Global Platform for the Right to the City
Plataforma Global por el Derecho a la Ciudad
Plataforma Global pelo Direito à Cidade

HABITAT III

Policy Papers Frameworks

Review and Comments

February 2016

8.- URBAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Overview

1. This paper does not mention the **Right to the City**. The approach that is developed do not make any link between **social inclusion and climate change**, and there is no mention to **environmental rights**. Although participation and community empowerment for resilience are refered to several times in the document, the focus of the solutions is very top-down.

2. The document does not framework the urban ecology issue within a Human Rights' approach. Environmental rights such as the right to water and energy ara absent in the document. Hence, this document should contain a more specific approach on the idea that ecological progress towards sustainable cities can't be dissociated from the fight against inequalities. At the same time, it should mention that the negative effects of fragile ecosystems are specially experienced by the urban poor.

3. The PPF describes in general the current challenges and threatens to urban ecosystems but in general fails to (1) question the root causes of climate change (CC) and environmental damage (ED), (2) identify the needed **technical and economic actions** to prevent CC and ED, and, although it mentions several times the interdependence of urban and rural areas (points 1.b.4, 2.b.2 and 2.b.4), it also fails to (3) deal comprehensively with the notion of **urban rural linkages**. Rural areas are mentioned but the PPF does not go beyond this. The PPF does mention the need to alleviate CC and restore ED but it could do more to present alternatives to the current economic model.

4. On the other hand the PPF does not question the **root causes of urbanization**. It simply states the percentage of global population living in urban areas while states that an unprecedented number of people are at risk. We should point here that many ecosystems are put at risk by urbanization, rampant consumption and resource depletion. This human&urban centred perspective is repeated throughout the whole PPF.

5. The focus of the PPF is on cities as the subject, but little mention is made of **inhabitants**. This peculiarity may arise from an overwhelmingly technical approach of the PU, which also would explain the other omissions mentioned here. The composition of expertise may be the source of shortcomings. In any case, the PPF needs to be reconsidered as an input to Habitat III, revising it to include the human and human rights dimensions and recent developments in the field and critical discourse on "**resilience**."

6. **Women** are mentioned, but only in the sense of "others" (among indigenous peoples and other "marginalized" categories), rather than acknowledging their pivotal role in bearing the burdens of "resilience." The notion of **accountability**, indispensable to the discussion of resilience, is wholly absent. No party should be expected to be resilient to shocks and crises caused by other parties, without those responsible parties bearing the liability for the damage they have authored.

Key concepts

7. **Ecology** shouldn't be understood as an isolated urban phenomenon. The symbiosis between urban-rural areas and between urban and nature is essential and this is further discussed in this PPF (1.b.4 Planning; 2.b.2 Policy; and 2.b.4 Planning) but not adequately addressed.

8. On the other hand, **resilience** is much needed to face natural disasters but it shouldn't be understood or promoted as a potential to recover from a range of human caused shock and stresses or human made disasters. Although this is easy to understand, the PPF should address the human causes of these stresses and define measures to alleviate them.

9. If resilience is the quality desired, then the scope of this paper is far too narrow. It is not only in the context of climate change and ecological events and developments that resilience enables survival and sustainability. Also in times of crises—cyclical financial crises, conflict, intermittent crises and protracted crises, military occupation, cases of failed and fragile states—resilience is needed.

10. This term has many different definitions that apply to specific contexts. Different definitions of "resilience" include "the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner" (UNISDR), or "the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organisation, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change" (IPCC), or alternatively "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change" (Resilience Alliance).

11. According to FAO, "the resilience of communities is particularly important in protracted crises, during and after violent conflicts, and whenever state institutions and the systems through which livelihoods normally operate (e.g. markets) are weak and ineffective."

12. Despite variances among definitions of "resilience" most have two common elements: (1) capacity to rebound after a shock and (2) capacity to adapt to changing environments (political, security, financial, economic, legal, social, demographic, ecological, etc.). Building resilience requires building supportive institutions and support networks between and among individuals, communities and governments, in order to transform policy into action and assist in prevention and remedy/recovery.

13. In housing and land rights, resilience refers to the capability of a person, household or community to recuperate after a shock or crisis involving the loss of, or damage to home or landed property, and/or displacement from a habitual residence.

14. The PPF should take note and adapt to the New Habitat Agenda of evolving recognition of the need for greater policy coherence, such as that provided in the

Committee on Global Food Security's "Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises" (CFS-FFA). It's paragraph 16 sets out the goal to "strengthen policy coherence in line with the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national
food security, by fostering coordination of policies and actions taken in the fields of humanitarian assistance, development and human rights."

15. The Paper´s vision should also **include** that "the future city will be respectful to its natural landscape / ecosystem".

Challenges

16. The vision included under point 1, does not challenge the rampant consumption pattern of cities, including goods, energy or water. It recommends green infrastructure, higher efficiency, improved resilience and mobility but does not address the unsustainable patterns of consumption and transport. The PPF should link these themes to other related PPFs such as PPF 6 "Urban Spatial Strategies" or PPF 9 "Urban Services and Technology".

17. PPF 8 successfully identifies key challenges grouped in a number of fields such as Governance, Policy, Capacity or Planning among others. However, it fails to go beyond and establish the obvious links with the current root causes of a number of issues such as environmental degradation, pollution, consumption and waste, infrastructure and transport inefficiency and unplanned urban growth.

18. As pointed above, the interdependence of urban and rural areas is mentioned several times (points 1.b.4, 2.b.2 and 2.b.4), but the PPF does not go beyond this. In particular, it would be very useful a much more detailed description of a number of processes such as migration, food security or water management that question the current urbanization trend.

19. Water, air and land should be considered as common goods for all, puting in place the adequate legal framework to protect them and the appropriate measures to guarantee the rights to water, sanitation, waste management, and energy to everyone. The progressive commonalization of these goods could be an opportunity to manage them in a sustainable way, improving the quality of the services provision and creating resources to benefit the general interest (See i.e. municipalization of energy in Germany).

20. Regarding culture: a resilient culture should also be understood as the capacity of a cultural system to adapt to new ethnic, religious or cultural inputs, resulting of a demographic change. Therefore, education in tolerance and respect to diversity becomes essential (p. 4).

21. Within the key challenges, there is no link with social inclusion while it is well known that the more vulnerable and urban poor are more affected by environmental risks such as

industrial and motorways' pollution, risk of landslide, subsidence, erosion, flood, few energy efficient homes, etc.

22. It would be important to address here the need to foster studies on new kinds of pollution, such a as the magnetic waves and other types of risk that are underestimated until now.

Priorities

23. More criteria should be included to link environmental justice with social justice, including: inclusiveness and participation, environmental justice, balance between rural and urban area, precautionary principle, responsibility of industries towards the local community and environment, capacity to adapt to local contexts (p. 9).

24. Governance: although the coordination between stakeholders and the empowerment of local authorities and communities are mentioned, there should be a reference to the inclusion of an empowered civil society in the governance system –mainly through its participation in policy-making, effective participatory budgeting and the adoption by governments of its valuable initiatives (p. 10).

25. Environmental externalization policy: market-based mechanisms to price in environmental externalities are not fair, nor effective: they do not capture the costs associated to bad externalities (decrease in quality of life, health worsening) and they do not prevent those who pollute the most to keep doing it (because they have money enough to pay for the externalities they produce). As quality of air and, more generally, environment are common goods, governments have to ensure that are not privatized by those who can afford to damage them –by forbidding polluting practices (p.11). There are also a few comments on how to avoid the financial or technological gaps of most disadvantaged communities in terms of urban ecology and resilience. Affordability and adaptability are only mentioned, without giving further details.

26. Planning - tenure systems: develop tenure systems different to individual private ownership and more adaptable to every city's inhabitants needs, and assume those normalized by the daily social practice (p. 12).

27. Urban development initiatives are not always compatible with resilience policies. In these cases, priority should be given to resilience. Instead of demanding investments for infrastructure that "can meet growing demands for services" (2.b.5), the PPF should demand fair redistribution, lower consumption (if possible) and equal access to resources, including water, energy and food.

28. Culture, livelihoods and consumption: the PPF proposes to build capacities and educate on urban ecology and resilience, but it fails to recommend alternatives to the current unsustainable consumption patterns such as the Social and Solidarity Economy.

Among other recommendations, the Paper should include the need to: a) recognise and take into account local knowledges in resilience policy-making - communities have a deep knowledge of the natural ecosystems where they live and the best way to protect it which should be valorised; b) acknowledge the fact that ecological transition is an opportunity to create new decent jobs in the framewok of solidarity based economy; c) support citizens and associations ecological projects; d) map, promote, support and disseminate civil society's initiatives for sustainable development; e) promote popular ecology facilitating access to ecological solutions for the poorest and the minorities; f) promote and incentive solidarity based economy; g) create and enforce the adequate framework regarding obligations and accountability of polluting industries at local level.

29. Point 2.b.8 supports social resilience to enhance the ability of individuals, households, communities and organizations to respond to shocks and stresses, but fails to mention the need to target the causes of shocks and stresses.

Implementation

30. The "enabling framework" mentioned in bullet point a.1. should take into account on the one hand the heterogeneity of civil society, and on the other the different capacity to influence the political agenda that civil society groups have vis à vis the private sector. For this reason, specific measures must be designed to i) equal the voice of both civil society groups and the private sector, and ii) foster the participation of traditionally excluded, marginalised or vulnerable groups, who will be specially taken into account in policy-making as they are often the ones experiencing the worst effect of natural disasters / phenomena. Planning and implementation mechanisms should also take into account the suggestion mentioned above.

31. PPF8 names Green Economy (3.a.1), but it does not elaborate on this. Furthermore, it does not point at the failures and environmental degradation of the current economic model but only points at the need of advancing this green economy. The PPF positively recommends nature-based solutions and circular economy (3.a.2) but regrettably these concepts are linked to (green) growth and (sustainable) development.

32. Last but not least, the PPF does not make any reference to the still valid HII commitments which, among other factors, promote comprehensive rural development while protecting fragile ecosystems and encourage the participation of community and nongovernmental organizations (*H2, para.* 79f). Two of these commitments relate to urban ecology:
    - Promote optimal use of productive land in urban and rural areas and protecting fragile ecosystems and environmentally vulnerable areas from the negative impacts of human settlements… (*H2, para.* 43p).
    - Integrate land and shelter policies with policies for reducing poverty and creating jobs, for environmental protection, for preservation of cultural heritage, for education and health, for providing clean water-supply and sanitation facilities, and for empowering those belonging to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, particularly people without shelter (*H2, para.* 67e).

Additional commentary on "Resilience"

For more information on this term, see the brief produced by the High-Level Expert Forum on Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises, released in September 2012.

Here we identify four essential requirements for building resilience to achieve adequate housing for all and good governance through balanced rural and urban development, as the Habitat Agendas have promised:

1. Address the underlying causes of vulnerabilities and follow a human rights-based approach,
2. Link humanitarian and long term development programs,
3. Combine local knowledge, priorities, and initiatives with research, science and technology,
4. Advance socio-ecological systems and sustainability.

1. Address the underlying causes of vulnerabilities and follow a human rights-based approach

Building resilience must include policies and actions which not only assist communities in coping with or absorbing "vulnerabilities" and "crises" but which act to resolve, resist and prevent them and their manifestations from reoccurring. A comprehensive resilience approach, therefore, must involve:

• Focus on the immediate, underlying and structural causes of vulnerability in general and crises in particular;

• Rigorous context analysis, given the wide variety of causes, including an analysis of power dynamics, inequality, livelihoods, markets, and others factors that may affect vulnerability;

• Recognition that inadequate housing, displacement and deprivation often result from deliberate actions by conscious parties. Methods to erode local housing and habitat systems forcing populations into relationships of dependency include: the usurpation or the destruction of natural resource, the violent targeting of vulnerable populations with forced eviction, dispossession, destruction and/or privatization of
public goods and services, as well as other violations; the imposition of sieges and asymmetric policies and relationships, neglecting rural or urban communities on some arbitrary basis of discrimination (race, religions, ethnicity, sexual orientation, tenure status, et al); and using food or water as coercive tools against populations;

• Preventive and remedial policies to respect, protect and fulfill people's human rights in cases where they are being violated as well as ways to survive or cope with the manifestations of those violations;

• Adherence to do-no-harm principles by public and privately interested persons and organizations, and avoidance of creating competing parallel systems that may heighten the risk of division and conflict;

• Challenges to the social, economic, and political institutions that sustain societal inequality, which may lead to further vulnerability or crises (particularly conflict), and

which result in the unequal distribution of burden that most often falls on the marginalized. Unequal distribution of risk is particularly true in the case of climate change. (Around 50 per cent of global carbon emissions are generated by just 11 per cent of people.) Those who suffer the most from climate change have the least role in causing it: It is estimated that, by 2100, the impact on poor countries will be GDP losses of 12–23 per cent; whereas, in the richest countries, the impact will be in the range of 0.1 per cent loss to a benefit of 0.9 per cent of GDP. Another example is land and housing speculation, when wealthy investors gamble with prices of habitat assets and services, it is the poorest populations who are often unable to withstand the resulting volatility in prices.

Causes vary significantly with their contexts. However, removing commonly occurring drivers of housing and land insecurity in intermittent and protracted crises requires policy and behavioral reform and political action:

• Decentralized governance that is based on rights and participatory decision making;

• To guarantee appropriate accountability mechanisms for all stakeholders;

• Ensuring compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law for all actors; and

• Raising the awareness and capacity of local and global communities.

2. Link humanitarian interventions with long-term development programs

If we were to pursue long-term resilience within communities and societies, we must break down the artificial barriers among humanitarian, development and human rights institutions, funding, and programs. This means converging humanitarian, political and economic responses and initiatives to include:

• Strengthening diversified local food production as well as national and local markets; supporting small farmers and community housing initiative, particularly through access to productive resources, in order to make communities less vulnerable to crises, conflict, sieges, the absence of safe borders among other factors;

• Prioritizing local procurement in humanitarian response, including the use of cash transfers and vouchers;

• Establishing and scaling-up local, national and regional reserves of habitat resources, including building materials, land banks and trusts, et al;

• Alternative methods of resource management alternatives such as water harvesting and urban agriculture;

• Comprehensive social-protection systems;

• Mainstreaming risk analysis through disaster risk-reduction (DRR) approaches and prevention, including early warning systems, disaster risk management, surge capacity, and climate change projection). The involvement of local institutions and communities in DRR is necessary. (Measuring and modeling resilience is especially helpful when investing in resilience to know both the cost and relative impact of different initiatives.);

• Funding streams adapted to be flexible, long-term and predictable.

3. Combine local knowledge, priorities, and initiatives with research, science and technology

Affected communities should be in the center of planning and implementation. In order to support these communities, there is a need to:

• Improve the capacities of local institutions;

• Focus on mapping and supporting local initiatives and reducing negative strategies that increase future vulnerability;

• Prioritize marginalized populations, including women, youth, small-scale producers, indigenous peoples, and people living under occupation.

Many successful local initiatives already strive to increase the resilience of their populations to threats and   obstacles. Agricultural and housing cooperatives are community-driven business models created as a form of resilience to both economic and environmental shocks.

4. Advance socio-ecological systems and sustainability

Resilience cannot be achieved without environmental sustainability and the sustainable development of communities and economies. This requires an integrated approach between social and ecological systems, ensuring that they interact regularly in a resilient, sustained manner by:

• Collecting and analyzing regular data on the interaction of the ecological and social systems;

• Early-warning systems;

• Supporting healthy ecosystems through the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources;

• Prioritizing and integrating traditional knowledge and practices into sustainability initiatives and policies;

• Promoting adaptive governance of communities and ecosystems.