

Civil Society`s Participation Towards Habitat III

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- In October 2016, the city of Quito will host Habitat III, the most important worldwide Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that takes place every 20 years. Habitat III calls for tens of thousands of people, including Member States of the United Nations, public and private institutions around the world, and citizens who seek to be part of the construction of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) containing the global agreements and commitments to shape future cities.
- The city's nomination as host was made in the context of national progress made in land use and urban development. Ecuador has been one of the first countries to speak of an urban revolution and a pioneer in incorporating the right to the city in its Constitution.
- Civil society has become a major player in the construction of urban public policies. It is a component that improves the management of governance when it serves to absorb growing demand from different sectors of society. Citizen participation must accompany the preparatory process of the Habitat III Conference, mainly based on the thematic discussion of the NUA.
- In addition to the Habitat III Secretariat, there are groups from civil society and organizations that have a high interest in the Conference and the results of the NUA. These groups have initiated activities to put their voice in the fray. Some of them are not necessarily aligned with the Habitat III Agenda.
- Civil society stakeholders are called to be active entities in the construction of their cities. They must therefore seek to have an impact on urban public policies and a strategy to reach effective results; they must think not only in speeches but also in concrete actions that allow them to set an agenda and establish milestones that are gradually conquered. In order to do this, some of the challenges that civil society face include achieving a thorough understanding of the interlocutor, finding points of common agreement, making demands but also generating contributions, and seeking outreach through all means, using what can be understood as "the new street".



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The Pathway from Quito to Habitat III

In October 2016, the city of Quito will host Habitat III, the most important worldwide Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which, because of its magnitude, is occurs every 20 years. Led by the UN agency, UN-HABITAT, and organized in the country by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, the conference will be held from 17 to 20 October at the *Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana*.

Habitat III gathers tens of thousands of people, including representatives of the 193 Member States of the United Nations, public and private institutions from around the world, and citizens who seek to be part of the construction of the New Urban Agenda (henceforth NUA). This will be the main product of the Conference, and will contain agreements and global commitments to shape future cities. A long way has been traversed for the realization of Habitat III, before defining the focal point that will guide cities for the next 20 years. The resulting Urban Agendas of the previous two conferences of 1976 and 1996, had as their central focus the supply of adequate housing and the compression of human settlements; and the fight against irregular settlements, respectively.

The fact that Quito hosts the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development is the result of a huge effort by several actors who have sought to attract the gaze of the world to the country and the region. It is also an important opportunity to include major urban concerns from this side of the world in the global agenda. Latin America's experience on issues of urbanization, treatment of poverty and slums, the struggle for inequality reduction, and other urban problems, must be heard in order to be replicated and corrected in the future.

The first edition of Habitat took place in 1976, in the city of Vancouver, Canada, and resulted in the Declaration on Human Settlements. Its contents represented a huge step forward in the distribution of the benefits of development, planning and regulation of land use, environmental protection, shelter for people displaced by natural disasters and the incorporation of women and young people in planning settlement management policies. While the Declaration does not refer to civil society as a specific actor –besides incorporating youth and women's groups– it clearly outlines society's role in land management. It thus recognizes that there is an opportunity for governments and the international community to manage policies for adequate and effective human settlements, if the former create possibilities for the effective participation of all people in the planning, construction and management of their human settlements. In addition, the thirteenth General Principle of the Declaration provides for the right and the obligation of all people to participate, individually or collectively, in the development and implementation of policies and programs related to human settlements where they live (United Nations, 1976).

The guidelines for improving quality of life in human settlements, also distinguish the role that drives the people in the management of governments. They propose that the direct participation of people in the design and implementation of programs and policies that affect their lives is a basic right and dignity, regardless of whether this occurs individually or collectively. They establish that work on effective policies for human settlements should base on the continuous and cooperative collaboration among all levels of the government and its population.

Two decades later, in 1996, the Conference took place in Istanbul, Turkey. Habitat II, also known as



the City Summit, established the Habitat Agenda at a global level. Its main concern was the promotion of adequate housing for all and the sustainable development of human settlements in the world.

The preparatory path to Habitat II had a strong participation and influence from civil society; moreover, it had a leading role in defining the positions and the contents of the Habitat Agenda. Indeed, there was an important recognition that led the representatives of civil society to have an opinion in the main session of the Conference. The large number of activities showed the profound interest and active willingness of organized groups to participate. These include debates, meetings, presentation of good ideas by citizens, roundtables on various topics, such as employment in cities, transportation, mega-cities, communication between rural and urban areas, urban physiology, democracy and cities in the twenty-first century, cities and information society and others, as well as networking events organized around the Conference by civil society worldwide.

The Istanbul Declaration (United Nations, 1996) places vulnerable groups in society, such as women, children and youth at the center of discussions and actions. Point number seven of the document is emphatic in its commitment to improve the living conditions of human settlements in a manner consistent with local realities. This implies an enormous effort to survey them and understand them from the local level, based on knowledge of the economic, social and environmental context, as well as the effective participation of all women and men, especially young people, people with disabilities, the poor, and other disadvantaged groups.

In general terms, the outcome of citizen's incidence remains somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, there was a major breakthrough in not talking exclusively about housing in order to start thinking about cities; but on the other, it was not possible

to insert concretely the right to housing in the Agenda, which had been the banner of civil society in the preparatory process towards the Conference (Elósegui Itxaso, 1996).

This document –considering the process that civil society has overcome since the first conference in Vancouver and the second one in Istanbul– aims to look at the role played by civil society in the preparatory process for Habitat III so far, and the role it will play within the framework of the Conference and into the future.

Civil Society's Role in the Construction of Urban Public Policies

Civil society has become an important player in public policy, especially when it is considered as an instance between state power and the citizenry and as a component that improves governance when it serves to absorb the growing demands of different sectors of society (Arcidiácono, 2011). But what do we mean by civil society? Whom do we mean by it? What role does it have?

Firstly, one can understand civil society as an organized sphere of social life in which collective or individual actors express and represent diverse interests, imaginaries, practices, discourses and values that make demands on the State for the achievement of public ends and/or goods. These demands need to be inserted in a given context on which they intend to have a degree of incidence (Portantiero, 2000). Somehow, civil society ends up being “everything that is not the State,” and what is not the private sector either, which operates under the market's logic.

Secondly, when referring to civil society, we include NGOs, churches, productive chambers, business associations, academia, professional associations, research centers, foundations, associations and any other institutions representing a social sector and



seeking to have influence to benefit their interests. Also included are those private organizations that generate public goods, understood as products that are of universal access, that are non-rival and that are not excluding.

For its part, public policy can be understood as a set of State actions, whether they are of a normative kind, or program and/or project actions with which the State promotes a particular view of development in their territory, aimed at the common good. Through public policies, the State produces public goods that seek to address social demands necessary for its development. This task becomes a permanent challenge for the State apparatus as more affluent societies demand more, not less, public goods over time.

The formation of public policies does not always respond to a sequence or an established order, since it is a dynamic process where different forces and interests interact simultaneously. The characteristics of civil society organizations (CSOs) allow them to enrich the different stages of public policy creation. Thus, there are CSOs focused on applied research, which contributes to the improvement of design and implementation of public policy interventions. Other civil society organizations play roles of activism and social mobilization that are key in the phase of introduction to the public agenda as well as in decision-making and sustainability (Belleini Cedeño, 2013).

Therefore, public policy is the reaction of States and governments to solve society's problems and conflicts (Salazar, 1995), it is easy to understand why civil society has a crucial role in the process—from development to implementation—as it becomes a voice for the aspirations of the people it represents and for citizens' demands in general. In addition, because of the deep knowledge it has of the reality of its constituents, it is the most capable of proposing mechanisms and solutions.

Thirdly, civil society is essential to protect and expand the rights of citizens since it contributes with the generation of fundamental public goods to guarantee civil and political rights as well as social, economic and cultural rights (Belleini Cedeño, 2013). In this sense, it is even healthy for democracy that social organizations integrate to propose public policies, control and influence governments and to assume a leadership role in political innovation (La Nación, 2014).

There must exist a goal of promoting the ongoing discussion on relevant issues in the construction of public policies for the territory where all levels of government and, mainly, members of civil society participate. Citizen participation must incorporate in urban dialogue citizen contributions about the specific needs and problems of local agendas, so that these become an input for the decision and design of public policies. It should seek mechanisms to raise the voice of civil society through discussions, online forums, document sharing, information dissemination and territorial debate.

In this context, citizen participation must accompany the preparation of the Habitat III Conference, mainly based on the thematic discussion of the NUA. Thus, the participatory process must have at least two main components:

1. Open spaces of thematic discussion on the proposed themes for the NUA, both face-to-face and online.
2. Promotion of technical inputs for discussion through research, determination of indicators and gathering of relevant information that helps support the direction of discussion and decision-making.

The establishment, consolidation and sustainability of a space for citizen participation should at least have the following objectives:



- To build an academic and social platform (institutions, researchers, research centers) at a national level, with global links or networks that organize a set of positions, studies, and pronouncements vis-à-vis Habitat III.
- To accompany, in terms of content, the initiatives of the States and local governments, but especially those of civil society, for generating a process of participation, awareness, incidence and commitment in relation to the declarations of the Conference.
- To promote, articulate, and disseminate, the works carried out nationally and internationally related to this theme.
- To establish and strengthen a system of exchange and capacity building networks in the social management of cities.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, meeting on 19 December 2014, graciously accepted the postulation of the Ecuadorian Government and decided that Quito would be the host city of the Habitat III Conference during the week of 17 October 2016.

The nomination of the city as the host occurred in the context of national progress in land use and urban development. The country has been one of the first to speak of an urban revolution and has been a pioneer in incorporating the right to the city in its Constitution. State restructuring around a democratic apparatus was one of the first visible actions of President Correa's government. Planning became the tool that articulated decisions and interventions in the country.

The Constitution of Ecuador reflects the relevance that citizen participation adopts and the role of civil society: Article 85 states "in the formulation, implementation, evaluation and control of public policies (...) the participation of individuals,

communities, peoples and nationalities will be ensured." Furthermore, Article 95 recognizes citizen participation as a right of society, and states that it can occur individually and collectively "in decision-making, planning and management of public affairs (...) in an ongoing process of building citizen power" (Republic of Ecuador, 2008).

For its part, Article 96 covers all forms of organization of society as a means to influence decisions and public policies, and to exert social control of all levels of government. These organizations can be linked with the different levels of government to strengthen citizen power and its forms of expression (Republic of Ecuador, 2008).

The State's structure recognize the importance of participation within Article 204, which states "the people are the main and first auditor of public power, in the exercise of their right to participation" (Republic of Ecuador, 2008) and in this spirit, the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control is incorporated as part of the State powers. This entity is responsible for promoting and encouraging citizen participation, especially in regards to having representation in spaces or other instances of State control, such as the Attorney General, the superintendents, the Comptroller's Office and others.

This context calls civil society to be part of the construction of public policy in Ecuador.

Civil Society's Role in the Construction Process of the NUA

Civil Society as an Actor in the Preparatory Process Towards Habitat III

The Secretariat of Habitat III is the formal instance in charge of coordinating the integral structure of the event. The preparatory process established a roadmap that intended to deal with a variety of



themes, aiming to include the greatest number of actors, represented by groups of members.

In the first instance, the Secretariat is the agent that must group, at a national, regional and worldwide level, a countless amount of inputs generated around the themes that the aforementioned actors seek to position as elements and commitments of the NUA. A key actor working with the Secretariat is the World Urban Campaign, which is a global network of urbanists including members of civil society, cities, and business groups aligned with the agenda proposed by UN Habitat.

The concrete proposal of the World Urban Campaign included the creation of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP). It is made up from 15 members representing the major groups and other interest groups: local and subnational authorities, researchers and academia, civil society organizations, grassroots organizations, women, members of congress, children and youth, businesses and industry, foundations and philanthropy, professionals, syndicates and professional associations, the agricultural sector, the indigenous sector, the media, seniors and others (Un-Habitat, 2016).

The GAP has the purpose of strengthening actors' commitment and degree of participation before the Conference takes place. Civil society is one of the specific members of this Assembly and it acts in representation of non-governmental organizations and institutions that express the interest and will of the citizens and that includes the family and the private sphere of the so-called third sector of society (UN-Habitat, 2015).

Preparatory Committees

The meetings of the Preparatory Committees, known as PrepCom, seek to advance the preparation of the Conference in Quito to which all member states of the United Nations attend. The first

occurred between 17 and 18 September 2014; the second one was during 14 to 16 April 2015, and the third one from 25 to 27 July of this year. The open consultations are meetings where local authorities, organizations, elements of the major group, and other members meet with the Secretary General of Habitat III to discuss specific issues of interest. In PrepCom 1, there were two interesting rounds of consultations for the process of participation of civil society: a first one more concerned with grassroots organizations, led by the alliance between the Hairou Commission, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (Wiego) and Slum Dwellers International (SDI). This consultation aimed to insure that the voices of grassroots organizations were heard during the course of the Habitat III Conference. The document *Grassroots Principals and Priorities*, prepared by the Hairou Commission, was presented in this event as a starting point for the structuring of the participation of grassroots organizations (United Nations 2014b). However, the concern arose about losing alliances achieved in previous United Nations meetings that did not agree to be "the others" with regards to representation in the Conference. In fact, a recommendation that came out of this discussion was the organization of thematic events that would be part of the preparatory process of the Conference.

Another meeting for open consultations was the one regarding civil society. The Habitat II Conference established a Partners Committee that enabled an active civil society participation in the Urban Agenda resulting from the Conference. In the same spirit and giving continuity to said achievement, the Planning Committee of Civil Society was implemented before this consultation meeting for Habitat III. With respect to the participation in the negotiation of the NUA, they identified the need for an inclusive platform that not only fosters dialogue but that is more proactive in relationship to concrete and practical urban solutions that members must implement. Besides the financing of a participatory platform and the obligation of learning from the



lessons of previous meetings, the consulted group did not present strong recommendations around the concrete means through which civil society participation is converted into the NUA results; neither did it clarify the role it must have in modeling and monitoring the Agenda.

On its part, the second PrepCom had a quite more controversial outcome than the first one. For even though the amount of parallel events showed a high interest and will regarding civil society participation, no agreements were reached in the negotiations of Member States on specific rules for participation of civil society actors and of local authorities in the discussions of the NUA in the Habitat III Conference. This lack of agreements was a relevant setback to the achievements reached in previous conferences in which members of civil society and local governments were accredited to participate in negotiations with a right to have an opinion but no vote. Upon the absence of agreements, the General Assembly of the United Nations worked on the proposal for participation rules in order to present it in its following meeting in September 2015. Despite the warning from European Union countries on the implications of reaching PrepCom3 without defining those participation mechanisms for Habitat III, everything seems to indicate that this will be the case. Unfortunately, it risks the credibility of the Conference and the products obtained from it. (Scrubs, 2015).

Ecuadorian Posture as the Host Country

Ecuador's posture as host of the Habitat III Conference is strategic, not only to position the country's vision around the resulting NUA, but also to be vocal about the perspective at a regional level on the future commitments for to build cities. Unfortunately, the country's statements have been very weak regarding the role of civil society as part of the event's preparation process, even worse regarding the construction and monitoring of the

NUA. In the first PrepCom, Ecuador presented to other nations the State's aspiration to build a society of *good living* through the regulation of public policy in all dimensions—including environmental, spatial, legal, economic and, of course, social spheres. The country recognizes human beings as the center of all planning, especially of urban planning, as this specifies quality of life conditions for individuals. Therefore, it especially cautioned on the need to avoid that market logic determines cities. Ecuador also presented the main urban problems of the country, which coincide with many in the region, including socio-spatial disturbances, threats to ecological reserves and land suitable for agriculture, the entrenchment of inequalities, inter-city migration, among others. The meeting established the right to the city as the guiding principle of State action to build a more just and equitable society. However, there was no reference to the role of civil society or the mechanisms proposed by the country for active participation not only in the Conference but for the future of the NUA (United Nations, 2014a).

In PrepCom 2, Ecuador ratified many of the elements described above, mainly to put human beings at the center of urban planning. The subject of debate recognized elements that revolved around the mechanisms of access to land, spatial justice, climate change control and harmony with the environment, which are all important factors for the proper management of cities. Again, the missing piece of the agenda was the country's civil society as a strategic actor in urban planning (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, 2015b).

Thematic Meetings

The preparatory process included thematic and regional meetings. Contrary to the request made in PrepCom 1, there has not been a specific meeting for civil society or grassroots organizations. Instead, meetings were dedicated to deal with public space, intermediate cities, sustainable energy, financing



for development, metropolitan areas, and informal settlements. Meanwhile, regional meetings focused on the African region, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The African regional meeting was held in the city of Abuja, on 24, 25 and 26 February of this year. Its declaration strongly recognizes the need to work in-depth in human settlements that do not provide good quality of life for the population, aware of their needs and resource constraints, and based on dialogue between stakeholders. It strongly admits the obligation to manage human settlements based on individuals and on meeting their basic needs and rights, the strengthening of planning, governance and local administration capacities, the adoption of knowledge and technologies that are favorable for the treatment of the effects of climate change. While it is proactive about the organization, implementation and participation in the NUA, it does not position a specific role for members of civil society or academia for the implementation of technologies suitable for the construction of human settlements. However, it does specify roles for the private sector in this context (United Nations, 2016b).

For its part, the European regional meeting was held in Prague from 16 to 18 March 2016. The resulting declaration explicitly admits the participation of professionals and academics, private sector, civil society, men, women, children and young people, as well as expected stakeholders, such as the representatives of the member countries of the European Economic Commission of the United Nations, local and regional authorities, and other organizations. The region recognizes the need for a new environmentally friendly, inclusive, secure, equitable and non-discriminatory city model. It is important that the section on “Good Urban Governance” explicitly mentions the need to build the capacities of civil society actors, among others, with a holistic approach and integrative strategies as the basis for sustainable urban development. The

region is known for incorporating these elements in its vision. It goes further still, recognizing that citizens must be permanently involved and consulted throughout the process of urban public policy formulation, as part of a well-designed multi-level governance system.

This multilevel governance proposal is important as a mechanism to ensure that the design of the NUA and in the materialization of public policies for its implementation, incorporate citizens’ demands (United Nations, 2016a).

The Asia and Pacific meeting was held in Jakarta from 21 October to 22 October 2015. In it, representatives from the region’s countries agreed on the obligation for drastic change in the planning, development and management model of cities. Something notable was the fact that they recognized individuals as agents of change and not as mere beneficiaries. For this, they drew attention to the need for appropriate regulatory models and appropriate land governance models. In addition, they appealed to a strong civil society that is committed and involved in the decision-making process and in the monitoring and implementation of urban development. In addition, the Declaration called on all spheres of government to work collaboratively among different actors to improve social cohesion and to strengthen social diversity in cities. This document is emphatic in its demand to reduce the human gaps that have occurred because of disorganized urban growth (United Nations, 2015).

The city of Toluca was in charge of hosting the meeting of representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean between 18 and 20 April 2016. Regional governments, academia and civil society attended it to determine challenges and commitments ahead of the preparation of the NUA in the region. The resulting declaration recognizes, above all, the importance of objective 11 of the Post-2015 Agenda, which puts on the table the relevance of urban and territorial development. It also emphasize the



important role of the right to the city (which later, in version zero of the New Urban Agenda would fall under the less controversial name of “Cities for All”), as an engine so that, once and for all, actors in the region’s urbanization process recognize their responsibilities and assume commitments. Furthermore, it should become a process to generate development opportunities. This has become an objective since the population began to concentrate on urban agglomerations. The Declaration of Toluca (United Nations, 2016c) is very clear in establishing the substantial role of national and subnational governments and communities in implementing a new roadmap that places the needs and rights of individuals at the heart of the NUA. The Declaration incorporates many improvements about the desired model of urbanization, which provides for equal participation, no discrimination, resource management, and multi-level integration of government. Merely one paragraph mentions civil society, which proposes the creation of effective participation spaces as a key element at a national or local level for the determination of the NUA. The idea behind this is that citizens can become part of the development of their city, with these spaces acting as tools to guarantee good governance, social cohesion and democratic consolidation. According to the Declaration, dialogue should take place between the national government, subnational governments, representatives of civil society and the private sector. The Declaration recognized internationally the importance of the promotion of civil society’s participation, as well as the participation of private sector, local authorities, the scientific and academic communities, foundations, volunteers, and other institutions in implementing the NUA through partnerships with various stakeholders to foster resources, knowledge, experience, technology, and other efforts (United Nations, 2016c). However, the role assigned formally to civil society is still relatively weak, since the meeting could have recognized an important role for it as monitor and overseer of compliance with the NUA, acknowledging the importance

of establishing formal spaces for monitoring, evaluating, and surveying the population’s needs. The strengthening of social actors, the identification of their achievements, and their empowerment as strategic figures for the realization of public policy purposes should be recognized objectives.

The NUA and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Habitat III Conference is the first mega event after the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. For the first time, the Development Agenda incorporates in its goals the issue of cities, and that’s a goal achieved thanks to the intervention of the urban community. This constitutes a global agreement on urban development objectives, where a geographical view differs from the sub-national level because of the importance that the phenomenon of urbanization has in determining a society’s quality of life (Commission of Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG, 2015).

The goal that manages to incorporate the urban dimension in the 2030 Agenda is number 11, which refers to sustainable cities and communities, and states that we should “manage to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (United Nations, --). To achieve the goal, 10 objectives are marked to match urban problems discussed around the NUA. These include access to housing, basic services and slum improvement, mobility, inclusion and sustainability of urbanization, heritage protection, risk management, environmental impact reduction, access to green spaces and public spaces, urban-rural links, resilient buildings, city financing, among other aspects that are relevant to the management of cities. In terms of citizen participation and inclusion, goal 11.3 refers to achieving a model of urbanization that is inclusive and sustainable, and with the capacity for participatory planning and management (United Nations, --).



Once the objectives set forth by the SDGs have been established, it is time for the design, selection and agreement on mechanisms for measuring progress and the measurement of goal achievement at a national and global scale. This requires thorough technical work accompanied by a process of citizen participation to ensure that the measuring mechanisms reflect the reality of cities' evolutions under Goal 11, to be easily measurable and available to social debate.

The implementation of the NUA does not exclude, nor should it exclude, the postulate of Goal 11 of the SDGs. In fact, national urban agendas should integrate the objectives of that goal and be consistent with its intentions, in general, for the sustainable development of the planet. Civil society must play an active role in ensuring the articulation of both agendas and any other presented at the local, national or regional level.

The First Results: the NUA Draft and its Considerations Regarding Civil Society

The first version of what will officially be the Quito Declaration on Cities for All was published in May 2016 (United Nations, 2016), and its first review was published in the month of June of the same year. This document aims to include the negotiations, debates, discussions, and contributions of the entire process to chart the commitments of the NUA. The document details lines of action on urban policy for the next 20 years, as well as agreements so that each country design its internal policy and achieve its implementation.

The document refers to civil society as an actor that contributes to the management of urban policies that nations must lead. It also recognizes a series of spaces for civil society to take part in the specific agenda of each nation in order to build partnerships between cities and actors, and for monitoring and evaluating implementation. These elements are the

ones that should draw the attention of civil society's actors, so that they may feel as responsible instances and coauthors of the kind of city that the Agenda proposes to build.

Within the first established commitments, there is a paradigm shift in the way of planning, executing and managing urban development, since it is an essential element for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. A focus on people is included as a commitment that guides the vision of city management. It anchors the Agenda's vision on the concept of "Cities for All", which is the equivalent to what is recognized in our Constitution as the right to the city. The provision of land and public goods and services rotates around it. Additionally, it promotes the progressive advancement of the right to housing, which must guarantee access to public space and cultural diversity, security, social cohesion, and other essential elements to ensure people's quality of life.

In fact, it establishes a change in the urban model as a key element for the implementation of the agenda. In this change, a process of effective decentralization is included, based on the principle of subsidiarity and the recognition of the importance of self-governance at a local level. For this to happen, there must be co-responsibility and contributions of local authorities and civil society (United Nations, 2016d). Compliance with the agreement that "no one is left behind" also implies the recognition and strengthening of culture, diversity and security, as well as gender-sensitive participation, and of all age groups. As part of the key points of the implementation of the Agenda, the explicit commitment is set, although briefly addressed in the document, of promoting participatory approaches throughout the planning, design, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of urban public policy. It also recognizes the need, at a local government level, to strengthen the channels of dialogue for potential contributions from all segments of society.



The Declaration's specific vision regarding cities and the participation of society is that this should generate a sense of ownership by the citizens, so that there is civic engagement and active participation in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and financing of plans and urban policies, strengthening effectiveness, transparency and accountability (United Nations, 2016d). Actually, the NUA establishes this participatory element as one of the transformative commitments of the NUA. Furthermore, it mentions civil society as one of the actors responsible for leveraging the opportunities brought about by the economic development of cities, and for this to occur, one of the listed obligations of nations is to facilitate effective participation and collaboration among city actors. The local government is also among these actors and, as a means of implementing the Agenda, it is stated that partnerships between levels of government should be promoted, and between the local government and civil society, as part of the mechanisms to improve capacities and collaborative actions.

The document does not recognize a specific role for civil society besides contributing to urban policy. While it opens spaces for nations to establish specifically the participation of stakeholders, there is a significant absence in determining or assigning the scope of its specific responsibility in the comprehensive processes of public policy. Therefore, although the States ascribe to the NUA, it would be up to each nation to determine the civil society's weight in particular processes of design, implementation and monitoring of public policy. Civil society has an important role in the adoption and implementation of the NUA. The Agenda recognizes the special attention that vulnerable groups require in the process of urbanization and city growth, including children, young people, and people with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous groups, women, grassroots organizations, informal workers, farmers, refugees, displaced persons, migrants, among others. These

groups have a significant representation in civil society organizations as they have been working for their rights and, therefore, the call to participation is crucial.

In points 65 and 66 of the NUA draft (United Nations, 2016d), explicit responsibility is found in the section for urban prosperity, in which Member States commit to facilitate the effective participation and collaboration between stakeholders, including civil society in addition to local governments. It combines the responsibilities for participation with labor aspects, especially with vulnerable groups –or “marginalized” groups as the text calls them– such as women and other groups. For these groups, the agenda advocates the removal of the legal and regulatory barriers to equitable involvement in the labor market without discrimination or wage differences, among others.

Finally, with regard to the follow-up and monitoring of the NUA, there is a call for cooperative work and participation of all stakeholders. It states that the reports the Agenda prepared for evaluation purposes should incorporate the inputs delivered by civil society, among other actors. It does not refer to the binding capacity or priority capacity that these inputs have on the decisions made about urban development. It further recognizes that the importance of citizen mobilization has resulted in platforms and specific events such as the World Day of Cities and World Habitat Day; it also calls for new mobilization proposals that may arise from civil society as a mechanism to highlight and strengthen the process of implementation monitoring of the NUA (United Nations, 2016d).

Spaces at the National Organization Level

The ruling entity of the field, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (Miduvi) is the counterpart entity in the organization process of the Habitat III Conference. Besides logistical



considerations, the Miduvi also has the responsibility of molding the contents of the country's position in the Conference. It will also present Ecuador's key elements for insertion in the NUA.

The *National Ecuadorian Report Towards Habitat III* deals with four themes of the urban agenda: equitable cities, sustainable and resilient cities, productive cities, and recovery of public space. The analysis of these four dimensions revolves around coverage of services and infrastructure for housing, services and public spaces. Specifically the chapter on "Recovery of What is Public" handles the issue of improving participation and human rights in urban development, and addresses the right to the city, citizen participation and involvement in the construction of the public agenda (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, 2015a).

The report's starting point is the 2008 Constitution, which enshrines participation as one of the rights of citizens, and as an innovative principle for State action and governance at all levels. It recognizes the public duty to create the institutional and material conditions that are appropriate so that the dynamism and initiatives of civil society have effective incidence in government processes (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, 2015a). This proactive role of the State would then frame the distribution and egalitarian redistribution of social wealth to ensure the right conditions to generate the capacity for participation. It also should consider the transformation of public management procedures towards mechanisms that are more democratic and susceptible to popular control and the implementation of training and communication processes to expand the powers of civil society, as well as the capacity for social organization.

As part of the concrete actions by the State, the document mentions the incorporation of the Transparency and Social Control Function as a meeting point between the traditional expressions of the State and the –in fact not so recent– citizens' initiative. However, although this institution

became effective in the bureaucratic apparatus and is structured to meet the objectives that it pursues, neither it nor the National Councils for Gender Equality, Peoples, Nationalities and others have played an active role in citizen motivation for the discussion of the NUA.

The recognition of State duties towards civil society opens a common workspace where civil society has the importance it deserves. However, there is a failure by stating that the public has lost the momentum of participation, and that social promotion in itself is not a task of the State, but that it must listen, implement mechanisms for adequate communication and ensure that the interaction between the State and civil society translates into concrete public policy actions. A citizenry that is active and able to demand things from the State, does not need to be built. It needs to be heard.

An effort by the State to bring the discussion of the NUA closer to civil society has been the organization of a series of discussion events and the activation of virtual platforms for citizen input. The National Secretariat of Planning and Development (Senplades) runs the virtual platform and aims to gather citizens' views on six topics of discussion as an input to feed back into the National Report and to raise the discussion, which must take place within the II National Urban Forum. The issues that are open for public opinion in the National Report of Ecuador are: (1) demographic issues, (2) equitable city, (3) sustainable and resilient city, (4) productive city; (5) recovery of what is public; and, (6) indicators. Since its beginning, from March until May, the total number of contributions among all subjects does not reach 60. It would be appropriate then to consider whether the themes proposed to civil society identify its needs or whether they are really the key points of debate in which it wishes to participate.

As for events, three techniques for approaching civil society were defined: workshops, focus groups and in-depth interviews. The workshops, particularly,



are part of thematic forums organized in the territory to disseminate the National Report, and in the Urban Forum Platform. The regional forums were held in the cities of Urucuquí, Portoviejo, Tena, and Cuenca between the months of March and April 2016, in the form of lectures and specific work roundtables about four of the six proposed topics for discussion in the National Report of Ecuador towards Habitat III.

An interesting contribution arising from the debate in the forums is a visualization of cities in three parts: past, in 1996, present, in 2016, and future, in 2036. In general, citizen vision about cities in the past, present and future revolves around the quality of public spaces, the existence of green spaces that have deteriorated or decreased, the existing degree of security, the required facilities for alternative mobility, and the provision of public services according to the needs and growth of cities.

It is striking to see the interpretation of citizens with regard to participation and the role of civil society, which do not appear in the vision of the cities' past, nor in the view of the present, but rather proposed as an ideal for the construction of future cities. The inclusion of citizens in the planning of cities and their involvement in the decision-making process appears as a social aspiration rather than a reality, where the perception is rather that there is a vacuum in participatory planning included in the Constitution. In fact, this participation represents a sort of co-responsibility to the extent that it anticipates that future cities will also have citizens who fulfill their duties and maintain relations of respect and solidarity among them. The meetings established the need to include the citizenry as a strategic actor to achieve better cities.

Citizen Initiatives in the Preparation of the NUA

Besides the official United Nations agencies and the stakeholders considered as representatives of civil society in the preparatory process towards

Habitat III, there are groups in civil society and organizations that have a high degree of interest in the Conference and in the results of the Urban Agenda (Citiscope, 2015).

These groups may or may not have a representation in the organizations that make-up the Global Action Plan (GAP), but that have initiated or carried out actions to make their voice heard. The Habitat III Agenda does not necessarily align some of them.

The actions of civil society range from academic encounters to expressions of agreement or disagreement with the preparatory process, with the participation of specific actors or with the Urban Agenda itself. At a regional level, positions from civil society groups that defend the right to the city appeared, as is the case of the Global Platform for the Right to the City, to mention just one example. In general, these groups aim to put to debate specific urban problems of each locality. The preparatory process either excluded these debates from the discussion, or lacked strength or the expected focus.

The possibility of employing the brand *Together Towards Habitat III*, which is specific for civil society events within the Conference framework, allows us to identify a series of events carried out within the preparatory process. Mainly, these based in lectures and thematic discussions, and even a real estate fair, that reflects the understanding of the citizenry about the importance of the event. On a closer look, the truth is that in Ecuador spaces have not proliferated as would be expected in a host country.

A notable space in the process of consolidation is the Platform for Habitat and the Right to the City-Ecuador, which consists of civil society organizations and individual citizens. Its goal is to influence permanently in urban national policy by promoting citizen interaction and the dissemination of information. The Platform originated in the forum *The Construction of the Urban and Territorial Agenda: in the Road Towards Habitat III*, which gathered representatives of the citizenry and close to



80 public institutions, private institutions NGOs, and civil society organizations.

After its activation, the Platform promoted a specific event for content generation regarding the thematic proposals of Habitat III, and a “thematic discussion of the NUA: towards Habitat III” took place in Quito in July 2015. This was an effort to decentralize the discussion and listen to the relevant points of the urban agenda in other cities.

In other places of the country, like Guayaquil and Riobamba, there were replication events of the thematic discussion.

The purpose of these discussions was to gather inputs from civil society around relevant themes to be included in the urban agenda both at a local and at a national level, contrasting with the guidelines defined in the diagnosis for Habitat III. From this discussion, an interesting input summarizes what might be the relevant demands to take into account by civil society in the creation of the NUA. Table N°. 1 presents these contributions, as well as crosscutting themes to the ones proposed for the NUA. It shows the outcomes from citizen participation in the three cities where the debate took place.



Table N°. 1

Systematization of the thematic discussion towards Habitat III
Crosscutting themes to the proposed themes for the New Urban Agenda

Area	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
1. Social cohesion and equity	1. Inclusive cities	<p>Guarantee the right to plural and crosscutting participation throughout the planning process; promoting empowerment and ownership of mechanisms and spaces. This involves, necessarily, having information and updated data from the territories, as a mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of participatory processes in planning, based on real needs and dialogue of the actors. An essential part of participation originates from finding catalysts of social cohesion like the neighborhood, which acts as a core in decision-making.</p> <p>Support through oversight committees promotes knowledge and continuous improvement of the rules governing society, where the citizens are their own watchmen.</p>	<p>Right to the city.</p> <p>Inclusion of actors of the Social and Solidarity-based Economy.</p> <p>Micro planning and its coincidence with real spaces for citizen participation.</p> <p>Social production and habitat solidarity.</p> <p>Digital literacy.</p>	
	2. Migration and refugees in urban areas		<p>The link between urban, rural and peri-urban affairs arises from the recognition of the diverse cultural practices that guarantee inclusion, especially with children, young people and women. This in turn, promotes the elimination of inequality gaps and ensures opportunities for different social groups and improves connectivity between them.</p>	<p>Peri-urban areas for cultural activation and provision of infrastructure must be prioritized, ensuring budget sustainability.</p> <p>It is also necessary to promote equitable income generation and redistribution to enable the empowerment of citizens in public affairs.</p>
	3. Safe cities	<p>Redistribution of power with citizens as the basis for decision-making.</p> <p>The strengthening of popular power and the construction of citizenship requires collective awareness, exercises and citizen commitments with the reconstruction of a different kind of State. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns against discrimination; constant dialogue to know real needs; building strong social institutions at all levels of participation; and promoting a community with a view to the common good.</p> <p>Encourage citizen participation, social control, citizen oversight.</p>		<p>Consider the link between cities and food security.</p> <p>Linking the urban to the rural by giving better access to knowledge and education to reduce violence.</p>



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
	<p>Universal accessibility to services; rights of people with disabilities; and equitable social security. The starting point must be the generation of clear information on access to services and enforcement of rights, to, in turn, promote education based on rights. In parallel, a comprehensive public policy must prioritize care needs, and guarantee exercise and access to priority care groups in order to overcome discrimination and stereotyping. It should include people with diverse capacities in planning and promote technological innovation.</p>		
			<p>Consider transnational flows of family migration and temporary migration to the city, which result from tourism, work or services. Incorporate the urban metabolism and its impact on the peripheries in in the planning process.</p>
	<p>The promotion of job sources for vulnerable women is required, as well as training for community leaders to prevent unsafe situations.</p> <p>Thoughts on poverty and sustainability must come from the generation of income, employment, social security, and care in natural risk areas, pollution, and garbage.</p>		





Area	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
2. Urban regulations	4. Urban norms and legislation	<p>It is necessary to use synergies between public entities of government and civil society, foundations, NGOs, academia and others to develop and participate in specific proposals regarding the public policy in practice, as well as to create an interface that generates proposals of sustainable economy within cities.</p> <p>Citizen participation becomes relevant with a dual function: citizen education, and the definition of decisive participatory mechanisms.</p> <p>Regulatory bodies must base on citizen participation mechanisms that also have a decisive driver, as a means to encourage the construction of inclusive public policies.</p>	<p>Absence of records and recognition of the evolutionary processes that have taken place in the territory: building a normative vision that rescues and responds to the social construct and citizen actions.</p>	
	5. Urban governance		<p>Build capacity for dialogue, where the actors also recognize their obligations, and encourage the collective interest on the subject, especially to generate an urban culture of good living.</p>	



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
<p>Weak or no national legislation about land: the development of a specific legal framework to regulate land requires a reconceptualization of the city from the value in use (beyond housing) and not exchange value; this would influence planning and living in the city territory.</p> <p>This regulation should consider inclusive policies that respect the dynamics and realities existing in the urban context, such as, for example, facilitating the use of unused land for social housing.</p>	<p>Consider real problems that cities experience, such as the construction of social and productive structures outside of the law, informality in labor and housing, exclusion of vulnerable groups, or also the deepening of vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>Think about the relevance of establishing effective control and compliance entities or mechanisms, especially in the absence of a regulator of the territorial governments and of the proper application of their respective competencies.</p>	
<p>Creation of regulatory bodies to consider the diversity of the territory, considering the effects of decentralization and autonomy. However, it is a great challenge to make a single regulation cover all municipalities in a uniform manner.</p>		<p>Low participation of local governments in managing municipal land: the reality of local governments is diverse. In general, they cannot (should not) be required to exercise their powers, since this has led to shortages of land and limitations on the effects of municipal housing and regularization programs that attempt to address a national problem of regional imbalance in service provision.</p>	





Area	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
3. Spatial development	6. Urban and spatial planning and design	<p>Understand the community as an activator of spatial processes and public safety, with multi-sectorial and multifunctional approaches that strengthen human rights.</p> <p>Include social organizations to participate in government decisions.</p> <p>Give citizens tools and concepts that contribute to the development and planning of settlements.</p> <p>Give citizens the right to participate and to live in decent settlements.</p> <p>Democratize, report, and agree on a development model in order to promote ownership by citizens.</p>	<p>Planning will be effective to the extent that it develops a model of participatory planning, in which the citizen is involved in the decision-making process and promotes social and cultural exchange to enrich the use of space.</p>	
	7. Urban land		<p>Develop a multi-sectorial and multifunctional approach with a rights perspective: incorporate a human rights approach to spatial planning, which begins by recognizing the right to safe land, housing, social fabric, social ties, security, and citizen participation.</p>	



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
<p>Addressing territory problems begins by studying urban and socioeconomic behaviors for the design of public policy.</p> <p>This requires ensuring transparency and freedom of access to information.</p>		<p>Rethinking spatial development in order to be multi-sectorial and multifunctional requires the involvement of key stakeholders, such as local government and citizens themselves. In this sense, it is important to break technocratic leadership and promote greater participation of local governments, mainly through training officials on issues, such as governance and city resilience to adverse situations. It is also necessary, at both the local governments' level and the citizenry, to strengthen the capacities of the different decision-making levels of government, and to have tools for land management and participatory planning.</p>	
<p>Build a legal framework about land: it is relevant for planning and spatial development to have a legal framework for benefit management, return on investment in social housing, housing relocation in risk areas and reconfiguration of the territory, as well as fostering of equitable development based on resource use.</p>		<p>Increase the active participation of municipal governments.</p> <p>Use technology for the benefit of integral development.</p> <p>Strengthen themes of scale at different levels of government.</p> <p>Propose a Land Law, a legal framework to regulate land use and planning.</p>	<p>Recover the notion of property as value in use over exchange value: the recuperation of some concepts left aside is important for spatial development.</p> <p>Around the recuperation of the idea of value in use, it is necessary to strengthen and disseminate historical awareness about the planning and changes that cities have undergone. Furthermore, the need to, recognize alternative tenure and collective land management forms and establishing city limits with adequate criteria and defending them is important, as well as the creation of new laws or the revision of existing ones to promote value in use.</p>





Area	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
4. Urban Economy	8. Local economic development	Continuity of the political territorial project promoted from grassroots citizen participation to generate proposals, policies, and regulations: the continuity comes from creating spaces for dialogue on government policies, to promote evaluation within a social and economic context. To achieve this, indicator systems must be developed to measure the degree of compliance with objectives and goals, as well as monitoring of regulations and public policies implemented through citizen participation mechanisms. Citizen participation plays a decisive role, so it is important to promote their empowerment on issues related to urban economy, through continuous education and training processes.	The use of resources to finance activities has an important role in economic performance. It is necessary to think about reinforcing the budget of the decentralized autonomous governments for implementation, generation and modification of ordinances, as well as encouraging that local enterprises ensure capital flow towards the city and not outwards.	Mechanisms must be created that promote the development of the rural sector, since migration negatively affects the socioeconomic conditions of the country and the city.
	9. Work and livelihood sources		<p>The Popular and Solidarity-based Economy: this aspect requires a clear definition about the concept, its scope, control entities at a territorial level, and the assessment of its contribution to the economy as a whole.</p> <p>This makes it possible to achieve the necessary coordination of economic processes carried out by the traditional capitalist economy with State policies and the Social and Solidarity-based Economy. In this manner, it is possible to approach the Popular and Solidarity Economy from the recognition of local products and services that can link together productive enterprises, and generate value chains and clusters within economic sectors, as a productive challenge for the territory.</p> <p>Inclusive growth approached from priority groups as an engine of urban economy: in order to generate economic growth mechanisms that promote inclusion, it is necessary to strengthen popular control over policies about the application, generation and modification of ordinances and improve education and technical training of social priority groups, with development policies aimed at reducing poverty.</p>	



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
	<p>It is important to incorporate into the analysis the problem of migration from the point of view of labor law.</p>		<p>Need to improve technical and occupational capacities to implement land use planning processes. It is necessary to incorporate into the understanding of the city the economic analysis of disaster resilience.</p>
<p>Encourage the use of copyright as a mechanism to promote innovation and production of new knowledge.</p>	<p>The structural problems of employment must be visible considering the phenomena that give rise to domestic labor, child labor and unemployment of people over 50 years of age.</p> <p>One proposal that comes from society, and must work at the policy level, is to ensure equal opportunities to combat underemployment.</p>		





Área	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
5. Urban ecology and environment	10. Urban resilience	<p>Strengthening of citizen participation processes.</p> <p>Create clear goals and indicators with mechanisms of participation and observation.</p> <p>Expand information and communication mechanisms about sustainable development.</p>	<p>Consider the impact of factors, such as human mobility, inequality and vulnerability on environmental management.</p>	<p>Disconnect between the urban system and the ecosystem: it is necessary to promote a circular metabolism in production and consumption in cities, avoiding linear processes and degenerative production in cities while promoting a circular metabolism.</p>
	11. Urban ecosystems and resource management	<p>Low incorporation of mechanisms for citizen participation in the planning and realization of sustainable development: planning should rescue and disseminate several initiatives from the public to generate social commitment to the environment; therefore, it should also make visible specific actions of civil society, such as urban gardens.</p> <p>Another fundamental line of action to encourage participation is the promotion of information and communication mechanisms, and training on sustainable development, consumption cycles and natural processes.</p>	<p>Low inclusion of epistemology of the South and ancestral knowledge in building visions of urban development: self-referencing a single source should be avoided, and the vision and ancestral knowledge on nature must be rescued.</p> <p>This includes taking the analysis and theoretical developments of Latin American authors as a reference to link academia to spaces for citizen participation. Furthermore, overcoming the anthropocentric paradigm, promoting the vision of rights of nature as presented in the Ecuadorian Constitution, and organizing information and education systems, awareness since childhood, and in the family and community levels regarding the care and protection of the environment and natural resources.</p>	<p>Reduce environmental pollution, rethink consumption patterns in the city, analyzing the environmental pollution problems holistically and promoting inclusive recycling. One way to overcome this disconnection can be rethinking academic plans directing them to local examples in public policy, and promoting their widespread dissemination in various media.</p>



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
			Application of ancestral knowledge and inclusion of epistemology of the South.
Address the lack of incentives and technology to meet regulations and make sustainable projects. In this sense, also analyze the role of subsidies.			Propose new resource management schemes: from consumption to presumption, inclusive recycling, eco-social risks related to health inequalities, green terraces, use of common goods and eliminating pressure on water resources. Work with concepts, such as environmental and food pollution and redefine the concept of food safety.





Area	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
6. Urban infrastructure and services	12. Urban infrastructure and basic services	The solution to the problems of housing, basic services and mobility begins by generating co-responsibility between the state and society. In order to do so, participatory processes must be activated to generate credibility, considering the experience and proposals of territorial actors, as well as citizen training to strengthen neighborhood and community organization.		
	13. Housing	<p>Consider citizen participation to prevent property speculation and privatized management. Consider management and administration techniques of great ideas for building homes with fewer materials and appreciating community work.</p> <p>Real and active community participation in the design and implementation of public policies and projects supported by social support programs, which facilitate the appropriation of social processes and the implementation of projects.</p>	<p>Consider housing not as an object but as a complex and comprehensive concept, which has a qualitative and not only quantitative dimension.</p> <p>Breaking the schemes of the center/periphery dichotomy in decisions about location of social housing.</p> <p>Consider the community actor, besides the state, family, and market, as a support group, including the recovery of ancestral knowledge.</p> <p>Qualitative housing deficit: one of the most important lines of action to address the problem of housing shortage is the access and reach of credit to quintiles 1 and 2 of poverty, for which it requires a comprehensive improvement of state policies: subsidies, social production of habitat, particularly with reference to a proper targeting of the housing subsidy.</p>	Give a more direct approach to the actual social, economic and cultural needs of rural areas, promoting workable solutions to rural problems affecting the urban aspect.



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
		<p>Work of municipalities under performance management criteria (efficiency).</p> <p>Think about the extent of real city problems, such as water, sewage treatment, garbage collection, better distribution of equipment.</p>	<p>Planning should prioritize the provision of health services considering infrastructure quality and resources.</p>
<p>Consider the quality of social housing, good construction technology and ordinances to control and regulate.</p> <p>The natural complement to improved access is a public policy that ensures the construction of comfortable and safe housing for the most vulnerable sectors. To do so, quality standards should be established in social housing and urbanized areas with sustainable models that even consider models of self-construction, with technical and financial support from academia and NGOs.</p>	<p>Bonuses or financial support for housing are essential for the most vulnerable families. They are a necessary element for housing access for families that would have no way to access mortgage credit because of their informal work situations. Particularly, a human development bonus is essential and necessary for quintiles 1 and 2.</p> <p>The relocation of families to safer areas leads to a new lifestyle and coexistence at a community level not interiorized in families.</p>	<p>Work on the complexity of procedures and requirements for access to housing, as well as options to diversify housing access against the predominant model of single-family homes in individual property.</p> <p>The state budget should provide for housing for the poorer quintiles.</p>	<p>Properly identify families and socioeconomic situation for the proper allocation of bonus types, so that these do not become a way of life that discourages job search and production of income to sustain the family. In this regard, it should include attention to improvement of informal housing and housing equity, instead of having plans and projects for new housing.</p> <p>Joint and long-term planning that transcends the political orientation of the current Government.</p> <p>Integrate fiscal policy to urban policy to encourage decision making from the bottom up in the territory.</p> <p>Consider that a complex management system is necessary to achieve sustainable, non-sectorial development (holistic approach).</p>





Área	Knowledge	Citizen participation	Inclusion	Urban-rural link
	Thematic documents			
6. Urban infrastructure and services	14. Informal settlements	Responsibility and real participation in the policy building process in informal spaces.		The natural complement to improved access is a public policy that ensures the construction of comfortable and safe housing for the most vulnerable sectors. Therefore, policies should establish quality standards in social housing and developable areas with sustainable models that consider even the models of self-construction, with technical and economic support from academia and NGOs.
	15. Transportation and mobility	Educational campaigns for citizens that are also part of the elementary education curriculum and that have greater participation, both of private companies and public institutions, developing campaigns that promote other transport systems like the bicycle.	<p>Promote a culture of mobility (overuse, lack of respect, wastage), supported in the political will to change the paradigm of the private car.</p> <p>Promote smart, comprehensive and inclusive mobility that prioritizes and considers the needs of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility.</p>	



Regulations	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Institutions: Government and control	Planning
<p>Issuance of regulations and norms: land use policies, regulation of rural transport, provision of accessible transport units (sidewalks / itineraries); accompanied by an appropriate institutional framework that manages mobility.</p> <p>It is necessary to incorporate regulatory standards criteria to change public transport (bus), in terms of access and design of low-rise stops / buses.</p>	<p>A mobility cultural change that must begin with the re-education of society, to create awareness on the fact that we are all pedestrians first. It is also necessary to raise awareness about the equality that must exist for vulnerable groups, using real data on mobility and including the participation and demands of citizens for a detailed analysis on mass transit service.</p>	<p>Inclusive mobility systems means having different charges for different groups of users with the support of technology. This requires enormous political will that values the benefits of improving the quality of transport above political cost, which includes working for the reduction of subsidies to private transport and giving more to public transport (fuel analysis) and the generation of a public policy for the control and incentive of sustainable mobility.</p> <p>Strengthening sustainable mobility by creating urban centralities, disincentives to overuse of private cars emphasizing the benefits of public and private transportation based on the number of passengers, improvement of public transportation and non-motorized mobility. In order to do this, it is also necessary to have specific policies, such as the encouragement of public and / or private bicycle production and awareness campaigns on the issue of fuel subsidies versus investing in improving mass transportation.</p>	<p>Analyze the appropriateness of subsidies both of public transportation and of private transportation, and its impact in terms of efficiency versus quality in transportation.</p> <p>Have as a public policy focal point the impacts of transport on health and sedentary lifestyle.</p> <p>In particular, mobility should be encouraged to be inclusive, and this requires covering the areas of regulation, control, infrastructure, and education.</p> <p>Consider the design of urban roads so that the public transportation system is multimodal, complies with having connectivity and implementing technology.</p>



The citizenry's interest and concern revolve around the themes of the NUA that relate to the inclusion and consideration of vulnerable groups in cities, to regulations and city planning and its key elements, such as land and especially with regard to urban infrastructure and housing. This remains an important issue to determine the quality of life of citizens.

Other themes, however, do not yet arouse strong discussion and the citizenry has not strongly positioned demands around these aspects, including the themes relating to the informal economic sector, the presence of urban cultures, urban climate change, among others. Table N°. 2 presents these themes with fewer expressed demands.

Table N°. 2

**Systematization of thematic discussion towards Habitat III
Crosscutting themes to the lines of action proposed to the New Urban Agenda**

Area	Knowledge	Citizen participation
	Thematic documents	
1. Social cohesion and equity	1. Urban culture and heritage	
2. Spatial development	2. Urban-rural links	
	3. Public space	
3. Urban economy	4. Informal sector	
4. Urban ecology and environment	5. Cities and climate change (risk management)	It is important to develop clear systems of indicators and goals to monitor the use of natural resources and remediation. These can serve as inputs to regulate the level of resource consumption, water in particular.



Inclusion	Vulnerability: disabilities / informality	Planning
<p>There is a loss of cultural identity, as well as of cultural spaces in peri-urban areas with access to the city's life.</p>		
<p>A rights approach in spatial planning must also make visible the reality of the territories and identify, recognize its differences, as well as the potentials of rural lands.</p>		
		<p>Promoting neighborhood identity for the creation of partnerships that help determine the use of space, as well as developing public policy proposals and interventions based on the potential application and spatial development of new projects are all part of this recovery of the notion of ownership. Recognizing other forms of production of space and of inhabiting it are also a part of it.</p>
	<p>Promote the process of formalizing informal economic units and making mechanisms for the informal sector flexible, in order to create conditions that will allow it to consolidate as an entrepreneurial sector.</p>	



Finally, two of the themes of the NUA did not have any specific contribution or demand: the formation of smart cities and the issue of municipal finances. It is important to note that this lack of contributions does not reflect lack of interest or demands, but it rather shows that they are not relevant issues for civil society.

The effort to spread the urban debate to several spaces and include a variety of social groups is what guides the agenda of the Platform. The proposed actions for the immediate agenda aim at generating citizen inputs that accompany the modeling, drafting and negotiation of the NUA. The result for Habitat III is its constitutive document and a strategy document on incidence on the Agenda but also on public policy, arising from adopting commitments by the governing body and the respective follow-up and compliance monitoring.

In the same manner, academic actors of civil society have actively motivated urban discussion. The Academic Network for City Studies is an association that brings together national universities; it has a presence in the city of Quito, and through a series of events called Urban Encounters it puts on the table urban research topics that are relevant according to the lines of action of each university. After carrying out 11 scheduled meetings, the goal is to reach the Conference with an academic stance on the debate and research on cities, but with a perspective that goes beyond Habitat III, since it intends to structure an inter-university research and knowledge generation system.

Youth is another group with a significant involvement in the Ecuadorean preparatory process for Habitat III. While not born as a civil society initiative, the participation of YoutHab has been representative and diverse in the open consultations to develop the Declaration of Ecuadorian Youth, and so they will hold the YoutHab Conference, the largest parallel event around the Habitat III Agenda. Another interesting social initiative is JapiAwer, a

series of thematic meetings that suggest a relaxed and open to the public debate methodology: experts on the subject for each meeting share their knowledge, there is debate with attendees and there is participation in a networking spirit. It is precisely this more relaxed approach that draws the attention of a younger segment and brings urban issues close to groups that are less academic or distanced from a more formal discussion.

An alternative group called Resistance Habitat 3 has arisen from civil society. It intends to be the space for social organizations and the general citizenry not associated with the thematic development of the Conference. It aims to discuss and build alternative proposals from specific territories and from their perspective about the needs of the community and the understanding of the right to have a city. This space is expected to take shape in what will be a counter-event to the Habitat III Conference, and bring together nearly 1 000 people that are opposed to the vision of a current city model that generates expulsion, problems and conflicts. Generally, their proposals oppose the megaprojects model. They seek to have “fewer wealthy people” and to promote inclusion in the territory, with protection of heritage, neighborhoods and communities.

The tendency to make alternative counter-events to those organized by the United Nations has been gaining strength in recent years, and one cannot underestimate their summoning power. After all, these events reveal the existence of specific demands from certain social groups who do not feel represented in the formal organization of Habitat III, and their contributions are equally valid and necessary when structuring a Global Urban Agenda, and also in building local public policy for cities.

Finally, one cannot ignore the fact that a large number of organizations, unions, associations and other social groups have not yet found a means of expression for their specific demands, or else, do not engage in existing spaces. This means that



inevitably a large sector of civil society was not involved in the discussion of urban issues, even though this will surely affect them. Hence, a debate has not occurred on the future of companies of the Popular and Solidarity-based Economy, a type of productive organization that is very characteristic of Latin American economies, such as that of Ecuador, which has about 8,200 ventures of this type (Líderes, 2015). There is no voice for the trade unions, their representatives and those of informal sector services, which absorb about 25% of the labor market; nor has there been profound work done with leaders and neighborhood organizations despite there being an actor that could be strategic for this, such as the United Confederation of Neighborhoods of Ecuador. The latter, in the midst of an urban discussion of such magnitude, continues to work its problems and agendas at a local level and with no prospect of integration into the dynamics of the city, worse still in relation to national policy. Similarly, little has been heard from urban groups related to the world of music, urban art, alternative mobility, urban culture, and others.

Civil Society's Challenges Towards Habitat III and Beyond

Throughout the preparatory process for the Conference, it is clear that civil society has had a relatively weak representation. On one hand, there are strong actors who are part of the GAP as strategic stakeholders. On the other, there is also little involvement from grassroots organizations, representatives of neighborhood organizations or even scholars that do not yet identify with the construction of the NUA. The truth is that the representation of civil society in the preparatory process has reduced to a limited core compared with those who make up civil society, both as regards to specific actors, as to the representativeness of the regions of the world.

It is important to note that the role civil society must assume is not determined from spaces set up

by the authorities or decision makers. The role of civil society is a determination that comes from civil society itself; this is a responsibility for the citizens themselves and they must assume the exercise of their right to participation. Today, it seems that the organization has been losing momentum in recent years, civil society has lowered the volume of its voice. However, it is still possible to see that there is a level of social organization around specific problems and everyday struggles with reach and results at the local level (neighborhood, union, etc.) and little insertion on global, national or integral policies. So one cannot assert, as the National Report does, that there is sufficient level of civil organization to generate dialogue. This organization rather turns to specific actions in relation to the interests and struggles for which each social group works, and that for various reasons did not articulate with the contents of global urban struggles and with spaces for debate and dialogue proposed at a larger scale.

This low level of action of civil organization can be due to ignorance of the generated spaces, for example for the discussion of the NUA, or to distrust or little identification with initiatives or participation mechanisms that arise from the different levels of government. However, the strongest hypothesis about it points rather to the institutionalization of citizen participation, starting from its recognition as a civil right in the Constitution of 2008. The longtime struggles of civil society are already recognized in the Constitution. Somehow, that has appeased the motivation of civil society, for there are now regulatory instances that govern the participatory process and establish mechanisms and procedures for the involvement of society in the decision-making process, as well as the administrative bodies to accomplish such participation. All these new tools end up being a decisive filter around who actually exercises their rights, on what specific issues, and how.

The operation of this bureaucratic apparatus that replaced the organization of citizens' initiatives



pushes civil society away and generates a certain political rejection to participation because it is less horizontal, and brings a number of administrative complications to define who can participate and how. The mechanism has gradually become a “space to be filled” and not one that makes the citizen voice effective on public policy. The new role that it must have to exercise participation revolves around redefining the current social struggles around the city. These must first specify what the Constitution already offers to fulfill. This role is replicated when following up on specific commitments assumed by the nation around the NUA.

On the one hand, a major challenge to perform this action is to obtain the involvement of the public, which seems inactive in the urban discussion because of lack of knowledge, not only about the scope that the Conference may have, but also of the importance of urban policies in their daily lives. Hence, the key role they can have when they are part of the process of decision making in urban planning is absent. The ignorance barrier must fall in order to include ordinary citizens in the city building process, a task in which civil society has a strong responsibility.

Moreover, it is a constant challenge for civil society's incidence in public policy to achieve and cover three minimum components for an active and ongoing participation process: time, resources, and will. The first component refers to the time horizon of the incidence process, which before materializing in specific agreements requires time for planning, discussion and maturation. This horizon is not short, and in fact can take several years until political decisions insert these struggles. This ends up being a disincentive for some social actors seeking immediate gains. The second component relates to the resources needed to carry out and maintain a process of effective incidence, as actions, research, socializations, etc. are essential activities in order to overcome the problem of time and achieve permanence. Finding sources of funding committed

to social interests involves a great effort from the elements, and may be vulnerable to the particular interests of big players that are more committed to the vision of the city as a commodity rather than a public good. Finally, the third element is crucial for incidence to have effective results in the design of urban policy, since social and political will must be motivated and maintained to overcome the limitations of time and resources, and to generate a real change in the status quo.

An incidence strategy that reaches effective results should think beyond speeches. Rather, it should include concrete actions to draw an agenda and establish gradually conquered milestones. For this, some of the challenges that civil society must face are:

- A profound knowledge of the interlocutor: effective public policy incidence goes through the proper exchange of knowledge and demands among stakeholders. This implies that each organization must clearly understand the role and scope of the public and private institutions with whom they communicate and who are acting as a counterpart to their struggles, and specifically discern who are those who can influence the building of specific agendas and the design and implementation of public policy. Understanding the interlocutor also means knowing and profiting from the spaces for dialogue, debate or confrontation that are conducive to effective results, and optimizing resources and efforts of civil society when it intervenes “outwards” for its particular social interests.
- Find points of agreement: each actor in civil society responds to the struggles and interests that guide their actions and their *raison d'être*. One should expect many social organizations working on the same urban or social problems, because the reality of a problem has different perspectives. The strength and



potential incidence of civil society thrives on the differences and coincidences of all actors involved in a particular issue. When dissent generates conflict and division, civil society loses the strength to conquer its struggles, while alliances can be a key element to success at least with common issues to find later the way to position particular issues. Thus, the incidence process involving civil society implies building strong partnerships among actors to confront the process of negotiation, dialogue or debate with actors that are external to the guild, which may be part of the government or the public sphere in general.

- Demanding and contributing: when civil society is critical of the actions and public policy of the State, it carries an unavoidable responsibility to be critical also of itself. Assessing the contributions from society to conquer social struggles must be a permanent exercise done with humility. One must be careful so that incidence does not translate into demands, so that actions do not result in passive protest, but rather in proposals to facilitate affirmative action. Structuring networks by social interests requires an exercise of valuation about the stakeholders' strengths, but also of the reinforcement capabilities in order to get involved and include them in processes of change through incidence in public policy. If there are no concrete contributions by civil society in the comprehensive process of public policy, this could relegate its role to demanding, instead of building.
- Find the new street: the traditional space for social struggles has been the street. Throughout history, demonstrations, protests, marches and other kinds of face-to-face activism happen on the streets, in the public space, since it ends up being a platform of open expression to highlight social unrest. It is a mechanism to impose strong pressure on decision makers, and even ends up being a way to reclaim spaces for dialogue

that are closed to the negotiation of different social interests. Since the occupation of streets is surely an existing and still very effective mechanism, it is also true that there is a "new street", one that is everywhere thanks to social networks that extend collective action and break boundaries and horizons. Social networks facilitate the immediacy of protest; they can be a meeting point for countless actors to externalize their most diverse positions in a conflict; they summon related actors and quickly disseminate information needed to keep up the struggle. That is why a process of strong civil society incidence should take advantage of this "new street"; it must understand how social networks can carry strategic messages, obtain adherents, add involved people and lend weight to society's interests for the design of public policy.

Civil society actors need to be active entities in the construction of their cities. It is transcendental to strengthen the capacities of actors in order to find the unifying thread that is behind the diversity of social struggles, in order for urban demands to translate into contributions that mark the course of the cities, and so that the impact on public policy can support itself on the immense potential of the "new street". Thus, the reorganization of social actors necessarily goes through relearning the processes of urban struggles, through the re-assimilation of the bases of incidence like the right to the city, redistribution or sustainability in cities. Strengthening social skills is one of the most important challenges that arise in social organization, as this involves rethinking the conceptual elements of social struggles. It also puts emphasis on disseminating and discussing them with new players so that debate does not revolve around the same people, sowing knowledge in citizens so that the debate arena opens to those who really affect urban policies that are unequal, exclusive and focused on private and market interests.



Final Considerations

The Significance of the 2016 Earthquake

In April 2016, the north central coast of Ecuador faced one of the most destructive natural events of recent decades. The 7.8 degrees earthquake caused more than 650 deaths, nearly 4,000 wounded, about 30 600 greatly affected houses, schools and hospitals, and the need for USD 3,344 million to rebuild areas affected by the disaster (National Secretariat of Development Planning, 2016).

This painful event for the country revealed the reality of Ecuadorian cities. On the one hand, it revealed the immense sense of solidarity and humanity of people, which became the hopeful element to overcome this national wound. On the other hand, it made patent the real vulnerabilities of cities that have grown without planning and that do not have the adequate technical or regulatory apparatus for the construction of its infrastructure. Furthermore, it indicates that, among other things, they do not perform monitoring or any form of measurement on population, needs and demands, growth of urban sprawl, informal trade, and legality of housing. This result in local governments unable to cope autonomously with disasters of this magnitude: risk management is nothing more than a formality in local planning. Equally, it is clear that a process of reconstruction is not simply to re-build housing and infrastructure; rehabilitating Ground Zero means fully rebuilding the country, in form and substance.

Beyond a fatalistic perspective on these problems, these weaknesses clearly reflect the reality of Latin American cities –a region that over the last 25 years has lost more than 42 000 people and has

had more than 121 million individuals affected by natural disasters (UN, 2013). Therefore, if we are to extract a positive result from the earthquake that affected Ecuador and from all the natural disasters in the region, it is, as previously stated, that clearly the current model of urban growth has major flaws, and that this should be a priority in the treatment of the NUA. The evidence from the earthquake, the huge human and material losses commit Ecuador to put the debate on the city model pursued in Latin America as the first element of the public agenda, and to propose, on a global stage, a new direction for urban planning. If this is not done, once again we will have lost the opportunity to make a momentous contribution to urban debate in the planet.

Civil Society Towards Habitat IV

The massive application for parallel and networking events reflects the anxiety that civil society feels in putting before the eyes of the world the important issues, which according to the stakeholders, should be part of the urban debate. Here it is appropriate to make a call to action to civil society: the issues that they position in the events related to the Habitat III agenda should consider a view towards the post Habitat III urban discussion. All the struggles and social recognition not part of the New Urban Agenda that the Conference will present in October should be discussed from this moment, to integrate them in the Habitat IV Agenda in 20 years' time. A fundamental role for civil society within the framework of the Conference is to be the voice that communicates that today's actions translate into the achievements of the future. Moreover, to communicate that Habitat III is not an end, but rather a starting point to continued participation in the construction of the cities we want.



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The Platform for Habitat and the Right to the City-Ecuador is a space that seeks to articulate actors of civil society to ensure the exercise of the right to the city, to a safe and healthy habitat, to adequate housing and the full enjoyment of the city and its public spaces. It works with principles of sustainability, social justice, respect for different urban cultures and a balance between the urban and the rural sector as recognized in the Ecuadorian Constitution.

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