The United Nations

Local Authorities in Four Frameworks

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INTRODUCTION

Over the course of 2015-2016, member states of the United Nations adopted four outcome documents that together amount to an international development agenda for the post-Millennium Development Goals era. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR), adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan (General Assembly resolution 69/283 2015), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (General Assembly resolution 69/313 2015), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals) adopted at United Nations Headquarters in New York during High Level Week (General Assembly resolution 70/1, 2015), and the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA), adopted during the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016), were all eventually endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).[1]

Prior to their adoption by member states and endorsement by UNGA, each outcome document was shaped by extended processes of stakeholder engagement, regional outreach, and ultimately member state negotiation. Preparatory committee meetings are the main venues for member state negotiations. Negotiations for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR), for example, involved three preparatory committees and two interim informal negotiating sessions from July 2014 to March 2015. These are buttressed by additional, more inclusive, meetings. The stakeholder engagement that was also meant to help shape the document began as early as 2012. Between March 2012 and the end of 2013, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) facilitated nearly 90 events that engaged not only member states but also partners, stakeholders, and networks (UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction 2014). The subsequent negotiation processes examined here also created extensive frameworks for engagement with and input from stakeholders.

The logic behind this engagement is simple: the accords are meant to be implemented by member states in partnership with, and with support from, stakeholders, networks, civil society, and local actors and governments. The Sendai Framework (General Assembly resolution 69/283 2015, par. 7-8) notes that "While recognizing their leading, regulatory and coordination role, Governments should engage with relevant stakeholders," and continues in the next paragraph, "International, regional, subregional and transboundary cooperation remains pivotal in supporting the efforts of States, their national and local authorities, as well as communities and businesses, to reduce disaster risk." The *New Urban Agenda* (NUA) calls upon "all national, subnational and local governments, as well as all relevant stakeholders, in line with national policies, to revitalize, strengthen and create partnerships, enhancing coordination and cooperation to effectively implement the *New Urban Agenda*." (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016, par. 21)

This shared vision of implementation among the four agreements reflects wider economic and governance trends that have accompanied the period of globalization which followed the end of the Bretton Woods monetary system in the 1970s. As opposed to the relatively nationalist post-WWII global economic order—which stemming from the lessons of the interwar years sought to control the movement of global capital—the new period of globalization increasingly favored finance and sought to lubricate the movement of capital (Sassen 2006, 162; Ferguson 2008, 305). When the United States ended convertibility of the dollar to gold in 1971, exchange rates floated more freely. New financial assets enabled the movement of capital not just between governments but also private entities. Bretton Woods institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—a product of the Marshall Plan— adapted policies to enable and promote the free movement of capital (Ferguson 2008, 308-311). Financial service institutions like investment banks and eventually hedge funds played larger roles in the economy as national governments focused on maintaining openness, competition, and movement globally over what had been a focus on "national economy and polity." (Sassen 2006, 161).

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1 Local governments, in particular mayors of major cities, played an important role in the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change. But those negotiations took place under the auspices of the UNFCCC not the UN. For more information, see http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/11/cities-striving-to-play-key-role-in-implementing-paris-agreement/; http://www.usgbc.org/articles/us-mayors-step-key-advocates-climate-change-action-during-un-conference-paris.

This new phase of globalization was accompanied and facilitated by national policies and strategies around governance and regulation, often aimed at attracting foreign direct investment and promoting exports, including through decentralization and the promotion of customized regulatory sites, respectively (Brenner 2004; Easterling 2014, chapter 1). These sites included Export Processing Zones, Special Economic Zones, Foreign Trade Zones, and innumerable versions of duty-free zones (Easterling 2014, 33).[2] More generically, the Global City, though a contested term, has come to embody at a minimum a political economy in which finance and associated service industries operate on a global scale through local engagement in cities which are simultaneously promoting their own economic competitiveness.[3] As scholars across a number of disciplines have noted, this process was not done in the absence of national governments but often with and through them.[4] Some of this has involved what Neil Brennan has termed "reterritorialization," through which the state has reconstituted and reorganized itself at multiple scales, to include the urban and international (Brenner 2004). Bob Jessop has noted that this process included, in certain instances, a "relativization of scales," in which some scales such as global cities, supranational regulatory bodies such as the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and, after the financial crisis, the Finance Stability Board, and global governance institutions see heightened roles (Jessop 2003). Whereas once the national was the "interface" between subnational and supranational, reterritorialization featured a constant renegotiation of the arrangement between subnational, national, and international entities. The rise of networks, public-private partnerships, and indeed the role of "local" entities in United Nations negotiations and implementation are all part of this larger trend.

Negotiation and consultation frameworks, however, do not simply adapt to wider global trends. Nor do outcome documents naturally, miraculously, contort themselves to reflect the wider world outside of UN headquarters and disparate negotiating rooms. Instead, the participation of stakeholders, civil society, and local government and authorities in negotiating processes and their referenced role in implementation is the result of formal and informal interactions between these groups and members states, and, ultimately, between members states themselves.[5] These exchanges and interactions involve multiple scales of geographic space, including the global, the national, and the local and thus provide these scales the opportunity to renegotiate their relations (Brenner 2004, 8; Smith 1995).

This paper outlines the interaction between these geographies of space and the manner in which local actors, and particularly those with an urban focus, participated in the development of the frameworks, and analyzes the varied treatment of urban governance in the four agendas. With each accord, we assess, first, the degree to which either municipalities or metropolitan regions were taken into account as potential implementers, as well as sources of expertise and knowledge. We then consider the modalities and processes that encouraged or allowed for such considerations. Finally, we assess the political issues within the UN system that either allowed for or inhibited urban considerations and expertise, asking to what degree the politics of one scale inhibited future progress on another.

THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, SENDAI, JAPAN, MARCH, 2015

The Sendai Framework was adopted on March 15, 2015 in Sendai, Japan at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR). The WCDRR was preceded by the World Conference on Natural Disasters in Yokohama in 1995 and World Conference in Disaster Risk Reduction in Kobe in 2004. The Kobe conference produced the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) which, while focused on resilience building, provided much of the foundational language for the Sendai agreement (Pearson and Pelling 2015; G77 Negotiation, email message to authors, July 3, 2017). Based on resolutions by the UNGA, the United Nations

2 In 1975, according to the International Labor Organization, there were 79 Export Processing Zones. By 2006 that number had reached 3,500.
3 The term was originally employed by David A. Heenan in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1977. For a particularly helpful overview on the literature and the surrounding debates, see Greg Clark, *Global Cities* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2016), chapter 5.
4 In addition to Sassen and Brennan, see Charles Maier, *Once Within Borders*, for a much longer historical perspective.
5 Outcome documents are formally negotiated and adopted only by the member states.

Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) served as the coordinating body for the conferences in Kobe and Sendai. Thailand and Finland served as the co-facilitators for the 2015 Sendai conference.

PROCESS

Consultations on the SFDRRR began in early 2013. These included regional conferences in Tanzania, Jordan, and Norway. Over the course of the year, at least 89 events were held globally to prepare for Sendai and the negotiations, including the Global Platform on May 19-23.[6] These also included consultations with the UN Major Groups, a collection of nine groups under which a significant portion of civil society participation was structured. These groups, of which one was "Local Authorities," were empowered to "engage in discussions with UN entities and States in informal and formal space." (UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2014a) The first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland on July 14-15, 2014, and the second also in Geneva on November 17-18, 2014. The final session of the PrepCom was held in Sendai on 13 March, 2015.

The body of the text was negotiated during the PrepCom sessions in Geneva in advance of Sendai. Representing the breadth of the issue, but also ongoing negotiations elsewhere, member states' negotiators were drawn from a wide array of backgrounds, including climate, trade, development, and humanitarian (G77 Negotiator, email message to authors, July 3, 2017). The initial sessions in advance of the final Sendai negotiations allowed for the participation of experts whose focus could look beyond politics. This structure did not hold, however. Beginning a pattern that would be continued in the negotiations on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on Financing for Development and the *New Urban Agenda*, the final Sendai negotiations stretched more than 30 hours. Political issues featured heavily in this final session, and in particular questions of financing, official development assistance (ODA), technology transfer, and the integration of climate change into the document (UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2014b). Many developing countries—represented in the negotiations by the G77[7]—sought a commitment for "reliable" or "predictable" financial support, and many delegations were concerned about the implications that language included in the Sendai Framework might have for the ongoing climate negotiations in the UNFCCC (Jennifer Landsidle, Lead Negotiator for the U.S. delegation, telephone interview by authors, June 30, 2017).

The chief voice for cities and metropolitan areas was the Local and Regional Authorities Major Group. Organization of the group fell to two of the leading international city networks, Local Government for Sustainability (ICLEI) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). On March 17, the third day of the conference and with the outcome document not yet agreed to, members of the major group issued a consensus document statement, "The Sendai Declaration of Local and Subnational Governments." The declaration urged stronger collaboration between national and local governments and noted "that despite all concentrated efforts, there are evident gaps in capacity, knowledge and financing at local level that would ensure implementation and sustainability." (United Cities and Local Governments 2015; G77 Negotiator, email interview by authors, July 3, 2017; Jennifer Landsidle, telephone interview by authors, June 30, 2017). Hj Illiza Sa-Aduddin Djamal, Mayor of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, then presented the declaration to present Ministers and international organizations while negotiations continued apace in private rooms to which non-member states did not have access.

THE OUTCOME DOCUMENT

The bulk of the SFDRR is built around four priorities for action, and, for the first time as it came to risk reduction, seven global targets. The four priorities are: understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk

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6 The Global Platform is the every two years meeting of key actors—governmental and non-governmental—in the disaster risk community.
7 The G77 is a bloc composed of 134 developing countries which negotiate as a single group on development issues at the UN. The European Union has observer status at the UN and negotiates on behalf of the 28 EU Member States. JUSCANZ is a collection of non-EU developed countries who do not negotiate as a bloc, but do share information and coordinate closely. The main members of JUSCANZ include Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Norway, Mexico, Iceland, Israel, the Republic of Korea, and Turkey.

governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and, enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The targets include figures for, among other things, reducing global disaster mortality and reducing disaster economic loss and, more generally, enhancing international cooperation to developing countries and increasing the availability of disaster risk information. These targets, as with the rest of the document, are not binding. Each priority for action was broken down into two subsections: national and local levels; and global and regional levels. Priority 1, "Understanding Disaster Risk," recognizes the need to pair "scientific knowledge" and "local knowledge." Similarly, Priority 2, "Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk" notes the importance of local strategies and capacity.

Urban issues are introduced in the Preamble. Paragraph 6 notes the importance of "unplanned and rapid urbanization" as a new driver of risk. The addition of "rapid" was a change from similar wording in the preceding HFA. Paragraph 8, meanwhile, while not mentioning urban or municipal issues by name, is the most notable paragraph on subnational action. It begins: "International, regional, subregional and transboundary cooperations remains pivotal in supporting the efforts of States, their national and local authorities, to reduce disaster risk." (General Assembly resolution 69/283 2015; General Assembly resolution 60/195 2005) "Urban planning" is further referenced as both an approach that can mitigate disaster and a discipline in which disaster reduction issues should be of concern.

Overall, however, while the importance of local knowledge and solutions are affirmed throughout the document, there are fewer references to cities, metropolitan regions, or explicitly urban concerns. The Guiding Principles section of the document similarly notes the importance of local authorities in paragraphs 19 (e) and 19 (f), but does not explicitly mention municipal authorities. The explicit reference to the empowerment of local authorities as actors in and of themselves was not a new development and consistent almost to a word with the preceding HFA.[8]

CONCLUSION

The negotiations surrounding the SFDRR were heavily influenced by parallel negotiations in the international community, in particular the climate negotiations of the UNFCCC. The negotiations also established a series of political issues—ODA, technology transfer, and others—that would feature as points of significant disagreement among member states for the subsequent conference over the next twelve months. The battle lines, as it were, were drawn, and would remain very much the same whether the policy question at hand was partnerships or urbanization.

From the local perspective, the preceding HFA has been subject to criticism for its lack of local impact (Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction 2009). Critics of the SFDRRR, such as Lucy Pearson and Mark Pelling, fear a similar result, arguing that "the need for national actors to build on local level capacities" is underrepresented in the document (Pearson and Pelling, 2015, 2). This gap stands in stark contrast, they note, to approaches currently being deployed by practitioners. While urban issues and institutions often fall under the umbrella of local issues, in and of themselves they are even more dramatically unrepresented. In particular, the unique challenges posed by urban spaces in disaster risk reduction, the needs of those spaces, and the particular tools available to mayors are not identified.

THE ADDIS ABABA ACTION AGENDA, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, JULY, 2015

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) was adopted by member states at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on July 16, 2015. It was preceded by earlier conferences

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8 HFA, para 13(f) reads: "Both communities and local authorities should be empowered to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources and authority to implement actions for disaster risk reduction."

on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002 and Doha, Qatar, in 2008. The conference in Monterrey was a landmark in directly addressing the core issues of global development, recognizing both the primary responsibility of developing countries for their own development as well as the need for wealthier countries to support such efforts via increased international development cooperation. The 2002 Monterrey Consensus embraced an integrated approach to development, addressing the key issues of domestic resources, international private flows, international trade, financial and technical cooperation, external debt, and global systemic issues (IMF 2002). The second conference in Doha, largely overshadowed by the unfolding global financial crisis, resulted in a commitment by developed countries to maintain ODA commitments despite the crisis, a recognition of the role of the UN in addressing issues related to financing for development, and a decision to hold a UN conference on the impact of the financial crisis (which took place from June 24-26, 2009) (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of Financing for Development 2008).

At the time of the Addis conference, private funding sources, including foreign direct investment, remittances, and other sources, had far surpassed traditional development assistance flows as key drivers of development (Anderson and Chonghaile 2015; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development n.d.). The AAAA captured this new reality in its recognition of three sources of development finance: domestic resources such as tax revenue; private investment, including foreign direct investment; and, international public finance, including official development assistance (ODA) and cooperation between developing countries (South-South cooperation). The AAAA affirmed the key role of the private sector—an important point to developed countries—as well as the continuing importance of ODA—a crucial point for developing countries—as a catalyst in leveraging private sector financing but also as a main financing source for the least developed countries that have weak domestic resource mobilization and face challenges in attracting foreign investment.

THE PROCESS

Negotiations on the outcome document were conducted according to standard UN practice for such conferences, namely, the process was managed by two Permanent Representatives appointed as co-facilitators by the President of the General Assembly, in this case Norway and Guyana. Preparatory briefings and hearings with multistakeholders occurred from October 2014 through July 2015. The co-facilitators held a series of informal negotiating sessions in New York from January to June of 2015, and, working with their staff and the secretariat, released successive versions of the draft outcome document following each session. Multistakeholders and advocacy groups for local authorities organized side events and submitted written inputs in order to advocate for their positions in the outcome document (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of Financing for Development 2015a).

The key actor in advocating for local authorities during the Addis negotiations was the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), a coordinating mechanism for the various international networks of local governments set up in 2013 and whose purpose was to advocate for local authorities in the key international processes related to sustainable development (Addis and the SDGs), climate change (the 21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change which led to the Paris Agreement), and urban development (the Habitat 3 conference and the *New Urban Agenda*) (Global Task Force n.d.). GTF was responsible for all of the advocacy activity related to local authorities during the Addis process, including the submission of a formal paper on the role of local governments in achieving sustainable development entitled *Financing Local and Regional Governments: The Missing Link in Sustainable Development Finance* (Global Task Force 2015); the organization of a side event with the Mission of France on "Mobilizing local finance to implement the Post-2015 Development Agenda" on April 10, 2015 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of Financing for Development 2015b); and, a formal letter to the co-facilitators arguing for amendments to the draft text to further highlight financing instruments to address the challenges of urbanization (Roig 2015).

This activity, however, mostly occurred in the background. Local authorities were not an active presence during the negotiating sessions or the hearings with multistakeholders (U.S. negotiator, personal interview by authors, April 15, 2017). The co-facilitators held a one day hearing with mayors, but, otherwise, local authorities did not play a significant role in shaping the outcome document (Shari Spiegel, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of Financing for Development, personal interview by authors, April 1, 2017). Groups representing local authorities did not deliver a formal statement at the informal interactive hearing with civil society on April 9, 2015 and the summary of the proceedings do not address local issues (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of Financing for Development 2015c). Much more noticeable was the presence of civil society organizations arguing for various positions related to traditional economic development issues such as tax policy, trade, and debt (Civil Society for Financing for Development 2015).

THE OUTCOME DOCUMENT

The only explicit reference in the final Addis outcome document to issues affecting municipal governments or metropolitan regions is found in paragraph 34, in which member states "acknowledge that expenditures and investments in sustainable development are being devolved to the subnational level, which often lacks adequate technical and technological capacity, financing and support." The paragraph entails further commitments by member states to support local authorities' efforts to build environmentally-sound infrastructure, mobilize revenue, manage debt, improve planning between rural and urban areas, enhance the participation of local communities in decision-making, and address climate change and disaster risk management.[9]

As for direct advocacy by local authorities, GTF sent a May 2015 letter to the co-facilitators seeking further references to local authorities in the outcome document. In addition to attempting to expand the language in paragraph 34, the GTF sought to insert references to the opportunities of urban development in paragraphs 4 (on the considerable challenges facing many countries) and 14 (bridging the infrastructure gap). This letter, however, did not find active support from member states (Shari Spiegel, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of Financing for Development, personal interview by authors, April 1, 2017). A key UCLG member noted that the GTF had originally been formed to overcome complaints that the voices of local authorities were too numerous and too fragmented to engage effectively at the UN, but added that the Addis process was challenging as local authorities did not have the type of recognition they had in UN discussions on urbanization (see below), the UCLG was the only organization of local authorities tracking the Addis process, and it was easily outnumbered by other civil society organizations in seeking limited speaking slots during negotiations (Emilia Saiz, UCLG, email message to authors, April 25, 2017).

Instead, two factors determined the inclusion of paragraph 34: advocacy from France, as well as instructions from the co-facilitators to incorporate the so-called means of implementation (MOI) targets from the draft of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Shari Spiegel, personal interview by authors, April 1, 2017). The French position was not driven by advocacy from local authorities, but rather was due to their government's conviction that local governments are critical in terms of aid effectiveness and capacity building (French negotiator, email interview by authors, April 25, 2017). This conviction was based on the positive experience of the French Development Agency (AFD) in providing loans to local governments in the absence of guarantees from the corresponding federal governments.[10]

Meanwhile, the SDG process increasingly influenced the AAAA process. A working draft of the SDGs had been negotiated by the Open Working Group (OWG) of the General Assembly and would eventually serve as a key input to the final negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which occurred later in 2015. One of the key criticisms of the Millennium Development Goals (the predecessor framework to the SDGs) had been the lack of detail regarding the resources and policies that would be needed for proper

9 See entire paragraph for the full list of commitments.
10 The French negotiator also noted that many French cities provide direct assistance to counterparts in developing countries.

implementation. The OWG addressed this directly by including explicit means of implementation (MOI) targets in each of the goals, as well as in a standalone MOI goal (SDG17). The concept of MOI quickly turned into one of the key flashpoints in discussions between the G77 and the EU/JUSCANZ. The developed countries have a broad understanding of MOI as encompassing all of the various factors necessary to spur development, going beyond financing to also include an effective tax system, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, effective institutions and educational systems, etc. The G77 countries have historically held to a more limited view of MOI as commitments by developed countries to provide increased ODA in order to assist developing countries in implementing sustainable development policies that they could otherwise not finance.

As the Addis negotiations progressed, the need to further define the relationship between the Financing for Development workstream and the SDGs and their MOI became increasingly apparent. Two opposing viewpoints emerged: EU/JUSCANZ viewed the references to MOI in the SDGs as an outline, whereas the AAAA would fill in the specific details. The G77, on the other hand, saw both the AAAA and the SDGs as separate but complementary commitments by developed countries, neither of which should be used as an excuse to shirk the other. The co-facilitators, needing to maintain impartiality, hedged their bets by incorporating references to the MOI targets in the Addis draft, including those from SDG 11 ("Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable") (United Nations 2014).

Negotiations among member states on the AAAA eventually boiled down to a fierce battle between the developed and developing countries on a series of long-simmering contentious issues, including a non-stop round-the-clock session in New York from June 19-21. While the final round in New York produced significant progress on issues related to technology facilitation, international trade, and sovereign debt, the most important unresolved issue was the role of the UN in setting global norms on tax policy.[11] Surrounding that topic were a set of sticking issues including the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and the standard conversation on whether and how to refer to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.[12] While each of these political issues had in theory local application, that perspective was not considered with regard to these issues in the final outcome document. Due to the deadlock in New York, the negotiations continued at the conference in Addis Ababa, where a final compromise, specifically on the tax issue, was reached.

CONCLUSION

The acknowledgement of the city as a political unit and the role of local authorities in financing development was largely limited to a single paragraph in the AAAA and clearly did not play an outsized role in the negotiations, which were overshadowed by more contentious issues.

As with all intergovernmentally negotiated outcomes at the UN, the AAAA is an agenda among member states and the co-facilitators paid significantly more heed to the voices of those member states, who can block

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11 Members of the G77 sought to elevate an existing panel of tax experts at the UN into an intergovernmental body that could negotiated international tax rules. In particular, they were reacting to the fact that much of the work on global tax norms was occurring at the OECD, which the G77 criticized for being a less inclusive body where they did not have an equal seat at the table. The final compromise in Addis Ababa strengthened the committee, but did not change its fundamental nature as a body of experts serving in their personal, rather than national, capacities. See http://www.euractiv.com/section/development-policy/news/addis-aba-ba-development-financing-conference-stumbles-on-tax-evasion/

12 The concept of CBDR was established in the specific context of environmental degradation as principle 7 of the outcome document to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the so-called Rio Earth Summit) in 1992. Principle 7 states, "States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command." CBDR was also included in the treaty establishing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). UNFCCC Article 3(1) states, "The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof." At Addis and during practically all other UN negotiations, the developing countries attempt to expand CBDR into a broad principle of development, something completely rejected by the developed countries, which insist that each country must bear the primary responsibility for their own development. Furthermore, argue the developed countries, CBDR was limited in scope to environmental degradation and climate emissions, but that reality has changed since 1992, with China as the top carbon emitter and India in the fourth position. Many UN documents contain a paragraph devoted to specific development challenges. Palestine, an observer state at the UN, traditionally seeks to add "countries under foreign occupation" to this list, something which Israel opposes. In the context of Addis, there was a widely acknowledged (though not universally accepted) informal agreement that foreign occupation would not be included in the AAAA, which was seen as more technical in nature, in exchange for being included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was more overtly political. A reference to the need for efforts "to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation," was included in paragraph 35 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

consensus outcomes, than to those of civil society, who cannot. The French negotiator echoed this view, acknowledging that local authorities are closer to ordinary citizens than central governments and better able to experiment with policies, but are fragmented by many divides (developed vs. developing, large vs. small, elected officials vs. appointed) and unable to compete with member states at the UN. The inclusion of paragraph 34 largely rested on French advocacy, as well as the co-facilitator's need to respond to the inclusion of a sustainable development goal on cities (SDG11) in the final report of the Open Working Group.

Yet the inclusion of paragraph 34 in the AAAA should not be seen in isolation, but rather in the broader context of the other negotiations of 2015-6. It was a sufficient placeholder to maintain the momentum that had begun with Sendai and the achievement of a cities goal in the repot of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, and which would culminate with the challenges, concerns, and opportunities of local authorities taking center stage during the negotiations that led up to the Habitat 3 conference in October 2016. It also ensured that local issues are included in the follow up and review framework for the AAAA, as demonstrated by the inclusion of local issues in the thematic chapter of the upcoming 2018 edition of the annual report on AAAA follow-up (Shari Spiegel, email message to authors, November 19, 2017).

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, SEPTEMBER, 2015

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted on September 27, 2015 in New York at the largest gathering of world leaders in UN history (Sengupta 2015). The non-legally binding agenda created a universal framework for sustainable development that included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 individual targets which member states would seek to fulfill over the 15-year period starting on January 1, 2016. The SDGs built on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were adopted in 2000 and whose 15-year time frame ended on December 31, 2015. The SDGs attempted to improve upon the MDGs in several key ways. First, member states negotiated the SDGs directly through an Open Working Group (OWG), unlike the MDGs, which were originally developed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his advisors. Second, the SDGs are universal and to be implemented by all member states equally, unlike the MDGs, which focused on goals for developing countries. Third, the SDGs focus more broadly on the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages between them, whereas the MDGs dealt largely with social issues and treated each goal separately. Fourth, a follow-up and review framework is built into the 2030 Agenda, whereas follow-up to the MDGs was largely an afterthought. And fifth, the means of implementation (MOI) were an explicit part of the development of the Agenda, including specific MOI targets for each goal (United Nations n.d.). The recognition of the importance of MOI was also demonstrated by the much closer coordination between the timing of the SDGs and the AAAA as seen by the decision to hold the Addis conference before the SDG summit (whereas the 2002 Monterrey Conference came two years after the adoption of the MDGs) (Shari Spiegel, email message to authors, November 19, 2017).

THE PROCESS

The SDG process was kicked off by a report published in May 2013 by a "High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda," which had been convened by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in July 2012 (United Nations 2013). The panel's 27 members included the three co-chairs (the heads of state of the United Kingdom, Liberia, and Indonesia), numerous ministers and other federal officials from various countries, and one mayor (Kadir Topba, the mayor of Istanbul and President of United Cities and Local Governments) (United Nations 2012). The final report included an illustrative set of 12 possible goals that could serve as the basis for the discussion by member states. A city-focused goal was not included, though the report did address cities in a section on "Addressing cross-cutting issues," in which it was noted that "cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost." (United Nations 2013)

Member states, in the context of the meetings of the OWG, held 13 sessions over the course of 2013-2014 during which the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets were developed. The OWG was chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Kenya and Hungary and used an "innovative, constituency-based system of representation" in which member states participated in groups (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.(b)).[13] UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described the process as "the most inclusive and transparent negotiation process in UN history." (United Nations 2015a) Efforts were made to seek input far beyond the traditional UN orbit, including a UN-led process that collected "the perspectives on the 'world we want' from over 1 million people around the globe" during a year-long process that involved 88 national consultations and 11 thematic consultations (United Nations Development Group 2013). The UN also coordinated a global survey in which over 9 million respondents cast votes for priorities to be included in the goals via physical ballots, online, or SMS messages (MY World 2015).

A potential goal for cities was discussed at the seventh meeting of the OWG on January 6-10, 2014 in New York. No consensus was reached on the issue (United Nations 2015b). Colombia and Guatemala and the fora for local authorities voiced strong support for a standalone goal, while others noted that urban issues could be captured in goals on transport or infrastructure "in order to ensure that a focus on urbanization would not detract from addressing the needs of rural populations." (International Institute for Sustainable Development 2015) The key role of cities in addressing sustainable development was widely recognized, but many delegations were concerned that there were too many goals and that urban issues could be handled by incorporating specific reference to cities in the targets of other goals or by taking an urban/rural lens to tracking overall performance across the framework (Genevieve Maricle, Senior Policy Advisor to U.S. Ambassador Elizabeth Cousens, telephone interview by authors, October 28, 2017). The OWG again addressed cities at its 10th and 11th sessions and a goal on "cities and human settlements" was eventually included by the co-chairs in the "zero draft" of goals and targets shared with the member states in June 2014 (United Nations 2015c).

The cities goal was included in the first draft of the SDGs due to active lobbying by UN-Habitat, "lukewarm support" from many delegations, and the absence of strong opposition (Genevieve Maricle, telephone interview by authors, October 28, 2017). This lack of opposition was largely due to the widely held belief that the OWG report was not considered at the time to be a final text of the SDGs, and that the push for streamlining could be made more forcefully during final negotiations, when the member states would once again have an opportunity to reshape the draft goals (Genevieve Maricle, telephone interview by authors, October 28, 2017; United Nations 2015d; United Nations 2015e). The OWG concluded its work in July 2014 by forwarding a report containing a draft of the 17 SDGs and 169 targets to the General Assembly, including SDG 11 on cities and human settlements, the so-called "Cities" goal.

Building on the report of the OWG, member states engaged in a standard process of intergovernmental negotiations, beginning with a formal stocktaking in January 2015. From February to May, formal meetings were convened on each of the anticipated sections of the final outcome document: a political declaration, the SDGs and targets, the means of implementation, and follow-up and review. In the interval since the end of the OWG's work, the Group of 77 and China decided that the content of the draft SDGs and targets contained in the OWG's report should not be reopened, a view which they pronounced forcefully at the session on the goals and targets, held on March 23, 2015 (United Nations 2015f). Many EU and JUSCANZ member states grudgingly acknowledged the futility of seeking to reopen the text of the SDGs in light of the fact that the co-facilitators had largely accepted the G77 view (as it dramatically reduced the amount of open text) (Genevieve Maricle, telephone interview by authors, October 28, 2017). As a result, the discussions during this session were largely devoted to whether the targets should undergo "technical proofing" (i.e. adjusting targets to ensure the ability to collect statistical indicator data to accurately measure implementation). The G77, however, rejected such proofing, seeing it as a politically-motivated attempt to reopen the goals and targets (United Nations 2015g).

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13 The United States, Canada, and Israel, for example, formed a group. The composition of the country groups was established on 22nd of January 2013 by decision 67/555 of the General Assembly, see http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/L.48/Rev.1&Lang=E

Civil society participants were able to participate in these negotiations through formal statements from the floor. A final three rounds of negotiations were held in June and July at the last of which member states were able to reach consensus on the final version of the outcome document, formally known as "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which was to be adopted at the September 2015 summit.

While urban issues receive mention in the formal outcome document, the most important recognition of such concerns were contained in SDG 11. Goal 11 seeks to make cities "inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable." Its language, recognizing both communities and cities, is not particularly precise, and intentionally so. Urbanization and its associated issues did not emerge as particularly difficult or contentious negotiating points. Some member states expressed concern that a separate goal on urban issues might come at the expense of attention to rural issues and areas. It was this balance between urban and rural, rather than explicitly urban issues such as density or governance, that sat at the center of the question about a cities SDG. The structure of the negotiations allowed civil society organizations to issue statements in the negotiating room before official sessions began. These statements held potential influence in that they could be integrated into the text by the co-facilitators. Other goals were pushed forcefully by member states, but an urban goal, unlike an ocean goal for instance, was never the highest priority of an influential member state or group of member states. Meanwhile, however, and perhaps more importantly for the development of SDG 11, UN-Habitat was separately pushing behind the scenes and within the UN bureaucracy for a city goal. Goal 11 was among the later goals to be decided upon and, when compared with other goals, not among the most contentious (Elizabeth Cousens, U.S. Representative to the UN Economic and Social Council, telephone interview by authors, September 26, 2017).

The unique negotiating structure of the SDG process, with its country groups, meant that traditional blocs such as the G77 and the EU could not as easily align around political issues (Elizabeth Cousens, telephone interview by authors, September 26, 2017). The most contentious issues included how to finance the goals, language on gender and sexual health and reproductive rights, the issue of CBDR, the inclusion of goal 16 on peaceful and just societies, how to address climate change language without prejudging upcoming negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (which eventually led to the Paris Agreement), and sensitive language on "foreign occupation" referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Genevieve Maricle, telephone interview by authors, October 28, 2017; International Institute for Sustainable Development 2015b).

In addition to those recurring political points, negotiators had to navigate the simultaneous negotiations occurring around the AAAA by defining the relationship between the two agendas. This relationship had quickly become a flashpoint, as JUSCANZ and EU countries argued that the AAAA should fulfill the role of MOI for the SDGs in order to create coherence (United Nations 2015h; United Nations 2015i). The G77, on the other hand, saw the two streams as historically independent but complementary, and accused developed countries of trying to shirk their commitments regarding MOI, which they largely viewed as ODA (United Nations 2015j). Ultimately, UN member states negotiated a strained text as part of the 2030 Agenda outcome document aiming to explain the relationship between AAAA and the SDGs. According to paragraph 40, the 2030 Agenda would be supported by "the concrete policies and actions as outlined in the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015." Furthermore, the document attempted to define the relationship between the two agendas by recognizing that the AAAA "is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and "that the full implementation of the Ababa Action Agenda is critical for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets." JUSCANZ and EU member states could now argue that the AAAA was a more detailed version of the SDG's MOI (in essence, they could ignore the SDG's MOI by focusing on the AAAA), while the G77 argued that the AAAA and the SDGs' MOI were separate (albeit complementary) commitments. In other words, member states overcame two seemingly unbridgeable positions by relying on a vague formulation that allowed for alternate interpretations.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was widely hailed as a historic moment, albeit with the full knowledge that the Agenda's lasting significance would be judged critically through the lens of member states' steps to fulfill their commitments (United Nations 2015k). Yet for local authorities, the inclusion of a sustainable development goal on cities firmly placed urban issues on the global sustainable development agenda and ensured they would be included as part of the formal follow-up and review process for the 2030 Agenda, including in official reports such as the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) and formal meetings such as the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.[14] The adoption of the SDGs also created overwhelming momentum in the buildup to the Habitat III conference, which was widely cited as the first "implementation conference" following the adoption of the AAAA and the SDGs (as well as the Paris Agreement on climate change) (Cities Alliance 2015, 7). Many commentators noted that cities and local authorities are the frontline in the battle for sustainable development, and the SDGs established a solid foundation for a formal monitoring of steps to address sustainable development at the local level (Carlton 2016). Others looked forward to Habitat III as an opportunity to consolidate the progress in addressing urbanization and to fill the gaps in areas where the SDGs do not sufficiently address urban challenges (Cities Alliance 2015, 7).

THE *NEW URBAN AGENDA*, QUITO, ECUADOR, OCTOBER, 2016

The *New Urban Agenda* (NUA) was adopted on October 20, 2016 in Quito, Ecuador on the final day of Habitat 3. Habitat 3 was preceded first by the UN Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976, so called Habitat I, and then by the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul in 1996, or Habitat II. A number of notable shifts took place between the first two Habitats which ultimately influenced the shape of the Habitat III. First, whereas Habitat I focused on national policies that could shape or even discourage unruly urbanization, Habitat II focused more explicitly on cities (taking on the name the "City Summit") and the question of shelter within them (United Nations 1976; United Nations 1996).[15] Second, the focus on urban issues prompted UN officials to recognize local authorities and civil society members for participation in Istanbul, including in dialogue with member states. These developments continued in Quito, thought altered by the 20-year gap. At Habitat 3 the focus on cities increased while the issue of settlements was reduced to one component of urbanization. The participation of local authorities and civil society included more than 36,000 representatives in Quito, including as members of official national delegations (U.S. Department of State 2016).

Habitat III was shaped by a third and final legacy of the preceding meetings. The Vancouver and Istanbul conferences proved crucial to the development of UN-Habitat as it exists today. Habitat I saw the creation of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement which served as the executive secretariat to a corresponding intergovernmental commission. The Centre, commonly known as Habitat, was subsequently strengthened by Istanbul's "Habitat Agenda" and ultimately became a full programme, UN-Habitat, in 2002 (General Assembly resolution 56/206 2002). UN-Habitat provided the secretariat for the Habitat III, and its Executive Director, Joan Clos, served as the conference's Secretary General. This put UN-Habitat in the somewhat precarious role of being both the conference coordinator and, if the history of previous conference with regards to UN-Habitat held true, a self-interested party.

THE PROCESS

The inclusion of local government officials as delegates to Habitat II laid a groundwork for extensive participation by local actors and civil society in the Habitat III process in advance of the conference in Quito. Participation in the *New Urban Agenda* process took multiple forms. First, beginning nearly two years before

14 See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport/2019 for more information on the GSDR and HLPF.
15 See also "The Habitat Agenda: Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements," paragraph 2: "We have considered, with a sense of urgency, the continuing deterio-ration of conditions of shelter and human settlements. At the same time, we recognize cities and towns as centres of civilization, generating economic development and social, cultural, spiritual and scientific advancement."

the final conference, the Secretariat of the conference organized 10 policy units composed of academics, practitioners, and civil society experts.[16] These policy units ultimately produced policy papers that were intended to inform the negotiations. Member states were offered the opportunity to provide feedback into these documents but were not officially involved in drafting them. In this sense, the policy units and associated papers were undertaken in a partnership between the Secretariat and experts, including local actors.

In addition to the policy units, the Secretariat also helped facilitate seven thematic and four regional meetings. These meetings were technically hosted by member states. Participants included government officials, along with experts, local actors, and civil society. The four regional meetings produced outcome documents which, while the product of exchange between all involved, were ultimately approved only by the member states, as is typical in UN processes. In this sense, the thematic and regional meetings were something of a hybrid allowing member state participation but orchestrated to encourage the open exchange of expertise.

The negotiations themselves were organized around three meetings of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), the first in New York, U.S.A., on September 17-18, 2014, the second in Nairobi, Kenya, on April 14-16, 2015, and the third in Surabaya, Indonesia, on July 25-27, 2016. "Informal" sessions between member states were held in New York in between the respective meetings of the PrepCom. Participation of local actors and civil society in meetings of the PrepCom and the "informal" negotiations were determined by modality negotiations which took place between member states in New York in October and November of 2015, as part of the annual resolution on the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II and the strengthening of UN-Habitat in the Second Committee of the General Assembly.

Modalities negotiations for UN conferences are often set well before the actual conferences and have significant implications for civil society and local authority participation. The modalities for Habitat III, like others, involved difficult discussions due to political issues often unrelated to the topic at hand. In this case, the negotiators for the United States and the European Union pushed hard for a robust civil society presence. The biggest opponents were Russia and China, which often demand that member states retain the right to block particular NGOs anonymously and without explanation (in the case of China, particularly ones that have had any contact with or position on Taiwan), and Argentina, which, in this case, was largely driven by concerns related to local authorities from the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas. As noted above, the modalities for the summit to adopt the 2030 Agenda were the most progressive in terms of civil society participation at the UN, and the negotiators for the Habitat III modalities from the United States and the European Union were successful in drawing upon that precedent.

The agreed upon modalities ensured that local actors and civil society would be present in the negotiating room and would have the opportunity to offer comment. Most important among these groups were the General Assembly of Partners and the Huairou Commission, among others. There were limits to such participation, however, formal and informal. While local actors and civil society could offer comment at the end of sessions, they could not intervene formally during sessions. This right was reserved for member states. Furthermore, the plodding nature of the negotiating sessions led member states to organize so-called "informal informal" negotiations. Such sessions were not chaired by the co-facilitators but rather by representatives from various member states. These sessions, which focused on contentious issues and tended to be more forthright, did not include local actors and civil society. And, ultimately, the final emergency negotiating session held in New York on September 7-11 and that included policy exchanges akin to marketplace trading was also closed to local actors and civil society. Ultimately, the *New Urban Agenda* process offered a myriad of models for the participation of local actors and civil society. In certain instances, such as the policy units, they were effectively in the lead. In other instances, such as the final negotiations, the process was effectively closed to everyone by member states.

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16 For a full list of the units see: https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/policy.

THE OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Given its explicit focus on urbanization, the concerns and actions of both municipalities and metropolitan regions naturally feature more prominently in the *New Urban Agenda* than in the other outcome documents. The importance of urbanization as a "transformative trend" is laid out in paragraph 2, while the relevance of cities and their management to key issues such as poverty, hunger, empowerment of women and girls, and others is detailed in paragraph 4. Page one of the *New Urban Agenda* leaves no doubt as to the centrality of urbanization and its relevance to global challenges (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016). Nonetheless, the more granular questions of cities as political actors, their role in the implementation of the *New Urban Agenda* and source of policy solutions is in fact more fraught.

The "we" in the NUA refers to the member states that negotiated and adopted the agenda; nonetheless, the NUA undoubtedly recognizes the importance of cities-based action. The NUA clearly lays out various actions that could enhance the ability of municipalities to pursue solutions at the local level (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016). Paragraph 15(c)(ii), for example, identifies the commitment to "strengthening urban governance, with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include urban stakeholders." Paragraph 15(c)(iv), recognizes the need to ensure that cities have the financial and budgetary capacity to act:

The support of effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments enabling strengthened municipal finance and local fiscal systems in order to create, sustain and share the value generated by sustainable urban development in an inclusive manner.[17]

The recognition of the city as a political unit and actor can be found both in the underlying logic of the NUA—cities are key to solving global problems—and in its repeated attention to the questions of the machination of municipal governments, including quality of finance and sustainability of finance. The past two decades have seen a proliferation of city networks, with more than 200 in existence by the end of 2016 (Acuto 2016). These networks build on two particular strengths of cities: their willingness to develop and share policy solutions, and their capacity to implement them—in short, they are good at knowledge and action. In acknowledging the importance of cities, did the *New Urban Agenda* also recognize these particular strengths?

The first question breaks down to two parts: recognizing the particular value of local knowledge and then acknowledging the processes that encourage the implementation and sharing such knowledge. On the first account, paragraph 29 of NUA (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016) commits member states to working with local communities and local governments to identify opportunities for engaging and developing local, durable and dignified solutions while ensuring that aid also flows to affected persons and host communities to prevent regression of their development. Meanwhile, drawing on the importance of local knowledge in the Sendai Framework, paragraph 79 commits member states to "ensuring timely and effective local responses to address the immediate needs of inhabitants affected by natural and human-made disasters and conflicts." These references acknowledge the importance of local knowledge and solutions but they do not go so far as to identify the local forms of knowledge to which national governments or UN-Habitat have not traditionally developed.[18] Meanwhile, existing networks of local governments—such as United Cities and Local Governments, Local Governments for Sustainability, Polis, and C40—which are rarely dependent upon national governments for support, are mentioned in paragraphs 149, 150 and 151 of the "Means of Implementation" section.

For a number of member states, including the United States, this attention to networks and partnership was crucial not only because it reflected extensive infrastructure already developed and work underway, but also because it diversified the means by which the NUA would be implemented. Multiple member states argued that

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17 Paragraph 139 also calls attention to local budgetary and debt issues.
18 See extended literature on forms of local knowledge, including: James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Easterling, *Extra-statecraft*; Michael Ignatieff, *The Ordinary Virtues* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017). And for criticisms, see, for example, Owen Hatherley, *Landscapes of*

an all-of-the-above approach—to include UN agencies, national governments, local governments, civil society, and the private sector—was needed for implementation. While consistent with the multiple scales at which urban issues are influenced—global, national, regional, local—this approach also reflected a fraught bureaucratic and political battle that overshadowed much of the negotiations (Scruggs 2017).

Not unlike the preceding outcome documents, the NUA was subject to contentious overtly geopolitical debate. As with the Sendai Framework, the AAAA, and the 2030 Agenda, CBDR and tech transfer were focal points of barbed exchanges during negotiations. The NUA, however, differed from those earlier agreements in that it had to honor or reflect the preceding agreements. UN negotiations place great importance on precedent. But a shared recognition of the importance of precedent does not guarantee a shared interpretation of its appropriate use. To the contrary, it can encourage liberal interpretations, misrepresentations and cherry-picking. In Paragraph 6 of the *New Urban Agenda*, the member states agreed that the previous outcomes mattered. But the fraught negotiations over numerous subsequent paragraphs, including many of which are no longer in the document, showed disagreement over the spirit and authority of those documents. Reference to the Paris Agreement on climate change in particular added an additional political hotspot.

Nonetheless, the most contentious overtly political issue related to the role of UN-Habitat in the implementation and follow up and review of the NUA. It was the position of the United States, Japan, the EU and others that the NUA was not the appropriate venue, given the existence of a governing council in Nairobi, to determine UN-Habitat's future, including the question of universal membership.[19] Finally, those member states did not believe UN-Habitat should be recognized as the lead implementer of the NUA or as the lead UN agency on urbanization. Meanwhile, it was the position of Kenya, Brazil, and generally speaking the G77 countries that UN-Habitat should be expanded to include universal membership, and recognized as the lead implementer of the NUA as well as UN lead on urbanization issues. The latter outcome would have likely resulted profound bureaucratic and budgetary implication at the UN.[20] The compromise, outlined throughout the document but most importantly in paragraphs 162-174, recognized UN-Habitat as a "focal point" for urbanization within the UN and effectively punted questions around finance and governing structure to the a future session of the UN General Assembly, at which point a decision would be taken based upon an "independent assessment" produced at the request of the Secretary-General.

Finally, a select number of issues proved to be both overtly political and directly related to the topic at hand, sustainable urbanization. Notable among these was the issue of the "Right to the City."[21] While the United States, India, and others did not support the recognition of a new right, Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, among others, saw in the NUA a crucial moment to expand recognition of a right codified by some of their own countries. This issue was largely settled in an "informal informal" negotiation in New York with language in paragraph 11 that reconciled the legalistic approach of the United States, the sovereignty-centered approach of the likes of India and Russia, and the value Brazil and others placed on referencing the "Right to the City."

A second contentious issue developed around the question of migrants and refugees. Rather than owing to bureaucratic in-battles, this issue stemmed from the global refugee crisis of 2015-2016. The Syrian refugee crisis in particular had brought a regional and geopolitical issue to bear on the social fabric and budgets of cities. A key sticking point here was the question of guaranteeing "access to services" regardless of "migratory status," something not favored by the European Union or, in theory, by the United States. The compromise

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Communism (New York: The .New Press, 2015), chapter 7.

19 The Governing Council of UN-Habitat has a limited membership of 58 member states with specific allocations for each geographical region. Several African countries, Kenya in particular, have been outspoken about the desire to turn the Governing Council into a universal body in which all member states can participate, likely out of a desire to increase its prominence and legitimacy and broaden its donor base. The United States and several other countries oppose universal membership out of a belief that it will simply exacerbate the politicization of the governance of UN-Habitat, making it even more unwieldy. Critics of universalization also note that the universalization of the UN Environment Programme (also based in Nairobi) has not led to any increase in its donor base.

20 All UN conference outcome documents are adopted by the General Assembly and then sent to the General Assembly's Fifth Committee where they are analyzed for budgetary implications. Any new mandate given by member states to UN-Habitat related to implementation of the NUA would therefore require that the Fifth Committee provide new positions and/or funding for consultants, etc., to the organization from the regular budget of the UN.

21 The term Right to the City originates with Henri Lefebrve in 1968.

here was developed during the final emergency negotiating session in New York. Captured most importantly in paragraph 29, the compromise focuses on the rights of migrants regardless of status rather than on access to services.

A third notable debate sprung up around the ability of cities and metropolitan regions to in fact lead on NUA implementation. While the relevance of cities as political actors, sources of knowledge, and even implementers of the NUA is found throughout the NUA, no consensus could be found regarding the independence or agency of cities to act on the implementation of the NUA. The acknowledgement of local governments, in fact, meant that for member states to find consensus, their agency had to be muddled. Representatives from federalized or decentralized member states, like Canada or the United States, were not empowered to make commitments of action on decisions whose powers sat at the state/province, county, or city level. Reference to national urban policies, for example, were a contentious issue for such decentralized countries, and as such introduction of the phrase can be found paragraph 89 of the "Effective Implementation" section in which member states agreed "to take measures to establish legal and policy frameworks, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, to enhance governments' ability to effectively implement national urban policies, as appropriate." (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016, par. 89)[22]

In a somewhat inverse dynamic, negotiators from more centralized member states, while authorized to acknowledge the importance of cities, were clearly not authorized to redistribute powers away from the central government to lower levels or to acknowledge certain political rights within cities. Paragraph 13(b) of the "Our Shared Vision" section includes one such introduction, when member states agree to promote cities that "engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants; prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces friendly for families; enhance social and intergenerational interactions, cultural expressions and political participation, as appropriate." (General Assembly resolution 71/256 2016, par. 13(b)) As a result of these dynamics, the phrase "as appropriate" appears 17 times in a 24-page document. Indeed, as the negotiations proceeded it became increasingly clear that the cost of acknowledging cities and local actors would be the introduction of phrasing the limited any clarity on their agency.

CONCLUSION

More than the previously negotiations and outcome documents, the Habitat 3 process and the NUA accessed the knowledge of local government and actors and recognized their importance as political actors and implementers. Networks organized around cities and civil society focused on urbanization issues were active in the run up to negotiations and frequently present in the negotiating room. Inclusion in the process, and continue access to the diplomats of member states, meant that the expertise held by these locally-focused groups allowed many of their equities and much of their expertise to find their way into the NUA. Nonetheless, such inclusion ultimately depended upon the support of the member states whose focus had to move back and forth between issues related to sustainable urbanization and more the more tradition policy questions of multilateral geopolitics.

From the participation of mayors on the last day in Sendai to the omnipresence of mayors in Quito, the concerns and interests of cities and metropolitan regions were visible during the major international conferences of 2015-2016. Even before the conferences themselves, groups like the General Assembly of Partners, ICLEI, UCLG, and others sought to ensure that municipal concerns were heard during negotiations and integrated into outcome documents.

Some practices worked better than others. In most cases, precedent was crucial, and reference to the catch-all "local" appears to have been more palatable to negotiators than to explicitly urban issues. Early advocacy,

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22 Another example can be found in NUA on p. 5, para. 15(b): "Recognize the leading role of national governments, as appropriate, in the definition and implementation of inclusive and effective urban policies and legislation for sustainable urban development."

before the final negotiating session and with a sense for other ongoing, parallel negotiations, was key to influence. Nonetheless, a wide gap still exists between those conducting UN negotiations and urban expertise and interests. The politics of the international system, in every case, inevitably overwhelmed the perspectives, capacities, and concerns of cities, including in the development of the urban focused *New Urban Agenda*.

Two sobering conclusions can be reached regarding advocacy by local authorities during negotiations at the UN. First, the key to getting language included in outcome documents depended largely on timing and access to either the co-facilitators or powerful member states that could champion the language. The first window of opportunity involves the co-facilitators, who are largely responsible for the shape of the early drafts and can easily include language that, if uncontroversial, can, through sheer inertia, remain until the final outcome, as happened with SDG 11 in the report of the Open Working Group. Once negotiations are underway in earnest, however, pressure to produce an outcome document mounts, and the co-facilitators are much more at the mercy of the member states. Successful advocacy at this stage relies on the presence of a powerful member state willing to champion such language, as with the case of France in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Once this final stage of a negotiation is reached, the co-facilitator's focus is reduced almost entirely to the outstanding areas of disagreement between member states, and advocacy by local authorities or other groups is very unlikely to be effective in shaping the document if a member state is not willing to champion the cause.

The second conclusion follows directly from the first, namely that the fraught geopolitical issues that dominated intergovernmental negotiations and processes in 2015-2016 often distracted from, or failed to add to, the discrete issue at hand, whether it be disaster risk reduction or sustainable urbanization. This phenomena reduces the space for dialogue with non-state actors, creating a challenging obstacle for local authorities to make their voices heard. Strategically, it creates a strong incentive to focus advocacy activities on the early stages of the intergovernmental process, i.e. before the endgame in which the window closes to all but the most powerful member states.

With all of these factors in mind, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the widespread acknowledgment of the importance of cities has not been met with a consensus on how to address the treatment of local governance in intergovernmental negotiations. Local forces remain largely subject to their ability to convince powerful actors (i.e. co-facilitators, bureaucratic organizations such as UN-Habitat, or powerful member state delegations) in seeking to influence multilateral intergovernmental outcomes. And yet despite these challenges, it is also incumbent to ask whether the current setup is sufficient for local actors to achieve their objectives at the UN. Many long-time observers of multilateral negotiations related to urban issues note that the measure of success lies not in the technical adequacy of outcome documents, but rather their use as political statements that signify the urgency of addressing key domestic issues. UN outcome documents are extremely useful tools in pushing for domestic funding for urban issues, seeking support for urban-related projects, and fundraising. In this context, action at the UN is simply the first step, with a clear acknowledgment that the real progress on implementation takes place at the local level, largely out of view of the UN and independent of it.

The rise of umbrella advocacy groups for local authorities, like the General Assembly of Partners, signifies the recognition of the heightened role of cities in addressing sustainable development and the need for more coordinated action in seeking to influence intergovernmental negotiations. These approaches, while clearly bearing fruit in 2015, have also come up against significant obstacles. The activity of local authorities can be seen as one part of a much larger debate, namely the resistance of certain member states to the increasingly "multi-stakeholder" model at the UN. These states continue to see the UN as an organization of and for member states and refuse to recognize the ability of local authorities (or the private sector, civil society, academia, indigenous groups, etc.) to speak on their own behalf in a way which might contradict the official government voice.

The adaptability of the United Nations, its agencies, and other international organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to the emergence of new powers has long been a source of controversy and tension. Much of this discussion has focused around the emergence of new powers such as India and China and, in particular, the United Nations Security Council. But over the last five years, cities have also assumed larger roles on the global stage. Whether UN processes can adapt to their particular perspectives and, increasingly, their collective voice will influence both the ability of the UN to deliver on its mission and, just as importantly, its legitimacy itself.

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