existent.

### 3.5. What WPR is not

It is important to point out what the WPR approach is not regarding other theoretical positions in discourse and policy analyses. First, WPR is not a form of discourse analysis interested in the study of linguistic structures and styles. The text or material selected for examination provides only a starting point in the analysis. It "uses texts as "levers" to open up reflections on the forms of governing, and associated effects, instituted through a particular way of constituting a "problem"" (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 18). Then, in regards to positivist policy analysis, "this approach does not involve a conventional form of policy evaluation" (Bacchi 2009: xiv), analysing the performance of policy

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16 Ch. 5: "Foucault and critical policy studies" by Eva Lövbrand and Johannes Stripple; Ch. 13 "Problem definition and agenda-setting in critical perspective" by Marlon Barbehön, Sybille Münch and Wolfram Lamping; and Ch. 25 "Making gender visible: exploring feminist perspectives through the case of anti-smoking policy" by Stephanie Paterson and Francesca Scala.



implementation and most than often gaps between policy promises and achievements. Finally, in respect to interpretive policy analysts, WPR is not concerned with whoever makes (policy) recommendations and does not deal with competing interpretations of a problem. “WPR does *not* examine how people *represent* an issue, which could form part of some Critical Discourse Analysis projects. Rather, problem representations are the implied “problems” in policy proposals—how a “problem” is characterized and conceptualised *within* a policy proposal or some other text” (Bacchi 2018a).

### 3.6. Practical application of the WPR approach

Before getting a thorough understanding of the role of each seven steps in regards to the WPR approach’s overall objective of “identifying, reconstructing, and interrogating problematizations” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 19), I call attention to a few practical issues, namely the empirical material suitable for WPR, context, nesting and complexity (Bacchi 2009).

#### 3.6.1. Types of empirical material that can be used in a WPR analysis

The WPR approach was originally designed to examine already established policy documents in the form of written texts (e.g. organizational files, charts, records and reports, legislation, judicial decisions, bills, speeches, institutional records, syllabi, interview transcripts, media statements, budgets, program contracts, research reports or even statistical data). It is, however, not limited to this material and research field only. “[T]exts” can be understood expansively to include images, videos, forms of digital communication (e.g. websites, hyperlinks across websites, etc.), [...] ceremonies (as spoken and acted text), organizational culture (as symbols), buildings and mechanisms or practices of government” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 18). Importantly, “[t]he key distinguishing characteristic of the material that can be adopted for a WPR analysis is that it is prescriptive—that it can be understood, possibly in a loose sense, as a *form of proposal* and a guide to conduct” (ibid.). “As proposals to guide conduct, the material adopted for analysis will [...] necessarily indicate what is targeted for change and hence what the “problem” is represented to be” (ibid.: 19).

### **3.6.2. Context**

According to Carol Bacchi, context matters. Knowledge about the context of selected text(s) is thus essential for the application of the WPR approach. Any meaningful WPR analysis cannot be done without informed knowledge of the background as well as surrounding developments. One must however note that writing the context of a specific policy is not only descriptive, neutral and purely objective work as the researching and writing implies selection and interpretation, and therefore political positioning (Bacchi 2009).

### **3.6.3. Nesting**

For each proposal coming under scrutiny and each problem representation identified in a policy text repeated application in whole or parts of the WPR's seven steps sequence might be necessary. "This is because problem representations tend to lodge or 'nest' one within the other [like Russian dolls]" (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 24). For example, "when I ask what the 'problem' of alcohol use is represented to be in WHO statements on alcohol policy, the answer that is offered is 'alcohol problems'. This 'answer' invites the subsequent question—what kinds of 'problems' are 'alcohol problems' represented to be? This next stage of the analysis involves two WPR strategies: examining specific alcohol policy interventions (e.g., controls on numbers of outlets, hours of sale and pricing) to see how they represent the 'problem', and producing an abbreviated genealogy of the concept 'alcohol problems'" (Bacchi 2015: 133). Another example, "competing approaches to reform in the area of girls and education are grounded in different views of both the 'problem' of 'women's inequality' and of the 'problem' of education more generally. In health policy the term 'health' itself requires reflection and interrogation. Similarly, it is important to consider the kind of 'problem' that 'prevention' is represented to be in health policies described as 'preventive'" (Bacchi 2009: 21).

### **3.6.4. Complexity**

"Policies often contain tensions and contradictions. There is seldom a single voice lying behind them. As with text selection, therefore, it is important to recognise the interpretive dimension of the analytic process. Be careful not to distort documents when choosing particular segments to support an interpretation. Acknowledge contesting positions within a document when they are apparent" (Bacchi 2009: 20).

### 3.6.5. Explanation of WPR's analytical steps

The sequence of seven steps may be applied systematically, one question at a time, or in an integrated manner, mixing the answers in a flowing text, or even simply adapted to one's own particular research needs answering not all questions. “[I]t is possible to draw selectively upon the forms of questioning and analysis just described, so long as a self-problematizing ethic is maintained. Not every question needs to be asked every time one engages with the critical thinking the approach offers” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 24). The WPR approach is not a formula, but a form of thinking. The following details the goal of each step and how to put them in practice.

#### **Q1: WHAT'S THE PROBLEM REPRESENTED TO BE IN A SPECIFIC POLICY OR POLICIES?**

To start the analysis, the first step seeks to identify and clarify the problem representation within a specific policy (proposal). “If a government proposes to do something, what is it hoping to change? And, hence, what does it produce as the ‘problem’?” To achieve this, the analyst or researcher must work backwards from the proposed change(s), thereby making explicit what is assumed as problematic in the text. The problem representations identification scheme works as follows:

- a) what we propose to do about something...
- b) ...indicates what we think needs to change,...
- c) ...hence what we assume as problematic,...
- d) ...and hence what the problem is represented to be.

The answer can be fairly straightforward and seems a truism. However, by proceeding this way, it allows entry into the thinking, into the problematisation behind the proposal with no need to step outside of it. The researcher is not imposing an interpretation of the policy “problem”. In addition, in order to clarify the proposal(s) and its problem representation(s), related statements and policy documents—potentially providing further pointers to governing rationales—can also be used. The selection of a starting point depends upon the pertinence to one's work and political priorities.

However, one must be careful as proposals, and therefore problem representations, are not always explicit in policy texts. Yet, they always refer at least to some kind of desired condition serving as a guide of conduct. In addition, more than one problem representation may be

contained in a policy text as “problem representations tend to lodge or “nest” one within the other (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 24), possibly requiring to ask what’s the problem represented be more than once. Problem representations can also be hierarchised, with several problem representations deriving from a dominant one.

It is important to recall that “the objective is not to try to identify the intentions behind a particular policy or program. Nor is the goal to assess the distance between promised changes and the failure to deliver those changes—we are not contrasting stated “solutions” with stated “problems”, and finding the “solutions” wanting. Rather, we start *from* stated “solutions” to inquire into their *implicit* problematization(s)” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 21).

## **Q2: WHAT DEEP-SEATED PRESUPPOSITIONS OR ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLIE THIS REPRESENTATION OF THE “PROBLEM”?**

Once the implied problem representation(s) has/have been identified—and, in the case there are too much to be dealt with at once, singled out—the analysis truly begins. The intent here is threefold (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). The aim is first to interrogate and make visible the conceptual logics, the commonly accepted assumptions, the familiar notions and the established, unexamined ways of thinking constituting the discursive practices underpinning the presuppositions which accord them intelligibility, coherence and truthness, effectually enabling them to operate within society. Second, the purpose is also to consider who or what is targeted as the one(s)/thing(s) who/what need to change. Last, the objective is to find out patterns in problematisations or ‘styles of problematisation’—govern-mentalities as Foucault would put it—that might signal the operation of a particular political or governmental rationality (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 21).

Q2 is a Foucauldian-like archaeological analysis of discourses,<sup>17</sup> understood as relatively bounded socially produced knowledges and considered as forms of truth. The point is to ask not *why* something happens but *how is it possible* for something to happen—what meanings need

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17 “Archaeology is the analysis of discursive formations. It thus looks for the rules of formation that constitute the unity of discourse. These rule concern the objects, concepts, enunciative modalities and strategies of a discourse. It also examines the limits of what can be said within the discourse and what is excluded – the repressive dimension of representing power. Its productive dimension is also relevant: which objects are created, which statements are provided possible, which realities are constructed in the discourse? In archaeology, texts are being analysed not as statements produced by individual subjects, but by the structures of the discourse, by rules which impose themselves on anyone who speaks in this discursive field” (Ziai 2016: 21).

to be in place for a proposal to tick, to make sense, to be . The analysis allows to stand back from notions that we are seldom encouraged to question and to see how they are involved in how we are governed. For that purpose, we look within the selected policy text(s) as well as in related documents at the origins, social constructions and operations of the ontologies, epistemologies, basic and fundamental worldviews, knowledge disciplines, belief systems or cultural and social values, concepts, categories, keywords, binaries and dichotomies underpinning the proposals and problem representations.

Finally, the policy researcher or analyst must remain aware throughout the analysis that his/her position and perspective is itself embedded in deep-seated cultural premises and values. Questioning one's own problem representation(s) is the object of the seventh step of the WPR approach.

### Q3: HOW HAS THIS REPRESENTATION OF THE "PROBLEM" COME ABOUT?

The purpose of the third question is twofold: (i) "to highlight the conditions that allow a particular problem representation to take shape and to assume dominance" (Bacchi 2009: 11) over other competing problem representations in the course of history, and (ii) "to bring to light the plethora of possible alternative developments [that therefore could have been]. "The objective is to see particular developments as singular *events*, rather than as part of an evolution towards an inevitable end-point" (Bacchi 2009: 61). Therefore, "the intent is to disrupt any assumption that what *is* reflects what *has to be*" (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 22), as it "often happens in conventional historical accounts, that current practices and institutions, and the ways 'problems' are understood, are the inevitable product of 'natural' evolution over time" (Bacchi 2009: 10). Thus, "the point of the exercise is to establish that problem representations have a history (genealogy) and that hence they could be otherwise" (Bacchi 2009: 61).

To achieve this, the analysis involves a form of Foucauldian genealogy,<sup>18</sup> starting in the present and going back in time, asking how we have got here from there, and which identifies specific points in time when key decisions were made, taking an issue in a particular direction (Bacchi 2009). By tracing and mapping the differential power relations of non-discursive as well as

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18 "If archaeology provides a synchronic analysis of discourses, genealogy provides the diachronic analysis. It examines the history and transformation of discourses and in particular of the relations of power inherent in them: Which relations of power gave rise to this discourse and which effects of power are produced by this discourse? The aim is to be aware of singularities and discontinuities and to avoid the homogenisation of discourse" (Ziai 2016: 21).

discursive practices engaged in the production of problem representations, with a particular attention directed to “subjugated knowledges” which are those minor knowledges that challenge the scientific consensus and that survive at the margins (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 22), the analysis reveals the twists and turns that led to the contingent emergence of a particular problem representation, hence susceptible to change.

#### **Q4: WHAT IS LEFT UNPROBLEMATIC IN THIS PROBLEM REPRESENTATION? WHERE ARE THE SILENCES? CAN THE “PROBLEM” BE CONCEPTUALIZED DIFFERENTLY?**

The fourth step’s purpose “is to destabilize an existing problem representation by drawing attention to silences, or unproblematized elements, within it” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 22). By asking what fails to be problematised?, what has been left out of the problematisation?, we highlight the constraints, limitations and inadequacies of how a ‘problem’ is being represented (Bacchi 2009). The point is not to find out other ways to think about an issue.

In practice, the comparison of problematisations across time and cross-culturally provides “help to identify the particular combination of practices and relations that give a “problem” a certain shape in a specific context, and indicate that different practices can produce contrasting problematizations” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 22–3). Analyses from questions 2 and 3 are particularly useful. The examination of the simplification mechanism of binaries in the second step indicates for instance distortions and misrepresentations while the genealogy in 3 draws attention to competing problem representations (those that were not taken up ), assisting in the task of identifying silences in those problem representations that gain institutional endorsement (Bacchi 2009: 14).

#### **Q5: WHAT EFFECTS (DISCURSIVE, SUBJECTIFICATION, LIVED) ARE PRODUCED BY THIS REPRESENTATION OF THE “PROBLEM”?**

The objective of the fifth step is to analyse the effects—understood as political implications, not measurable outcomes as in conventional policy evaluation—of identified problem representation(s). The reason is that discursive, subjectification and lived effects, distinct and without predictable patterns yet intertwined and mutually reinforcing, are what Foucault calls ‘dividing practices’ which have uneven social consequences and might be deleterious for members of some social groups rather than to others.

“*[D]iscursive* effects shows how the terms of reference established by a particular problem representation set limits on what can be thought and said. *Subjectification* effects draw attention to how “subjects” are implicated in problem representations, how they are produced as specific kinds of subjects. *Lived* effects, as an analytic category, ensures that the ways in which discursive and subjectification effects translate into people’s lives” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 23).

Since there is also the intention of providing a means to consider the long-range impact of policy interventions in terms of social change, the following sub-questions should be considered an integral part of Q5 (Bacchi 2009: 18):

- What is likely to change with this representation of the ‘problem’?
  - What is likely to stay the same?
  - Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the ‘problem’?
  - Who is likely to be harmed by this representation of the ‘problem’?
- How does the attribution of responsibility for the ‘problem’ affect those so targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to ‘blame’?

#### **Q6: HOW AND WHERE HAS THIS REPRESENTATION OF THE “PROBLEM” BEEN PRODUCED, DISSEMINATED AND DEFENDED? HOW HAS IT BEEN AND/OR HOW CAN IT BE DISRUPTED AND REPLACED?**

The goal in Q6 is to analyse the means by which problem representations are on the one hand promoted, achieving legitimacy and authority, and on the other hand, contested. By highlighting for instance the practices of policy mobility, policy networks and policy entrepreneurs that install and authorize a particular problem representation, the intent, similar as in Q3, is to emphasize the existence and possibility of contestation, to destabilize taken-for-granted “truths” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 23–4). Asking what individuals, what groups or classes have access to a particular kind of discourse? and how is the relationship institutionalized between the discourse, speakers and its destined audience? can be helpful. The role of the media in disseminating and supporting particular problem representations should also be considered (Bacchi 2009: 19).

#### **STEP 7: APPLY THIS LIST OF QUESTIONS TO YOUR OWN PROBLEM REPRESENTATIONS.**

“Given one’s location within historically and culturally entrenched forms of knowledge, we need ways to subject our own thinking to critical scrutiny” (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 24). Therefore, the last step is an invitation for self-reflexivity, to problematise one’s own proposals and thereby problem

representations. It is particularly important for “researchers [...] to [...] not simply buy into certain problem representations without reflecting on their origins, purposes and effects” (Bacchi 2009: 19).

### 3.7 Examples of applied WPR analyses

I now propose two examples to illustrate the WPR approach, first regarding training courses for women and second about Aboriginal health policy. They are both taken from Bacchi (2009: x; xiv-xv) and edited to be read more easily.

#### EXAMPLE 1: TRAINING COURSE FOR WOMEN:

- policy proposal: training courses are offered to women as part of a policy to increase their representation in better paid occupations or in positions of influence.
- Q1: problem representation: women's *lack* of training. The policy proposal of training schemes for women assumes (assumption) that women's lack of training explains their absence from positions of influence.
- Q2: deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlying this representation of the “problem”: thinking about people as needing training relies upon a particular understanding of people as able to learn and acquire skills. This is a form of socially produced knowledge based on, among others, social psychology of development. This presupposition is within the proposal and underpins the policy to be intelligible. This commonly accepted thinking as well as developmental psychology, however, must be put in question. It is not truth, but within the true, it is what is accepted as truth. So, psychology becomes a knowledge involved in how we are governed.
- Q3: [not dealt with in the example]
- Q4: unproblematic and silences: in this specific proposal little attention is paid to the kinds of work made available, the other demands created by caring commitments, the cultural assumption that women will undertake those caring commitments, and so on.



- Q5: discursive, subjectification and lived effects: it is at least possible that, with this understanding of the ‘problem’, little will change in regards to women’s share in better paid occupations or positions of influence.
- Q6: [not dealt with in the example]

## EXAMPLE 2: ABORIGINAL HEALTH:

- policy proposal: to explain the high incidence of child mortality in the Northern Territory, a 1972 Australian policy statement on Aboriginal health identified the ‘semi-nomadic life of some of the Aborigines’ as a contributing factor.
- Q1: problem representation: the “problem” is represented to be Aboriginal people's way of life and the solution, by implication, was for them to change their lifestyle.
- Q2: deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlying this representation of the “problem”: presumptions about desirable and undesirable lifestyles. In addition, this example of policy indicates the close intermeshing of the medical profession and medical technologies in Australian governance.
- Q3: [not dealt with in the example]
- Q4: unproblematic and silences: a social scientist (not under contract to the government) offered an alternative representation of the “problem”: instead of emphasis being placed on Aboriginal failure to assimilate to our norms, it should rather be put on our failure to devise strategies that accommodate to their folkways. The proposal here locates the “problem” in the inflexibility of Australian health services at the time rather than in the recalcitrance of the Aborigines. This problem representation carries very different implications for what needs to change – if the “problem” is the mode of delivery of the medical system, this is what needs to change.
- Q5: discursive, subjectification and lived effects: reflect on how such a representation of the “problem” has implications for the ways in which Aboriginal people are portrayed and the accompanying impact on race relations in Australia.
- Q6: [not dealt with in the example]

As presented in details, Carol Bacchi's WPR approach can be a powerful analytical tool for the political analysis of policy documents and other prescriptive statements. In the following chapter 5, I will apply her method to the text of the NUA. While the first section will identify and clarify the central problem representations contained within it, the second section will ask and answers (as much as possible) questions 2 to 6 to two problem representations, first in a systematic way and the other one in an integrated manner. But before that, I will now in the fourth chapter provide some contexts in order for the reader to get more familiar with the policy document of the NUA.

# CONTEXTUALISING THE *NEW URBAN AGENDA*

This fourth chapter provides a context analysis of the NUA in order for the reader to get familiar with the policy document under investigation. As such, it offers some insight of the agenda-setting/building process of the NUA. For that purpose, it follows the recommendations of Reiner Keller (2011: 100) and Achim Landwehr (2008: 107–8) who consider four dimensions of context in any discourse analysis:

- The *institutional* context are the conditions under which the material for examination came into existence. It considers the history, reasons, purpose, intention, structure, power relationship, addressee and other features characterising the institutional field of the object of research as well as the extent to which these are reflected into the structure and substance of the text.
- The *situational* context asks foremost the question about who does what when and where. It looks at the authors, participants and attendees, their roles and relations to each other. It looks as well at the possible rituals arranging in a meaningful way the multitude of constituting acts while taking into account the geography of the place and the spatial configuration of the settings in which the event happens. It thereby outlines an ethnosociology of the event.
- The *media/material* context is about the form of the medium used to convey the information contained in the material to be analysed. Following the principle of ‘the medium is the message’, whether it is a printed book, a video or an audiotape makes a difference.
- The *general societal* context includes the overall historical, social, political, economic, environmental and cultural situation—in relation to the research question—in which the investigated material exists.

However, we will only deal here with the two first. The media/material context is of importance solely for historical documents whose materiality can bear significant information for the discourse analyst, which is notably not the case here. In the general societal context, the process of worldwide urbanisation could be exposed, yet this would by far expand the scope of this master thesis. In this

regard, I would recommend for a conventional, mainstream view on the phenomenon Eugenie L. Birch's and Susan M. Wachter's co-edited book *Global Urbanization* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); for a critical historical-materialist standpoint, the volume edited by Neil Brenner *Implosions / Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (jovis Verlag, 2014); and for a critical postcolonial "southern" perspective, the reader co-edited by Susan Parnell and Sophie Oldfield *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South* (Routledge, 2014).

## 4.1 Institutional context

### 4.1.1 A brief history of the global urban agenda

From the 'Urban Internationale' to the Habitat process: internationalisation and institutionalisation of the urban problematique since the 1890s.

As the literature review of the introductory chapter revealed the blatant historical knowledge deficit on the GUA, I therefore offer now a brief reconstruction of the political history of the policy phenomenon. I propose to divide the history of the international institutionalisation of the GUA in two distinctive periods: first the 'Urban Internationale', spanning from the 1890s to the 1960s, and then the Habitat process, ongoing since the 1970s.

Attempts to produce international definitions of urban problems and their solutions date back at least to the end of the nineteenth century (Clarke 2012; Dogliani 2002, 2017; Meller 1995; Saunier 2001; Saunier and Edwen eds. 2008; Wagner 2016; Ward 2005). The 'Urban Internationale' (UI), a term coined by historian Pierre-Yves Saunier (2001), describes the existence between the 1890s and 1960s of an "international milieu that was dedicated to the study of issues relating to cities" (Saunier 2001: 381) and moved by "the conviction [...] that urban problems were universal and could be solved through international cooperation" (ibid.: 380). Ideologically, the UI was at the crossroad of socialism, liberalism, pacifism, internationalism and municipalism. This transnational sphere of the urban emerged in European and North American countries in the two decades before the First World War as a web of personal relations of concerned 'men of good will' and from the convergence of interests between on the one hand established movements seeking national welfare and international peace, and on the other hand the growing importance of knowledge and expertise produced by social scientists, architects/planners and municipal officers (Meller 1995; Saunier 2001). Indeed, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century "the possibilities of international rivalry leading to war and social unrest leading to revolution

created strong fears. [...] Failing to gain support from national governments, the city became the focus of attention” (Meller 1995: 300–1) since it was seen as a place of chaos and disorder, perceived as the consequence of these countries’ common experience of mass urbanisation, industrialisation, political change and interrelated dreadful social effects. Therefore, “the improvement of modern city life seemed the best way to guarantee [social and international] peace in order to foster social evolution in the future” (ibid.: 301).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the importance of “efficient management of cities and their public services as an economic imperative” (ibid.: 307) started to become a conventional wisdom.

Since mid-nineteenth century, international expositions and other World Fairs, displaying at the same time national rivalries and international cooperation, provided a regular meeting place for activists, social scientists and urban experts across national borders while private philanthropies funded the production, exchange and exhibition of knowledge (Meller 1995). Congresses including exhibitions became in the course of time the structuring events of the international life of the UI and one of them became particularly important for the history of the GUA (Meller 1995; Saunier 2001). The first international conference with a comprehensive programme on urban issues was the Congrès international de l’Art de Construire les villes et l’Organisation de la Vie communale (literally: International congress for the art of building cities and organisation of community life), a week-long side-event of the 1913 Ghent International Exposition in Belgium (Meller 1995; Saunier 2001; UCLG 2013; Wagner 2016; Whyte 2014). This event was the birth certificate of the international municipal movement as its main outcome was the foundation of the Union Internationale des Villes which eventually became United Cities and Local Governments in 2004 (UCLG 2013; Whyte 2014), which is the UN of subnational governments. Many other international conferences and congresses were held by international associations in the following decades such as the International Congresses for Modern Architecture or CIAM (Mumford 2000) and the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (Wagner 2016), contributing to a very large extent to the definition of urban problems and their solutions at the international level before the UN.

In the Interwar period and even more after World War Two, the UI evolved from informal transnational networks towards institutions with permanent headquarters and staff, either as specialised associations with international membership or organising the international activities of municipalities

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19 A good illustration of this state of mind is the title Ebenezer Howard gave to its world famous seminal 1898 published planning manifesto: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (known as *Garden Cities of To-morrow*) where “To-Morrow” refers to the idea of (social) progress, “Peaceful path” to international and social peace, and “real reform” to social reform.

and representing them on the international stage (Saunier 2001). American philanthropic foundations (e.g. Carnegie, Rockefeller and Ford) played a key role in this internationalising institutionalisation process by often funding these organisations and staffing them with managers either trained by these foundations' educational programs or with some of their former managers (ibid.). Even though the degree of institutional integration between the associations and organisations composing the UI and the intergovernmental international system of first the League of Nations and then the United Nations Organization was rather weak, the level of functional integration was rather strong as the former's most influential members and highly-trained experts were often hired by the latter as project managers in charge of policy content as well as field operations (ibid.).

Although the UI was never monolithic or homogeneous and expanded its geographical scope to South Americans in the Interwar and to Asians and Africans after the Second World War, it remained nonetheless predominantly Euro-centred, male-dominated, elitist and paternalistic (ibid.). Due to this heterogeneity, the UI was not free of conflicts and tensions. Indeed, several universalisation projects, influenced by the dynamic balance of power within the international system, constituted the UI. As such, it was “a place of struggle for definition of the most appropriate objects, methods, tools and people to think about and act on the city” (ibid.: 382) and “where differing concepts and definitions of the city as a universal phenomenon came face to face” (ibid.: 383). The UI was “a place of symbolic power [...], an environment where ways of judging, apprehending and acting on the city were defined, where expertise and professional legitimacies were created, where knowledge and disciplines were constructed, and where the profiles of politicians responsible for urban issues were modified” (ibid.: 382) long before global multilateral organisations started dealing with them.

The foundation and the emergence of the UN constituted a major change for the UI. Due to war destructions, decolonisation and nation-building processes and the emergence of development as international practice, issues related to urbanisation, housing and planning became politically visible at the international level (ibid.). “The technical assistance programmes launched by the UN and its affiliated agencies and others by the 1950s reinforced and extended the transnational networks of progressive planners, designers, activists and social reformers, which had been growing since the mid-nineteenth century [...] and which now began to coalesce as a global scholarly community (Shoshkes 2006: 190). Experts like Ernest Weissmann (1903-1985), Constantinos A. Doxiadis (1913-1975), Jaqueline Tyrwhitt (1905-1983), and Barbara Ward (1914-1981) were instrumental in establishing an urban *development* agenda within the UN system in the postwar period.

The first interest to summon an international conference under UN auspices and establish an intergovernmental mechanism for housing and urban planning issues within the UN system dates back to 1946 (Carlson 1978).<sup>20</sup> From the late 1940s to the early 1970s, issues related to urbanisation, cities and human settlements including housing and planning were mostly dealt—with respect to UN’s intergovernmental level—within ECOSOC under the rubric of ‘social questions’. In the 1950s, two lengthy reports prepared by the Department of Social Affairs of the United Nations: *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation, With special reference to standards of living* (1952) and *Report on the World Social Situation, including studies of urbanization in under-developed areas* (1957), illustrates well this state of mind. From 1948 to 1955 existed within the UN Social Affairs Division a Housing, Town and Country Planning Section (UN HTCP). In January 1954 took place in New Delhi the First United Nations International Symposium on Housing and Community Planning (Shoshkes 2006; Wakely et al. 2014). In 1956, ECOSOC established within the Secretariat of the UN the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning in order to provide technical assistance in these fields (Wakely et al. 2014), and in 1962 it created the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, a small intergovernmental body to supervise the Centre’s work.<sup>21</sup> This was the institutional situation before the establishment of the Habitat process in the 1970s.

In sum, the main direct legacies of the UI are (i) institutionalised and organised international municipal movement; (ii) institutionalised and organised international professional associations, and (iii) last but not least, the formative period of the UI (1890s-1914) was already decisive in that “nearly all the ideas which were to stimulate and inform practitioners of the new profession of modern town planning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were first articulated at this time” (Meller 1995: 295).

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20 Concerned by the magnitude and gravity of housing problems in various parts of the world, in particular in Europe due to war destructions but also in the European colonies due to their “backwardness”, the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution in 1946 during its first session entitled “Housing and Town Planning” (53(1), 65<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, 14 December 1946)—proposed by France (A/BUR/38), revised by UK and amended by USA, Chile and Venezuela—instructing the Economic and Social Council “to expedite their study of housing problems, with special reference to the organisation and unification of international exchanges of information relating to town planning principles, building techniques and the climatic, economic and financial, legal and legislative aspects of housing and town planning questions; and to consider the desirability of holding an international conference of experts to advise on the need for establishing an international mechanism to collate such information, lay down guiding principles for new technical research on materials, methods of use and prefabrication, and to define standards capable of general application”. The Economic and Social Council adopted another one in 1947 (50(IV), 28 March 1947). At the same time, “in November 1946, at UNESCO’s first General Session, zoologist Julian Huxley, secretary of the Preparatory Commission and director general during 1946–48, enthusiastically endorsed a similar proposal ‘to set up an international organization to study the problems for Home and Community Planning [i.e. for Human Ecology] on a world scale’ as a programme of UNESCO” (Shoshkes 2009: 269). A committed eugenicist, Huxley’s agenda was underpinned by the Malthusian fear common among late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Western elite of the non-white population boom (Mazower 2012).

21 Resolution 903 C (XXXIV) “Housing and urban development: Creation of a Committee on Housing, Building and Planning of the Economic and Social Council” (ECOSOC’s 34<sup>th</sup> session, 1235<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, 2 August 1962).

The 1970s mark a watershed in the institutionalisation of urban issues at the international level with the start of the Habitat process. This international political process refers to the historic development of ideas and activities of the various agencies and programmes of the UN system, including the World Bank, associated with the series of ad hoc action-oriented UN-sponsored global Habitat conferences and their outcome documents that have framed urbanisation and development questions together since the 1970s (Biau 2014; Birch 2016; Citiscope 2015; Cohen 2016; Emmerij et al. 2001; Leaf and Pamuk 1997; Parnell 2016; Ramsamy 2006; Rudd et al. 2018; Satterthwaite 2016; Schechter 2005). From this decade on, in contrast to the UI period, national governments, through their multilateral organisations, got in charge of international urban policy-making. Although the Habitat process cannot be fully understood without the UI, it can neither be seen as its direct successor following a linear institutional development path. Indeed, its origin significantly differs. Concerns in the 1960s and 1970s on the one hand over environmental degradation, in particular in the industrialised countries, and on the other hand about tremendous population growth and degrading living and housing conditions as especially observed in cities of the then-Third World, led to the rallying of international as well as local actors as both phenomena were understood as linked to urbanisation and global in scope. Indeed, the convening of Habitat I was one of the main recommendation of the *Action Plan for the Human Environment* (UN 1973) of Stockholm 1972 *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment's* outcome document.<sup>22</sup>

Entities of the UN system have been central for setting the GUA. However, it does mean that they have had the exclusive reserve of ideas and right for action about the political globalization of urban planning. As an internationally co-ordinated public policy-making, including multilevel decision-making, and sponsored by the UN system (Emmerij et al. 2001; Schechter 2005; Rittberger 1983), the Habitat process has progressively included an even greater number of actors. Among its historical institutional actors figure the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat who started in the 1950s to provide demographic information about urban population on a world scale (Birch 2016); the World Bank who began funding capital-intensive housing and other “socially-oriented” urban development projects in the early 1970s (Ramsamy 2006); and UN-Habitat who commenced operations in 1978 and rapidly became the UN focal point in matters of housing and humans settlements issues (Parnell 2016).<sup>23</sup> The picture would not be complete if we forget the funding role continuously played by American philanthropic foundations as well as that of policy

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22 Recommendation 2, paragraphs 2b and 2c.



entrepreneur and watchdog taken by Habitat International Coalition, an umbrella association networking at the global level NGOs involved in the defence of human rights in the international housing and urban development fields (HIC 2016). NGOs have traditionally played an influential role in the Habitat process and the Habitat conferences since the 1970s (Birch 2016; Brown 2018; Cohen 2016; Garschagen et al. 2018; Parnell 2016; Satterthwaite 2016, 2018). Meanwhile, ancient actors have come back and new one appeared on the scene. After a longer period during the Cold War when local authorities were sidelined by national governments from international politics, cities through their international associations (e.g. UCLG, ICLEI, C40) have become again central actors since the 1990s (Biau 2014). Additional multilateral organisations like the OECD have seized the GUA (see e.g. OECD 2015). With the famous example of Shack/Slum Dwellers International as well as other community-based and grass-root organisations, the urban poor of the South have organised themselves to take part in setting the agenda. Private corporations have also demonstrated a growing interest and participation in the GUA. Between academic, private and parapublic research institutions, the knowledge production landscape has increasingly diversified.

Finally, the typology of actors and institutions involved in the agenda-setting process of the GUA has undergone several developments. First ignored by states, urban issues and its international milieu were slowly and incrementally integrated at the intergovernmental level with the advent of the UN and the development of the multilateral system in the contexts of postwar reconstruction, the management of North-South/core-periphery relations through aid and development and today climate change and sustainable development. Thus, in the course of the twentieth century a gradual but clear shift from internationally organised local authorities to internationally organised national governments accompanied by a transformation of the profile of policy-makers from experts/mayors-as-diplomats in the period of the UI to diplomats-as-experts in the Habitat process occurred in regards to the primacy over the GUA.

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23 The institutional chronology of UN-Habitat is as follow: in 1975 was established within UNEP the Habitat and Human Settlement Foundation (UNHHSF), a small unit whose task was to strengthen place-based environmental programs and assist national programmes with issues relating to human settlements through the provision of capital and technical assistance, particularly in developing countries. Following a recommendation of Habitat I's outcome document, the UN General Assembly created in 1977 (operational in 1978) the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements (UNCHS)—an intergovernmental body—and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS)—its executive secretariat—out of the merging of the already existing Committee on Housing, Building and Planning and its Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (both UN CHBP) as well as the UNHHSF. In 2002, UNCHS was upgraded into the UN Human Settlements Programme (UNHSP), a stand-alone programme of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council becoming therefore a full-fledged entity with the same duties but elevated in stature, with an executive director raised to the undersecretary level, with a seat on the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, access to the UN budget, and permission to hold its own biannual World Urban Forum as a non-legislative technical meeting.

Curiously, the role played by some individual experts to influence the system in the framing and steering of the GUA has remained more or less constant (Bode 2015; Parnell 2016; Saunier 2001). For instance, the professional career of Ernest Weissmann (1903–1985), Yugoslav architect member of the CIAM and long-time director of urban affairs within the UN from 1948 to 1966, is emblematic of the discursive and institutional construction of the urban question in the UN system deriving from the legacy of early 20<sup>th</sup> century European modernist architecture and planning and spreading across “Third World” rural and urban human settlements on behalf of “development” (Muzaffar 2007; Tolic 2017). Weissmann’s 1965 article *The Urban Crisis in the World* in the journal *Urban Affairs Quarterly* with its problem analysis and eight recommendations can be seen as a first Habitat agenda and would be therefore of value for a discursive policy analysis. In addition, as Susan Parnell (2016) suggests, the careers of experts such as Michael Cohen of the World Bank and David Satterthwaite of the International Institute for Environment and Development should also be reviewed in regards to their long-term influence in regards to the Habitat process. Even if the international diffusion of planning ideas from the centre to the periphery happened as much by borrowing as by imposition, between voluntary borrowing and authoritarian imposition (Ward 2012), there has been nonetheless since the origins a clear domination of Euro-American knowledge and expertise in the construction of the GUA.

To conclude in a few words we can say that the dominant understanding of the urban problematique in the GUA has shifted in time, from a social question between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 1960s, to an environmental question since the 1970s and an economic question in addition since the 1990s.

#### 4.1.2. The post-2015 development agenda

The *New Urban Agenda* (NUA) is the outcome document of the *United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development* (Habitat III) which took place in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 to 20 October 2016. It was the first UN global conference of the post-2015 development agenda. As most usually for a UN document, it is fully in line with previous UN decisions and events: the milestone global agreements of the year 2015 as well as three internationally agreed upon guidelines documents related to decentralisation and planning adopted by UN-Habitat’s Governing Council.<sup>24</sup>

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24 Including the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its Sustainable Development Goals, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the *Paris Agreement* adopted at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*; as well as the *International Guidelines on Decentralisation and the Strengthening of Local*

A follow-up meeting of the 1976 Vancouver *Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements* (Habitat I) and the 1996 Istanbul *United Nations Conference on Human Settlements* (Habitat II), Habitat III's stated purpose was "to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assessing accomplishments to date, addressing poverty and identifying and addressing new and emerging challenges" (UNGA 2012: para. 6a). For the UN and its member states, "the implementation of the New Urban Agenda contributes to the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [...] and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (UNGA 2016b: para. 9). It is conceived by the UN as "an accelerator for the achievement of all other agendas" (UNSG 2018: 1). For Susan Parnell (2016), the "urban SDG" together with the NUA mark a shift in global policy from a pre-2015 agenda of cities as sites of developmental intervention to a post-2015 agenda of cities as agents of sustainable transformation.

#### 4.1.3. Style and content of the NUA

Proclaimed as "concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document" (UNGA 2012: para. 6b) the NUA is also presented as "focused on problem-solving with clear means of implementations" (UN-Habitat 2016: 175, 177). Habitat III's outcome document comprises 175 numbered paragraphs divided between the *Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All* (22 paragraphs) and the *Quito implementation plan for the New Urban Agenda* (152 paragraphs) in a 29 pages-long document.<sup>25</sup> While the former is the formal political position of the member states of the United Nations on the phenomenon of worldwide urbanisation, the latter is their guidelines for action. Both parts are structured in three sections whose headings for the Declaration are "Our shared vision", "Our principles and commitments" and "Call for action", and for the Implementation plan: "Transformative commitments for sustainable urban development", "Effective implementation" and "Follow-up and review".

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*Authorities* (UN-Habitat, 2007), the *International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Basic Services for All* (UN-Habitat 2009) and the *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning* (UN-Habitat, 2015).

25 As in its UN General Assembly resolution form A/RES/71/256 (UNGA 2016b)

The NUA does not put forward any one-size-fits-all ready-made model of city but strategies and tools conceived as universal that can yet be contextually adapted and appropriated. It must also be said that there is no apparent hierarchy between these proposals. The 152 paragraphs of the *Quito implementation plan* list in a holistic vision specific measures to be taken for multifarious and multidimensional actions, which I summarise here:

- functional city-regions on the one hand and neighbourhoods on the other hand as **scales of public intervention**;
- mixed-use, balanced, connected and accessible urban, peri-urban and rural **spaces and territories** within and across metropolitan regions;
- polycentric, compact and dense **spatial morphology and structure**, with a particular emphasis on streets and public space as structuring elements of urban space;
- the right to adequate **housing** as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living; access to adequate and affordable housing through finance products as well as cooperative solutions;
- planned extensions, infills, renewal, regeneration and retrofitting as **priority physical interventions in the built environment**, with a particular emphasis on the upgrading of slums and informal settlements;
- medium- and long-term, flexible, nature-based, evaluated and reviewed, age- and gender-responsive, people-centred, context-sensitive and rights-based **principles for policies and development plans, maps and designs**;
- **horizontal integration of** land, housing, energy, transport/mobility, communication, food, water and waste infrastructural (**functional**) **sectors**;
- **vertical integration of decision-making processes** across levels of governments through multi-level governance, including multi-stakeholder partnerships with and participation of non-state actors, and with a particular emphasis on the key role of local governments as interface among all relevant stakeholders;

Furthermore, in order to carry out these principles of action, the NUA recommends the following means of implementation:

- **mobilisation of financial resources** first from endogenous fiscal revenues through capture of benefits of urbanisation, then from national transfers and finally from international public and private borrowing for the investment in urban development, e.g. local property taxes, service charges, housing finance products, climate finance funds, creditworthiness, municipal debt markets;
- **Regulations** and regulatory frameworks for services and infrastructures, housing, planning, transport and mobility, land market, national and municipal borrowing
- science-policy interfaces, evidence-based practices and data platforms supplied by comparable, quantitative, qualitative and geospatial data to **provide knowledge and expertise guidance** and share best practices, including a particular mention to progress towards a global people-based definition of cities and human settlement;
- **usage of** information and communication **technologies** as well as digital services for the dissemination of information and service delivery such as e-government;
- North-South, South-South and triangular regional and **international cooperation** as well as subnational, decentralised and city-to-city cooperation for fostering exchanges, mobilisation of resources and mutual learning;
- **capacity development** and trainings to strengthen the skills and abilities of all stakeholders in all areas and practices addressed by the NUA, e.g. project and programme management, debt-management for municipal officials, national gender mainstreaming policy-making, grass-root generated data collection, etc.
- the policy normative, technical assistance and coordination **role of UN-Habitat** in the implementation, follow-up and review of the NUA **at the international level**;

## 4.2. Situational context

### 4.2.1. The preparation process of the Habitat III conference and of the NUA

Although the official decision to convene Habitat III was taken by the General Assembly of the UN already in late 2011 (UNGA 2011), the preparation process of the Conference was not launched until

2014, first informally and media-wise in April at UN-Habitat's 7<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum in Medellin (WUF7), and then formally in September at the PrepCom1 meeting at the UN headquarters in New York. Following the procedures for an inter-governmental conference (UNGA 2012), a Preparatory Committee as ad hoc body was established at this latter meeting to host the activities of member states and entities of the UN system in regards to the preparation of the Conference. A bureau of the Preparatory Committee (the Habitat III Bureau), representing the member states, was set up as well to steer and coordinate the preparation of the Conference and prepare the draft of Habitat III's outcome document.<sup>26</sup> To achieve its mission, the Bureau was assisted by an ad hoc secretariat (the Habitat III Secretariat), headed by UN-Habitat's Executive Director Joan Clos (2010-2017), who was appointed Secretary-General of the Conference in December 2011 (UNGA 2011: para.6), and mostly staffed with officers from the UNHSP. In addition to its founding meeting (PrepCom1), the Preparatory Committee officially met twice more until the Conference: in April 2015 in Nairobi for PrepCom2 and in July 2016 in Surabaya (Indonesia) for PrepCom3.<sup>27</sup> These meetings were very important insofar as they constituted the governing council of the Conference, taking decisions about the form and substance of Habitat III, the rules of procedures, the modalities of participation (i.e. who was entitled to take part and under what conditions; who is included or excluded). Participation and mobilisation for and around the meetings of the PrepCom were also indicative of the interest shown for Habitat III and the NUA, which appeared to be quite high.

According to the UN, the preparation process as well as the Conference itself were intended to become a landmark of inclusion in the history of diplomacy in general and of the UN in particular (UNGA 2011: para.4; UNGA 2012: para.9, 14). The Habitat III Bureau was co-chaired by two women: María Duarte, then Ecuador's minister of housing and urban development, and Maryse Gautier, then senior adviser to the French government's General Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development and former World Bank expert (Scruggs 2016a). The preparation process was not solely the concern of national governments and organisations of the UN. On the contrary, following the experiences of

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26 The Habitat III Bureau was composed of ten persons, each one representing a member state. These were chosen by the General Assembly to equally represent the five UN regional groups: Chad and Senegal for the African Group, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates for the Asia-Pacific Group, Czechia and Slovakia for the Eastern European Group, Chile and Ecuador for the Latin American and Caribbean Group, and finally France and Germany for the Western European and Others Group. It was co-chaired by Ecuador (the Conference's host) and France. Except for Ecuador whose representative was a politician (the Republic's minister for urban development and housing), the other persons were senior civil servants. See <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/preparatory-process/preparatory-committee>>. See also A/RES/69/226 (75th plenary meeting, 19 December 2014) and A/RES/70/210 (81st plenary meeting, 22 December 2015)

27 See A/CONF.226/PC.2/6 for PrepCom2

Habitat I and II as well as of other UN global conferences since the 1990s, there was unsurprisingly a very large and strong mobilisation from so called “stakeholders” and “partners”, eased by a highly favourable Conference Secretariat. Thus, the participation of civil society organisations, non-state actors as well as associations of local authorities was structured by the Habitat III Secretariat to match UN procedures and channelled into the Global Assembly of Partners (GAP), a global consortium aiming to organise “efficiently” their advocacy work and endow them with a single global voice to be heard by national governments.<sup>28</sup> However, in addition to their incorporation within the GAP, the different international associations and networks representing local governments such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG; the “UN of cities”), ICLEI and C40 also organised themselves within the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) in order to keep some political independence and be able to put pressure on the preparation process.<sup>29</sup> Other organisations such as Habitat International Coalition (HIC) and the Global Platform for the Right to the City also kept their voice independent from UN-Habitat’s control.

Two different phases can be distinguished from the two and a half years-long preparation process: first, a contribution phase running from UN-Habitat’s 7<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum in April 2014 to end of April 2016; second, a negotiation phase starting with the publication of the Zero Draft on 6 May 2016 and ending with the agreement reached by national governments upon the NUA draft for adoption in Quito on 10 September, one month only before the Conference. However, most of the preparatory work was done and decisions were taken between September 2015 and July-September 2016, when the preparation was in full swing. Although the Habitat III Secretariat (i.e. UN-Habitat) exerted a strong leadership and was in full control of the preparation process during the first phase, the balance of power with the Habitat III Bureau (i.e. the member states) was relatively restored in the second phase.

The 24 months of the contribution phase were characterised by the convening of official events and the production of official documents, both serving as vehicle for mobilisation and as official substantial

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28 Founded in April 2015 at PrepCom2, the Global Assembly of Partners (GAP) is an initiative of UN-Habitat’s World Urban Campaign, itself created in 2009 as advocacy and partnership platform to organise the relation between “partners” and national governments on matters related to sustainable urbanisation in international development cooperation. 1,200 organizations and individuals and 58,000 networks are members of the GAP and they are organised in 16 Partner Constituent Groups: Business and Industries; Children and Youth; Civil Society Organizations; Farmers; Foundations and philanthropies; Grass roots organizations; Indigenous people; Local and sub-national authorities; Media; Older Persons; Parliamentarians; Persons with disabilities; Professionals; Trade Unions and workers; Research and Academia; Women. After Quito, the GAP has positioned itself as a central actor of the implementation of the NUA. See <<http://generalassemblyofpartners.org/about-gap/>> <<http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/about>>.

29 See <[www.global-taskforce.org](http://www.global-taskforce.org)>

inputs for the drafting of the Zero draft of the NUA. Regarding the events, the Habitat III Secretariat arranged different formats and a multitude of rendezvous across the world in order to ensure the broader participation possible and draw the most attention possible. Eleven regional and thematic high-level meetings punctuated at a fast pace the time between September 2015 and April 2016.<sup>30</sup> They were as such true international conferences, drawing each time several hundreds to thousands of participants for one or a couple of days, and concluding with a final declaration containing policy recommendations for the NUA Zero Draft; as if the once in every twenty years global meet up Habitat conference was already taking place. Among the official events there were also smaller and more informal formats. For instance, 26 Urban Thinkers Campus and 51 Urban Breakfasts/Lunch/Afternoon were thus hold in different cities around the world.<sup>31</sup>

Writing contributions were very important in the preparation process in order to supply the drafting of the NUA with statements. Many policy actors were consulted and numerous policy-oriented documents were thus produced and immediately made public online. A series of 22 ten pages-long issue-oriented non papers named “Issue Papers” offering a state of the art on specific issues were prepared by the UN and other multilateral organisations and made public online in May 2015.<sup>32</sup> Announced early October 2015 by name, 200 international experts recommended by national governments and stakeholders’ organisations and commissioned by the Habitat III Secretariat and Bureau delivered and published online late February 2016 10 lengthy action-oriented problem-solving policy papers known as “Policy Units”.<sup>33</sup> Both the Issue Papers and Policy Units were open for public written comments by member states and stakeholders before the publication of the Zero Draft of the

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30 Thematic meetings: Civic Engagement (Tel Aviv, 7 September 2015); Metropolitan Areas (Montreal, 6-7 October 2015); Intermediate Cities (Cuenca, Ecuador, 9-11 November 2015); Sustainable Energy and Cities (Abu Dhabi, 20 January 2016); Financing Urban Development (Mexico City, 9-11 March 2016); Public Spaces (Barcelona, 4-5 April 2016); and Informal Settlements (Pretoria, 7-8 April 2016). Regional meetings: Asia-Pacific (Jakarta, 21-22 October 2015); Africa (Abuja, 24-26 February 2016); Europe (Prague, 16-18 March 2016); and Latin America and the Caribbean (Toluca, Mexico, 18-20 April 2016). See <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/preparatory-process/regional-thematic-meetings/>>

31 For Urban Thinkers Campus, see <[www.worldurbancampaign.org/about-urban-thinkers-campus/](http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/about-urban-thinkers-campus/)>; and for Urban Breakfasts/Lunch/Afternoon, see <<http://habitat3.org/engagement/toolkits/toolkit-for-urban-breakfast/>>

32 The 22 Issue Papers are clustered in 6 thematic groups: Social Cohesion and Equity - Livable Cities (1 - Inclusive Cities; 2 - Migration and Refugees in Urban Areas; 3 - Safer Cities; 4 - Urban Culture and Heritage); Urban Frameworks (5 - Urban Rules and Legislation; 6 - Urban Governance; 7 - Municipal Finance); Spatial Development (8 - Urban and Spatial Planning and Design; 9 - Urban Land; 10 - Urban-Rural Linkages; 11 - Public Space); Urban Economy (12 - Local Economic Development; 13 - Jobs and Livelihoods; 14 - Informal Sector); Urban Ecology and Environment (15 - Urban Resilience; 16 - Urban Ecosystem and Resource Management; 17 - Cities and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management); Urban Housing and Basic Services (18 - Urban Infrastructure and Basic Services, including energy; 19 - Transport and Mobility; 20 - Housing; 21 - Smart Cities; 22 - Informal Settlements). See <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/documents/issue-papers/>> and <<http://archive.citiscopes.org/habitatIII/news/2015/06/habitat-iii-issue-papers-provide-backbone-new-urban-agenda>>.



NUA. To the official written contributions we can also add the eleven declarations of the thematic and regional meetings, the 111 national reports from member states, and the results of the Urban Dialogues, a series of online discussions.<sup>34</sup> Besides the official documents, some key actors also made their own written input to the preparation such as UN-Habitat's flagship report World Cities Report 2016, the partners' and stakeholders' "The City we need 2.0" of the World Urban Campaign as well as "Partnerships for the NUA" of the GAP, and the GTF's "Key Recommendations of Local and Regional Governments towards Habitat III".<sup>35</sup> The contribution phase concluded end of April 2016 with a five days Open-Ended Informal Consultative Meeting at the UN headquarters in New York where national governments could for the first time meet with stakeholders, partners and experts who were active in preparation.<sup>36</sup> As a final step one week before the release of the first version of the NUA, they could listen to them and exchange views on the outputs of the organised events and produced documents that substantially contributed to the preparation process. The absence of China and India, two "urbanising giants", from the contribution phase must be particularly pointed out.

Not part of the contribution phase anymore and yet not fully part of the negotiation phase, the drafting of the document NUA Zero Draft was a threshold that began late January 2016 and took three months of work. Starting with a contents structure and gradually filling in with text and paragraphs from the official contributions, three "working notes" ("Outline", "Extended Outline" and "Extended Outline 2.0") with several updated versions each based on language proposed by the Habitat III Secretariat and comments and remarks by states members of the Bureau came one after another until late April 2016. There was an undeniable competition for authority over the drafting of the Zero Draft of the NUA

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33 The 10 Policy Units are: 1. The Right to the City and Cities for All; 2. Socio-Cultural Urban Framework; 3. National Urban Policies; 4. Urban Governance, 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; and 10. Housing Policies. See <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/documents/policy-papers/>>.

34 For the thematic meetings' declarations see <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/documents/declarations-from-thematic-meetings/>> and for the regional meetings' see <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/documents/declarations-from-regional-meetings/>>. For the national reports see <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/documents/national-reports/>>. For the Urban Dialogues see <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/documents/urban-dialogue-reports/>>

35 See by order of mention: <<http://wcr.unhabitat.org/>>; <<http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/city-we-need>>; <[http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/20160503-GAP\\_Partnerships-for-the-New-Urban-Agenda-2.pdf](http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/20160503-GAP_Partnerships-for-the-New-Urban-Agenda-2.pdf)>; and <<http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Global-Task-Force-Key-recommendations.pdf>>

36 See <<http://enb.iisd.org/habitat/3/oeicm/>>

between the Bureau and the Secretariat, to the latter's ascendancy and despite a clear mandate for the former to be in charge.<sup>37</sup>

On 6 May 2016 the Zero Draft of the NUA was made public online and the negotiation phase between national governments over its content started. The negotiation was structured in five sessions, four scheduled and one additional; three different versions of the NUA were produced and made public between the Zero Draft and the agreed upon draft outcome document.<sup>38</sup> Before PrepCom3 end of July, which was intended to be the final round of negotiation before Quito, the Bureau convened other member states to closed-door informal intergovernmental meetings in New York for three days in May, three in June and three in June-July. Consistent with the principle of inclusion that characterised the preparation process so far, they also invited local authorities associations and stakeholder groups, respectively in May in June for two days of informal hearings within the same weeks of the informal intergovernmental meetings. As a result of these hearings and negotiation, two new draft versions of the NUA were published before PrepCom3. There, in Surabaya end of July, however, member states could not reach a consensus after three days and two nights, yet produced an updated draft version. Based on this, they met again in September in New York for a four days emergency and final round.

Despite overall convergence of interests over the content of the Zero Draft, there were some minor but also major points of divergence. Among the former, i.e. settled without significant blockage, were:

- the acknowledgement of local authorities and civil society stakeholders as partners of states in the definition, implementation and evaluation of the NUA, opposed chiefly by China and Russia (who also disagreed about decentralisation and transparency in national transfers and local spendings) but supported by the EU, US, Canada and the African Group, was secured in

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37 See paragraphs 17 of resolution 69/226 and 12 of resolution 70/210 of the United Nations General Assembly.

38 Here the negotiation rounds and publication date of successive versions of the NUA drafts in chronological order:

- Informal Hearings with Local Authorities Associations, 16-17 May 2016, New York
- Informal Intergovernmental Meetings, 18-20 May 2016, New York
- Informal Hearings with Stakeholder Groups, 6-7 June 2016, New York
- Informal Intergovernmental Meetings, 8-10 June 2016, New York
- REVISED ZERO DRAFT OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA as of 18 June 2016
- Informal Intergovernmental Meetings, 27 June-1 July 2016, New York
- DRAFT NEW URBAN AGENDA as of 18 July 2016
- PrepCom3, 25-27 July 2016, Surabaya, Indonesia
- DRAFT NEW URBAN AGENDA or Surabaya Draft NUA as of 28 July 2016
- Informal Intergovernmental Meetings, 7-10 September 2016, New York
- AGREED UPON NEW URBAN AGENDA DRAFT outcome document for adoption in Quito as of 10 September 2016

the June 18<sup>th</sup> revised zero draft. However, the GTF's request of a "special status" for local governments, a red line for national governments, was rejected by all states.

- The GAP's proposal of the creation of a science-policy interface (as for climate change and biodiversity) made of a "Multi-stakeholder Panel on Sustainable Urbanization", supported by the G77 and China but opposed by the EU, US and Japan, was kicked out during PrepCom3.

The major lines of conflict, reasons for an unscheduled additional round of negotiation, ran along two main issues: the notion of right to the city and the future of UN-Habitat:

- backed by Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and El Salvador but rejected by the US, Japan, Russia, Argentina and Colombia, with the EU playing the trouble-shooter, member states found a compromise enabling the notion of the right to the city to appear for the first time in an intergovernmental agreed-upon universal document, timidly and watered down though.<sup>39</sup>
- Not a technical question but a typical diplomatic-political one, the future of UN-Habitat, whose fate has always been linked to the outcome documents of Habitat conferences, was the most contentious point of the negotiation. The inclusion in the outcome document of a new mandate for the UNHSP, including a series of institutional reforms, was supported by the African group and the G77 and China but eventually ruled out by the EU, US and Japan who wanted to separate negotiations over the NUA and the UN programme. Related sub-issues which were also rejected included the creation of a multi-trust fund for sustainable urbanization managed by UN-Habitat as well as making UN-Habitat the central and almost single actor for the global follow-up and review of the implementation of the NUA. Instead, the follow-up and review process of the NUA was anchored in that of the SDGs and located within ECOSOC's High-Level Political Forum.

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39 See <http://archive.citiscopes.org/habitatIII/news/2016/09/historic-consensus-reached-right-city-new-urban-agenda>. In the Zero Draft, it appears as Right to the City (with capital letters) at the beginning of paragraph 7; in the agreed upon version, it appears as right to the city (in lowercase) at the end of paragraph 11.

#### **4.2.2. Proceedings of the Habitat III conference**

The Habitat III Conference was chaired by Rafael Correa, President of the Republic of Ecuador (2007–2017) and orchestrated by Joan Clos, Secretary-General of the Conference and Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (2010–2017).

The programme of the conference was very rich and dense. Over the span of nine days from 12 to 20 October 2016 Habitat III hosted about 1,000 events of different formats, including 8 Plenary sessions, 6 High-level Roundtable sessions, 4 Assemblies, 16 Stakeholders Roundtables, 10 Policy Dialogues, 22 Special Sessions, 3 Urban Talks, an Urban Journalism Academy, 59 United Nations events, 157 Exhibition booths, 42 Village projects and over 460 side, networking, training and parallel events as well as an Urban Future room, an Urban Library and an Urban Stage. However, most of them were concentrated within the four days of the formal intergovernmental segment, opening on Monday 17 and closing on Thursday 20 October with the adoption of the draft outcome document. The Conference was not a place to negotiate the content of the NUA anymore, as it was already agreed upon beforehand, but should rather be seen as a symbolic moment and a rare chance of encounter for people with different background to meet, discuss and exchange on common issues and shared interests.

The attendance did not fall short. According to the conference website over 30,000 people, among them 10,000 international participants from 167 countries, participated and more than 2,000 representatives of local and regional governments received accreditation, making of Habitat III the strongest participation of civil society, stakeholders, and local authorities in the history of the United Nations.<sup>40</sup>

#### **4.2.3. Location and venue of the Habitat III conference**

After an initial offer in late 2012 by Turkey to host Habitat in Istanbul again (UNGA 2012: para.4), and strong interest from Germany, Saudi Arabia and China (Scruggs & Barrera 2016), the General Assembly of the UN decided on 19 December 2014 to accept Ecuador's proposal to convene the Conference in their Capital city (UNGA 2014: para.7). For the UN, the choice of Quito was in several ways emblematic of its vision of sustainable urbanisation. A city of the “global South”, the Andean city

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40 See <<http://habitat3.org/the-conference/participants>>

—located at 2,850 meters above sea level and surrounded by active volcanoes—grew sevenfold from 200,000 to 1.4 million inhabitants between 1950 and 2000 (Scruggs 2014). Yet, the coverage of utilities (i.e. drinking water, garbage collection, electricity) is nowadays pretty close to European standards, Quito was also an earlier adopter in the mid-1990s of the Bus Rapid Transit system which made Curitiba, Brasil, world famous (Scruggs and Barrera 2016). Despite rapid, unplanned urbanisation, Quito did not neglect its urban cultural heritage as its historical centre was the first (together with Krakow’s) city district and urban neighbourhood worldwide to become listed in 1978 as UNESCO World Heritage Site. Finally, the Republic of Ecuador incorporated in its 2008 constitution several new progressive rights and principles: next to the rights of nature, rights of the good way of living (“buen vivir”), right to sexual orientation, or also food sovereignty, the right to the city was enshrined in this fundamental political document.<sup>41</sup>

The main venue of the Habitat III Conference was “*el Circular*”, an oval-shaped modernist convention and exhibition hall built in the 1950s located in downtown Quito nearby the historical centre. It houses the headquarters of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamín Carrión, a national public cultural institution founded in 1944 and dedicated to the promotion of the Ecuadorian national culture, as well as museums, theatres and art galleries.<sup>42</sup> With the exception of the Exhibition and the Habitat III Village, all events took place in the 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> on three levels of the building as well as on 25,000 m<sup>2</sup> of surrounding outdoor space of the Parque del Arbolito in which “*el Circular*” is situated. The exhibition area was set close by on the esplanade in front of the building of the Ecuadorian National Assembly,<sup>43</sup> and the urban project demonstrations which composed the Habitat III Village were scattered throughout the surrounding neighbourhoods.<sup>44</sup>

The Conference was open to everyone free of charge. Once registered on the Habitat III website or directly at the (heavy) security check at the entrance of the Conference’s ground, anyone could attend the different events at the Casa de la Cultura or in the exhibition area. However, access to the plenary sessions and other intergovernmental events was reserved only to those accredited by the UN, i.e.

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41 In Ecuador’s 2008 constitution, “the right to the city is based on the democratic management of the city, with respect to the social and environmental function of property and the city and with the full exercise of citizenship” (art. 31). See <<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.html>>.

42 See <<https://www.casadelacultura.gob.ec/>>

43 See <<http://habitat3.org/the-conference/programme/exhibition/>>

44 See <<http://habitat3.org/the-conference/village/>>

members of national delegations and other official stakeholders, excluding de facto common citizens from the possibility of attending intergovernmental plenaries and sessions.

#### 4.2.4. Habitat III alternatives

Habitat III and the NUA were not without protests and criticism despite a strongly proclaimed inclusive and participative preparation and drafting process. In parallel to the official Conference and not sanctioned by the UN ran three different alternative fora which, however, shared not only discontent towards such international processes of failing to listen to critical voices as well as scepticism regarding their problem-solving capacity, but also a common endeavour for the ‘right to the city’ as a rallying cry. (Scruggs 2016b).

First, the main politicised venue was *Resistencia Popular Hábitat III* (RH3). Following on from the experience of previous protests organised in parallel to UN-Habitat’s 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum (Naples, 2012; Medellín, 2014), this anti-capitalist and altermondialiste social forum convened by the Comité Popular por Nuestros Territorios and supported by the International Alliance of Inhabitants gathered at the Universidad Central del Ecuador an estimated 3,000 persons from 35 countries, most of whom were housing, human rights and indigenous activists (Giraldo et al. 2017). Besides debates, exhibitions, visits, planning workshops and street demonstrations, one of the main highlights of the programme was the fifth session of the International Tribunal on Evictions, an awareness-raising performance staging an injustice affecting 60 million people worldwide and addressing the wrongdoing and neglect of governments and international organisations alike.<sup>45</sup> *Resistencia Popular Hábitat III* concluded its social forum with its own final declaration: “Declaración por la Defensa de Nuestros Territorios”, conceived as an anti/alter-NUA.<sup>46</sup>

The two other alternative fora were academic-based interdisciplinary events. Organised and hosted by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), *Hacia un Hábitat 3 Alternativo* (H3A) was actually an “international seminar” of left-leaning academics from 25 countries spanning over the four days of the official Conference. Among internationally prominent scholars who participated were for

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45 See  
<[www.habitants.org/the\\_urban\\_way/social\\_forum\\_resistance\\_habitat\\_3/international\\_tribunal\\_on\\_evictions\\_2016](http://www.habitants.org/the_urban_way/social_forum_resistance_habitat_3/international_tribunal_on_evictions_2016)>

46 See  
<[https://www.habitants.org/the\\_urban\\_way/social\\_forum\\_resistance\\_habitat\\_3/news\\_from\\_quito/declaration\\_for\\_the\\_defence\\_of\\_our\\_territories](https://www.habitants.org/the_urban_way/social_forum_resistance_habitat_3/news_from_quito/declaration_for_the_defence_of_our_territories)>

instance the critical geographer Jordi Borja as well as the sociologist Saskia Sassen. With a regional focus on Latin America, the programme was critical to current urbanisation trends as well as policies advanced by international institutions, yet aimed at being complementary to the outcomes of Habitat III. *Hacia un Hábitat 3 Alternativo* ended with an eleven pages-long collective document named “Manifiesto de Quito”. On the other hand, with the slogan “Agenda Global, Acciones Locales”, *PUCE HIII* was organised and hosted by the school of architecture and urbanism of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador.<sup>47</sup> For six days, a dense programme with a variety of activities “covering the full spectrum of hot urban topics — refugees, climate change, public space, urban design, right to the city and the informal economy” (Scruggs 2016b) aimed to be a ‘living campus’ open to everyone.

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47 See <<https://pucehiii.wordpress.com/>>

# WPR ANALYSIS OF THE *NEW URBAN AGENDA*

This fifth chapter is the empirical analysis of the master thesis. It is divided in three sections: the first answers question #1 of Bacchi's WPR while the two others analyse two of the problem representations identified, answering the other questions in a systematic way in the second section and in an integrated manner in the third section.

### 5.1. Identification and clarification of the problem representations in the NUA

Among the 175 paragraphs building the NUA 15 or 9% explicitly or implicitly state policy problems and 149 or 85% contain recommendations for action. Regarding the “problem” group, even though language and its use is not the primary analytical focus in the WPR approach, it is striking to notice the vocabulary and figures of speech used in the text (e.g. euphemism, meiosis, tapinosis, antanagoge) downplaying, diverting attention from and transforming negatively connoted terms into positive ones in order to reduce the chance readers focus on them. The words “problem” or “issue” are never employed in the text of the NUA, a startling contrast with Habitat I and II's outcome documents where they are used about 30+ times. While “obstacle” and “concerns” each appear once, “address”, “challenge”, “solution” and “opportunity” are respectively mentioned fifteen, fourteen, thirteen and twenty-three times. The NUA is thus a policy text without “problems” or “issues” but with a wealth of “challenges”, “opportunities” and “solutions”.

As the NUA overflows with solutions whose wording is diluted in the typical and ubiquitous sustainable development and sustainability rhetoric of the UN (see Holden 2010), the task of this first section of the empirical chapter is therefore to identify and select with precision policy proposal(s) deemed to be central and reveal the implicit problem representation(s) (PRs) contained within them. I answer here the first question of the WPR approach: what is/are the problem(s) of SC, SU and SUD represented to be in the NUA? What is in the NUA assumed to be the problem(s) of SU, SC and SUD?



As Carol Bacchi (2009) reminds us, asking the Question 1 of the WPR approach is foremost a ‘clarification exercise’. Although one “can expect the answer to Question 1 to be fairly straightforward” (Bacchi 2009: 55), this however depends on the complexity of the policy text and the extent of nesting cases within pinned down PRs. Thus, trying to leave aside for sake of clarity the axiomatic desired outcomes of global sustainability—who can overtly be against this ideal?—I single out core proposals from the text of the NUA, and starting from these identified proposed solutions I work backwards to see how “problems” are assumed to be as particular sort of problems, thereby showing the operation of the identification of problematisations. With reference to Carol Bacchi (2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016) as well as Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007), the logic of the operation is thus the following:

- a) what is proposed to do about something...
- b) ...indicates what is thought needed to change or to be done,...
- c) ...hence what is assumed as problematic...
- d) ...and hence what the problem is represented to be.

As a result, four core problem representations are identified in the NUA:

- an “urban” problem representation
- an “economic growth imperative” problem representation
- a “mode of intervention or collective action” problem representation
- a “state power and practice sociospatial configuration” problem representation

### 5.1.1. An “urban” problem representation

(a) “The New Urban Agenda reaffirms our global commitment to **sustainable urban development as a critical step for realizing sustainable development** in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant actors. The implementation of the New Urban Agenda contributes to the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” (UNGA 2016b: para.9, emphasis added)

(b) To realise sustainable development, what needs to change according to the NUA is therefore the lack of commitment to the urban dimension of sustainable development.

(c) Hence, the default of an urban-centred approach to sustainability is assumed as problematic for the realisation of sustainable development.

(d) Hence, the problem of unsustainability and unsustainable development at all levels is represented in the NUA to be an urban problem.

In the first PR, the sustainable development and sustainability of the planet (i.e. the policy object of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs) is problematised—and thus framed—as a problem pertaining to the management of cities and urbanisation worldwide. This problematisation can be found again in another paragraph of the NUA: “recognizing sustainable urban and territorial development as essential to the achievement of sustainable development and prosperity for all” (para. 15a).

In an op-ed for the Japan Times during the preparation process of Habitat III, Joan Clos, Secretary-General of the Conference and then-Executive Director of UN-Habitat declared “the advantages that urbanization offers can be an important contribution to the solution to many of the challenges that face the world today” (Clos 2016). This discursive change of perspective in global development policy also explains the presence of an urban/city SDG (#11) in the SDGs (Parnell 2016).

### 5.1.2. An “economic growth imperative” problem representation

a) “Since the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976 and in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996, and the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 [...] **there is a need to take advantage of the opportunities presented by urbanization as an engine of sustained and inclusive economic growth**, social and cultural development, and environmental protection, and of its potential contributions to the achievement of transformative and sustainable development.” (UNGA 2016b, para.3–4, emphasis added)

(b) To achieve transformative and sustainable development, what needs to change according to the NUA is therefore the default of not taking advantage of the opportunities presented by urbanisation understood as an engine of economic growth.

(c) Hence, the untapped opportunities presented by urbanisation viewed as an engine of economic growth is assumed as problematic for the achievement of transformative and sustainable development.

(d) Hence, the problem of stagnating and unsustainable development is represented in the NUA to be a problem of unawareness, indifference or distrust towards urbanisation seen as an engine of economic growth.

In the second PR, the sustainability of cities, urbanisation and urban development is problematised as a necessity and/or desirability of economic growth qualified as “sustained, inclusive and sustainable”

(UNGA 2016b: para. 4, 5, 13-d, 15-c-ii, 43, 62, 114-d). In the NUA, economic growth is powered by urbanisation and driven by cities/urban areas seen as global economic growth powerhouses. For the NUA, cities and urbanisation must be used to generate economic growth globally, achieving thereby global sustainable development goals and fulfilling aspiration of global sustainability. What is implied here is that developing countries are poor because they have not taken urbanisation and city planning seriously or ignored it.

Despite particular mentions to the “social and ecological function of land” (ibid.: para.13A, 69), the re-recognition of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living (ibid.: para. 13-1, 31, 105), a shy appearance of the ‘right to the city’ (ibid.: para. 11) and an appreciable acknowledgement of the role of culture “in the promotion and implementation of new sustainable consumption and production patterns that contribute to the responsible use of resources” (ibid.: para. 10), the economic leg of the three-legged sustainability stool is by far the strongest. Economic growth is frequently mentioned throughout the outcome document (ibid.: para. 4, 5, 13-d, 15-c-ii, 43, 62, 66, 114-d). Nature and the environment are rather valorised (Inwertsetzung) for the services it provides to the economy as “nature-based solutions and innovations” and “ecosystem-based solutions and services”, than protected. Thus, although the social, environmental and cultural dimensions of (sustainable) development are also positively affected by urbanisation in Habitat III’s outcome document, there is a clear emphasis and priority put on the economic dimension, almost exclusively conceived as economic growth. As such, the NUA resembles a pro-growth urban-based and city-driven global development strategy.

Indeed, this idea was central to Habitat III. In the resolution of the UN General Assembly which formally decided in 2012 the convening of the Conference, it already stated that:

**“cities are engines of economic growth** and that, **if they are well planned and developed**, including through integrated planning and management approaches, they can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies” (UNGA 2012; emphasis added)

A few years later at the height of the preparation process, the Habitat III Secretariat promoted the idea of ‘good urbanisation’ (Clos 2016; Sennet et al. 2018; UN-Habitat 2016;) as “engine of growth” (Clos 2015a), “tool for development” (Kanhema and Clos 2016) and “source of prosperity” (Clos 2015b; 2015c).

The second PR assumes a direct relationship between cities/urbanisation and sustainability/sustainable development in the form of a positive causality whereby cities and urbanisation are sites and engines of

economic growth and economic growth brings development and development brings “prosperity and quality of life for all” (UNGA 2016b: para. 11). The new conventional wisdom about cities and urbanisation not as obstacle but as solution to prosperity (Barnett and Parnell 2016; Cohen and Simet 2018; Turok 2018) was largely promoted while preparing the Conference. For instance, on the Habitat III website you can find on one of the main page very illustrative figures telling that cities represent 70% of global GDP, 60% of global energy consumption, 70% global greenhouse gas emissions and 70% global waste. On the same page it also reads in the main text: “Throughout modern history, urbanization has been a major driver of development and poverty reduction. [...] Urbanization had become a driving force as well as a source of development with the power to change and improve lives”.<sup>48</sup>

This ‘transformative power of urbanisation’ is assumed in the NUA (UNGA 2016b) to occur as follows:

- urbanisation—i.e. the growth and concentration of population, economic activities, and social interactions in cities (para. 2,3),
- by virtue of economies of scale—reducing costs of urban services—and of agglomeration—increasing productivity, revenues and business efficiency and opportunities (para. 14-b, 44, 51, 98),
- and on the conditions of:
  - planned and designed polycentric, compact, dense, mixed use and connected adequate urban forms and public spaces (i.e. streets, sidewalks, cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks) (para. 14-b, 14-c-iii, 44, 51, 67, 98, 100),
  - as well as appropriate regulatory frameworks
    - for inclusive and participatory urban policy-making, implementation and evaluation (para. 48, 86),
    - for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the development and management of urban infrastructures and services (para. 91),
    - for the housing sector and supply (para. 111), for transport and mobility services (para. 116),
    - for taxation systems to capture and share land and property added-value (para. 132, 137),
    - and for municipal borrowing and debt markets (para. 139),
- is expected to become an engine of economic growth (para. 4, 13-d) and a leverage for (socio-economic) structural transformation, high productivity, high-value-added activities, resource efficiency, competitiveness and innovation (para. 13-d, 14-b, 44, 60),
- eventually achieving prosperity and quality of life for all (para. 11, 15a, 58, 61, 62, 65, 68, 94, 115, 118).

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48 See <<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda#>>

### 5.1.3. A “mode of intervention and collective action” problem representation

(a) “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; foster resilience; and protect the environment.” (UNGA 2016b: para. 5, emphasis added; also para. 15a)

(b) In order to help end poverty [...] and protect the environment what needs to change according to the NUA is therefore the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, built, financed, developed, governed and managed.

(c) Hence, the perpetuation of the way cities and human settlements have so far been planned, designed, built, financed, developed, governed and managed is assumed as problematic for allowing poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to persist; inequalities to increase; sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth to be hindered; missing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls neglecting their vital contribution to sustainable development; deteriorating human health and well-being; impeding resilience; and destroying the environment.

(d) Hence, the problem of persisting poverty [...] and destruction of the environment is represented in the NUA to be a problem of the reproduction of deficient and harmful modes of city and human settlement planning, design, building, financing, development, governing and management, or the lack thereof.

In the third PR, the sustainability of cities, urbanisation and urban development is problematised as a problem of mode of intervention and collective action. Here, the ideas and practices of social engineering as mode of conduct of social change and transformation are central to the political construction of this PR. To underscore the importance of this PR for the NUA, it can be noted that the same exact paragraph selected above was reproduced verbatim in the first post-Habitat III resolutions of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 2016a: para.9; UNGA 2017: para.12).

The third PR must however be understood in two ways in which mainstream modes of intervention and collective action are falling short of expectations: first, as an urbanism / urban model / urban development question, and second as a multilateral/global policy-making issue whose action field is urbanisation. Regarding the former, the NUA’s advocates opposes what they call ‘laissez-faire urbanisation’ of uncontrolled population, spatial and economic growth (Clos et al. 2016; UN-Habitat

2016) and the perpetuation of the 80 years-old *Athens Charter's* model of functional urbanism (Sennet et al. 2018). In regards to the latter, presented on the one hand as “forward-looking and focused on problem-solving with clear means of implementations” (UN-Habitat 2016: 175, 177), the NUA implicitly assumes on the other the limited performance of the previous Habitat I and Habitat II agendas to solve the problems they identified, most of which are still persistent (Cohen 2016; Satterthwaite 2018). It thereby perhaps unwillingly calls into question the function and efficacy of the international management of global (urban) issues as it has been conducted since WWII.

#### 5.1.4. A state power and practice sociospatial configuration problem representation

(a) “We envisage **cities and human settlements that [...] act as hubs and drivers** for balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development at all levels” (A/RES/71/256, para. 13e, emphasis added); “to **leverage the key role of cities and human settlements as drivers** of sustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world.” (UNGA 2016b: para. 22, emphasis added)

(b) For balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development at all levels, and sustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world, what needs to change according to the NUA is therefore the default of cities and human settlements to act as hubs and drivers.

(c) Hence, cities and human settlements not acting as drivers and hubs is assumed as problematic for balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development at all levels, and sustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world.

(d) Hence, the problem of unbalanced, unsustainable and divided urban and territorial development at all levels, and unsustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world is represented in the NUA to be a problem of cities and human settlements relegated to a passive and lesser/minor role.

Not only the active role of cities is proposed as solution in the NUA, but also that of civil society, referred to as “stakeholders” and “partners”.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in the fourth and last PR, by opening up the definition and implementation of urban policies at all levels to so-called subnational governments and non-state actors, the sustainability of cities, urbanisation and urban development is problematised as a

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<sup>49</sup> Judging by the very high frequency of use of both terms throughout the text of the NUA: stakeholders: paragraphs 1, 15-b, 15-c-i, 15-c-ii, 16, 21, 23, 31, 42, 47, 48, 72, 77, 79, 82, 97, 104, 128, 147, 153, 154, 160, 162, 167, 169, 172-c; partner/partnerships: paragraphs 15-c-i, 21, 82, 91, 92, 96, 126, 128, 149, 153, 154, 162, 163, 169, 172-c.

matter of sociospatial (re)configuration of state power and practice (see Brenner 2004; Jessop 2008, 2016). Indeed, states have adopted a multiscale and multi-stakeholders partnership approach in order to deal with transboundary and complex phenomena such as worldwide urbanisation, redefining thereby the notion and practice of statehood and state power. In this PR, it is eventually the ideas and practices of sovereignty that are problematised.

In conclusion, the four PRs identified appear to be hierarchically structured. The urban PR is an overarching problematisation under which the three others are situated. The economic growth imperative PR is the key problematisation in the NUA while the two others are subordinated to it. The mode of intervention and collective action PR as well as the state power and practice sociospatial configuration PR serve the purpose of the economic growth imperative PR.

Having now identified and clarified what core “problems” are represented to be in the NUA, I will analyse in more details in the two next sections of the empirical chapter the two of these problematisations: the economic growth imperative PR and the mode of intervention or collective action PR, and leave out the two others. The reason for that choice is twofold. First, as Carol Bacchi explains, applying comprehensively and thoroughly her method makes only sense for larger research projects involving at best several researchers.<sup>50</sup> Second, I decide to focus on the economic growth imperative problem representation because economic growth has historically been a consensual and at the same time a controversial issue in regards to relationship between urbanisation and development. Production and consumption patterns in the North—based on the pursuit of economic growth—have been acknowledged since Habitat I as one the main cause of the unsustainability of urbanisation worldwide (UN 1976), and yet, paradoxically, the NUA recommends economic growth as solution to problems caused by economic growth, as paragraph 63 shows: “cities and human settlements face unprecedented threats from unsustainable consumption and production patterns, loss of biodiversity, pressure on ecosystems, pollution, natural and human-made disasters, and climate change and its related risks”; these are well-known negative consequences of economic growth. Third, as I will show, the third PR is articulated around the notion of social engineering which is a notion and a family of practices critical for the understanding of the management of social change while keeping order, stability and socio-political status quo. The two analyses do not aim to be exhaustive as this would by

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50 In a video recorded workshop at the University of Adelaide to train postgraduate students and PhD candidate interested in the WPR analytical strategy. See <<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/carst/online-modules/wpr/>>

far exceeds the scope of a master thesis, but intend nevertheless to provide elements that could be useful for a larger research project.

## **5.2. WPR analysis (systematic) of the economic growth imperative problem representation**

This second section of the empirical chapter applies in a systematic way the questions 2 to 6 of the WPR method to the NUA's "economic growth imperative" problem representation.

What is economic growth? In conventional macroeconomic terms, "[e]conomic growth is the process by which the amount of goods and services one can earn with the same amount of work increases over time. It generally implies that income per person rises over time" (de la Croix 2015: 38). This rise or growth is measured by "what economists call the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, that is, the average national income per person. The GDP is [...] the monetary value of the goods and services that are being produced and consumed within a given nation or region. Economic growth takes place when the GDP is rising – usually at a given 'rate of growth' – across the economy" (Jackson 2017: 3–4). "GDP can be thought of as simultaneously measuring the sum of all economic output (gross value added), the sum of all incomes (wages and dividends/profits) and the sum of all expenditures (consumption and investment)" (ibid.: 229, endnote 4 of Ch.1). Economic growth—or stagnation—and the calculation of GDP is a relatively recent field of study as it relies on data from national accounts that were set up in most countries after World War II (de la Croix 2015).

### **5.2.1. WPR\_Q2: Presuppositions / premisses of the problem representation**

What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem' (*problem representation*)? Which meanings and presuppositions are necessary for this representation of the 'problem' to make sense or to be coherent?

The problem representation relies upon two sets of conceptual logics mutually reinforcing each other which are underpinning the statement first, in specific terms, about cities/urbanisation as engine of growth, and second, in more general terms, about the implied imperative of growth that ensues.



## **Cities/urbanisation as engine of growth**

This statement relies upon two presuppositions. First, cities, by virtue of their form and according to the theories of agglomeration and economies of scale of urban/regional microeconomics as well as economic geography, provides externalities (size, density, diversity and proximity) that particularly stimulate economic growth. “Through a combination of density and diversity, cities improve the efficiency of economic transactions, improve the productivity of firms and cultivate innovation” (Beall and Fox 2009: 100). “In the language of urban economists, agglomeration facilitates sharing (e.g., of large facilities), matching (e.g., of jobs and people) and learning (e.g., about more productive ways of working)” (McGranahan 2015: 962). Even the form of a sustainable city (e.g. compactness, density, etc.) does not prevent the culture of factors of economic growth, on the contrary, it makes even more possible to continue with growth (Oikonomou 2015). There is an assumed physical determinism of cities’ form that underlie the problem representation (Cuthbert 2006).

Second, it is commonly accepted in macroeconomic terms that urbanisation is associated with national wealth. This rests on the one hand upon a famous type of scatter diagram showing a correlation that higher levels of urbanization (i.e. population living in settlements designated as urban) are associated with higher per capita incomes/GDP (Beall and Fox 2009: 68, Fig 3.1. “Urbanisation and Income”; McGranahan 2015: 962, Fig. 2), and on the other hand upon “[c]onsiderable theory and empirical evidence support[ing] the view that urbanization is integral to economic growth” (McGranahan 2015: 962).

## **Economic growth as necessary and desirable**

The problem representation of an economic growth imperative is underpinned by a deep-seated, almost fossilised, perhaps sanctified, most certainly taken for granted association coupling economic growth with prosperity, stability and a good life. “The conventional view is that economic expansion will lead to rising prosperity. Higher incomes mean a better quality of life. This equation seems both familiar and obvious” (Jackson 2017: xxv).

Several elements explaining the international political salience of the economic growth imperative can be given here. First, according to Jackson, although “[t]he elision of rising prosperity with economic growth is a relatively modern construction” (2017:5), it is nonetheless entrenched in widely shared assumptions stemming from Enlightenment philosophy and Judeo-Christian religious tradition viewing human nature as perfectible, human history as a time linear progression from barbarism to civilisation and nature as to be tamed and used for human purposes. The possibility of human and social progress

by surpassing the limits set by nature functions as a very powerful collective meaning translating into a source of hope for a better, brighter future, yet based on the continual exploitation of nature's resources.

Second, the historical experience of certain regions of the world, starting with European and North American countries in the nineteenth century, has proved that sustained economic growth and the market economy have been efficient economic practices and policies to significantly raise the levels of wealth and prosperity of populations. Taking a long-run perspective on economic development and using estimates and data related to life expectancy, body height and real wages, the Maddison Project of historical statistics of the Groningen Growth and Development Centre at the University of Groningen, Netherlands, "shows that, over the past millennium, income per capita in [Belgium, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA] has increased 32-fold, from \$717 per person per year around the year 1000 to \$23,086 nowadays. This contrasts sharply with the previous millennia, when there was almost no advance in income per capita. The figure shows that it started rising and accelerating around the year 1820 and it has sustained a steady rate of increase over the last two centuries" (de la Croix 2015: 38-9). In short, for two centuries in Europe and North America, economic growth was the economic mechanism by which the European ideas of progress and modernity materialised. In the decades following the Second World War, the same process expanded to other regions of the world, with East Asia (e.g. China, South Korea, Taiwan) being the best illustration (Williams 2015), materialising thereby the international development ideas of modernisation and 'catch up' for non Western countries.

Third, macro-economically "[t]he modern economy is structurally reliant on economic growth for its stability. When growth falters [...] politicians panic. Business struggle to survive. People lose their jobs and sometimes their homes" (Jackson 2017: 21). In addition, social welfare through the redistribution of wealth is also structurally dependent upon economic growth. This is why, at the level of national governments, there has been for decades a general agreement among economists and across the political spectrum about the necessity of economic growth, making alternatives difficult (AK Postwachstum 2016; Brand 2016b; Jackson 2017).

### **5.2.2. WPR\_Q3: Emergence and dominance of the problem representation**

How has this representation of the 'problem' come about? How has this representation of the 'problem' come to prominence?

For the problem representation to emerge and prevail, three conditions were necessary:

- the continuous perception and utilisation of the housing sector in international development and aid cooperation as factor of economic growth (see Arku and Harris 2005; Harris and Arku 2007);
- the neutralisation of the 1970s critic of economic growth (and thereby capitalism) as formulated among others in *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972) and *Social Limits to Growth* (Hirsch 1976) by the notion of sustainable development from the late 1980s onwards, in particular through its dominance in international development discourse (see Krueger and Gibbs eds. 2007);
- the emergence of post-fordist/modern economic meaning of cities through the process of entrepreneurialisation of urban governance (Harvey 1989) and voice and writings of Jane Jacobs (1969, 1984) which inspired the World Bank. The place of “public space” as generator of economic value is particularly important and also present in the NUA (UNGA 2016b: para. 53)

An overarching contingent condition was also necessary: the establishment of neoliberalism in the 1980s in the knowledge productions centres of the development discourse, foremost in the USA and UK (see Harvey 2007).

### 5.2.3. WPR\_Q4: Unproblematic and silences in the problem representation

What is left unproblematic in this problem representation Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be conceptualized differently? What does this representation of the 'problem' take for granted and leave unquestioned?

The evidence that urbanisation does not automatically equal economic growth (Jedwab and Vollrath 2015) is left out the NUA. Thinking that urbanisation, even if well-planned, automatically brings about economic growth, which in turn realises sustainability, is at best controversial. Indeed, “at different periods in time cities have been sometimes seen as the engines of development and sometimes as a drain on national development resources” (Watson 2015: 180). The NUA decidedly privileges the “positive” side of the urbanisation-development nexus over its “negative”.

In addition, “[t]he notion that cities are self-propelled engines of economic growth is an ideological fable: it hides the large-scale infrastructural and ecological links that embed cities within vast landscapes of extraction, production, distribution and power” (Arboleda and Brenner 2017: 277).

The NUA silences several elements:

- the capitalist/productivist nature of economic growth and its systemic crises are omitted. In the NUA, capitalism is made invisible (it is never directly mentioned or named) even though being pervasive;
- in this regard, the role of urbanisation for the production of value and the circuits of capitalist accumulation (Harvey 1985) and the urban roots of capitalist crises (Harvey 2012) are not given any attention;
- the social and environmental “costs” of economic growth; instead of social justice, the NUA speaks of social inclusion, which is economically connoted; the term “social justice” was present in the *Vancouver Declaration and Action Plan* of Habitat I in 1976 (UN 1976);
- urbanisation without economic growth and economic growth without urbanisation (Turok 2018);
- economic growth without economic development “growth can occur without economic development” (Beall and Fox 2009: 69);
- alternative modes of development, i.e. not relying on economic growth.

#### **5.2.4. WPR\_Q5: Discursive, subjectification and lived effects**

What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’? How they affect our lives and the lives of others? How they influence who we are and our views of others?

First, among the noticeable discursive effects are perhaps the neutralisation of potential conflictual concepts. The case of the right to the city is emblematic. Although it is mentioned in the NUA, it was watered down and given a softened meaning as ‘cities for all’.

Second, two types of subjects in international political-economic terms are produced: countries that have made use of urbanisation and cities to generate economic growth and develop their national economies, and those that have not. To the former category belong mostly Western nations, East and Southeast Asian developmental states (including China and India) and other emerging or middle-income countries such as Mexico, Turkey, South Africa, Saudi Arabia or Brazil who have had a rather positive economic development experience with urbanisation. On the other hand, the latter group includes many countries principally of the former Third World whose development experience in relation to urbanisation has been rather negative. In reaction to the legacy of socio-economic deprivation and spatio-racial segregation and exclusion in colonial cities and over-urbanization and the urban bias thesis in the postwar and independence period, many governments in the global South have shown anti-urbanisation sentiments and policies (Beall and Fox 2009; Davis and Keating 2015; King 1990; McGranahan 2015; Parnell 2016; Turok 2018; Watson 2015). In sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, “[t]hree-quarters of governments are so concerned about the burden that they have policies to restrict rural–urban migration” (Turok 2018: 94). Such policies are an oft-used indicator to measure the extent of anti-urbanisation attitudes among governments.

Third, regarding the lived effects, we can suggest that urban population and space must become productive and profitable in order to generate economic growth.

### **5.2.5. WPR\_Q6: Promotion of and resistance against the problem representation**

How and where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced? Who supports these problem representations, and how they could be challenged, if we are unhappy with them?

Multilateral development organisations such as the World Bank (see Ramsamy 2006) and the OECD belong to the strongest promoters of this problematisation while UN-Habitat is perhaps one of its earliest promoter as its first flagship report published 1987 suggests (UNCHS 1987). However, it is important to remind that these organisations are foremost the international representatives of the interests of states. It is interesting to see also the activities of large American philanthropies (e.g. Ford, Rockefeller, etc.) funding and supporting many projects directed towards production of knowledges in academic institutions (LSE, NY New School, etc.) as well as international development journalism and reporting services (e.g. Citiscope). Resistance on the other hand is of two kinds as we saw in the

context chapter: an academic one and a grassroots one, using different methods but sharing common ideas of “cities for people and not for profits” as well as the right to the city.

### 5.3. WPR analysis (integrated) of the mode of intervention or collective action problem representation

The third problem representation identified and selected in the section 5.1. rests on the presupposition that by changing cities it is possible to change society at large; interventions in cities’ spatial and social fabric serve social change and the achievement of higher societal goals, e.g. global sustainability and sustainable development. This interconnection is well illustrated for instance by the theme of the Shanghai 2010 World Expo: “*Better City, Better Life*”, an ‘imaginary’ (see Jessop 2010) implying a causal or at least correlative relationship between urban improvement and societal betterment.<sup>51</sup>

In order for this presupposition to be intelligible, coherent and to appear within the true, it relies upon a particular discursive formation known as social engineering. Basically, social engineering is practical and applied social science to organise social change while maintaining social order. For Jon Alexander and Joachim K.H.W. Schmidt, it “means arranging and channelling environmental and social forces to create a high probability that effective social action will occur” (1996: 1). In its 1945 book *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Karl Popper distinguished between ‘piecemeal social engineering’—to be rather found in liberal democracies—and ‘utopian social engineering’—rather in authoritarian and totalitarian states. “Letzteres gilt Popper als gefährlich, weil es einen dogmatisch zu befolgenden Plan zur Erlangung eines ideologisch fixierten Ziels entwirft und sich zu radikalieren droht. Ersteres ist rational, weil es mit Hilfe von Planung reflektiert und schrittweise gesellschaftliche Missstände abstellen will, immer bereit, sich veränderten Gegebenheiten anzupassen” (Etzemüller 2009: 18-9).

However, Thomas Etzemüller’s work has been more precise in grasping the elusive yet politically deeply structuring phenomenon: “Beim Social engineering handelt es sich um einen transnationalen Versuch, gegen die vermeintlich zersetzenden Kräfte der Moderne mit künstlichen Mitteln eine

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51 “Taking place between 1 May and 31 October 2010, the Expo was organised under the theme of “Better City, Better Life”, in a city renowned for its growth, its bold projects, and its unique way of life: Shanghai. In 2010, more than one in two people were living in a city, raising questions over social mixing, sustainability, security, hygiene and mobility. With an urban population of 23 million, **Shanghai was considered ideal location to showcase solutions to these pressing issues**” (<https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/2010-shanghai>; emphasis added)

natürliche Ordnung der Gesellschaft wieder zu erschaffen, indem eine, alle gesellschaftlichen Bereiche durchdringende, vernünftige soziale Ordnung entworfen wurde” (Etzemüller 2017). Spread across different countries and languages as well as diverse professional fields, scientific disciplines and political positions, the specific mode of thinking and problematising modernity of social engineers (Etzemüller 2009: 36) has never been a homogeneous entity but must rather be understood as a combination of heterogeneous strategic relations and practices sharing common constitutive characteristics (Etzemüller 2009, 2012, 2017):

- a social identity of highly-trained and -qualified experts or *professionals* with self-proclaimed ideology- and religion-free empirical habitus drawing equally on utopian thinking, Enlightenment philosophy, the French revolution, Comtist positivism, Le Playist empiricism and conservative social reformism, Marxism and Ferdinand Tönnies’ sociology (in particular his *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* distinction);
- a specific social-ecological worldview dominated from mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century by biologism and based on the dichotomy between organically integrated harmonious communities and atomised mechanical society. For social engineers, *Gemeinschaft* was being transformed into *Gesellschaft* by the destructive, ill and cancer-like forces of industrialisation, urbanisation as well as nation- and state-building, threatening/contaminating the health of community-based social order that must be restored by means of rational, modern technologies and knowledges;
- a political modus based on the scientification, rationalisation and normation of social life, and a political influence based on learning processes rather than prescriptions, directed as much to the state as to the masses through various modes of communication (e.g. social circles, journals, mass media, exhibitions, realised projects), correlative to states’ needs of expertise to problematise social reality and design solutions;
- entanglement in what Zygmunt Bauman (1991) called the ambivalence of modernity referring to the stigmatisation/exclusion/elimination of what deviates from the social norm despite ideals of social progress;
- a perception of the present as crisis, understood however as *Krisis*, i.e. a turning point when a difficult or important decision about the future must be made; for social engineers, non-decision was not an option as their awareness and knowledge oblige them to act;

- favoured fields of intervention, such as social policy and urban planning.

Although Thomas Etzemüller (2009, 2012, 2017) delimits this ‘sozialtechnokratisches Denken’ and ‘wirkmächtige Formation’ to the Euro-American context and to a historical period spanning approximately from mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, I suggest however that if social engineering is defined as “[d]ie Verbindung aus (sozial-)technologischer Lösungen, einer spezifischen Vorstellung von der sozialen Ordnung sowie einem dezidierten Gestaltungsimperativ” (Etzemüller 2017), then its geographical and historical scope must be revised. Through European colonial empires and then economic globalisation on the one hand, and sustainable development and climate change on the other, social engineering has most probably already been a global phenomenon at an early point and has continued well into the twenty-first century (see Boomkens 2008; Carlson 2005; Harrison 2010).

Because towns and cities have epitomised social disorder and chaos in consequence of (de-)industrialisation, urbanisation and mass rural migration, questions, issues and policy and design solutions related to urban social life and space have always had a particular importance for the promotion by social engineering of renewed social order:

- “der gebaute Raum [ist] Voraussetzung einer vernünftigen Sozialordnung” (Etzemüller 2009: 13)
- “das Habitat war die Voraussetzung, die Sozialbeziehungen neu zu ordnen. Es strukturierte nicht einfach die amorphe Masse. Vielmehr sollten die Menschen den rationalisierten Raum buchstäblich erfahren und dadurch zu Praktiken überzeugt werden, die gemeinschaftsstiftend waren“ (Etzemüller 2009: 15-6).
- “Es ist kein Zufall, dass derartige Zukunftsentwürfe von Beginn an, und seit der Industrialisierung immer stärker, auf den gebauten Raum setzten. Über den Raum organisierten sich Gemeinschaften auf verschiedenen Ebenen, am Tor wurde geschieden, wer dazugehörte und wer nicht, über die gezielte Gestaltung des Raumes konnte Einfluss auf die Gestaltung der Gemeinschaft genommen werden, so wie umgekehrt ein verfallender Raum die Menschen verkommen ließ” (Etzemüller 2009: 15).

The emergence in late nineteenth-early twentieth century in Europe and North America of transnational movements of housing reform (Bullock and Read 1985), municipalism (Dogliani 2002, 2017; Kubaczek and Raunig 2018), town planning (Hall 2014; Meller 1995; Saunier 2001; Wagner 2016) and modern architecture (Mumford 2000) are answers to problematisations produced by social engineering and can therefore be affiliated to it. “[T]he ambition [for instance of the Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City movement or CIAM’s functional urbanism] in planning was to produce urban populations that would lead ordered and disciplined lives, in healthy environments, and develop and improve both physically and spiritually” (Watson 2015: 182).



Thus, the NUA's proposal to change the mode of city making problematising the control of cities'/urban areas' population and space and their utilisation in order to elicit—rather than determine—social behaviour and spatial patterns appropriate “to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (A/RES/71/256, para. 9) reflects the discourses of ordered/steered socio-spatial transformation/change of social engineering, which in turn are underpinned by theoretical and practical knowledges of spatial planning and socio-economic policy.

The binary or dichotomous construction as can be read in the following paragraphs from the NUA mirrors quite well the above argumentation about social engineering. On the one hand, cities and human settlements are described in the NUA as place of societal and ecological imbalance and disorder engendered by urbanisation:

“Populations, economic activities, social and cultural interactions, as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts, are increasingly concentrated in cities, and this poses massive sustainability challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others” (A/RES/71/256, para. 2).

“[T]he persistence of multiple forms of poverty, growing inequalities and environmental degradation remain among the major obstacles to sustainable development worldwide, with social and economic exclusion and spatial segregation often an irrefutable reality in cities and human settlements” (A/RES/71/256, para. 3).

“We recognize that cities and human settlements face unprecedented threats from unsustainable consumption and production patterns, loss of biodiversity, pressure on ecosystems, pollution, natural and human-made disasters, and climate change and its related risks” (A/RES/71/256, para. 63).

On the other hand, the NUA envisages at the same time cities and human settlements that curb the stated imbalances and disorder. It declares:

“We share a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all” (A/RES/71/256, para. 11).

# CONCLUSION

## 6.1. Results

The research clearly identified four main problematisations which are hierarchically structured. In the NUA, thus, global sustainability and global sustainable development, chief goal of UN's *Agenda 2030*, have become an urban/city problem. The other problem representations are encompassed under this umbrella problem, translation of the SDG #11 into the NUA. Regarding the three others, urbanisation and cities will only become sustainable if economic growth is prioritised and modes of urban intervention and collective action on the one hand, and state power and practices on the other hand, are changed accordingly. Cities and urbanisation must be planned, designed, managed and governed and state power and practices must be spatially rescaled and socially restructured in order for both to accommodate and stimulate global economic growth in the most effective way.

These problematisations produce discursive practices which celebrate the figure of the competitive, entrepreneurial city. In the NUA, cities are framed as places (or rather sites of strategic intervention) for economic growth to take place and offer endless economic opportunities. Obviously, urban/regional microeconomics is a central form of knowledge in the emergence of this way of thinking. From Jane Jacobs to more recent "city triumphalists" (e.g. Richard Florida, Edward Glaeser), appropriated and amplified by intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank and the OECD, they are highly connected nodes in the 'networks of power relations' of discursive practices. The terms of the development debate seems to become less based on an urban-rural dichotomy than on a cities for people vs. cities for profit opposition, where the former gives the impression in the NUA to be in a disadvantaged position.

Using Carol Bacchi's WPR analytical strategy was thus very useful to not get trapped by the NUA's stated problems and discern what issues are truly at stake. Instead of focussing on the eradication of urban poverty as main stated problem, the analysis enabled to see that global urbanisation is rendered governable and acted upon in the extent of which the NUA in fact targets the improvement of the conditions which make cities and urbanisation agents of global economic growth. Thus, the global

urban agenda as instantiated by the NUA is foremost a pro-growth agenda. Its political priority is clearly economic growth, rather than the famous “leave no one behind”.

Finally, regarding the structure of the global international system in the light of the problematisations occurring in the NUA, there is of course the classical development distinction between developed and developing countries, in spite of the universal scope of the NUA. However, I suggest that this classical North/South divide might lose significance as increasingly meaningful is perhaps the emerging distinction between cities that can compete in the global market and those that cannot, regardless of their geopolitical location in the global North or South. As another noticeable implication might be the rescaling of the prime responsibility for securing and generating economic growth from states to cities. This is the states-led universal urban question in the early twenty-first century.

## 6.2. Reflection

Approaching the GUA with Michel Foucault’s concept of problematisation and Carol Bacchi’s WPR method revealed to be the analytical tools what I was looking for to understand my thoughts and appraise the implications of my actions as a global urban policymaker (see Foreword). This is also for Bacchi the idea behind her analytical strategy: to know policies better than policymakers themselves.

Although the application in this master thesis of WPR to the NUA might have as result to raise more questions than provide answers, I found it to be very useful to critically question policy processes. My guess would be that Foucault-influenced poststructural policy analysis would gain a lot to collaborate with historical-materialist concepts and notions (e.g. Antonio Gramsci’s cultural hegemony and Nico Poulantzas’ condensation of social relations) and vice-versa, as David Kreps (2015) already demonstrated. For instance, enabling a constructive dialogue between poststructural and historical-materialist theories within a single theoretical framework for the study of the GUA would be a great advancement.

## 6.3. Outlook

In 1988, Peter Hall (1932–2014), a British town planner and geographer famous for his intellectual masterwork *Cities in Civilization: Culture, Technology, and Urban Order* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998)

remarked in his book *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* that:

“after 100 years of debate on how to plan the city, after repeated attempts – however mistaken or distorted – to put ideas into practice, we find we are almost back where we started. [...] That does not mean, of course, that we have made no progress at all: the city of the millennium is a vastly different, and by any reasonable measure a very much superior, place compared with the city of 1900. But it does mean that certain trends seem to reassert themselves; perhaps because, in truth, they never went away” (2014: 11).

Less than a decade later, Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) which was taking place in Istanbul, made the same honest observation in his opening statement:

“We see that, as much as the world has changed since the first Habitat Conference, in 1976, human settlements issues have remained essentially the same” (United Nations 1996: 212).

By way of outlook I would like to pay attention to another observation of Carol Bacchi. Recently, she raised the question about whether policy problems tend to (socially) reproduce themselves, enabling thereby certain policies to last over longer period of time despite disappointing implementation results.<sup>52</sup> I guess the GUA would be an adequate research object as as a field of political action and intervention it is more than a century old, and yet results are more than ambivalent.

Thinking in terms of international regime, asking the question whether there is/was something like an international/global urban regime could also be useful. International regimes are “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given issue-area of international relations” (Krasner 1983: 1). This question appears relevant as global conferences, around which the Urban Internationale and the Habitat process were articulated, are “periodic constitutional conventions of regimes” (Gelman 2000). Although for the moment there is indeed far too little historical and onto-epistemological knowledge available to answer it, yet the few evidence gathered in this master thesis and found around might prove useful to start the documenting and questioning work. Furthermore, Michel Foucault’s close notion of ‘regime of truth’ (see Theory chapter) and Carol Bacchi’s WPR analytical strategy might add theoretical and methodological value for such a project that could include an analysis of the GUA from the Ghent

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52 See <<https://carolbacchi.com/2018/08/06/the-investment-in-problems/>> and <<https://carolbacchi.com/2018/08/20/the-investment-in-problems-a-response/>>

Planning Congress of 1913 (Whyte ed. 2014) to the NUA passing by CIAM's 1933/43 *Athens Charter* (CIAM 1933; Le Corbusier 1973) as well as Habitat I (UN 1976) and II (UN 1996). Such an investigation could shed light on the role and place of cities, urbanisation and urbanism in the international management of social change/transformation as undergoing since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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# ANNEX

- **The *New Urban Agenda*, resolution 71/256 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 2016b)**
- **Abstract / Zusammenfassung**



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
25 January 2017

Seventy-first session  
Agenda item 20

## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 23 December 2016

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/71/L.23)]

### 71/256. New Urban Agenda

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* its resolution [67/216](#) of 21 December 2012, in which it decided to convene the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), as well as its resolutions [68/239](#) of 27 December 2013, [69/226](#) of 19 December 2014 and [70/210](#) of 22 December 2015,

1. *Expresses its profound gratitude* to the Government and the people of Ecuador for hosting the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) from 17 to 20 October 2016 and for providing all the necessary support;

2. *Endorses* the New Urban Agenda adopted by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which is contained in the annex to the present resolution.

*68th plenary meeting  
23 December 2016*

### Annex

#### New Urban Agenda

#### Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All

1. We, Heads of State and Government, Ministers and High Representatives, have gathered at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) from 17 to 20 October 2016 in Quito, with the participation of subnational and local governments, parliamentarians, civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, the private sector, professionals and practitioners, the scientific and academic community, and other relevant stakeholders, to adopt a New Urban Agenda.

\* Reissued for technical reasons on 7 April 2017.



2. By 2050, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanization one of the twenty-first century's most transformative trends. Populations, economic activities, social and cultural interactions, as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts, are increasingly concentrated in cities, and this poses massive sustainability challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others.
3. Since the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976 and in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996, and the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, we have seen improvements in the quality of life of millions of urban inhabitants, including slum and informal-settlement dwellers. However, the persistence of multiple forms of poverty, growing inequalities and environmental degradation remain among the major obstacles to sustainable development worldwide, with social and economic exclusion and spatial segregation often an irrefutable reality in cities and human settlements.
4. We are still far from adequately addressing these and other existing and emerging challenges, and there is a need to take advantage of the opportunities presented by urbanization as an engine of sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development, and environmental protection, and of its potential contributions to the achievement of transformative and sustainable development.
5. 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; foster resilience; and protect the environment.
6. We take full account of the milestone achievements of the year 2015, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>1</sup> including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,<sup>2</sup> the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,<sup>3</sup> the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,<sup>4</sup> the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,<sup>5</sup> the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway<sup>6</sup> and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020.<sup>7</sup> We also take account of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,<sup>8</sup> the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 70/1.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 69/313, annex.

<sup>3</sup> See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution 69/283, annex II.

<sup>5</sup> Resolution 69/137, annex II.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 69/15, annex.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7)*, chap. II.

<sup>8</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

Development,<sup>9</sup> the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>10</sup> the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the follow-up to these conferences.

7. While recognizing that it did not have an intergovernmental agreed outcome, we take note of the World Humanitarian Summit held in May 2016 in Istanbul.

8. We acknowledge the contributions of national Governments, as well as the contributions of subnational and local governments, in the definition of the New Urban Agenda, and take note of the second World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments.

9. The New Urban Agenda reaffirms our global commitment to sustainable urban development as a critical step for realizing sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant actors. The implementation of the New Urban Agenda contributes to the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

10. The New Urban Agenda acknowledges that culture and cultural diversity are sources of enrichment for humankind and provide an important contribution to the sustainable development of cities, human settlements and citizens, empowering them to play an active and unique role in development initiatives. The New Urban Agenda further recognizes that culture should be taken into account in the promotion and implementation of new sustainable consumption and production patterns that contribute to the responsible use of resources and address the adverse impact of climate change.

### **Our shared vision**

11. We share a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all. We note the efforts of some national and local governments to enshrine this vision, referred to as “right to the city”, in their legislation, political declarations and charters.

12. We aim to achieve cities and human settlements where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as their fundamental freedoms, guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. In this regard, the New Urban Agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>11</sup> international human rights treaties,

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<sup>9</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

<sup>10</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>11</sup> Resolution 217 A (III).

the Millennium Declaration<sup>12</sup> and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.<sup>13</sup> It is informed by other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development.<sup>14</sup>

13. We envisage cities and human settlements that:

(a) Fulfil their social function, including the social and ecological function of land, with a view to progressively achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, without discrimination, universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, as well as equal access for all to public goods and quality services in areas such as food security and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, mobility and transportation, energy, air quality and livelihoods;

(b) Are participatory, promote civic engagement, engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces that are friendly for families, enhance social and intergenerational interactions, cultural expressions and political participation, as appropriate, and foster social cohesion, inclusion and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met, recognizing the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations;

(c) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal rights in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision-making, by ensuring decent work and equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, for all women and by preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against women and girls in private and public spaces;

(d) Meet the challenges and opportunities of present and future sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, leveraging urbanization for structural transformation, high productivity, value-added activities and resource efficiency, harnessing local economies and taking note of the contribution of the informal economy while supporting a sustainable transition to the formal economy;

(e) Fulfil their territorial functions across administrative boundaries and act as hubs and drivers for balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development at all levels;

(f) 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, effectively linking people, places, goods, services and economic opportunities;

(g) Adopt and implement disaster risk reduction and management, reduce vulnerability, build resilience and responsiveness to natural and human-made hazards and foster mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;

(h) Protect, conserve, restore and promote their ecosystems, water, natural habitats and biodiversity, minimize their environmental impact and change to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

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<sup>12</sup> Resolution [55/2](#).

<sup>13</sup> Resolution [60/1](#).

<sup>14</sup> Resolution [41/128](#), annex.

### **Our principles and commitments**

14. To achieve our vision, we resolve to adopt a New Urban Agenda guided by the following interlinked principles:

(a) Leave no one behind, by ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including the eradication of extreme poverty, by ensuring equal rights and opportunities, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and integration in the urban space, by enhancing liveability, education, food security and nutrition, health and well-being, including by ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, by promoting safety and eliminating discrimination and all forms of violence, by ensuring public participation — providing safe and equal access for all, and by providing equal access for all to physical and social infrastructure and basic services, as well as adequate and affordable housing;

(b) Ensure sustainable and inclusive urban economies by leveraging the agglomeration benefits of well-planned urbanization, including high productivity, competitiveness and innovation, by promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all, by ensuring the creation of decent jobs and equal access for all to economic and productive resources and opportunities and by preventing land speculation, promoting secure land tenure and managing urban shrinking, where appropriate;

(c) Ensure environmental sustainability by promoting clean energy and sustainable use of land and resources in urban development, by protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, including adopting healthy lifestyles in harmony with nature, by promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, by building urban resilience, by reducing disaster risks and by mitigating and adapting to climate change.

15. We commit ourselves to working towards an urban paradigm shift for a New Urban Agenda that will:

(a) Readdress the way we plan, finance, develop, govern and manage cities and human settlements, recognizing sustainable urban and territorial development as essential to the achievement of sustainable development and prosperity for all;

(b) Recognize the leading role of national Governments, as appropriate, in the definition and implementation of inclusive and effective urban policies and legislation for sustainable urban development, and the equally important contributions of subnational and local governments, as well as civil society and other relevant stakeholders, in a transparent and accountable manner;

(c) 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, including:

(i) Developing and implementing urban policies at the appropriate level, including in local-national and multi-stakeholder partnerships, building integrated systems of cities and human settlements and promoting cooperation among all levels of government to enable the achievement of sustainable integrated urban development;

(ii) Strengthening urban governance, with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include urban stakeholders, as well as appropriate checks and balances, providing predictability and coherence in urban development

plans to enable social inclusion, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and environmental protection;

(iii) Reinvigorating long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design in order to optimize the spatial dimension of the urban form and deliver the positive outcomes of urbanization;

(iv) Supporting effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments enabling strengthened municipal finance and local fiscal systems in order to create, sustain and share the value generated by sustainable urban development in an inclusive manner.

### **Call for action**

16. While the specific circumstances of cities of all sizes, towns and villages vary, we affirm that the New Urban Agenda is universal in scope, participatory and people-centred, protects the planet and has a long-term vision, setting out priorities and actions at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels that Governments and other relevant stakeholders in every country can adopt based on their needs.

17. We will work to implement the New Urban Agenda in our own countries and at the regional and global levels, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and respecting national legislation and practices, as well as policies and priorities.

18. We reaffirm all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including, inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as set out in principle 7.

19. We acknowledge that in implementing the New Urban Agenda particular attention should be given to addressing the unique and emerging urban development challenges facing all countries, in particular developing countries, including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries. Special attention should also be given to countries in situations of conflict, as well as countries and territories under foreign occupation, post-conflict countries and countries affected by natural and human-made disasters.

20. We recognize the need to give particular attention to addressing multiple forms of discrimination faced by, inter alia, women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples and local communities, slum and informal-settlement dwellers, homeless people, workers, smallholder farmers and fishers, refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and migrants, regardless of their migration status.

21. We urge all national, subnational and local governments, as well as all relevant stakeholders, in line with national policies and legislation, to revitalize, strengthen and create partnerships, enhancing coordination and cooperation to effectively implement the New Urban Agenda and realize our shared vision.

22. We adopt this New Urban Agenda as a collective vision and political commitment to promote and realize sustainable urban development, and as a historic opportunity to leverage the key role of cities and human settlements as drivers of sustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world.

## Quito implementation plan for the New Urban Agenda

23. We resolve to implement the New Urban Agenda as a key instrument for enabling national, subnational and local governments and all relevant stakeholders to achieve sustainable urban development.

### **Transformative commitments for sustainable urban development**

24. To fully harness the potential of sustainable urban development, we make the following transformative commitments through an urban paradigm shift grounded in the integrated and indivisible dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

#### *Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty*

25. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We also recognize that growing inequality and the persistence of multiple dimensions of poverty, including the rising number of slum and informal-settlement dwellers, are affecting both developed and developing countries, and that the spatial organization, accessibility and design of urban space, as well as the infrastructure and basic services provision, together with development policies, can promote or hinder social cohesion, equality and inclusion.

26. We commit ourselves to urban and rural development that is people-centred, protects the planet, and is age- and gender-responsive and to the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, facilitating living together, ending all forms of discrimination and violence, and empowering all individuals and communities while enabling their full and meaningful participation. We further commit ourselves to promoting culture and respect for diversity and equality as key elements in the humanization of our cities and human settlements.

27. We reaffirm our pledge that no one will be left behind and commit ourselves to promoting equally the shared opportunities and benefits that urbanization can offer and that enable all inhabitants, whether living in formal or informal settlements, to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential.

28. We commit ourselves to ensuring full respect for the human rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, regardless of their migration status, and support their host cities in the spirit of international cooperation, taking into account national circumstances and recognizing that, although the movement of large populations into towns and cities poses a variety of challenges, it can also bring significant social, economic and cultural contributions to urban life. We further commit ourselves to strengthening synergies between international migration and development at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels by ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration through planned and well-managed migration policies, and to supporting local authorities in establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities and strengthened urban-rural linkages.

29. We commit ourselves to strengthening the coordination role of national, subnational and local governments, as appropriate, and their collaboration with other public entities and non-governmental organizations in the provision of social and basic services for all, including generating investments in communities that are most vulnerable to disasters and those affected by recurrent and protracted humanitarian crises. We further commit ourselves to promoting adequate services,



accommodation and opportunities for decent and productive work for crisis-affected persons in urban settings and to working with local communities and local governments to identify opportunities for engaging and developing local, durable and dignified solutions while ensuring that aid also flows to affected persons and host communities to prevent regression of their development.

30. We acknowledge the need for Governments and civil society to further support resilient urban services during armed conflicts. We also acknowledge the need to reaffirm full respect for international humanitarian law.

31. We commit ourselves to promoting national, subnational and local housing policies that support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing for all as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, that address all forms of discrimination and violence and prevent arbitrary forced evictions and that focus on the needs of the homeless, persons in vulnerable situations, low-income groups and persons with disabilities, while enabling the participation and engagement of communities and relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation of these policies, including supporting the social production of habitat, according to national legislation and standards.

32. We commit ourselves to promoting the development of integrated and age- and gender-responsive housing policies and approaches across all sectors, in particular the employment, education, health-care and social integration sectors, and at all levels of government — policies and approaches that incorporate the provision of adequate, affordable, accessible, resource-efficient, safe, resilient, well-connected and well-located housing, with special attention to the proximity factor and the strengthening of the spatial relationship with the rest of the urban fabric and the surrounding functional areas.

33. We commit ourselves to stimulating the supply of a variety of adequate housing options that are safe, affordable and accessible for members of different income groups of society, taking into consideration the socioeconomic and cultural integration of marginalized communities, homeless persons and those in vulnerable situations and preventing segregation. We will take positive measures to improve the living conditions of homeless people, with a view to facilitating their full participation in society, and to prevent and eliminate homelessness, as well as to combat and eliminate its criminalization.

34. We commit ourselves to promoting equitable and affordable access to sustainable basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, modern and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, safe, nutritious and adequate food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, health care and family planning, education, culture, and information and communications technologies. We further commit ourselves to ensuring that these services are responsive to the rights and needs of women, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate, and to those of others in vulnerable situations. In this regard, we encourage the elimination of legal, institutional, socioeconomic and physical barriers.

35. We commit ourselves to promoting, at the appropriate level of government, including subnational and local government, increased security of tenure for all, recognizing the plurality of tenure types, and to developing fit-for-purpose and age-, gender- and environment-responsive solutions within the continuum of land and property rights, with particular attention to security of land tenure for women as key to their empowerment, including through effective administrative systems.

36. We commit ourselves to promoting appropriate measures in cities and human settlements that facilitate access for persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment of cities, in particular to public spaces, public transport, housing, education and health facilities, public information and communication (including information and communications technologies and systems) and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, in both urban and rural areas.

37. We commit ourselves to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks, that are multifunctional areas for social interaction and inclusion, human health and well-being, economic exchange and cultural expression and dialogue among a wide diversity of people and cultures, and that are designed and managed to ensure human development and build peaceful, inclusive and participatory societies, as well as to promote living together, connectivity and social inclusion.

38. We commit ourselves to the sustainable leveraging of natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, in cities and human settlements, as appropriate, through integrated urban and territorial policies and adequate investments at the national, subnational and local levels, to safeguard and promote cultural infrastructures and sites, museums, indigenous cultures and languages, as well as traditional knowledge and the arts, highlighting the role that these play in rehabilitating and revitalizing urban areas and in strengthening social participation and the exercise of citizenship.

39. We commit ourselves to promoting a safe, healthy, inclusive and secure environment in cities and human settlements enabling all to live, work and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation, taking into consideration that women and girls, children and youth, and persons in vulnerable situations are often particularly affected. We will also work towards the elimination of harmful practices against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

40. We commit ourselves to embracing diversity in cities and human settlements, to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and understanding, tolerance, mutual respect, gender equality, innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusion, identity and safety, and the dignity of all people, as well as to fostering liveability and a vibrant urban economy. We also commit ourselves to taking steps to ensure that our local institutions promote pluralism and peaceful coexistence within increasingly heterogeneous and multicultural societies.

41. We commit ourselves to promoting institutional, political, legal and financial mechanisms in cities and human settlements to broaden inclusive platforms, in line with national policies, that allow meaningful participation in decision-making, planning and follow-up processes for all, as well as enhanced civil engagement and co-provision and co-production.

42. We support subnational and local governments, as appropriate, in fulfilling their key role in strengthening the interface among all relevant stakeholders, offering opportunities for dialogue, including through age- and gender-responsive approaches, and with particular attention to potential contributions from all segments of society, including men and women, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, regardless of their migration status, without discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

*Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all*

43. We recognize that sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, with full and productive employment and decent work for all, is a key element of sustainable urban and territorial development and that cities and human settlements should be places of equal opportunities, allowing people to live healthy, productive, prosperous and fulfilling lives.

44. We recognize that urban form, infrastructure and building design are among the greatest drivers of cost and resource efficiencies, through the benefits of economy of scale and agglomeration and by fostering energy efficiency, renewable energy, resilience, productivity, environmental protection and sustainable growth in the urban economy.

45. We commit ourselves to developing vibrant, sustainable and inclusive urban economies, building on endogenous potential, competitive advantages, cultural heritage and local resources, as well as resource-efficient and resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable and inclusive industrial development and sustainable consumption and production patterns and fostering an enabling environment for businesses and innovation, as well as livelihoods.

46. We commit ourselves to promoting the role of affordable and sustainable housing and housing finance, including social habitat production, in economic development, and the contribution of the sector to stimulating productivity in other economic sectors, recognizing that housing enhances capital formation, income, employment generation and savings and can contribute to driving sustainable and inclusive economic transformation at the national, subnational and local levels.

47. We commit ourselves to taking appropriate steps to strengthen national, subnational and local institutions to support local economic development, fostering integration, cooperation, coordination and dialogue across levels of government and functional areas and relevant stakeholders.

48. We encourage effective participation and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector and civil society, women, organizations representing youth, as well as those representing persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, professionals, academic institutions, trade unions, employers' organizations, migrant associations and cultural associations, in order to identify opportunities for urban economic development and identify and address existing and emerging challenges.

49. We commit ourselves to supporting territorial systems that integrate urban and rural functions into the national and subnational spatial frameworks and the systems of cities and human settlements, thus promoting sustainable management and use of natural resources and land, ensuring reliable supply and value chains that connect urban and rural supply and demand to foster equitable regional development across the urban-rural continuum and fill social, economic and territorial gaps.

50. We commit ourselves to encouraging urban-rural interactions and connectivity by strengthening sustainable transport and mobility, and technology and communications networks and infrastructure, underpinned by planning instruments based on an integrated urban and territorial approach, in order to maximize the potential of these sectors for enhanced productivity, social, economic and territorial cohesion, as well as safety and environmental sustainability. This should include connectivity between cities and their surroundings, peri-urban and rural areas, as well as greater land-sea connections, where appropriate.

51. We commit ourselves to promoting the development of urban spatial frameworks, including urban planning and design instruments that support sustainable management and use of natural resources and land, appropriate compactness and density, polycentrism and mixed uses, through infill or planned urban extension strategies, as applicable, to trigger economies of scale and agglomeration, strengthen food system planning and enhance resource efficiency, urban resilience and environmental sustainability.

52. We encourage spatial development strategies that take into account, as appropriate, the need to guide urban extension, prioritizing urban renewal by planning for the provision of accessible and well-connected infrastructure and services, sustainable population densities and compact design and integration of new neighbourhoods into the urban fabric, preventing urban sprawl and marginalization.

53. We commit ourselves to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces as drivers of social and economic development, in order to sustainably leverage their potential to generate increased social and economic value, including property value, and to facilitate business and public and private investments and livelihood opportunities for all.

54. We commit ourselves to the generation and use of renewable and affordable energy and sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure and services, where possible, achieving the benefits of connectivity and reducing the financial, environmental and public health costs of inefficient mobility, congestion, air pollution, urban heat island effects and noise. We also commit ourselves to giving particular attention to the energy and transport needs of all people, particularly the poor and those living in informal settlements. We also note that reductions in renewable energy costs give cities and human settlements an effective tool to lower energy supply costs.

55. We commit ourselves to fostering healthy societies by promoting access to adequate, inclusive and quality public services, a clean environment, taking into consideration air quality guidelines, including those elaborated by the World Health Organization, and social infrastructure and facilities, such as health-care services, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services to reduce newborn child and maternal mortality.

56. We commit ourselves to increasing economic productivity, as appropriate, by providing the labour force with access to income-earning opportunities, knowledge, skills and educational facilities that contribute to an innovative and competitive urban economy. We also commit ourselves to increasing economic productivity through the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work and livelihood opportunities in cities and human settlements.

57. We commit ourselves to promoting, as appropriate, full and productive employment, decent work for all and livelihood opportunities in cities and human settlements, with special attention to the needs and potential of women, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, refugees, and internally displaced persons and migrants, particularly the poorest and those in vulnerable situations, and to promote non-discriminatory access to legal income-earning opportunities.

58. We commit ourselves to promoting an enabling, fair and responsible business environment based on the principles of environmental sustainability and inclusive prosperity, promoting investments, innovations and entrepreneurship. We also commit ourselves to addressing the challenges faced by local business communities by

supporting micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperatives throughout the value chain, in particular businesses and enterprises in the social and solidarity economy, operating in both the formal and informal economies.

59. We commit ourselves to recognizing the contribution of the working poor in the informal economy, particularly women, including unpaid, domestic and migrant workers, to the urban economies, taking into account national circumstances. Their livelihoods, working conditions and income security, legal and social protection, access to skills, assets and other support services, and voice and representation should be enhanced. A progressive transition of workers and economic units to the formal economy will be developed by adopting a balanced approach, combining incentives and compliance measures, while promoting preservation and improvement of existing livelihoods. We will take into account specific national circumstances, legislation, policies, practices and priorities for the transition to the formal economy.

60. We commit ourselves to sustaining and supporting urban economies to transition progressively to higher productivity through high-value-added sectors, by promoting diversification, technological upgrading, research and innovation, including the creation of quality, decent and productive jobs, including through the promotion of cultural and creative industries, sustainable tourism, performing arts and heritage conservation activities, among others.

61. We commit ourselves to harnessing the urban demographic dividend, where applicable, and to promoting access for youth to education, skills development and employment to achieve increased productivity and shared prosperity in cities and human settlements. Girls and boys, young women and young men are key agents of change in creating a better future and when empowered they have great potential to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities. Ensuring more and better opportunities for their meaningful participation will be essential for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

62. We commit ourselves to addressing the social, economic and spatial implications of ageing populations, where applicable, and harnessing the ageing factor as an opportunity for new decent jobs and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, while improving the quality of life of the urban population.

#### *Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development*

63. We recognize that cities and human settlements face unprecedented threats from unsustainable consumption and production patterns, loss of biodiversity, pressure on ecosystems, pollution, natural and human-made disasters, and climate change and its related risks, undermining the efforts to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to achieve sustainable development. Given cities' demographic trends and their central role in the global economy, in the mitigation and adaptation efforts related to climate change, and in the use of resources and ecosystems, the way they are planned, financed, developed, built, governed and managed has a direct impact on sustainability and resilience well beyond urban boundaries.

64. We also recognize that urban centres worldwide, especially in developing countries, often have characteristics that make them and their inhabitants especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and other natural and human-made hazards, including earthquakes, extreme weather events, flooding, subsidence, storms, including dust and sand storms, heatwaves, water scarcity, droughts, water and air pollution, vector-borne diseases and sea level rise, which particularly affect coastal areas, delta regions and small island developing States, among others.

65. We commit ourselves to facilitating the sustainable management of natural resources in cities and human settlements in a manner that protects and improves the urban ecosystem and environmental services, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution and promotes disaster risk reduction and management, by supporting the development of disaster risk reduction strategies and periodical assessments of disaster risk caused by natural and human-made hazards, including standards for risk levels, while fostering sustainable economic development and protecting the well-being and quality of life of all persons through environmentally sound urban and territorial planning, infrastructure and basic services.

66. We commit ourselves to adopting a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies, as well as innovative transport technologies, thus providing options for inhabitants to make more environmentally friendly choices and boost sustainable economic growth and enabling cities to improve their service delivery.

67. We commit ourselves to promoting the creation and maintenance of well-connected and well-distributed networks of open, multipurpose, safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, to improving the resilience of cities to disasters and climate change, including floods, drought risks and heatwaves, to improving food security and nutrition, physical and mental health, and household and ambient air quality, to reducing noise and promoting attractive and liveable cities, human settlements and urban landscapes and to prioritizing the conservation of endemic species.

68. We commit ourselves to giving particular consideration to urban deltas, coastal areas and other environmentally sensitive areas, highlighting their importance as ecosystems' providers of significant resources for transport, food security, economic prosperity, ecosystem services and resilience. We commit ourselves to integrating appropriate measures into sustainable urban and territorial planning and development.

69. We commit ourselves to preserving and promoting the ecological and social function of land, including coastal areas that support cities and human settlements, and to fostering ecosystem-based solutions to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, so that the ecosystem's regenerative capacity is not exceeded. We also commit ourselves to promoting sustainable land use, combining urban extensions with adequate densities and compactness to prevent and contain urban sprawl, as well as preventing unnecessary land-use change and the loss of productive land and fragile and important ecosystems.

70. We commit ourselves to supporting local provision of goods and basic services and leveraging the proximity of resources, recognizing that heavy reliance on distant sources of energy, water, food and materials can pose sustainability challenges, including vulnerability to service supply disruptions, and that local provision can facilitate inhabitants' access to resources.

71. We commit ourselves to strengthening the sustainable management of resources, including land, water (oceans, seas and fresh water), energy, materials, forests and food, with particular attention to the environmentally sound management and minimization of all waste, hazardous chemicals, including air and short-lived climate pollutants, greenhouse gases and noise, and in a way that considers urban-rural linkages, functional supply and value chains vis-à-vis environmental impact and sustainability and that strives to transition to a circular economy while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.

72. We commit ourselves to long-term urban and territorial planning processes and spatial development practices that incorporate integrated water resources planning and management, considering the urban-rural continuum on the local and territorial scales and including the participation of relevant stakeholders and communities.

73. We commit ourselves to promoting the conservation and sustainable use of water by rehabilitating water resources within the urban, peri-urban and rural areas, reducing and treating wastewater, minimizing water losses, promoting water reuse and increasing water storage, retention and recharge, taking into consideration the water cycle.

74. We commit ourselves to promoting environmentally sound waste management and to substantially reducing waste generation by reducing, reusing and recycling waste, minimizing landfills and converting waste to energy when waste cannot be recycled or when this choice delivers the best environmental outcome. We further commit ourselves to reducing marine pollution through improved waste and wastewater management in coastal areas.

75. We commit ourselves to encouraging national, subnational and local governments, as appropriate, to develop sustainable, renewable and affordable energy and energy-efficient buildings and construction modes and to promoting energy conservation and efficiency, which are essential to enable the reduction of greenhouse gas and black carbon emissions, ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, help create new decent jobs, improve public health and reduce the costs of energy supply.

76. We commit ourselves to making sustainable use of natural resources and focusing on the resource efficiency of raw and construction materials such as concrete, metals, wood, minerals and land. We commit ourselves to establishing safe material recovery and recycling facilities, promoting the development of sustainable and resilient buildings and prioritizing the use of local, non-toxic and recycled materials and lead-additive-free paints and coatings.

77. We commit ourselves to strengthening 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 and ecosystem-based approaches in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and by mainstreaming holistic and data-informed disaster risk reduction and management at all levels to reduce vulnerabilities and risk, especially in risk-prone areas of formal and informal settlements, including slums, and to enable households, communities, institutions and services to prepare for, respond to, adapt to and rapidly recover from the effects of hazards, including shocks or latent stresses. We will promote the development of infrastructure that is resilient and resource efficient and will reduce the risks and impact of disasters, including the rehabilitation and upgrading of slums and informal settlements. We will also promote measures for strengthening and retrofitting all risky housing stock, including in slums and informal settlements, to make it resilient to disasters, in coordination with local authorities and stakeholders.

78. We commit ourselves to supporting moving from reactive to more proactive risk-based, all-hazards and all-of-society approaches, such as raising public awareness of risks and promoting ex ante investments to prevent risks and build resilience, while also ensuring timely and effective local responses to address the immediate needs of inhabitants affected by natural and human-made disasters and conflicts. This should include the integration of the “build back better” principles into the post-disaster recovery process to integrate resilience-building, environmental and

spatial measures and lessons from past disasters, as well as awareness of new risks, into future planning.

79. We commit ourselves to promoting international, national, subnational and local climate action, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to supporting the efforts of cities and human settlements, their inhabitants and all local stakeholders as important implementers. We further commit ourselves to supporting building resilience and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from all relevant sectors. Such measures should be consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

80. We commit ourselves to supporting the medium- to long-term adaptation planning process, as well as city-level assessments of climate vulnerability and impact, to inform adaptation plans, policies, programmes and actions that build the resilience of urban inhabitants, including through the use of ecosystem-based adaptation.

### **Effective implementation**

81. We recognize that the realization of the transformative commitments set out in the New Urban Agenda will require enabling policy frameworks at the national, subnational and local levels, integrated by participatory planning and management of urban spatial development and effective means of implementation, complemented by international cooperation as well as efforts in capacity development, including the sharing of best practices, policies and programmes among Governments at all levels.

82. We invite international and regional organizations and bodies, including those of the United Nations system and multilateral environmental agreements, development partners, international and multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, the private sector and other stakeholders, to enhance coordination of their urban and rural development strategies and programmes to apply an integrated approach to sustainable urbanization, mainstreaming the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

83. In this regard, we emphasize the need to improve United Nations system-wide coordination and coherence in the area of sustainable urban development, within the framework of system-wide strategic planning, implementation and reporting, as stressed in paragraph 88 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

84. We strongly urge States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

### *Building the urban governance structure: establishing a supportive framework*

85. We acknowledge the principles and strategies contained in the International Guidelines on Decentralization and Strengthening of Local Authorities and the International Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for All, adopted by the



Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in its resolutions 21/3 of 20 April 2007<sup>15</sup> and 22/8 of 3 April 2009.<sup>16</sup>

86. We will anchor the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda in inclusive, implementable and participatory urban policies, as appropriate, to mainstream sustainable urban and territorial development as part of integrated development strategies and plans, supported, as appropriate, by national, subnational and local institutional and regulatory frameworks, ensuring that they are adequately linked to transparent and accountable finance mechanisms.

87. We will foster stronger coordination and cooperation among national, subnational and local governments, including through multilevel consultation mechanisms and by clearly defining the respective competences, tools and resources for each level of government.

88. We will ensure coherence between goals and measures of sectoral policies, inter alia, rural development, land use, food security and nutrition, management of natural resources, provision of public services, water and sanitation, health, environment, energy, housing and mobility policies, at different levels and scales of political administration, across administrative borders and considering the appropriate functional areas, in order to strengthen integrated approaches to urbanization and implement integrated urban and territorial planning strategies that factor them in.

89. We will take measures to establish legal and policy frameworks, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, to enhance the ability of Governments to effectively implement national urban policies, as appropriate, and to empower them as policymakers and decision makers, ensuring appropriate fiscal, political and administrative decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity.

90. We will, in line with countries' national legislation, support strengthening the capacity of subnational and local governments to implement effective local and metropolitan multilevel governance, across administrative borders, and based on functional territories, ensuring the involvement of subnational and local governments in decision-making and working to provide them with the necessary authority and resources to manage critical urban, metropolitan and territorial concerns. We will promote metropolitan governance that is inclusive and encompasses legal frameworks and reliable financing mechanisms, including sustainable debt management, as applicable. We will take measures to promote women's full and effective participation and equal rights in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision-making, including in local governments.

91. We will support local governments in determining their own administrative and management structures, in line with national legislation and policies, as appropriate, in order to adapt to local needs. We will encourage appropriate regulatory frameworks and support to local governments in partnering with communities, civil society and the private sector to develop and manage basic services and infrastructure, ensuring that the public interest is preserved and concise goals, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms are clearly defined.

92. We will promote participatory age- and gender-responsive approaches at all stages of the urban and territorial policy and planning processes, from

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<sup>15</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/62/8)*, annex I.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, *Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/64/8)*, annex I.

conceptualization to design, budgeting, implementation, evaluation and review, rooted in new forms of direct partnership between Governments at all levels and civil society, including through broad-based and well-resourced permanent mechanisms and platforms for cooperation and consultation open to all, using information and communications technologies and accessible data solutions.

*Planning and managing urban spatial development*

93. We acknowledge the principles and strategies for urban and territorial planning contained in the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, approved by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat in its resolution 25/6 of 23 April 2015.<sup>17</sup>

94. We will implement integrated planning that aims to balance short-term needs with the long-term desired outcomes of a competitive economy, high quality of life and sustainable environment. We will also strive to build flexibility into our plans in order to adjust to changing social and economic conditions over time. We will implement and systematically evaluate these plans, while making efforts to leverage innovations in technology and to produce a better living environment.

95. We will support the implementation of integrated, polycentric and balanced territorial development policies and plans, encouraging cooperation and mutual support among different scales of cities and human settlements, strengthening the role of small and intermediate cities and towns in enhancing food security and nutrition systems, providing access to sustainable, affordable, adequate, resilient and safe housing, infrastructure and services, facilitating effective trade links across the urban-rural continuum and ensuring that small-scale farmers and fishers are linked to local, subnational, national, regional and global value chains and markets. We will also support urban agriculture and farming, as well as responsible, local and sustainable consumption and production, and social interactions, through enabling and accessible networks of local markets and commerce as an option for contributing to sustainability and food security.

96. We will encourage the implementation of sustainable urban and territorial planning, including city-region and metropolitan plans, to encourage synergies and interactions among urban areas of all sizes and their peri-urban and rural surroundings, including those that are cross-border, and we will support the development of sustainable regional infrastructure projects that stimulate sustainable economic productivity, promoting equitable growth of regions across the urban-rural continuum. In this regard, we will promote urban-rural partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms based on functional territories and urban areas as effective instruments for performing municipal and metropolitan administrative tasks, delivering public services and promoting both local and regional development.

97. We will promote planned urban extensions and infill, prioritizing renewal, regeneration and retrofitting of urban areas, as appropriate, including the upgrading of slums and informal settlements, providing high-quality buildings and public spaces, promoting integrated and participatory approaches involving all relevant stakeholders and inhabitants and avoiding spatial and socioeconomic segregation and gentrification, while preserving cultural heritage and preventing and containing urban sprawl.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., *Seventieth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/70/8)*, annex.

98. We will promote integrated urban and territorial planning, including planned urban extensions based on the principles of equitable, efficient and sustainable use of land and natural resources, compactness, polycentrism, appropriate density and connectivity, and multiple use of space, as well as mixed social and economic uses in built-up areas, in order to prevent urban sprawl, reduce mobility challenges and needs and service delivery costs per capita and harness density and economies of scale and agglomeration, as appropriate.

99. We will support the implementation of urban planning strategies, as appropriate, that facilitate a social mix through the provision of affordable housing options with access to quality basic services and public spaces for all, enhancing safety and security and favouring social and intergenerational interaction and the appreciation of diversity. We will take steps to include appropriate training and support for service delivery professionals and communities in areas affected by urban violence.

100. We will support the provision of well-designed networks of safe, accessible, green and quality streets and other public spaces that are accessible to all and free from crime and violence, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence, considering the human scale, and measures that allow for the best possible commercial use of street-level floors, fostering both formal and informal local markets and commerce, as well as not-for-profit community initiatives, bringing people into public spaces and promoting walkability and cycling with the goal of improving health and well-being.

101. We will integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation considerations and measures into age- and gender-responsive urban and territorial development and planning processes, including greenhouse gas emissions, resilience-based and climate-effective design of spaces, buildings and construction, services and infrastructure, and nature-based solutions. We will promote cooperation and coordination across sectors and build the capacities of local authorities to develop and implement disaster risk reduction and response plans, such as risk assessments concerning the location of current and future public facilities, and to formulate adequate contingency and evacuation procedures.

102. We will strive to improve capacity for urban planning and design and the provision of training for urban planners at the national, subnational and local levels.

103. We will integrate inclusive measures for urban safety and the prevention of crime and violence, including terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Such measures will, where appropriate, engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing urban strategies and initiatives, including taking into account slums and informal settlements as well as vulnerability and cultural factors in the development of policies concerning public security and crime and violence prevention, including by preventing and countering the stigmatization of specific groups as posing inherently greater security threats.

104. We will promote compliance with legal requirements through strong, inclusive management frameworks and accountable institutions that deal with land registration and governance, applying transparent and sustainable management and use of land, property registration and sound financial systems. We will support local governments and relevant stakeholders, through a variety of mechanisms, in developing and using basic land inventory information, such as cadastres, valuation and risk maps, and land and housing price records, to generate the high-quality, timely and reliable data — disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in

the national context — needed to assess changes in land values, while ensuring that these data will not be used for discriminatory land-use policies.

105. We will foster the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. We will develop and implement housing policies at all levels, incorporating participatory planning and applying the principle of subsidiarity, as appropriate, in order to ensure coherence among national, subnational and local development strategies, land policies and housing supply.

106. We will promote housing policies based on the principles of social inclusion, economic effectiveness and environmental protection. We will support the effective use of public resources for affordable and sustainable housing, including land in central and consolidated areas of cities with adequate infrastructure, and encourage mixed-income development to promote social inclusion and cohesion.

107. We will encourage the development of policies, tools, mechanisms and financing models that promote access to a wide range of affordable, sustainable housing options, including rental and other tenure options, as well as cooperative solutions such as co-housing, community land trusts and other forms of collective tenure that would address the evolving needs of persons and communities, in order to improve the supply of housing (especially for low-income groups), prevent segregation and arbitrary forced evictions and displacements and provide dignified and adequate reallocation. This will include support to incremental housing and self-build schemes, with special attention to programmes for upgrading slums and informal settlements.

108. We will support the development of housing policies that foster local integrated housing approaches by addressing the strong links between education, employment, housing and health, preventing exclusion and segregation. Furthermore, we commit ourselves to combating homelessness as well as to combating and eliminating its criminalization through dedicated policies and targeted active inclusion strategies, such as comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable housing-first programmes.

109. We will consider increased allocations of financial and human resources, as appropriate, for the upgrading and, to the extent possible, prevention of slums and informal settlements, with strategies that go beyond physical and environmental improvements to ensure that slums and informal settlements are integrated into the social, economic, cultural and political dimensions of cities. These strategies should include, as applicable, access to sustainable, adequate, safe and affordable housing, basic and social services, and safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, and they should promote security of tenure and its regularization, as well as measures for conflict prevention and mediation.

110. We will support efforts to define and reinforce inclusive and transparent monitoring systems for reducing the proportion of people living in slums and informal settlements, taking into account the experiences gained from previous efforts to improve the living conditions of slum and informal-settlement dwellers.

111. We will promote the development of adequate and enforceable regulations in the housing sector, including, as applicable, resilient building codes, standards, development permits, land-use by-laws and ordinances, and planning regulations, combating and preventing speculation, displacement, homelessness and arbitrary forced evictions and ensuring sustainability, quality, affordability, health, safety, accessibility, energy and resource efficiency, and resilience. We will also promote

differentiated analysis of housing supply and demand based on high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data at the national, subnational and local levels, considering specific social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions.

112. We will promote the implementation of sustainable urban development programmes with housing and people's needs at the centre of the strategy, prioritizing well-located and well-distributed housing schemes in order to avoid peripheral and isolated mass housing developments detached from urban systems, regardless of the social and economic segment for which they are developed, and providing solutions for the housing needs of low-income groups.

113. We will take measures to improve road safety and integrate it into sustainable mobility and transport infrastructure planning and design. Together with awareness-raising initiatives, we will promote the safe-system approach called for in the Decade of Action for Road Safety, with special attention to the needs of all women and girls, as well as children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities and those in vulnerable situations. We will work to adopt, implement and enforce policies and measures to actively protect and promote pedestrian safety and cycling mobility, with a view to broader health outcomes, particularly the prevention of injuries and non-communicable diseases, and we will work to develop and implement comprehensive legislation and policies on motorcycle safety, given the disproportionately high and increasing numbers of motorcycle deaths and injuries globally, particularly in developing countries. We will promote the safe and healthy journey to school for every child as a priority.

114. We will promote access for all to safe, age- and gender-responsive, affordable, accessible and sustainable urban mobility and land and sea transport systems, enabling meaningful participation in social and economic activities in cities and human settlements, by integrating transport and mobility plans into overall urban and territorial plans and promoting a wide range of transport and mobility options, in particular by supporting:

(a) A significant increase in accessible, safe, efficient, affordable and sustainable infrastructure for public transport, as well as non-motorized options such as walking and cycling, prioritizing them over private motorized transportation;

(b) Equitable "transit-oriented development" that minimizes the displacement, in particular, of the poor, and features affordable, mixed-income housing and a mix of jobs and services;

(c) Better and coordinated transport and land-use planning, which would lead to a reduction of travel and transport needs, enhancing connectivity between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, including waterways, and transport and mobility planning, particularly for small island developing States and coastal cities;

(d) Urban freight planning and logistics concepts that enable efficient access to products and services, minimizing their impact on the environment and on the liveability of the city and maximizing their contribution to sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

115. We will take measures to develop mechanisms and common frameworks at the national, subnational and local levels to evaluate the wider benefits of urban and metropolitan transport schemes, including impacts on the environment, the economy, social cohesion, quality of life, accessibility, road safety, public health and action on climate change, among other things.

116. We will support the development of these mechanisms and frameworks, based on sustainable national urban transport and mobility policies, for sustainable, open and transparent procurement and regulation of transport and mobility services in urban and metropolitan areas, including new technology that enables shared mobility services. We will support the development of clear, transparent and accountable contractual relationships between local governments and transport and mobility service providers, including on data management, which further protect the public interest and individual privacy and define mutual obligations.

117. We will support better coordination between transport and urban and territorial planning departments, in mutual understanding of planning and policy frameworks, at the national, subnational and local levels, including through sustainable urban and metropolitan transport and mobility plans. We will support subnational and local governments in developing the necessary knowledge and capacity to implement and enforce such plans.

118. We will encourage national, subnational and local governments to develop and expand financing instruments, enabling them to improve their transport and mobility infrastructure and systems, such as mass rapid-transit systems, integrated transport systems, air and rail systems, and safe, sufficient and adequate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and technology-based innovations in transport and transit systems to reduce congestion and pollution while improving efficiency, connectivity, accessibility, health and quality of life.

119. We will promote adequate investments in protective, accessible and sustainable infrastructure and service provision systems for water, sanitation and hygiene, sewage, solid waste management, urban drainage, reduction of air pollution and storm water management, in order to improve safety in the event of water-related disasters, improve health, ensure universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, as well as access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, with special attention to the needs and safety of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. We will seek to ensure that this infrastructure is climate resilient and forms part of integrated urban and territorial development plans, including housing and mobility, among other things, and is implemented in a participatory manner, considering innovative, resource-efficient, accessible, context-specific and culturally sensitive sustainable solutions.

120. We will work to equip public water and sanitation utilities with the capacity to implement sustainable water management systems, including sustainable maintenance of urban infrastructure services, through capacity development, with the goal of progressively eliminating inequalities and promoting both universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all.

121. We will ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services by promoting energy efficiency and sustainable renewable energy and supporting subnational and local efforts to apply them in public buildings, infrastructure and facilities, as well as in taking advantage of the direct control, where applicable, by subnational and local governments of local infrastructure and codes, to foster uptake in end-use sectors, such as residential, commercial and industrial buildings, industry, transport, waste and sanitation. We also encourage the adoption of building performance codes and standards, renewable portfolio targets, energy-efficiency labelling, retrofitting of existing buildings and public procurement policies on energy, among other modalities as appropriate, to achieve energy-

efficiency targets. We will also prioritize smart-grid, district energy systems and community energy plans to improve synergies between renewable energy and energy efficiency.

122. We will support decentralized decision-making on waste disposal to promote universal access to sustainable waste management systems. We will support the promotion of extended producer-responsibility schemes that include waste generators and producers in the financing of urban waste management systems, reduce the hazards and socioeconomic impacts of waste streams and increase recycling rates through better product design.

123. We will promote the integration of food security and the nutritional needs of urban residents, particularly the urban poor, in urban and territorial planning, in order to end hunger and malnutrition. We will promote the coordination of sustainable food security and agriculture policies across urban, peri-urban and rural areas to facilitate the production, storage, transport and marketing of food to consumers in adequate and affordable ways in order to reduce food losses and prevent and reuse food waste. We will further promote the coordination of food policies with energy, water, health, transport and waste policies, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, reduce the use of hazardous chemicals and implement other policies in urban areas to maximize efficiencies and minimize waste.

124. We will include culture as a priority component of urban plans and strategies in the adoption of planning instruments, including master plans, zoning guidelines, building codes, coastal management policies and strategic development policies that safeguard a diverse range of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and landscapes, and will protect them from potential disruptive impacts of urban development.

125. We will support the leveraging of cultural heritage for sustainable urban development and recognize its role in stimulating participation and responsibility. We will promote innovative and sustainable use of architectural monuments and sites, with the intention of value creation, through respectful restoration and adaptation. We will engage indigenous peoples and local communities in the promotion and dissemination of knowledge of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and protection of traditional expressions and languages, including through the use of new technologies and techniques.

#### *Means of implementation*

126. We recognize that the implementation of the New Urban Agenda requires an enabling environment and a wide range of means of implementation, including access to science, technology and innovation and enhanced knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms, as well as capacity development and mobilization of financial resources, taking into account the commitment of developed and developing countries and tapping into all available traditional and innovative sources at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, as well as enhanced international cooperation and partnerships among Governments at all levels, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, accountability, respect for human rights and solidarity, especially for those who are the poorest and most vulnerable.

127. We reaffirm the commitments on means of implementation included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

128. We will encourage UN-Habitat, other United Nations programmes and agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to generate evidence-based and practical guidance for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, in close collaboration with Member States, local authorities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as well as through the mobilization of experts. We will build on the legacy of the Habitat III conference and the lessons learned from its preparatory process, including the regional and thematic meetings. We note, in this context, the valuable contributions of, inter alia, the World Urban Campaign, the General Assembly of Partners for Habitat III and the Global Land Tool Network.

129. We urge UN-Habitat to continue its work to develop its normative knowledge and provide capacity development and tools to national, subnational and local governments in designing, planning and managing sustainable urban development.

130. We recognize that sustainable urban development, guided by prevailing urban policies and strategies, as appropriate, can benefit from integrated financing frameworks that are supported by an enabling environment at all levels. We acknowledge the importance of ensuring that all financial means of implementation are firmly embedded in coherent policy frameworks and fiscal decentralization processes, where available, and that adequate capacities are developed at all levels.

131. We support context-sensitive approaches to financing urbanization and enhancing financial management capacities at all levels of government through the adoption of specific instruments and mechanisms necessary to achieve sustainable urban development, recognizing that each country has the primary responsibility for its own economic and social development.

132. We will mobilize endogenous resources and revenues generated through the capture of benefits of urbanization, as well as the catalysing effects and maximized impact of public and private investments, in order to improve the financial conditions for urban development and open access to additional sources, recognizing that, for all countries, public policies and the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, underpinned by the principle of national ownership, are central to our common pursuit of sustainable urban development, including implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

133. We call upon businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges in urban areas, acknowledging that private business activity, investment and innovation are major drivers of productivity, inclusive growth and job creation, and that private investment, particularly foreign direct investment, along with a stable international financial system, are essential elements of development efforts.

134. We will support appropriate policies and capacities that enable subnational and local governments to register and expand their potential revenue base, for example through multipurpose cadastres, local taxes, fees and service charges, in line with national policies, while ensuring that women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, and poor households are not disproportionately affected.

135. We will promote sound and transparent systems for financial transfers from national Governments to subnational and local governments based on the latter's needs, priorities, functions, mandates and performance-based incentives, as appropriate, in order to provide them with adequate, timely and predictable resources and enhance their ability to raise revenue and manage expenditures.



136. We will support the development of vertical and horizontal models of distribution of financial resources to decrease inequalities across subnational territories, within urban centres and between urban and rural areas, as well as to promote integrated and balanced territorial development. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of improving the transparency of data on spending and resource allocation as a tool for assessing progress towards equity and spatial integration.

137. We will promote best practices to capture and share the increase in land and property value generated as a result of urban development processes, infrastructure projects and public investments. Measures such as gains-related fiscal policies could be put in place, as appropriate, to prevent its solely private capture, as well as land and real estate speculation. We will reinforce the link between fiscal systems and urban planning, as well as urban management tools, including land market regulations. We will work to ensure that efforts to generate land-based finance do not result in unsustainable land use and consumption.

138. We will support subnational and local governments in their efforts to implement transparent and accountable expenditure control instruments for assessing the necessity and impact of local investment and projects, based on legislative control and public participation, as appropriate, in support of open and fair tendering processes, procurement mechanisms and reliable budget execution, as well as preventive anti-corruption measures to promote integrity, accountability, effective management and access to public property and land, in line with national policies.

139. We will support the creation of robust legal and regulatory frameworks for sustainable national and municipal borrowing, on the basis of sustainable debt management, supported by adequate revenues and capacities, by means of local creditworthiness as well as expanded sustainable municipal debt markets when appropriate. We will consider the establishment of appropriate financial intermediaries for urban financing, such as regional, national, subnational and local development funds or development banks, including pooled financing mechanisms, which can catalyse public and private, national and international financing. We will work to promote risk mitigation mechanisms such as the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, while managing currency risk, to reduce the cost of capital and to stimulate the private sector and households to participate in sustainable urban development and resilience-building efforts, including access to risk transfer mechanisms.

140. We will support the development of appropriate and affordable housing finance products and encourage the participation of a diverse range of multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks and development finance institutions, cooperation agencies, private sector lenders and investors, cooperatives, moneylenders and microfinance banks to invest in affordable and incremental housing in all its forms.

141. We will also consider establishing urban and territorial transport infrastructure and service funds at the national level, based on a variety of funding sources ranging from public grants to contributions from other public entities and the private sector, ensuring coordination among actors and interventions as well as accountability.

142. We invite international multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, development finance institutions and cooperation agencies to provide financial support, including through innovative financial mechanisms, to

programmes and projects for implementing the New Urban Agenda, particularly in developing countries.

143. We support access to different multilateral funds, including the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund and the Climate Investment Funds, among others, to secure resources for climate change adaptation and mitigation plans, policies, programmes and actions for subnational and local governments, within the framework of agreed procedures. We will collaborate with subnational and local financial institutions, as appropriate, to develop climate finance infrastructure solutions and to create appropriate mechanisms for identifying catalytic financial instruments, consistent with any national framework in place to ensure fiscal and debt sustainability at all levels of government.

144. We will explore and develop feasible solutions to climate and disaster risks in cities and human settlements, including by collaborating with insurance and reinsurance institutions and other relevant actors with regard to investments in urban and metropolitan infrastructure, buildings and other urban assets, as well as for local populations to secure their shelter and economic needs.

145. We support the use of international public finance, including official development assistance, among other things, to catalyse additional resource mobilization from all available sources, public and private, for sustainable urban and territorial development. This may include the mitigation of risks for potential investors, in recognition of the fact that international public finance plays an important role in complementing the efforts of countries to mobilize public resources domestically, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries with limited domestic resources.

146. We will expand opportunities for North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation, as well as subnational, decentralized and city-to-city cooperation, as appropriate, to contribute to sustainable urban development, developing capacities and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning at all levels and by all relevant actors.

147. We will promote capacity development as a multifaceted approach that addresses the ability of multiple stakeholders and institutions at all levels of governance and combines the individual, societal and institutional capacity to formulate, implement, enhance, manage, monitor and evaluate public policies for sustainable urban development.

148. We will promote the strengthening of the capacity of national, subnational and local governments, including local government associations, as appropriate, to work with women and girls, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, and those in vulnerable situations, as well as with civil society, academia and research institutions in shaping organizational and institutional governance processes, enabling them to participate effectively in decision-making about urban and territorial development.

149. We will support local government associations as promoters and providers of capacity development, recognizing and strengthening, as appropriate, both their involvement in national consultations on urban policies and development priorities and their cooperation with subnational and local governments, along with civil society, the private sector, professionals, academia and research institutions, and their existing networks, to deliver on capacity development programmes. This should be done by means of peer-to-peer learning, subject matter-related partnerships and collaborative actions, such as inter-municipal cooperation, on a

global, regional, national, subnational and local scale, including the establishment of practitioners' networks and science-policy interface practices.

150. We underscore the need for enhanced cooperation and knowledge exchange on science, technology and innovation to benefit sustainable urban development, in full coherence, coordination and synergy with the processes of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism established under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and launched under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

151. We will promote capacity development programmes to help subnational and local governments in financial planning and management, anchored in institutional coordination at all levels, including environmental sensitivity and anti-corruption measures, embracing transparent and independent oversight, accounting, procurement, reporting, auditing and monitoring processes, among others, and to review subnational and national performance and compliance, with particular attention to age- and gender-responsive budgeting and the improvement and digitalization of accounting processes and records, in order to promote results-based approaches and build medium- to long-term administrative and technical capacity.

152. We will promote capacity development programmes on the use of legal land-based revenue and financing tools, as well as on real estate market functioning for policymakers and local public officials, focusing on the legal and economic foundations of value capture, including the quantification, capturing and distribution of land value increments.

153. We will promote the systematic use of multi-stakeholder partnerships in urban development processes, as appropriate, establishing clear and transparent policies, financial and administrative frameworks and procedures, as well as planning guidelines for multi-stakeholder partnerships.

154. We recognize the significant contribution of voluntary collaborative initiatives, partnerships and coalitions that plan to initiate and enhance the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, highlighting best practices and innovative solutions, including by promoting co-production networks between subnational entities, local governments and other relevant stakeholders.

155. We will promote capacity development initiatives to empower and strengthen the skills and abilities of women and girls, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as persons in vulnerable situations, for shaping governance processes, engaging in dialogue, and promoting and protecting human rights and anti-discrimination, to ensure their effective participation in urban and territorial development decision-making.

156. We will promote the development of national information and communications technology policies and e-government strategies, as well as citizen-centric digital governance tools, tapping into technological innovations, including capacity development programmes, in order to make information and communications technologies accessible to the public, including women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons in vulnerable situations, to enable them to develop and exercise civic responsibility, broadening participation and fostering responsible governance, as well as increasing efficiency. The use of digital platforms and tools, including geospatial information systems, will be encouraged to improve long-term integrated urban and territorial planning and design, land administration and management, and access to urban and metropolitan services.

157. We will support science, research and innovation, including a focus on social, technological, digital and nature-based innovation, robust science-policy interfaces in urban and territorial planning and policy formulation and institutionalized mechanisms for sharing and exchanging information, knowledge and expertise, including the collection, analysis, standardization and dissemination of geographically based, community-collected, high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national, subnational and local contexts.

158. We will strengthen data and statistical capacities at the national, subnational and local levels to effectively monitor progress achieved in the implementation of sustainable urban development policies and strategies and to inform decision-making and appropriate reviews. Data collection procedures for the implementation of, follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda should primarily be based on official national, subnational and local data sources, and other sources as appropriate, and be open, transparent and consistent with the purpose of respecting privacy rights and all human rights obligations and commitments. Progress towards a global people-based definition of cities and human settlements may support this work.

159. We will support the role and enhanced capacity of national, subnational and local governments in data collection, mapping, analysis and dissemination and in promoting evidence-based governance, building on a shared knowledge base using both globally comparable as well as locally generated data, including through censuses, household surveys, population registers, community-based monitoring processes and other relevant sources, disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national, subnational and local contexts.

160. We will foster the creation, promotion and enhancement of open, user-friendly and participatory data platforms using technological and social tools available to transfer and share knowledge among national, subnational and local governments and relevant stakeholders, including non-State actors and people, to enhance effective urban planning and management, efficiency and transparency through e-governance, approaches assisted by information and communications technologies, and geospatial information management.

#### **Follow-up and review**

161. We will carry out a periodic follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda, ensuring coherence at the national, regional and global levels, in order to track progress, assess impact and ensure the Agenda's effective and timely implementation, accountability to our citizens and transparency, in an inclusive manner.

162. We encourage voluntary, country-led, open, inclusive, multilevel, participatory and transparent follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. The process should take into account contributions of national, subnational and local levels of government and be supplemented by contributions from the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations, major groups and relevant stakeholders, and should be a continuous process aimed at creating and reinforcing partnerships among all relevant stakeholders and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning.

163. We acknowledge the importance of local governments as active partners in the follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda at all levels and encourage them to develop, jointly with national and subnational governments, as appropriate, implementable follow-up and review mechanisms at the local level, including through relevant associations and appropriate platforms. We will consider strengthening, where appropriate, their capacity to contribute in this respect.

164. We stress that the follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda must have effective linkages with the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure coordination and coherence in their implementation.

165. We reaffirm the role and expertise of UN-Habitat, within its mandate, as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements, in collaboration with other United Nations system entities, recognizing the linkages between sustainable urbanization and, inter alia, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change.

166. We invite the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General, with voluntary inputs from countries and relevant regional and international organizations, to report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda every four years, with the first report to be submitted during the seventy-second session of the Assembly.

167. The report will provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the progress made in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanization and human settlements. The analysis will be based on the activities of national, subnational and local governments, UN-Habitat, other relevant entities of the United Nations system, relevant stakeholders in support of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the reports of the UN-Habitat Governing Council. The report should incorporate, to the extent possible, the inputs of multilateral organizations and processes where appropriate, civil society, the private sector and academia. It should build on existing platforms and processes such as the World Urban Forum convened by UN-Habitat. The report should avoid duplication and respond to local, subnational and national circumstances and legislation, capacities, needs and priorities.

168. The preparation of the report will be coordinated by UN-Habitat in close collaboration with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, ensuring an inclusive United Nations system-wide coordination process. The report will be submitted to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.<sup>18</sup> The report will also feed into the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly, with a view to ensuring coherence, coordination and collaborative linkages with the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

169. We will continue to strengthen mobilization efforts through partnerships, advocacy and awareness-raising activities relating to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda using existing initiatives such as World Habitat Day and World Cities

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<sup>18</sup> The report is intended to replace the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council on the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It is also intended to be part of, and not additional to, the report of the Secretary-General requested by the General Assembly in its resolution under the relevant agenda item.

Day, and will consider establishing new initiatives to mobilize and generate support from civil society, citizens and relevant stakeholders. We note the importance of continuing to engage in the follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda with subnational and local government associations represented at the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments.

170. We reaffirm General Assembly resolutions [51/177](#) of 16 December 1996, [56/206](#) of 21 December 2001, [67/216](#), [68/239](#) and [69/226](#), as well as other relevant resolutions of the Assembly, including resolutions [31/109](#) of 16 December 1976 and [32/162](#) of 19 December 1977. We reiterate the importance of the Nairobi headquarters location of UN-Habitat.

171. We underline the importance of UN-Habitat, given its role within the United Nations system as a focal point on sustainable urbanization and human settlements, including in the implementation, follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda, in collaboration with other United Nations system entities.

172. In the light of the New Urban Agenda and with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of UN-Habitat, we request the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly during its seventy-first session an evidence-based and independent assessment of UN-Habitat. The result of the assessment will be a report containing recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat, and in this regard it should analyse:

- (a) The normative and operational mandate of UN-Habitat;
- (b) The governance structure of UN-Habitat, for more effective, accountable and transparent decision-making, considering alternatives, including universalization of the membership of its Governing Council;
- (c) The work of UN-Habitat with national, subnational and local governments and with relevant stakeholders in order to tap the full potential of partnerships;
- (d) The financial capability of UN-Habitat.

173. We decide to hold a two-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly, to be convened by the President of the General Assembly during the seventy-first session, to discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in this regard. The meeting will discuss, inter alia, best practices, success stories and the measures contained in the report. A Chair's summary of the meeting will serve as an input to the Second Committee during the seventy-second session for its consideration of action to be taken in the light of the recommendations contained in the independent assessment in its annual resolution under the relevant agenda item.

174. We encourage the General Assembly to consider holding the next United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat IV) in 2036 within a renewed political commitment to assessing and consolidating progress on the New Urban Agenda.

175. We request the Secretary-General, in his quadrennial report to be presented in 2026 pursuant to paragraph 166 above, to take stock of the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda since its adoption and to identify further steps to address them.

## Abstract

Drawing on theoretical concepts from Foucauldian poststructuralism, the present master thesis asks to what extent the United Nations' *New Urban Agenda* (NUA) does problematise sustainable cities, urbanisation and urbanism, and thereby questions how global urbanisation is rendered governable and acted upon by global policymaking's discursive practices. Applying Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) poststructural method in discursive policy analysis, the empirical analysis finds out that the problem representations contained within the NUA's recommendations for transformative commitments towards global sustainability are in fact politically ambiguous and that due to its 'régime of truth' the implementation of the NUA might result in the persistence of conditions of unsustainable urbanisation, cities and urbanism.

## Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit, welche sich auf Foucault'sche poststrukturalistische Theorien stützt, stellt die Frage inwiefern nachhaltige Städte, Urbanisierung und Städtebau/Stadtplanung in der *Neuen Urbanen Agenda* (NUA) der Vereinten Nationen problematisiert werden und hinterfragt dadurch wie die globale Verstädterung durch diskursive Praktiken des globalen Policymaking regierbar gemacht wird. Durch die Anwendung von Carol Bacchis "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) poststrukturalistische Methode aus der diskursiven policy Analyse, findet die empirische Analyse heraus, dass die Problem Repräsentationen, die sich in den Handlungsempfehlungen der NUA für Transformative Verpflichtungen zugunsten globaler Nachhaltigkeit befinden, vielmehr politisch ambivalent sind und, dass aufgrund seines 'régime of truth', die Umsetzung der NUA eventuell zur Fortdauer von unnachhaltigen Bedingungen für Städte, Städtebau/Stadtplanung und Urbanisierung führen wird.