The Sustainability of Urban Development: A European Vision Realities and Challenges of the 2030 Agenda

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ABSTRACT: The planning of the territory and the activities of cities in Europe, those that are main as well as emerging cities, represent a challenge for sustainability, both because they generate environmental and social problems by concentrating wealth, powers and being subject to constant waves of new human settlements, as for being, by themselves, a key part of the solution. In the European vision on the sustainability of urban development, cities should not be exclusionary areas from the rest of the territory and their authorities and citizens should focus on understanding various phenomena that are beginning to configure a new ordering of their physical coordinates, of their limits geopolitical and their economic relations.

The European vision of sustainable urban development is, in many ways, more inclusive than the proposals that have emerged from within the United Nations, because it has identified the historical realities, economic asymmetries and cultural heritage of the Member States. to generate sustainability policies, purposes and community lines of action that do not go beyond the powers of governments but that propose an intelligent, humanized, eco-responsible development of the common European space in an integrated model of future cities, attractive for technological connectivity, multicultural and diverse exchange, and for comprehensive and sustainable territorial planning. In this essay we aim to take a look at the progress and challenges of the European initiative for present and future urban sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainability, urban development, 2030 Agenda, European Union, Urban Agenda, Pact of Amsterdam, Sustainable Development Objectives.

Introduction

The challenges of social coexistence and the sustainability of economic models in Europe, within the framework of their relations with other cultural, economic and sociopolitical scenarios, have given rise to multiple agreements, proposals and policies that have shaped the consumption habits of its citizens., the ways and means of production, industrial and technological revolutions, and more recently the reordering of cities and urban spaces.

To a large extent, the intensive exchange of new goods based on knowledge, the increasingly dependent commercial relationship between the EU Member States and a new political position regarding the sustainability of urban development have been factors of change, because the Cities represent the centers that stimulate the economy, play a versatile role in the generation of innovations and in the concentration and specialization of human talents.

European urban areas thus constitute complex biogeophysical systems that concentrate a large part of social metabolism; in them, sophisticated production mechanisms and technologies are developed to, among other things, generate and supply various types of energy (electrical and hydraulic), food and various consumer goods, as well as cities, are determinant to structure and consolidate governments and culture, and for the daily socio-cultural interaction of all its social agents.

For these reasons, cities have been considered as key axes of the present and future development of Europe, and in this way it has been manifested in the Europe 2020 Strategy, in the Amsterdam Pact, in the 2030 Agenda, in the Sustainable Development Goals and, especially, in the Urban Agenda for the EU, and in many other citizens' initiatives.

These initial considerations allow us to point out three key dimensions in the socioeconomic and productive fabric of cities:

a) The profiles of jobs (diversity and specialization) and salaries, which stimulate the progressive development of the economic and social life of individuals and communities. In particular, the high rate of knowledge diversification and professional specialization in cities are driving factors for accelerating economic growth.

b) The resilience and adaptability capacity of urban areas in the face of risk scenarios, their adjustment margins to the instability of political changes and their proven resistance to unforeseen weather events. In current studies, inclusive, city resilience indices (CRI) have been incorporated to invigorate the adaptability and renewal of cities.

c) The protection and exchange of intellectual property in university centers, libraries and repositories, museums and art centers, scientific organizations, institutions and powers of the States, and public and private companies. For all of these, knowledge is a valuable intangible asset that guarantees intelligent development, social ordering, and mechanisms that translate into economic advantages.

However, since cities are spaces in which resources are concentrated, they generate other series of collateral problems for rural areas and for those human settlements that lack effective means of communication with the city. This has generated new concerns that, as we have mentioned, represent major challenges for the sustainability of development in Europe.

Other phenomena, less programmed, but which have emerged as a result of the stimulation of the commercial torrent between towns and cities, we find in the new cross-border configurations and the urban sprawl, not limited to the conventional limits of political geography, which begin to consolidate themselves as new centers and alliances of power. These new socioeconomic conformations have received the name of megacities because, in many cases, their GDP exceeds that of countries such as Argentina and Indonesia. The success of these new alliances between towns and cities has been based on technological connectivity, the diversity of commercial exchange and the increasing human mobility.

The Member States of the European Union, as we shall see, have taken note of the impulses, demands and transformations that have been generated by the intense cultural hybridization, the heterogeneity of the geographical space, the economies of scale and imperfect competition.

The phenomenon of cities and their ordering. Brief look at the policies agreed in the United Nations Organization

Among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), signed and endorsed by the countries of the United Nations Organization (UN), two deserve special mention because they outline clear purposes on the sustainability of urban development to which leaders and citizens aspire for the year 2030 The ODS N°9 that refers to Industry, innovation and infrastructure, and the ODS N°11 on Sustainable Cities and communities.

Among the goals of SDG No. 9 it is stated: "Develop reliable, sustainable, resilient and quality infrastructure, including regional and cross-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with special emphasis on affordable and equitable access for all" (Target 9.1; UN, 2019). Regarding SDG No. 11, it calls for: "By 2030, increase inclusive and sustainable urbanization and the capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable planning and management of human settlements in all countries" (Goal 11.3; UN, 2019).

The phenomena and challenges that urban areas embody have been targeted by the United Nations, not by chance, but due to the accelerated and disproportionate urbanization of the planet. For these reasons, the UN, in various milestones and agreements, such as the Earth Summit of 1972, the Habitat I Conference in Vancouver 1976 and Habitat II in Istanbul 1996, and more recently, in the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, has called attention to establishing common purposes and goals regarding the challenges of urban development.

In this scenario of the nations of the world, in their multiple concerns and agreements, we find a reasonable justification: the new geofunctional conformation of cities, which we are experiencing and which we must experience, especially since it obeys the unstoppable impulse that the revolution of the new Technologies have brought about physical and digital connectivity. These SDGs also mean that we are moving towards a qualitative change in the societal paradigm because it gradually abandons the physical limits of political geography and develops new geographic coordinates based on the mobility of ideas and knowledge, human mobility and the mobility of means and resources (transport, energy, technologies).

This phenomenon has tried to be named as connectography[1]. In other words, a functional geography that signifies a progression of changes towards the global network civilization of the 21st century. This evolution supposes the improvement of cities because it represents alliances and cross-border investment projects that will correct social asymmetries, poverty margins and internal inequality of cities -and between cities- in a kind of planetary urbanization. One point to consider is that the 2030 Agenda was able to diagnose, although not predict, what was happening around and in the nuclei of the cities and, consequently, the voices of the UN agreed to consider urban areas as key elements in the equation for the sustainability of our ways of life.

This phenomenon of connectivity and world reorganization is quietly causing a new order that is not only expressed in the geographical question but also means the formation of human and commercial conclaves that strategically begin to become new necklaces of human settlements that They are strengthened through the exchange of knowledge, innovations, and the production and commercialization of goods and services.

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[1]Parag Khanna. (2016). How megacities are changing the map of the world. [TED; Arch of video].

On the other hand, as expressed in other goals of the SDGs, the progress of people and the reduction of inequality and poverty are, by themselves, fundamental premises that justify the transition towards cities connected by their transport infrastructures, for their commercial and financial sources, through their means of communication and technologies, and that they develop another form of relationship between people and their cities.

Some other issues, however, have deserved a more specific analysis, such as the overpopulation of these cities, the abandonment of rural areas (and their productive activities), the contrary effects of the urban sprawl and the viability of the sustainability of this new geofunctional conformation. For this reason, as the UN clarifies and we will see, later, that the European Union also considers, urban development must be based on zero-emission technologies, the improvement of green and intelligent spaces and the use of green energy and means of alternative transportation.

For these reasons, in the cities of our time, we are beginning to feel, although perhaps slowly, an overcoming of the old physical and mental cartography of the 20th century and a greater social demand for urban development within the framework of environmental sustainability. But how, really, are cities defined and what concrete examples, in our time, do we have of this?

Before delving into the exploration of the European Union's approach to urban development sustainability, we want to consider some phenomena of cities and some examples that tell us about their often spontaneous expansion. The intention of the next lines is to be able to recognize what are the meanings of these urban areas and why they interest both the UN and the EU when they talk about the purposes of sustainability.

Economies of location, economies of urbanization and urban sprawl. Some previous definitions and real examples about cities

We have considered before that the economies of cities transcend the limited borders imposed from political geography, and we know that this is the case because commercial activities and socio-cultural relations have historically pushed to overcome the limits between people and between companies. In this sense, it is necessary that we stop to consider the heterogeneity of the geographical space, the economies of scale and imperfect competition. These and other reasons allow us to define and characterize the economies of location, the economies of urbanization (agglomeration economies), and the urban sprawl phenomenon, within the framework of the study of cities and sustainable urban development that we propose.

We understand by localization economy that which agglomerates similar activities external to a company that participate in its production, supply and commercialization chain, and that generate lower global costs, better competitiveness margins, knowledge specialization and progress of its technical capacities.

An example of this type of agglomeration economy is San Fernando de Henares, 15 km away from the capital Madrid. This municipality began its industrialization in the middle of the 20th century, abandoning the primary sector, and directing its economy towards the formation of an industrial estate with a housing and service infrastructure that benefits an estimated population of 39,681 inhabitants (INE database, 2017). In San Fernando de Henares, a city oriented to the service and industry sectors, various companies are based that maintain commercial interrelation and strategic alliances such as Amazon Spain, Carrefour, IBM, among others.

On the other hand, the urbanization economy involves all the economic activities of various productive sectors that arise from the public goods and services sector, from the large market system itself and from factors of production of finished goods and services. The urbanization economy is characterized by the concentration of fixed and social capital infrastructures, economic scalability in the provision of public services, opportunities to access foreign markets and global dimensions, and a great capacity for long-term growth.

An example of an urbanization economy is represented by Barcelona, which concentrates the largest industrial production in Catalonia and where multinational food, chemical, automotive and electronics companies do business, but where, in addition, public productive entities, strong social investment, a conglomerate of SMEs converge (clusters) and various productive companies.

However, the growth and development of cities, the improvement of their communication and service infrastructures, brings with it a phenomenon that we have already referred to: the urban sprawl, which represents the widening of the limits of a city towards more peripherals. This phenomenon of urban sprawl occurs for various reasons, among which it should be noted:
  a) The costs of living in the center of a city
  b) Imbalances between wages and consumption
  c) The search for a better quality of life
  d) The development of small enterprises and productive projects in less competitive scenarios

The urban sprawl has its collateral effects because it can translate into excessive and disorderly expansion, it can also influence the collapse of public services in the destination, increase public spending by

local governments and cause phenomena of disintegration of the productive social fabric. However, we see it in different parts of Europe, it is an emerging and unstoppable social phenomenon, often unplanned and closely related to citizen perspectives on work and quality of life. Dealing with this phenomenon of dispersion and reengineering of urbanization: "…it is a difficult process to reverse, but it can be controlled, directed, coordinated and minimized. (Hermant-de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz, and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.57).

An example of urban sprawl is found in Guadalajara, a province of the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha, whose population increased by 53.8% (Lomba Santiago, 2019)[2], product, among other things, for being chosen as a commuter town by people who work in Toledo and Madrid capital. In the same way, Alcorcón, according to the 2018 statistical figures from the INE, has grown thanks to this process of progressive dispersion of the urbanization of Madrid, to become an urban center of great industrial development, which is home to a good part of the workers of Madrid capital.

Focusing on Barcelona, the policies of superilles (superblocks) are based on the continuity of the agreements, guidelines and strategies expressed in the Urban Mobility Plan 2013-2018, the Barcelona Commitment to the Climate, the Green Plan and Biodiversity, the Superblock Program 2012-2015 and the strategic lines contemplated in the PAM (2016-2019). All these initiatives have had the purpose of redoing the functional ordering of the city's geography and recovering public spaces, minimizing environmental impact, prioritizing sustainable urban mobility, and stimulating the formation of urban units, of several blocks, that are spaces for inclusion. and citizen coexistence, eco-sustainable and solutions to conflict situations that the city itself and its high population density pose.

The Barcelona City Council set itself the goal: "...a transition in the way of managing, understanding, moving and living the public space of Barcelona" (Barcelona City Council, 2019), through a set of programs that are directed towards balanced sustainability of natural and urban spaces, the improvement of air quality, greater connectivity through intelligent communication networks in the city and local networks in each district or neighborhood in which families, businesses and workplaces participate.

For these reasons, those proposed by the UN and the Sustainable Development Goals, but also due to the phenomena and examples that we have described here, cities are key to the transition towards a sustainable, bio-intelligent and self-sufficient global development model. These and many other concerns have been reflected, not by chance, in the Amsterdam Pact, in the EU Urban Agenda and in the Spanish Urban Agenda.

EU Urban Agenda and the Amsterdam Pact

The EU Urban Agenda agrees as a fundamental premise the maximum development of the potential of urban areas within the coordinates of the principles of subsidiarity, proportionality and competition. However, this Agenda is not only a declaration of intent but also demands the incorporation of the Member States, their national and local governments and municipal authorities to articulate and execute policies that contribute to the sustainable development of cities.

It is, then, a comprehensive and inclusive vision of the sustainable development of urban areas in Europe that, supported by the laws of the States and the agreements of the EU, seeks a common good: impact on the new conformation of the areas urban areas and stimulate the territorial cohesion of the EU. For these purposes, the EU considered three key instruments of community policies:

1. Improve regulation: efficiency in policies, body of rules and instruments of EU legislation to achieve the objectives of the EU Urban Agenda. It was planned to reinforce the rules and regulations in force to transcend administrative barriers and speed up the implementation of sustainability policies.
2. Improve financing: improvement and identification of financing sources for the development of interventions and innovations in European urban areas. The EU Urban Agenda did not consider increasing costs and extraordinary financing mechanisms, although it did consider taking advantage of investment opportunities and cohesion policies.
3. Improve knowledge: transfer and reuse of knowledge and good practices on sustainable urban development to establish common, efficient, proven policies that translate into solutions to current and emerging challenges..(Ministerio de Fomento, Gobierno de España, 2020).[3]

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[2]Lomba Santiago. (20 de july de 2019). *Elcorreogallego.es*. Available in https://www.elcorreogallego.es/galicia/ecg/ourense-segunda-provincia-pais-pierde-poblacion/idEdicion-2019-07-20/idNoticia-1194518

[3]The Amsterdam Pact (2016) and the Urban Agenda of the European Union. Available in:http://192.148.212.29/MFOM/LANG_CASTELLANO/DIRECCIONES_GENERALES/ARQ_VIVIENDA/SUELO_Y_POLITICAS/ACTIVIDAD/UE/PACTO_AMSTERDAM/

Of the objectives

To these ends, the EU Urban Agenda has outlined shared, inclusive purposes and lines of action that benefit all of its Member States. Among these objectives of the Agenda for European urban sustainability we have:

1. "The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to harness the full potential and contribution of urban areas to achieve the Union objectives and related national priorities in full respect of the principles and competences of subsidiarity and proportionality.
2. The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to establish a more effective integrated and coordinated approach to EU policies and legislation with a potential impact on urban areas and also to contribute to territorial cohesion by reducing the observed socio-economic gaps in urban areas and regions.
3. The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve urban authorities in policy design, mobilize urban authorities for the implementation of EU policies and strengthen the urban dimension in these policies. By identifying and striving to overcome unnecessary obstacles in EU policy, the Urban Agenda for the EU aims to enable urban authorities to work in a more systematic and coherent way towards the achievement of overall objectives. Furthermore, it will help make EU policy more environmentally friendly, effective and efficient.
4. The Urban Agenda for the EU will not create new sources of EU funding, unnecessary administrative burden, affect the current distribution of legal powers and existing working and decision-making structures and will not transfer powers to the level of the EU (in accordance with articles 4 and 5 of the Treaty on European Union)." (European Commission, 2020)[4].

The EU Urban Agenda identifies some aspects that can determine the failure or success of its purposes. These are born, as in the case of the UN, as a result of numerous milestones and previous agreements on the inclusion of migrants and refugees, studies on poverty and environmental quality, the technological and energy transition in Europe, the circular economy model, the phenomenon of human mobility (urban, migrant and displaced), and the sustainable use of natural resources (recovery of ecosystems).

Specifically, the aspect of urban mobility is a determining line of action in all European projects for smart and sustainable cities. This should be considered in the light of: "...infrastructure planning and management...information, training and public awareness, development regulations, tax policy and very specific actions in urban and metropolitan transport." (Crespo García, 2009: p.104). Undoubtedly, urban and metropolitan mobility is one of the most important sustainability challenges in Europe because it also means a substantial improvement in the quality of life and economic growth within the framework of respect for the environment. For these reasons, in the EU Green Paper "Towards a new culture of urban mobility": "...it is recognized that urban mobility is the cause of 40% of CO_2 emissions, which would be equivalent to saying that in the urban mobility that same percentage is consumed in energy." (Crespo García, 2009: p.102)

All these diagnoses, and the scope and solutions of various initiatives and studies, developed by public institutions, private organizations, scientific centers and NGOs, were estimated and incorporated into the European vision on the sustainable development of urban spaces.

Due to the above, the Urban Agenda for the EU is a valuable resource because it considers various levels of responsibility for the public agents and institutions of the Member States, for the industry sector and private companies and for civil society organizations. This leads us to value the inclusive vision with which the EU involves all those social agents that are co-responsible for the sustainability of urban spaces.

For these reasons, we understand that the EU, in a certain way, proposes a science perspective of cities, not a technocrat or a bombastic bureaucratic dimension, but with an urban policy approach for the planning, design and implementation of models of cities more intelligent, self-sustaining, friendly with the environment, and reconciled with its inhabitants. However, these EU policies emerge as a result of the undeniable statistical evidence that points to a permanent increase in human concentration and social conflict in the most important European cities and, in addition, the impact that it produces in the emptying of areas rural.

These imbalances occur in the midst of human phenomena that are very characteristic of the European Union: human mobility in the form of migration and the low birth rate of its citizens; For these reasons, we must also consider that: "Cities must adapt economic strategies and social services to an aging population." (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz, and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.61).

In this context, UN estimates predict that cities by the year 2050: "...will come to concentrate 68% of the world's population..." (Juvillà Ballester, 2019: p.15). However, what is striking is that, currently in Europe: "...it already accounts for 75% of the total, while, in Spain, that percentage concentrated in urban areas is already

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[4] Urban Agenda for the UE.Available in: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/node/1829#Objectives

80%, according to the data collected in the Agenda Urban Spanish"[5] (Ídem). Seen in this way, the challenge appears much more lofty than the simple reordering of the city or the repositioning of the city as a development factor. It is, we understand, an important problem of sustainability of the European model, because it has economic, social, political, geographical implications and balanced ordering between urban spaces and rural areas.

In this sense, the relevance of intermediate cities has been pointed out (we have previously referred to this phenomenon and the urban sprawl), because these urban settlements are considered key to efficient management: "...of financial and economic resources, the growing urbanization process... the consumption of natural resources, demographic changes such as migratory phenomena and rural depopulation, the difficulty of access to housing or the economic transformations generated by the new patterns of consumption and electronic commerce (Ministry of Public Works, 2019)" (Juvillà Ballester, 2019: p.16).

Let us also agree that Europe is one of the most urbanized continents on the planet and its main cities, which concentrate, as we have pointed out, a high population density, will be the ones that decide the fate of the EU. It seems chimerical to imagine that a return of citizens to the fields or rural areas could be generated. The most reliable forecast is that cities will continue to grow, become saturated, and from them solutions must emerge in terms of reducing the carbon footprint, the use of non-polluting green energies, the reduction of social asymmetries and the generation of jobs for quality that allow people to achieve adequate standards of living.

However, European cities face all these social challenges, and those related to the organization of their administrative and geographical limits, because we are facing -unforeseen- phenomena of cities that become hyperconnected for human, technological and economic reasons and reach have more weight, even, than the totality of the regions of certain countries.

Given this panorama, a new vision of governance in the EU Member States is necessary, with much more flexible regulatory frameworks and policies that allow them: "…a common vision of the European city of tomorrow as: a place of advanced social progress with a high degree of social cohesion, with socially balanced accommodation, and with social, health and "education for all" services, a platform for democracy, cultural dialogue and diversity, a place of green, ecological or environmental regeneration, a place of attraction and engine of economic growth." (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.VI).

In this sense, the EU, when referring to the Cities of Tomorrow, the challenges, visions and paths to follow, suggests that we support the urban development of the European territory on the following principles:

1. "Be based on balanced economic growth and the territorial organization of activities, with a polycentric urban structure.
2. Focus on strong metropolitan regions and other urban areas that can provide good accessibility to services of general economic interest.
3. Characterized by a compact settlement structure with limited urban expansion.
4. Achieve a high level of environmental protection and quality in and around cities." (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.VI).

In order to achieve these assumptions, it is imperative that, in essence, Europe move towards another model of governance, one that allows it to assemble its policies and its economies in a holistic model of sustainability. Not a decreed and regulated sustainability, but a culture of life in cities based on sustainability, convinced of the need to be sustainable to guarantee present life and that of future generations. In other words, this translates to:

1. "Solve challenges in a holistic and integrated way.
2. Match the approaches based on the territory with those based on people.
3. Combine formal governance structures with other informal and flexible ones that are appropriate to the types of challenges.
4. Develop governance systems capable of building shared perspectives that reconcile contradictory objectives and development models.
5. Cooperate to ensure coherent spatial development and efficient use of resources." (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.VII).

The European vision of the sustainable development of cities leads to less centralized, more resilient types of governance that recognize, rather than their limits, their own territorial scales in order to create

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[5]The Spanish Urban Agenda (QUE) was prepared by the Ministry of Public Works and approved by the Council of Ministers on February 22, 2019. Available at: http:/www.aue.gob.es/

synergies between different levels of authority that become network cooperation. between cities, investment and transfer of valid resources and knowledge, but above all in the increase and equality of social wealth.

All these aspects, together with the call for the skills of all social agents, can reconvert European urban spaces into regions of innovation and civic engagement, as effective as they are efficient in managing solutions within the framework of a European model of sustainable urban development. . This European vision of the city has some clear characteristics that we must point out:
1. Progress and social cohesion.
2. Reduction of spatial segregation and social marginality.
3. Access to basic services, health, decent housing and education.
4. Spaces for the recreation of freedom and intercultural dialogue.
5. Deceleration of environmental impact
6. Eco-responsible and bioethical conscience.
7. Energy efficiency
8. Democratic, flexible and plural governance
9. Architectural infrastructures, means of transport and sustainable communications.
10. Spaces for innovation, resiliency and generation of solutions.
11. With diversified local economies
12. An urban landscape that preserves historical memory and promotes citizen coexistence
13. Connectivity between metropolitan cities, large and small regions, and the most remote rural areas.

All these considerations of the route for sustainability that Europe has undertaken is, without a doubt, more inclusive than the vision of the UN, whose proposals have not materialized; On the contrary, in many cases they have been neglected by the great powers that dismiss the importance of sustainability and by countries that do not have the economic and financial resources to make the necessary technological transition.

The vision of the European Union on sustainable urban development is not an exercise in political competence or interference in territorial and urban development that is the responsibility of the States, but it has been configured as a community model: "...which encompasses both development internal cities and their territorial development. The shared vision of the European model of urban development takes into account all the dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated way." (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz, and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.12).

On the other hand, the sustainable model of the European city is based on physical and technological connectivity, on the communication of polycentric cities, in which redensification is necessary, with satellite regions and rural areas, less populated, but which must be assembled in a multifunctional and diverse territorial and social ordering due to extensive human mobility and the flow of commercial goods. This means, most likely, that: "Monotonous and monofunctional satellite cities will undergo a process of urbanization that will turn them into more colourful, socially mixed and multifunctional places." (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz, and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.57).

In general, the European vision of urban development focuses on the planning of cities and their territories as intelligent spaces, respectful of the environment and their ways of life; creative cities that transcend the conventional order because they grow in relation to: "…broader processes of creative action, social innovation, organizational learning and construction of an «urban intelligence». These processes can be applied to economic activity, public governance, social structures and cultural expression" (Hermant de Callataÿ, Svanfeldt, Piskorz, and García-Patrón Rivas, 2011: p.59).

In addition, it is necessary that urban developments in Europe, as stated in the EU Agenda, promote regional economic growth, are not exclusive and concentrate wealth; that is, that they become engines of development: "...to favor a polycentric urban Europe with a balanced territorial development." (Ibid: p.61).

Conclusions
It is right to place Europe at the forefront of sustainability and compliance with commitments on responsible consumption and the reduction of CO2 emissions, as well as the reduction of particulate matter PM 2.5[6]and the decarbonization of the energy matrix. Also, the European Union has understood that it is not just about pointing to those social and business behaviors and convincing them to change their paradigm of life. It is

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[6]"Respirable particulate matter present in the atmosphere of our cities in solid or liquid form". (Linares and Diaz, 2008). Information available at https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/17842/que-son-las-pm25-y-como-afectan-a-nuestra-salud/#nb76-1

a matter of turning them into protagonists of this change, promoting, even, a new order in the cities, and in their relations with peripheral regions.

The European vision and will in this field has collated the responsibilities of the Member States, the disposition and interests of public and private organizations, and the demands of social groups to plan and order cities as resilient territories, not vulnerable to bad weather. climate, inclusive from the social, communicational and technological aspects and, especially, cities that generate solutions for energy efficiency and less inducing social asymmetries.

For these reasons, the EU Urban Agenda is a resource that reveals not only the state of affairs, but also the regional alliances that are beginning to articulate to achieve the efficient transition towards a sustainable energy paradigm and, with it, those prerogatives that supposes the intelligent and committed urban organization.

The social and economic logic of this urban planning in Europe moves away from the traditional material ambitions and macroeconomic figures on development based on consumption. It approaches, with greater responsibility, another level of social coexistence in which economic growth must correspond to the development of the European quality of life and the sustainability of its main natural resources. In this process, as we have seen, European cities will be decisive.

In turn, the European vision of this issue has been inclusive, peripheral, has broadened the spectrum of the problem, taking note and reflecting on the agreements of the United Nations Organization (UN), the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), of the Agenda 21 Action Plan, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to generate an inclusive policy in the community of countries that make up the European Union, without neglecting their particularities and without generating policies that overlap with the legitimate decisions and actions of the Member States.

In this scenario, the leading role of cities for the economic development of Europe is related to community cooperation strategies and cohesion policy instruments for the achievement of more flexible, innovative forms of governance and proponents of networks of cities and networks. regions-cities supported by a polycentric economic and urban structure, which contribute, among other things, to improving the distribution of social wealth, the sustainability of green spaces and the intelligent coexistence of citizens with their urban environment and natural.

This means closing the gap in the social asymmetries produced by the cities themselves, ordering the displacements and new settlements that produce phenomena such as the urban sprawl, extending the limits of European cities in an orderly manner and based on the improvement of roads and media. Communication.

It is a matter, then, of implementing a European vision on sustainable urban development that reduces disparities between cities, lessens the impacts of the different categories with which the European social composition has historically been represented and, especially, generate a closer and more harmonious sense of territorial, cultural and economic cohesion between the different peoples of the European Union for the precious achievement of the high global quality of life in Europe.

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