



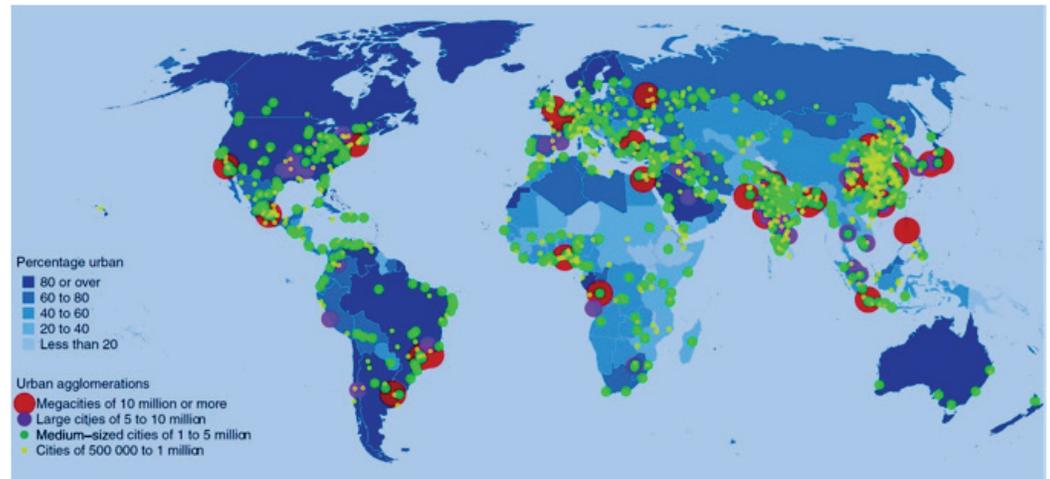
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BULLETIN OF THE CARMELITE NGO

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"We aim to achieve cities and human settlements where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as their fundamental freedoms, guided by the purposes and principles of the *Charter of the United Nations*, including full respect for international law. In this regard, the *New Urban Agenda* is grounded in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, international human rights treaties, the *Millennium Declaration*, and the *2005 World Summit Outcome*. It is informed by other instruments such as the *Declaration on the Right to Development*.

-- The New Urban Agenda



Percentage urban and location of urban agglomerations with at least 500,000 inhabitants, 2014. Source: UN | World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights

The Urban Challenge

By Renato Rallo

Last October the capital of Ecuador, Quito, welcomed the third Habitat conference. It is the largest conference in the world on the issue of cities and human settlements: 10,000 people flew from around the planet to attend the event. Organizer of the conference is the namesake UN agency, 'Habitat', which studies the urban dynamics, and every 20 years convenes a plenary meeting. The first of these meetings took place in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976; the second was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.

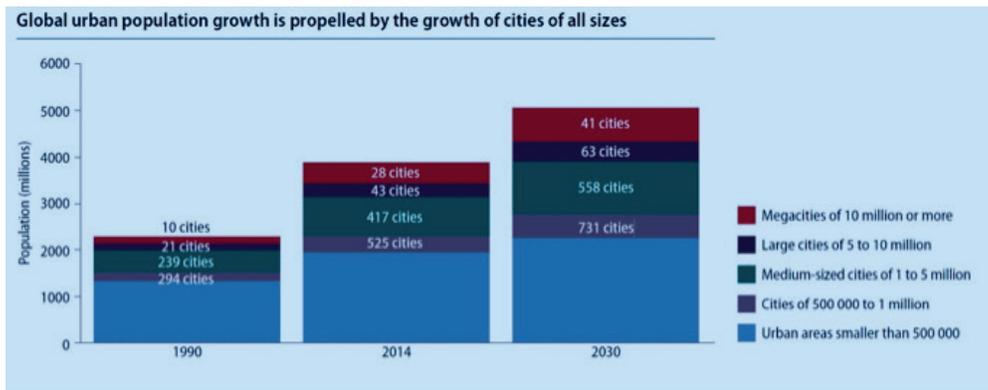
New Urban Agenda

The main result of this last, huge event was the ratification of the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA). Until a few weeks before the conference, there was a very heated debate on the final draft to be presented. The negotiations on the final shape went on until September 10, when, finally, the delegations reached an agreement which would be formally signed a month later in Quito.

The agenda consists of 175 points that summarize the position of signatory countries on the development of cities. Like many of the UN's programmatic documents, the Agenda is the application, in the Habitat's field, of the more general principles of development collected in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (particularly the number 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"). These SDGs entered into force in September 2015, replacing the Millennium Development Goals.

Being NUA too broad to be defined as a guideline, we could say that is the frame within which all urban policies should be enrolled for the coming decades.

The first ten agenda items (1-10) clarify the challenge we face: to date, approximately 54.5% of the people live in cities, and this number is expected to increase in coming years. This rapid urbanization can be seen as one of the "crisis" of our age, in the Greek sense of the word, which comes from the verb κρίνω, 'to discern': we can't cope with these huge numbers with the usual tools, the so-called "business as usual", but we need to radically rethink the horizon of our development. These initial ten points try to highlight what today does not work, and clarify how this objective urbanization trend can be seen as a positive opportunity and not as an ad-



Source: UN | World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights

ditional burden.

Five points follow about “Our Shared Vision” (11-13) and “Principles and Commitments” (14-15), where it is recalled, *inter alia*, that the agenda is grounded in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the Millennium Declaration, and it generally wishes cities to be participatory, fulfill their social and ecological function, promote civic engagement, achieve gender equality, ensure food security, health, education, mobility, energy, air quality, etc.

A 7-points *Call for Action* (16-22) invites everyone to use this tool, and then there is a long *Implementation Plan* (23-175) in which these general principles are translated in the various sectors pertaining the city.

The New Urban Agenda is an important historical document, but its weight in real change of current and future city is still to be built. Institutional documents, mainly those issued by supra-national organizations, serve to testify and to spread a theoretical vision, but the transition to the real world meets an infinite series of contingent obstacles. However, the effort that the UN does in this and in many other areas is very remarkable, also because it is often accompanied by real sustainable development projects. Let’s try to expand the zoom, and analyze some significant points.

Urban & Rural Environment

Usually, we tend to talk separately about the city and the environment. Why do we do that? By a closer look (and being careful with etymology) environment is generally what is around us. Be it rural, urban, natural, anthropogenic, it is always the space in which we breathe, move and live.

The city is first and foremost the place of meetings, exchanges, the accumulation point where the human essence, defined by Aristotle as *zōon politikōn* (political animal), is realized. As we saw earlier, the desire for city is steadily increasing throughout the world. In the OECD, 80% of the population is urbanized, and this trend is likely to spread everywhere, especially in developing countries.

Today, however, the actual city is often a missed opportunity. It is not easy to manage virtuously a large density of people, and the lack of organization and planning produces exclusion as a first effect. The city is structured according to concentric rings of income, and the greater the urban diameter, more people live on the edge. In the suburbs, services and resources are scarce, and thus situations of social poverty, crime, pollution, increase. The border areas between town and country, instead of representing buffer zones to alleviate the urban environmental impacts, are often used as open dumps, places where to leave any kind of waste, away from the eyes of tourists and laws.

We need to completely rethink the relationship between urban and rural areas. The attention today is very focused on the city, and analysts comfortably crop the edges of the system where it is more convenient, regardless of what comes in and what goes out. The city uses the surrounding environment as an infinite reservoir and unalterable landfill, according to a linear and

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Related Websites for this Issue:

3rd Habitat Conference

<https://habitat3.org/>

History of UN Habitat Process

citioscope.org/habitatIII/explainer/2015/06/whats-history-habitat-process

The New Urban Agenda

habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda

Doomsday Clock

thebulletin.org

Planet Earth Herald

planetearthherald.com



Pope Francis and Urban Planning

Goal #11 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals focuses on sustainable cities and communities. The following facts will provide a reason of why we need to invest in sustainable urban areas.

Half of humanity – 3.5 billion people – lives in cities today

By 2030, almost 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas

95% of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in developing world

828 million people live in slums today and the number keeps rising

The world's cities occupy just 3% of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emissions

Rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health.

When we think of urban planning, we can agree that there is a need for sustainable energy sources, fresh water, clean air, proper sewerage disposal, medical care, access to affordable food, etc. What we also need to think about is what is needed to help an urban area become a community where the quality of life is enhanced for all its dwellers.

“Living in a big city is not always easy. Yet big cities are a reminder of the hidden riches present in our world; in the diversity of its cultures, traditions and historical experiences. In the variety of its languages, costumes and cuisine.” – Pope Francis, New York, 2015.

Pope Francis offers an enlightened vision on urban planning in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Francis describes his vision of a sustainable urban area in this way:



“Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives. These settings influence the way we think, feel and act. In our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and neighborhoods, we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity. We make

every effort to adapt to our environment, but when it is disorderly, chaotic or saturated with noise and ugliness, such overstimulation makes it difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.” *Laudato Si*, #147.

Integral to his vision of urbanization is the integration of the urban fringe. “It is important that the different parts of a city be well integrated and that those who live there have a sense of the whole, rather than being confined to one neighborhood and failing to see the larger city as space which they share with others.” – Pope Francis, April 2015. To be sustainable, urban areas must be community oriented not isolated into separate neighborhoods where individuals and families feel isolated from the vibrant social culture of the larger area. To achieve this, urban planners must incorporate the element of sustainable transportation to all parts of the city in their planning. People must be free to move about unhindered throughout the entire urban area. Feeling included in the whole will help build trust and a mutual understanding across cultures within a city. “The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created.” – *Pope Francis*

Perhaps to come to a more perfect vision of a sustainable urban area is to build on the role of the ‘common good.’ *Laudato Si*, #156 states: “Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the ‘common good,’ a central and unifying principle of social ethics. The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.”

by Jane Remson, O. Carm.



telesurtv.net

The Doomsday Clock and the Danger of Global Catastrophe

The Doomsday Clock is a representation of the countdown to possible global catastrophe. Begun in 1947 by the members of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Science and Security Board*. A Governing Board and the Board of Sponsors, which include 18 Nobel laureates, advise the members.

Originally, the Clock, intended to represent the threat of global nuclear war. In 2007 this was changed to also represent the dangers from climate change, and the developments in the life sciences and technology that can inflict irrevocable harm to life on the planet.

The hypothetical global catastrophe is represented as "midnight" and how close the world is to a global catastrophe is represented by the number of "minutes" before midnight.

The clock's original setting in 1947 was seven minutes to midnight. It has been set backward and forward 22 times since then. As of January 2017, the Clock is set at two and a half minutes to midnight, due to a "rise of 'strident nationalism' worldwide and the disbelief in the scientific consensus over climate change by the Trump Administration.

The clock hangs on the wall of *The Bulletin's* office at the University of Chicago.



Top Ten Environmental Issues

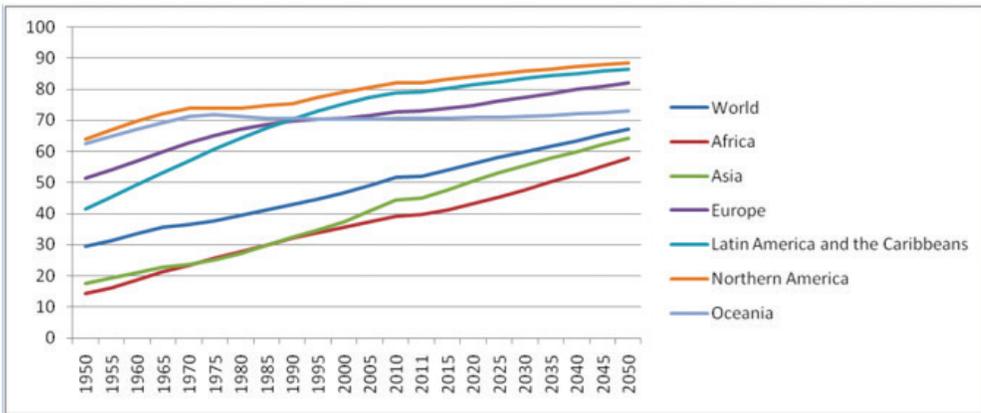
What are the top environmental issues we should be focused on? It gets rather subjective but the crew at Planet Earth Herald has helped with the discussion by listing their top 10.

When you visit the Planet Earth Herald website, each of these environmental issues is accompanied with a short video that explains the issue in depth.

Their top ten environment issues are:

1. Population
2. Climate Change
3. Loss of Biodiversity
4. The Phosphorus and Nitrogen Cycles
5. Water
6. Ocean Acidification
7. Pollution
8. Ozone Layer Depletion
9. Over Fishing
10. Deforestation

The Planet Earth Herald team brings news about the environment from various sources around the planet. By publishing the latest environmental news from around the world, they hope to motivate fellow earthlings into taking action! planetearthherald.com



Urbanisation trends and estimates in major regions of the world (in % from 1950 to 2050). Source: UN-DESA (2010) and UN-DESA (2011)

unidirectional flow mechanism. But this vision is totally anachronistic. Today we have the tools and knowledge to understand that this situation is unsustainable, that nature's capacity to absorb waste and provide raw materials is rapidly saturating, so a turnaround is urgently necessary. Re-balancing the relationship between town and country, considering the entire cycle (from cradle to grave, "from cradle to grave") of products, are steps required to build a new urban model.

Global & Local Governance

Another very hot topic in recent years is the distribution of power. The nation-state is still the fundamental level of aggregation for the key policy and the economy. But this state of things is starting to creak. More and more local communities are calling for greater independence from the central state, advocating greater freedom of choice, both in political and in economic terms. The national states are often perceived as entities distant from everyday problems, bureaucratic centers too far apart to be able to solve specific situations, and they often end up dispersing most of the resources. The spread of technology is also contributing to shape new dynamics of power, where the distance between "high" and "low" tends to shrink or to tip over. In this climate, suspended between globalization and localism, stronger municipalities are emerging, led by "presidents-mayors" who do not limit themselves to administer the usual local affairs, but also express themselves on cultural, ethical, political, energetic issues, in an effort to create real "small homelands".

This political process is extremely interesting and, to a large extent, desirable; anyways, it should always be analyzed taking into account economic and geopolitical considerations. The financial capital is becoming everyday more virtual and evanescent, and if a strong state could still try to play a role in redistribution and social justice, there is a risk that this is more difficult for local authorities who act individually. At the same time, some countries could push for the fragmentation of "rival" states, in order to get an advantage in global competition. A further risk could arise from excessive concentration of means and resources in little spots, causing the depletion of peripheral areas. Like every "critical" time, opportunities and risks are balanced and it's up to us to direct them in a positive way.

Smart & Wise Cities

What about the city of the future? Being the result of all the factors that compose a society, to forecast its development would mean to know the trajectories of each interaction. It is therefore difficult to give an answer, primarily for the large changes we are going through, from the organization of work to the technological innovation. There is much talk of smart city, often narrowing the scope to a simple digital breakthrough of some services to citizens. But a truly smart city is not limited to this. A smart city uses technological tools to be more resilient, inclusive, integrated in the environmental context. To do that it's not enough to deploy new electronic devices, but we need renewed political will, social justice, cultural diffusion, environmental awareness, good consumer practices. The new millennium, with its great challenges, has already shown us that the solutions to be found must be connected, and that the partial remedies are nearly always ineffective. The city, the realm of the most fascinating complexity, can't escape the call for "integral sustainability" that Pope Francis formulated in his last encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

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