



Program Alternative Governance of Urban Settlements
PAGUS INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC NETWORK
In collaboration with IASQ

MANIFESTO TO THE UN PACT FOR THE FUTURE

As academics, experts, and researchers worldwide, we invite the global range of authorities and organisations to stimulate and support all initiatives that are focused on addressing the severe challenges of our time, especially concerning the urbanization issues. We regard it as vital to mitigate the impacts resulting from the deepening climate change and to face the challenge of improving the overall living conditions for humankind on planet Earth.

Considering that:

- It is undisputable that we are witnessing an acceleration in climate change. This threatens humanity's living conditions, both now and for future generations. There is an immediate need to define operational strategies and launch shared initiatives for ensuring global, resilient developments that protect the environment and enhance collective well-being.
- UN, UNDP, UN-HABITAT, amongst many other agencies, warn that the current uncurbed growth of megacities and huge urban areas needs to happen in sustainable ways that mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. We consider that AGENDA 2030, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 11, do not set out a coherent and systematic approach towards sustainable, people-centred urbanisation. They present an insufficiently integrated development strategy for urban and rural areas.
- The impacts of climate change on Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and, indeed, in the developed global North, are already dramatic. The inadequate international response to climate change-related natural disasters, food and energy crises, and recurrent pandemics, further highlights the lack of long-term strategies. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive vision and approach.
- Internal and international people migrations, resulting from economic disruptions, wars, conflicts and regional crises, are accelerating the growth of massive urban agglomerations. These are increasingly significant in Asia and Africa. The numbers of people who are permanently living in marginal and unhealthy informal settlements has reached crisis levels.
- The growth of new megacities, often in developing countries, requires huge public sector investments. These do not represent a long-term solution. The dominant paradigm of ever-greater urbanisation, which currently encompasses 70% of the global population, requires urgent review and new policies to reduce this trend.

The contemporary, one-sided, emphasis on technical and economic solutions, to address issues of urbanisation, requires a drastic re-evaluation. It is responsible for losing sight of the conditions facing humanity in cities. A new, resilient, territorial balance must be struck

between urban, peri-urban, and less populated regions, which accounts for the needs of all people, particularly the most vulnerable.

A profound review of the current settlement approach is needed. There have been similar calls since the 1970s. But the extent of the current crisis in cities, and to reduce and prevent the growing negative impacts, requires urgent action..The imposed paradigms of the 20th century are no longer responding to the 21st century challenges.. Different contexts and characteristics require unique responses and solutions.

The signatories declare:

The consequences of contemporary inhumane forms of urbanisation need to be highlighted. The increasing critical urban/peripheral imbalance must be described, explained and challenged. Such a challenge will be based on new theoretical insights and strategic guidelines. It must indicate radical and complementary approaches towards territorial settlement. As such, it will ***pave the way for a real paradigm-shift***¹, which reflects the following:

- ***Recognising*** that the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, catastrophic natural events, health, energy, food crises, wars, migrations, etc., are now evident, critical, and inter-connected, so that it is necessary to intervene urgently and comprehensively to mitigate their short and medium-term effects.
- ***Recalling*** the principles of the UN, the Paris Agreement, the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the indications of the subsequent COPs, and the commitments signed by governments and international organisations, with the aim of mitigating and adapting to the climate catastrophe.
- ***Identifying*** the near-exponential increase in urbanisation flows, which are taking place without adequate controls. This results in the growth of precarious settlements, the abandonment of peripheral and marginal territories, the reckless use of land and natural resources, and close to irreversible levels of environmental pollution and degradation.
- ***Confirming*** the inadequacy of current urban planning and development approaches, which have become subject to market growth imperatives. These are unable to deal with numerous new emergencies. Strategies for "smart" and "15-minute cities" are only temporary palliatives which are unable to solve the structural problems of 21st century urbanisation.
- ***Underlining*** that the growing number of megalopolises and new urban agglomerations are being created outside of any environmental and socio-economic contexts which enhance human dignity and wellbeing. The fact that their development is motivated mainly by economic growth and consumerism diminishes their capacity to provide for daily needs of human welfare and prosperity.
- ***Highlighting*** with concern that governmental, urban and other authorities' attention has been largely deficient, focused on marketisation, and, in some cases, uniformed. There is an urgent need for international bodies, and all stakeholders responsible for territorial and urban development, to take account of these issues, and not to ignore them in their numerous declarations and statements,

Therefore, the signatories will build a comprehensive understanding about:

- ***Contributing*** to presenting practical measures for mitigating and adapting to the climate and biodiversity loss catastrophes. Equally, these will include reducing the negative impacts produced by large urban agglomerations. They will involve regulating the use of natural capital sources, protecting environmental sinks, and limiting the carrying capacity and footprint of human activity.

- **Introducing** a specific objective focused on balanced and sustainable territorial development. This will reduce imbalances between urban and peripheral areas, as complementary elements of an integrated single "smart territory". It will address future strategies and the 2030 Agenda SDGs, particularly reflecting the issues and concerns underpinning SDG 11.
- **Mitigating** urban migration flows towards large cities and the growth of precarious and marginal settlements. It will focus on retaining inhabitants in their territories and revitalising original settlements using new ITC and digital technologies, proper accessibility, enhanced services, and reducing the current gaps that exist within urban areas.
- **Identifying** and implementing new approaches to urban development, spread and extension across territories. They will capitalise on investment in new technologies and remote working methods. These approaches will seek to implement "green" and "circular" economy production and consumption operations. They will not be based on self-contained economic parameters. Such approaches will account for the interrelationships of all societal aspects, emphasising the human values of solidarity, justice, equal worth, human dignity, and capability, such that environmental balance and harmony can be achieved.
- **Spread** awareness among authorities, local communities, and individual citizens on the urgency of urgent collective action to change the current development approaches of, concentration on expanding urban areas. Revitalise smaller towns, villages, and settlements, accompanied by a revitalisation process of production, consumption and distribution, to ensure a balance, permanent relationship with the natural environment.

Through these actions, the PAGUS initiative aims to challenge and change the current approach to urbanisation. It addressed the growing imbalance of urban/peripheral areas. It identifies these impacts as responsible for a significant share of climate change, and the degradation of all Nature. The initiative will significantly contribute to the protection, redevelopment and sustainable use of ecosystem services and natural capital.

We consider that the world is at a pivotal juncture. It requires a strategic action to pave the way for the proposed "paradigm shift" to a more balanced distribution of human scale settlements. The initiative aims, in collaboration with other international experts, organisations, associations, to present to the U.N. Summit-2025 an elaboration of this 2024 Manifesto.

It should pave the way for enabling natural risk prevention, local and resilient economic development, greater social cohesion, improved quality of daily living circumstances, and the conditions for permanent collective and individual well-being.

