

The failure of the neoliberal model of cities Vancouver Mani fest

Thirty years after the first Habitat world summit held in Vancouver, we, citizens of the world, have witnessed the manifest deterioration of our living conditions and unalienable rights.

After all these years, not one of the objectives or goals has been even partially achieved: 15% of the world population is subjected to forced eviction caused by foreign investments in indebted countries or in countries undergoing the transition towards a market economy (Karachi, Bombay, New Delhi, Istanbul), to the privatization and liberalization of the real estate market (throughout Europe including Russia, and the United States), due to ethnic cleansing (from the ex Yugoslavia to the United Kingdom), due to occupations and wars (Palestine and others), and finally, due to speculation in the aftermath of natural disasters such as the Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina.

This also underlines the fact that Objective 11 of the United Nations' Millenium Goals on the basis of which living conditions of 100 million people were supposed to have been improved by the year 2020, when it is more realistic to foresee that there will be 700 million more residents of shanty towns.

The main cause of this was the failure of the strategies of simplification and support which conferred the main responsibility for housing development to the market, which supposedly would have then been self-managed and thus the existing inequity would have been corrected. Instead of improving living conditions in most cities, neoliberal globalization caused new problems stemming from the mercantilization of the land and basic services, as well as from wasting limited resources such as water.

This phenomenon is causing a rapid loss of identity of the communities and their territories, rising segregation and marginalization of individuals and concepts such as housing and participation, the indiscriminate rise in the cost of land, mass evictions and the elimination of counterbalances and elementary norms, which crumble under the pressure of large sums of capital.

Furthermore, the neoliberal policies and structural reform programs have favoured the privatisation of public services all over the world and the transfer of elementary responsibilities to the local communities, both through the local authorities and through the organized community, while the State provides only insufficient subvention, concentrating only on welfare policies for the poor, whose numbers have risen everywhere during the last decade.

Today inequality goes much deeper, so much so, that the issue of manageability of the cities is being questioned, because of the development of two different but strongly interconnected worlds, the formal and the informal, each of which develops its own rules and regulations.

In this context, the idea of basing public policy on the formalization of the informal policies by simplifying administrative norms and progressively eliminating all references to "housing rights" in the texts of UN-habitat is incredibly superficial and naïve.

The reign of capital in third-world cities can only lead to the realization of the chilling predictions made by George Orwell in his famous book "1984": cities where police control millions of poor individuals who survive with great difficulty in the vicinity of the official city. Only those who do not know the shortages suffered by the majority of the urban population in developing countries in cities like Lima, Sao Paulo, Mexico D.F., Buenos Aires, Abuja, Nairobi, Harare, could find this to be an exaggerated statement. As for the cities of the "first world" or those in transition toward a market economy, any outside observer can see the accelerated process of "third world-isation" that they experience year after year. This process is not only due to increasing migration but also to the deterioration of living



conditions and to the creation of ghettos that have given rise to the recent revolts of young people in the poor Parisian suburbs and to the opposition of the inhabitants of Beijing to the demolitions associated with the Olympic Games. Not to mention those historical cities, such as Venice, Rennes or Aachen, which evict their inhabitants and thus squander the dynamism of community life, and are thus drained of their significance as well as their substance.

Call for a New Urban Social Pact

The harmonious development of cities, the respect for fundamental civil rights and the improvement of living conditions of their populations, demands more than ever the implementation of a **new urban social pact** that concerns everyone (habitant associations and urban social movements, local and governmental authorities, militant researchers and other operators) with common principles (rights to housing and to the city, public intervention, durability, equality and non-discrimination). In this pact, the autonomy and the differences of the actors should be considered as a part of the solution to the problems and not as problems to be solved by the rules of the market or police intervention.

However, this new urban social pact involves agreeing on the material and symbolic significance of the city for its habitants, for the region, for the country and for the world and on shared principles that make it possible to live a civilized life in the heart of the city, such as gender and economic equity, peace, harmony and the wisdom to manage conflicts as well as resources. Among others:

- Respect of individual and collective rights of the city and in the city
- No racial, social, economic, or gender discrimination
- Collective character of public property

2004 World Social Forum, Mumbai, India. Photo by P. Makedonski

- Fundamental role of the public sector and of participation in controlling the market
- Land use restrictions in agreement with the needs and interests of the whole, especially in matters of rare resources such as water
- Shared development planning
- Local democracy and active subvention

As for housing and urban development, it must be taken into account that urban and habitat problems have specific characteristics according to each concrete reality and that, as a consequence, the envisaged solutions must be flexible, adapted to the circumstances, with a local approach and needs for improvement proper to each territory, and they must be worked out with the active participation of the habitants and of their organizations and not behind their backs or in their names. Uniform housing policies promoted by the multilateral agencies, and that can not be modified by the "beneficiary" country, should be put aside.

But for that to happen the countries, especially those in the South, must be able to count on the necessary resources so that programs adapted to the real needs of the people can become reality.

According to this perspective, social movements propose practical measures such as taxes on speculative real estate transactions and the creation of public trusts for the improvement of housing that draw, for example, on foreign debt.

From these bases, we call on the UN Habitat to become closer to people, to renew its vocation to service and its social sensitivity, to put aside privatist philosophies and its immeasurable faith in a market that has caused so much damage to the poor. For this thirtieth anniversary of Habitat I, we propose a new form of dialogue so that the voice of the habitants, the true builders of the city will be heard once and for all.



The IAI at the World Social Forum 2007, Nairobi

Some activities of the International Alliance of Inhabitants at the World Social Forum 2007:

Sunday, 21st January

Right to Housing and Zero Evictions

Monday, 22 January

People's Fund for the Right to Land and Housing for the development of the Public Housing Service for the promotion of the security in housing through cooperation

Wednesday, 24th January

2007/08 housing right world mobilization journeys.

Also, there are some activities organized by Kutoka & C with the AIH support, outside of the Moi Stadium.

Saturday, 20th January

OPENING CEREMONY in Uhuru park: everybody mobilized to join!

Sunday, 21st January

MEETING OUR COMMUNITIES: Kutoka Network wants to offer the chance to meet its communities in the slums.

Monday, 22nd January

SECURING BASIC RIGHTS FOR THE POOR IN THE SLUMS

Tuesday, 23rd January

DECENTRALISED WORKSHOPS ON SLUM ISSUES: seven workshops with Land and Housing Coalition and other groups.

Wednesday, 24th January

GLOBAL PLANNING FOR ACTION: Networking for future action plan and building common strategies together.

Thursday, 25th January

MARATHON THROUGH THE SLUMS FOR BASIC RIGHTS: It will be a marathon passing through several Nairobi's slums to reach Uhuru Park and join the closing ceremony of the WSF.

Mumbai Declaration: the launching of IAI campaigns

We met as social and working class urban leaders of Africa, Asia, Europe, United States, Latin America and Caribbean, at the IV World Social Forum (Mumbai, India, 16 - 22 January 2004). We consider that it is urgent to oppose the pervasive effects of exclusion, poverty, environmental degradation, exploitation, violence, problems of transportation, public services, housing and urban governance, which the neo-liberal globalisation has produced in our countries. After having revised all our experience in building society, we conclude that we have created inclusive, productive, sustainable and democratic processes. On this basis we commit ourselves to support three world campaigns: Zero Eviction!, Social production of habitat and Participatory Budget.

Zero Eviction Campaign!

The real estate capital drives out and evicts peoples from their land to build shopping and administration centres, airports, golf fields, dams, motorways, while wars produce millions of refugees and racism increases the number of those excluded from the city rights. To avoid this destructive process we have decided to unite all national and international initiatives so that security to housing may be granted to all.

We invite all associations and networks working in the housing right, institutions and the UN system to participate in solidarity in this campaign called "Zero Eviction!".

This will also be the participation ground of the members of the International Alliance of Inhabitants in the UN International Committee on evictions.

The Social Production of Habitat Campaign

The International Alliance of Inhabitants supports and consolidates the ability of people to create alternatives to solve the housing problem. Thus, we mind that tools for the social production of habitat may be provided, since they are the daily devices that build the city. Besides, we have the integral vision of the habitat as the place where men and women live and interact with one another, with society and nature.

This campaign wants to promote the defeat of public and social housing shortage, prioritising the use of territorial, social, cultural, ecological and productive variables.

Thus, we shall request the local governments to make concrete the city right, because if we do not propose the restoration of the built city, we shall not improve the life quality of the planet inhabitants.

Participatory Budget Campaign

In the third millennium, the majority of human beings of the planet will live in cities and villages, where we shall need to get used to dwell and cohabit.

The society of the XXI century needs cities and villages which are democratic, governable, prosperous, efficient, just, solidary, environmental sustainable, safe and respectful of the citizen's rights. Thus, it is necessary to rely on political and social willpowers able to cooperate in joining efforts to reach these results. Hence, we propose to use the methodology of social participation in order to demand the local government for the implementation of the participatory budget, so to prioritise the social spending which guarantees peace, sustainability and democracy in our countries.

IAI's Founding Principles

PREAMBLE

We, representatives of the inhabitants' associations and social movements, communities, tenants, private house owners, homeless, people living in favelas and settlements, cooperatives, indigenous peoples and working class neighbourhoods of different world regions;

Facing the permanent violations of the right to an adequate house and to a liveable city;

In the context of a neo-liberal globalisation, which privatises public services and human rights, increases social segregation, debases and merchandises human relationships;

1. Consider that, in order to protect our right to be cities' builders and users, cannot confine ourselves to a mere local protection of our claims, while huge real estate investments, the urban infrastructures construction, the ever more public sector fading due to the foreign debt and to the monetary parameters, migrations, and conflicts which destroy the relational fabrics of the cities, jeopardize the security of billions of people and the very survival of the planet.

2. In front of such situation and in order to build and strengthen solidarity relationships, which may both be effective and demonstrate that a different kind of human relationships is possible, have, henceforth, resolved to act in a coordinated manner on a horizontal ground and in mutual cooperation, from the local to the global level.

3. Hence, we bear in mind and bring together previous times, dynamics and initiatives accordingly developed in various locations of the world, and which have produced declarations and formulated principles, which we make our own, and which had an important moment of synthesis and a meeting ground on the occasion of the First Inhabitants' World Assembly held in Mexico City in the year 2000.

4. We also take into account the principles declared in the International Treaty on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art.11) and in the Human Rights Universal Declaration (art.25).

WHO IS WHO

1. The Alliance we promote today is placed in this collective effort as well as in the processes, promoted by the Citizens' World Assembly for a Responsible and Solidarity World and by the World Social Forum, while we adopt the motto "Another world is possible".

2. The Alliance originates as a network of inhabitants' grassroots associations and territorial social movements: an intercultural movement, inclusive, autonomous, independent, self-governing, and available to coordinate with other similar associations pursuing the same goals.

3. The Alliance is made of social organizations and indigenous populations, and underlines the importance of women in the social struggle, in development and in popular initiatives aimed to decrease poverty.

4. Non governmental organizations and institutions of professionals which join the Alliance have the target to assist and give technical and promotional support to proposals and initiatives approved by the Alliance's organizations and social movements, establishing a specialized technical team for this purpose.

PRINCIPLES

The founding principles, which drive the Alliance work and constitute the rules of conduct for all the members are:

1. Equity and sustainable gender, social and ecological development carried out by inhabitants, their associations and movements, and by public powers from the specific urban setting.

2. Social justice, active dedication and solidarity with the social movements struggle for proper housing and habitat.

3. Promotion, protection of inhabitant's global rights and struggle for social change and for power control at local, national and international level, as the result of a joint effort with other social sectors.

4. Unity with other progressive social movements respecting social, cultural and political diversity recognized to be an enrichment.

5. Tolerance, multiculturalism and respect of the inhabitants' rhythms as practical option of daily life and collective work.

6. Acknowledgement by local, national and international institutions of participative processes in the right to housing, to the city and to a suitable habitat, seen as an added value in the process of negotiation in the planning and development of public urban policies.

7. Autonomy of the popular urban movement from political and institutional powers, being variously expressed by its struggle, demands and self-governance.

OBJECTIVES

The Alliance delineates a short, medium and long-term programme to:

1. Encourage inhabitants' associations and movements, which internationally have "no-voice", so that they may know one another, struggle and seize it.

2. Coordinate and give visibility, strength and solidarity to national and international inhabitants' activities and to their associations.

3. Elaborate proposals of social change, which may imply substantial modifications of the housing and city situation in order to transform and make it sustainable.

4. Fight for the acknowledgement, application and protection of the right to housing, to the city and to a proper habitat in the whole.

5. Fight for the boundless materialization of the economic, social, political and cultural rights of the inhabitants.

6. Contribute to the search of development models being alternative to neo-liberalism and to its negative consequences for the world countries, on the grounds of a new leading role of the public sector in relation to the civil society.

www.habitants.org - logo: www.maroussia.be

International Alliance of Inhabitants

ZERO



EVICCTIONS!
Campaign

Toward a World Assembly of Inhabitants

This call will be all the stronger at every level if, the inhabitants know how to conquer the spaces and to claim the legitimacy that was refused to them.

Thus, we reaffirm the proposal, first made at the World Social Forum, to build a unified sphere for associations and urban social movements, which includes more than 200 organizations from more than 30 countries: exchange of experiences, refinement of shared

strategies, a global solidarity campaign like the Campaign for Zero Expulsions.

These events will represent a further step toward reaffirming the voice of the inhabitants as opposed to the voice of the counterparts, a fundamental step in the creation of the World Assembly of Inhabitants, which should be based on the pace of the neighbourhoods, at the local/national/continental levels, so as to give life to a new Urban Way.



International Alliance of Inhabitants

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