

# The Urban Agenda

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## 1. Urban Agenda

The concept of Urban Agenda refers to a strategic document that establishes a policy framework aimed at guiding the development of modern cities in order to respond to relevant urban challenges, such as population growth, mobility, housing, waste management, climate change, and social inclusion [1] (United Nations, 2016).

The original idea of the Urban Agenda was to define a conceptual framework and collection of principles for sustainable urban development; thus, the initiative lacked a normative character. However, with the introduction of the New Urban Agenda, adopted in 2016 at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador [2] (UN-Habitat, 2018), member nations of the UN established a specific, concrete, and universal commitment to promote a new global model for sustainable urbanization. The New Urban Agenda established a global framework with standards and principles for urban planning, construction, development, and management, with the main goal of guiding sustainable urban development and fostering a more positive urban future. The specific focus was on the best practices for managing rapid urbanization, supporting the climate goals under the Paris Agreement, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 11 (“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”) [3] (United Nations, 2015).

The Urban Agenda constitutes a working method and a process for all actors, public and private, that intervene in cities and that seek equitable, fair, and sustainable development from their different fields of action. It is also considered as a frame of reference for urban areas, establishing a range of urban policies of a social, economic, and environmental nature, which can be put into practice by any municipality in a rural or urban environment and by any city, regardless of its location and size, and which concern the entire territory. Urban Agenda proposes the synergy of six main concepts—urban planning and design, urban resiliency, sustainable mobility, economic growth and innovation, governance and decentralization, and equity and inclusion—as shown in Figure 1.

The concept of urban planning and design goes beyond traditional approaches based on the physical layouts of locations; it is a strategic tool to shape cities according to key goals, such as building compact, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, resilient, and economically vibrant urban environments. This concept provides the spatial framework for the implementation and development of other broader goals of the Urban Agenda (equity, sustainability, and prosperity).



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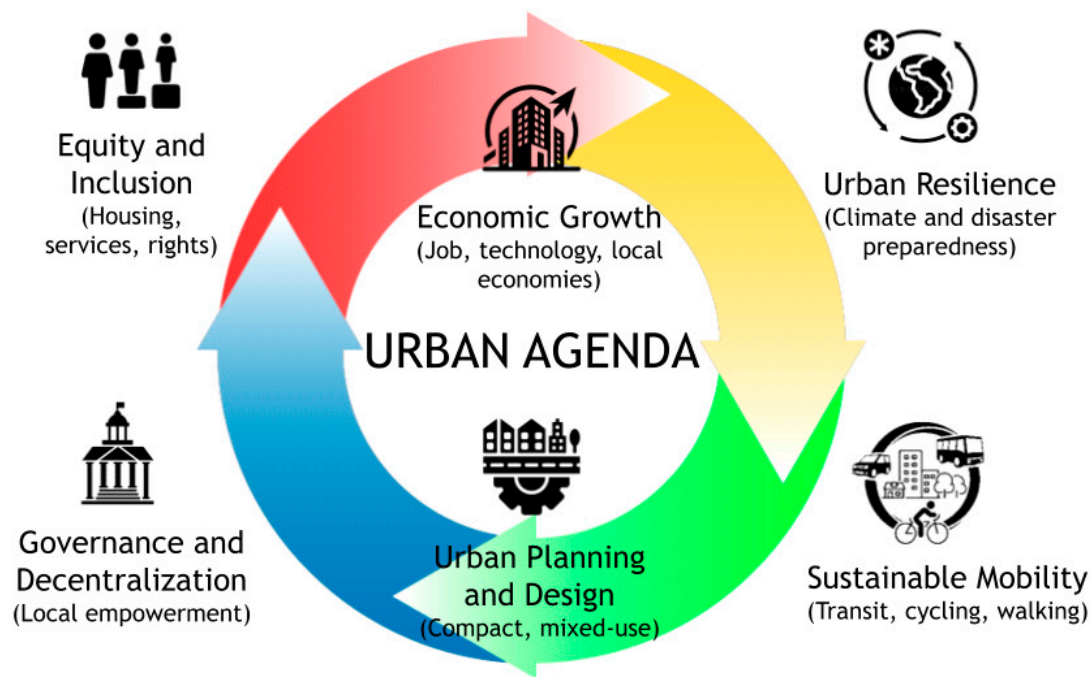


**Figure 1.** Synergy of the six main concepts of the Urban Agenda.

The concept of urban resiliency refers to the creation of cities that are able to anticipate, absorb, adapt, and recover from unforeseen environmental, economic, or social events. The main idea is to build strong and flexible urban environments that guarantee the continuity of public services, protecting lives and livelihoods, and building adaptive capacities for the future.

The concept of sustainable mobility encompasses several key issues related to the design and maintenance of proper transportation systems, following a people-centered paradigm to guarantee their affordability, accessibility, efficiency, safety, and environmental friendliness. Among the relevant key issues, prioritizing public transit, walking, and cycling is key to reducing dependence on private means of transportation and supporting compact, inclusive urban growth.

The concept of economic growth and innovation is focused on promoting and developing the role of cities as drivers of prosperity, productivity, and creativity, without compromising inclusiveness, sustainability, and resiliency. The main idea is to exploit the potential of cities as centers of economic dynamism to generate inclusive prosperity, foster entrepreneurship and technological innovation, and support sustainable industries, with a special focus on reducing inequalities and contributing to environmental and social wellbeing.

The concept of governance and decentralization proposes building effective, inclusive, transparent, and accountable institutions and empowering low-level local governments to allow for urbanization management following a democratic, participatory model. Decentralization is conceived as a key point, alongside coordination with national and global governments and initiatives, to fulfill the goals defined by the Urban Agenda.

Finally, the concept of equity and inclusion is horizontal to all other concepts. This refers to guaranteeing social justice, i.e., ensuring that all citizens have equal opportunities, rights, and access to city benefits, regardless of income, gender, age, ability, migration status, etc. This concept is key for addressing discrimination, poverty, and inequality so that cities become just, inclusive, and participatory environments. Under this concept, urbanization is conceived as a driver of inclusive development rather than exclusion or marginalization.

The New Urban Agenda is structured radially, considering five key elements or implementation pillars to develop the previous concepts: national urban policies, urban legislation, urban planning and design, local economy and finance, and local implementation. These pillars are meant to establish a paradigm shift, moving from traditional top-down approaches for urban planning and development to a new conception of cities, centered on the people, and adopting a holistic view of integral sustainable development. The New Urban Agenda pushes cities to move from a growth-first pattern to a people- and planet-centered urbanization model, adopting flexible, participatory, and inclusive planning strategies developed under an empowered, decentralized, and multi-level governance. Under this new paradigm, cities are conceived to be not reactive and fragmented, but integrated, proactive, and resilient. In this way, they can effectively respond to the main urban challenges, including rapid population growth, mobility, housing and urban infrastructure, climate change, and social inclusion.

The Urban Agenda is a relevant matter because without applying sustainable planning strategies, the rapid urban growth risks worsening inequality, congestion, pollution, and vulnerability to climate impacts. By shaping inclusive, green, and resilient cities, the Urban Agenda provides a blueprint for sustainable development at a global level.

## 2. Implementation, Practical Examples, and Relevance of Urban Agenda

The New Urban Agenda (New Urban Agenda) was never meant to stay abstract. It is framed to work across multiple, interconnected scales through which its pillars are translated into action.

The implementation of the New Urban Agenda pillars has been proposed at different levels:

- At a higher, global level, world institutions are meant to provide the overarching vision, and define the general frameworks and monitoring mechanisms for sustainable urbanization. The highest-level institution is the United Nations, which acts via relevant departments and programs, such as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Other important actors are multilateral development banks (e.g., the World Bank and regional banks), international non-governmental organizations, and academic networks.
- At the national level, national governments and organizations, such as ministries of finance, environment, housing, etc., planning offices, and other institutions in charge of urban development are responsible for framing the actions defined in the general frameworks into realistic national urban policies, taking into account the specific regulations, financing strategies, and institutional limitations.
- At the regional or metropolitan level, regional governments and municipalities are in charge of the coordination and management of urban–rural linkages, metropolitan regions, and cross-boundary systems.
- At the local or city level, the city authorities (city councils, municipal agencies) and relevant actors of the city, such as local businesses, academia, and civil society, work on specific implementation plans to define new models for governance, services, economic growth, and participation.
- Finally, at the community or neighborhood level, associations and movements such as social institutions, community-based organizations, societal and popular organizations, and cooperatives are involved to guarantee that all initiatives related to urban development are people-centered, inclusive, and equitable.

Relevant examples of specific actions to be undertaken at each level include the following: (at the global level) the global monitoring of high-level initiatives, the definition

of global indicators, especially related to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, and the creation of specific contents related to their paradigm and dissemination via open global knowledge-sharing platforms; (at the national level) the development of national urban policies aligned with sustainable development goals, the formulation of a legal basis for decentralization, fiscal transfers, and local empowerment, and the integration of the main pillars of the New Urban Agenda into national strategies and plans for infrastructure investment; (at the metropolitan level) the coordination and integration of metropolitan transportation systems, the definition of strategies for land use, housing, and environmental protection, and the promotion and development of economic clusters and innovation hubs; (at the city level) the implementation of participatory urban planning to ensure compact, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development, the creation of affordable housing and basic service delivery programs, and the development of green infrastructure, resilient buildings, and renewable energy; (at the community level) the implementation of programs for the community-driven upgrading of informal settlements, the promotion of participatory design in public spaces, parks, and transportation nodes, the inclusion of local forces in waste management, energy cooperatives, and microfinance, and the improvement of social cohesion through cultural, educational, and youth programs.

Some specific examples of the implementation of the Urban Agenda around the world include the following: the integration of public transportation and housing policies implemented in Bogotá, Colombia, built around the TransMilenio BRT system to promote accessibility and equity; the integrated and coordinated Urban Agenda for the EU initiative, focusing on the urban dimension and national policies and legislation through the use of specific working groups focused on affordable housing, sustainable mobility, and digital transition; the urban regeneration strategies developed in Nairobi, Kenya, to provide affordable housing, upgrade informal settlements, and undertake resilience planning; and the sustainable mobility policies developed in Toyama, Japan, to encourage walkable neighborhoods, accessible transit, and reduced carbon emissions.

### 3. Related Work

The fundamental criticisms of traditional top-down planning models are not new. In a seminal work, Jacobs (1961) exposed the main weaknesses of the rationalist urban planning approaches developed in the 1950s and 1960s. Jacobs criticized the privacy-oriented, automobile-dependent orthodox approaches and their management of green spaces. Instead, he proposed an innovative use of mixed-use streets, considering sidewalks and parks as the central components of the city. The use of valuable local knowledge and an organic view of urban complexity were also proposed to complement the design paradigm to create diverse, vital, and local communities. Although these criticisms were formulated decades before the New Urban Agenda was proposed, relevant comments were raised, which served as a foundation for proposing a sustainable means of urban development.

Another early work provided useful information for the characterization of urban environments. Sassen (1991) [4] developed a thorough analysis of three main global cities (New York, London, and Tokyo) and reviewed their role as economic centers in the era of globalization, but also their negative aspects as highly concentrated locations of economic power and inequality. Relevant outcomes from the analysis were considered to formulate the Urban Agenda recommendations regarding governance challenges and globalized urban economies.

In his article about urban informality, often referred to as one of the most influential works in critical urban studies, Roy (2005) [5] made strong criticisms of exclusionary urban planning models. Roy formulated informality as a structural condition of cities, especially

when considering a Global South perspective. This concept influenced the New Urban Agenda and led to the proposal of a new paradigm of an inclusive and participative urban planning model. The comments about power, legality, and governance also influenced the New Urban Agenda's commitment to equity and transparency.

A few years before the proposal of the Urban Agenda, Glaeser (2011) [6] highlighted the role of cities as hubs of innovation, productivity, and human capital, providing some foundations for specific pillars included in the Urban Agenda proposal. The arguments about the economic, social, and environmental value of cities contributed to urbanization being positioned as a driving force for prosperity and sustainability, while recognizing the importance of density, connectivity, and human capital. Special recommendations were made for policymakers to avoid inequality and exclusion.

The flagship report by UN-Habitat (2016) [7] presented empirical evidence of the main urbanization trends, providing relevant input for the formulation of the New Urban Agenda. Existing urbanization models were characterized as non-sustainable and the need for new planning approaches that consider governance, finance, and social issues was acknowledged. The main considerations about urbanization and development from the report were crucial in defining the priorities of the New Urban Agenda.

The New Urban Agenda was proposed by the UN (2016) [2]. The formal global policy text was adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, consolidating more than twenty years of prior work regarding a new paradigm for sustainable urbanization. Key aspects, including sustainable development, housing, mobility, resilience, financing, and multi-level governance, were integrated according to the suggestions for urban interventions, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDG 11. At present, the New Urban Agenda is the primary normative framework shaping urban policies and urban strategies at global, national, and /local levels. An edited collection of articles and presentations at Habitat III was published by UN-Habitat (2018) [7], providing the view of scholars and practitioners on relevant subjects, such as urban planning, urban design, land use, and governance, under the New Urban Agenda. Both its theoretical development and the main concepts behind its practical implementations were covered in the collection, which aimed to provide useful hints about how to translate the general principles into local planning and real design practice.

The main concepts and perspectives of the recently proposed New Urban Agenda and its relationship with smart cities were presented in the compilation by Gil-Garcia et al. (2016) [8]. Several key elements were discussed, including innovative technologies, institutional frameworks, evaluation approaches, and case studies. The main focus of the study was to close the gap between theoretical models and real implementations and to demonstrate the need to align digital strategies with social goals. Special emphasis was placed on showing how smart urbanistic approaches help these proposals to reach their desired goals regarding sustainability, inclusion, efficiency, transparency, and participatory governance.

Regarding regional regulations and implementations, the Pact of Amsterdam (European Commission, 2016) [9] was formulated as the main document in the Urban Agenda for the European Union. The pact defines an operational, multi-level governance mechanism to include relevant urban priorities into the policies devised in Europe. The three core pillars of the Urban Agenda for the European Union are summarized in the slogan "better regulation, better funding, better knowledge". These pillars aim to improve the quality of life in urban areas by focusing on the development of effective policies tailored to the real needs of cities. A concrete implementation model at the regional level was proposed, based on discussion with supranational, national, and local actors.

The contributions from Japan and Germany towards urban sustainability were described in the compilation by Müller and Shimizu (2017) [10]. Specific case studies were described, showing approaches to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda concepts to deal with environmental challenges posed by rapid urbanization. The addressed issues included the application of sustainable practices, strategies for climate resilience, the creation of green infrastructure, and the development of urban ecosystem services. The empirical evidence and comparisons provide valuable insights into key concepts of the New Urban Agenda aiming to make cities more environmentally sustainable.

The role of new models for urban governance was discussed by Cruz et al. (2018) [11]. A review of relevant topics related to urban governance was performed, including sustainability, inclusion, politics of local government, and institutional innovation. Specific recommendations were formulated to define the major needs when developing effective urban policies under the New Urban Agenda. The article also helped to identify gaps between the ideal concepts formulated in the New Urban Agenda and the governance initiatives and implementations developed in the real world.

In the last five years, related works have reported a transition from the normative frame proposed by the New Urban Agenda toward concrete studies and applications. Special effort has been put into defining appropriate indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented programs, the grade of success of governance policies, and financing opportunities, among other relevant issues. The incorporation of information and communication technologies into the novel paradigm of smart cities has been extensively studied too.

The United Nations has reviewed the regional implementations of the New Urban Agenda proposals. The review for Europe and North America (United Nations, 2022) [12] presented empirical evidence of the integration of New Urban Agenda concepts at the sub-national and municipal levels. The overall conclusion was that disparities have emerged: whereas these proposals strictly followed the main New Urban Agenda concepts in high-income contexts and obtained good results, less promising outcomes were produced in poorer regions, especially regarding equity, decentralization, and the quality of urban services. The main suggestion was to strengthen regional institutions, since their robustness strongly conditioned the outcomes of New Urban Agenda initiatives. In turn, the 2022 World Cities Report (UN-Habitat, 2022) [13] focused on New Urban Agenda concepts related to urban resilience, equity, and future thinking. A data-driven analysis was conducted, and empirical evidence was presented about urban vulnerabilities and the role of policies to provide proper financing, planning, and governance to develop the New Urban Agenda as a key initiative towards SDG11. The reporting guidelines for 2024 (Urban Agenda Platform, 2024) [14] described practical outputs aiming to improve the quality and comparability of New Urban Agenda initiatives developed at national and local levels. Important subjects included how the applied indicators must be aligned with SDGs, the reliability of data-sources, and the need for precision when elaborating the reports.

Several articles have addressed of how crises reshape urban priorities. Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a real challenge to the new paradigm for urban development. During 2021–2023, several articles studied the way in which COVID-19 disrupted urban systems and the implications for the New Urban Agenda. Mouratidis (2021) [15] reviewed the impact of the pandemic on several aspects of urban quality of life, including mobility and access to public services, and Wolff and Mykhnenko (2023) [16] posed questions about the structural disruption of COVID-19 and possible adjustments. The main focus of these articles are resilience, public health, and how New Urban Agenda implementation must include adaptive planning strategies.

The transformative potential of a global Urban Agenda was studied by Espey et al. (2023) [17], studying how the New Urban Agenda is a useful tool to catalyze systemic

changes. The analysis was influenced by the recent global shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. From this perspective, Espey et al. concluded that local capacities must be strengthened, access to integrated funding instruments is crucial, and adaptive governance models are needed for the effective implementation of initiatives following the New Urban Agenda pillars. In a similar line of work, Badland et al. (2023) [18] introduced a framework for evaluating New Urban Agenda initiatives related to health, inclusion, and livability, implemented at the neighborhood level. The proposed framework considered a large number of spatial indicators, which were applied to provide information about the intervention in an effective way. This idea can be extended to other relevant goals of the New Urban Agenda related to mobility, sustainability, and equity.

In a recent article, Díaz-Sarachaga and Longo (2024) [19] surveyed a series of reports of New Urban Agenda development at the national level with the main goal of monitoring and reporting on the initiatives introduced by different countries. One of the most relevant results of the analysis indicated that some countries, including advanced economic nations, have not followed the templates for correct reports defined by the United Nations. In addition, important gaps were detected in relevant measurable indicators. The main conclusion was that more systematic strategies for monitoring and reporting are needed when putting into practice the main concepts of the New Urban Agenda.

Overall, recent articles have highlighted the importance of proper measurement and reporting for the correct evaluation of the implementation of New Urban Agenda initiatives. Clear and coherent monitoring and reporting frameworks and evaluation guidelines must be proposed and followed at the different implementation levels. Another relevant conclusion is that, besides the general concepts proposed in the New Urban Agenda, other concrete actions are needed for the initiatives to develop and achieve successful urban transformation. Among the main baseline actions that condition the effectiveness of New Urban Agenda initiatives are political commitment and the availability of funds, the development of capacities at the local and regional levels, and the integration of urban planning across different sectors and scales. These specific actions will help to effectively develop the New Urban Agenda to empower cities and increase their prosperity through inclusively and cross-sectorally designed plans committed to sustainability, equity, and resilience.

#### 4. Articles Published in the Urban Agenda Topical Collection

This section presents a brief description of each article published in this Topical Collection. Articles are categorized into eight topics: governance, legislation, and citizen participation; sustainable mobility; urbanization housing and green spaces; nutrition and health; smart energies; smart tourism; and other topics (urban agriculture, climate change, smart waste management, and racial diversity).

##### 4.1. Governance, Legislation, and Citizen Participation

The manuscript “A Qualitative Methodology for Identifying Governance Challenges and Advancements in Positive Energy District Labs” by Silvia Soutullo, Oscar Seco, María Nuria Sánchez, Ricardo Lima, Fabio Maria Montagnino, Gloria Pignatta, Ghazal Etminan, Viktor Bukovszki, Touraj Ashrafian, Maria Beatrice Andreucci, and Daniele Vettorato studies the implementation of Positive Energy District (PED) labs in Europe, which are specific urban areas meant to generate more energy than they consume. The article analyzes governance policies, the role of stakeholders, and factors hindering the development of PED labs via a qualitative methodology using data obtained by surveys and comparative case studies. The main goal was to identify drivers of and barriers to its successful implementation and development. The main outcome is that not only is technical innovation required, but governance frameworks are also crucial (Soutullo, 2025).

The manuscript “Socio-Economic Feasibility for Implementation of Environmental Legislation along the Riparian Buffer Zones in Urban Rivers of Northern Tanzania” by Janeth Mwile Mwasenga and Ibrahimu Chikira Mjemah analyses how land use changes, economic pressures, and lack of enforcement affect the implementation of environmental legislation in Tanzania. The authors studied how socio-economic activities developed within the 60 m buffer zone of Tanzanian rivers. Using remote sensing and field interviews, the paper unpacks gaps in governance, compliance challenges, and community perceptions, advocating for policy coherence, capacity building, and socio-economic incentives. The relevant results relate urbanization with ecological threats and provide useful suggestions and recommendations to establish regional and national policies towards the sustainable management of these water resources (Mwasenga and Mjemah, 2023).

The manuscript “Enhancing Citizen Participation in Citizen-Centered Smart Cities: Insights from Two European Case Studies” by Idoia Landa Oregi, Silvia Urrea-Uriarte, Itsaso Gonzalez Ochoantesana, Maite Anaya Rodriguez, and Patricia Molina-Costa examines how citizen participation was organized in two smart city projects in Europe (the URBANAGE and drOp projects). The authors acknowledged the relevant role of citizen participation in the paradigm shift towards citizen-centered smart cities under the New Urban Agenda guidelines to achieve resilience, inclusivity, and responsiveness to community needs. The study identifies procedural, structural, and awareness-related barriers to meaningful engagement, and proposes guidelines (e.g., participatory design, transparency, and feedback loops) to improve participation and equity (Landa et al., 2025).

#### 4.2. Sustainable Mobility

The manuscript “The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Public Transportation System of Montevideo, Uruguay: A Urban Data Analysis Approach” by Sergio Nesmachnow and Andrei Tchernykh applies urban data processing methods to open-source mobility and public transport data to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Montevideo, Uruguay. Several key aspects were studied, including public transportation usage, shifts in mobility patterns, and the recovery of the public transportation system. The study provides useful lessons about the resilience of transport systems using a real case study and highlights the importance of multimodal transport and flexibility in operations (Nesmachnow and Tchernykh, 2023).

The manuscript “Pedestrian Flows Characterization and Estimation with Computer Vision Techniques by Federico Karagulian, Carlo Liberto, Matteo Corazza, Gaetano Valenti, Andreea Dumitru, and Marialisa Nigro describes a lightweight implementation for object detection and tracking to track pedestrian movements. The applied methodology uses the state-of-the-art YOLOv3 algorithm to analyze videos of walking patterns. The validation was performed using real videos taken in Piazza Duca d’Aosta, in Milan, Italia, recorded during different weekdays. Relevant outputs are generated, including densities, speeds, temporal patterns, etc. The proposed system contributes an innovative approach to gather real data to help public space design, safety, and mobility planning (Karagulian et al., 2023).

The manuscript “Assessment of Sustainable Mobility Initiatives Developed in Montevideo, Uruguay” by Sergio Nesmachnow and Silvina Hipogrosso evaluates several mobility initiatives (electric mobility, cycling infrastructure, and e-public transit) developed in Montevideo in the period 2020–2023. The study evaluates key Urban Agenda goals, including environmental impact, accessibility, and efficiency, and highlights successes and limitations, such as adoption rates and infrastructure gaps. The need for an integrated policy for the development of sustainable mobility initiatives is highlighted as one of the main conclusions of the analysis (Nesmachnow and Hipogrosso, 2024).

A computational intelligence approach, applied to analyze carbon intensity in the transport infrastructure sector of China, is presented in the manuscript “Carbon Intensity and Sustainable Development Analysis of the Transportation Infrastructure Industry in China: An MLP Network Approach” by Guandong Liu and Haicheng Xu. The goal of the study was to determine and evaluate the main factors that affect carbon intensity. Both traditional and newer indicators (including green revenue share and business model entropy) are considered in the study and a multi-layer perceptron machine learning model is applied. The model was trained and validated using a dataset from 20 Chinese transportation enterprises from 2018 to 2022. The results could identify thresholds for renewable energy capacity and the capital expenditure/revenue ratio. The obtained results are useful for formulating policies on decarbonization and investment, prioritizing industries that can benefit from adopting renewable energies, and targeting sectors that could apply circular economy initiatives (Liu and Xu, 2025).

#### *4.3. Urbanization, Housing, and Green Spaces*

The study reported in the article “A Partial Least Squares Analysis of the Perceived Impact of Sustainable Real Estate Design upon Wellbeing” by Anna Cortesi, Ioannis Vardopoulos, and Luca Salvati investigates how sustainable design features in real estate, including energy efficiency, green spaces, indoor environmental quality, and resource-saving technologies, are perceived to influence the comfort of occupants. The proposed model determines that sustainable design not only enhances environmental performance but also contributes positively to physical comfort, mental health, and overall quality of life. This is a relevant result for the New Urban Agenda paradigm, as it shows how sustainable housing and urban design can simultaneously address environmental goals and human-centered outcomes. Thus, it links green building practices to broader commitments to inclusivity, health, and quality of life in cities (Cortesi et al., 2022).

The manuscript “Urbanization and Land Use Planning for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Case Study of Greece” by Dimitrios Kalfas, Stavros Kalogiannidis, Fotios Chatzitheodoridis, and Ermelinda Toska studied how urbanization quality, integrated land use strategies, and planning opportunities affect the attainment of SDGs in Greece. A quantitative survey was performed on 384 government leaders in Greece, analyzing relevant indicators regarding population growth, planning quality, level of infrastructure, environmental protection, the integration of land use strategies, and opportunities for urbanization and planning. The results highlight the importance of high-quality land use planning on achieving SDGs through the proper coordination of governance capacity, strategic policies, and regional initiatives. This case study is a practical demonstration of how governance, planning, and sustainable land use are central to driving inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban transformation under the New Urban Agenda (Kalfas et al. 2023).

The manuscript “Comparison of Green Space Usage During COVID-19” by Humam Helmi, Can Kara, and Tuğşad Tülbentçi investigated how park usage and access changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in Northern Nicosia, Cyprus. Surveys and observational counts were conducted to gather relevant data. The main results indicate the shifts in usage frequency and duration, show which green spaces were more used, and reveal how accessibility and safety concerns shifted perceptions. The outcomes are useful for urban design, green areas, and park infrastructure planning decisions, as well as public health, which are all related to the resilience concept in the New Urban Agenda (Helmi et al., 2024).

The manuscript “Vulnerated Urban Areas under Regeneration: Strategies to Prevent Neighborhood Expulsion in Barcelona or How to Improve without Expelling?” by Gon-

zalo Piasek and Pilar Garcia-Almirall analyzes the negative social and urban effects of gentrification, especially in vulnerable neighborhoods of modern cities. Five case studies in Barcelona, Spain, are studied and regeneration programs are analyzed, applying mixed quantitative–qualitative methods and documenting displacement risk and household trajectories. Specific policy instruments (including social housing quotas, anti-displacement protections, and participatory regeneration) are proposed to reconcile physical improvements with social justice. The study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of gentrification, and how regeneration strategies could be more socially inclusive, contributing to the New Urban Agenda goals (Piasek and Garcia-Almirall, 2024).

The compendium presented in the manuscript “Trends, Methods, Drivers, and Impacts of Housing Informalities (HI): A Systematic Literature Review” by Rim Mrani, Hassan Radoine, Jérôme Chenal, and Alanda Kamana (2025) analyzes different types of housing informality, including unauthorized modifications, accessory dwelling units, squatting, etc., and their impact on urban landscapes. A holistic approach is applied to analyze economic, sociocultural, and regulatory factors and their impact on the subject, based on a study of 541 scientific peer-reviewed publications. The review provides helpful insights to understand the housing informality phenomenon under the New Urban Agenda paradigm and the proper governance and equality measures to address this issue (Mrani et al., 2025).

#### 4.4. Nutrition and Health

A conceptual request for the development of a new transdisciplinary field is formulated in the manuscript “Towards a New Urban Health Science” by Franz Gatzweiler, Saroj Jayasinghe, José Siri, and Jason Corburn. The new concept of “urban health science” is proposed, which aims to integrate ecology, social determinants, and urban planning to properly address severe health challenges that are increasingly becoming a threat for people in modern cities. The definition of new indicators and cross-sectoral research are required to align city design with population health goals, following an approach that is highly relevant to the New Urban Agenda health commitments (Gatzweiler et al., 2023).

The manuscript “Sociodemographic Analysis of Disability in a Highly Depopulated Rural Region: The Case of Soria, Spain” by Juan R. Coca, Julio Fernández-Portela, Susana Gómez-Redondo, and Anabel Paramá-Díaz studied the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in very depopulated areas in terms of access to services and inclusion challenges. The authors explore how structural difficulties compromise the quality of life of disadvantaged citizens in comparison with those living in more populated regions. The main findings indicate that the distance from central services, severe budget constraints, and the absence of physical infrastructure are large barriers that lead to exclusion. In these contexts, usually the main form of assistance comes from informal social solidarity. Specific recommendations are provided about developing targeted mobility and service-delivery policies that are attentive to disability and geographies for improving inclusion (Coca et al., 2024).

The manuscript “Mapping Nutritional Inequality: A Primary Socio-Spatial Analysis of Food Deserts in Santiago de Chile” by Leslie Landaeta-Díaz, Francisco Vergara-Perucich, Carlos Aguirre-Núñez, and Felipe Ulloa-Leon applies spatial analysis techniques combining census, retail location, and socioeconomic data to understand the influence of urban planning and socioeconomic factors on access to nutritious food and to identify “food deserts” (areas with low access to nutritious food) within Santiago de Chile. The study documents the spatial clustering of poor access to fresh food in peripheral districts and suggests targeted planning and market incentives (mobile markets and urban agriculture) to reduce nutritional inequality. The article presents the

implications for public health, spatial planning, and food policy under the New Urban Agenda (Landaeta-Díaz et al., 2024).

The manuscript “Climate Change Awareness and Urban Food Choices: Exploring Motivations for Short Food Chain Engagement” by Elena Kokthi, Fatmir Guri, and Zenepe Dafku studies how awareness of climate change relates to the willingness of consumers to pay and engage in urban short food chains. Data from a survey in Tirana is examined and the results show that environmental motivations correlate with willingness to participate. However, relevant barriers are identified, including price, convenience, available information, and policy. Overall, the study finds that altruistic and ecological motivations matter, but also that demographics (education, gender, and family composition) modulate willingness to pay and participation. The article provides insights that could help to design food and nutrition policies that are sensitive to both climate and equity, according to the New Urban Agenda principles (Kokthi et al., 2025).

#### 4.5. Smart Energies

The manuscript “Geographically Weighted Regression-Based Predictions of Water–Soil–Energy Nexus Solutions in Île-de-France” by Walid Al-Shaar, Olivier Bonin, Bernard de Gouvello, Patrice Chatellier, and Martin Hendel applies Ordinary Least Squares and Geographically Weighted Regression to predict the spatial potential of water–soil–energy nexus solutions, such as wastewater heat recovery, surface geothermal energy, and heat mitigation, using a case study in Île-de-France, France. The main results show that land use, population distribution, and impervious surfaces strongly influence deployment potential, while future land cover changes may limit some nature-based options. The study provides spatially explicit evidence to support sustainable urban planning, resilience strategies, and energy transition policies in line with the New Urban Agenda (Al-Shaar et al., 2022).

The manuscript “Biodiesel Production by Transesterification of Recycled Oil Catalyzed with Zinc Oxide Prepared Starting from Used Batteries” by Domenica Seminario-Calle, Melissa Ortega-Maldonado, Verónica Pinos-Vélez, Juan Cisneros, Andrés Montero-Izquierdo, Paulina Echeverría-Paredes, Paola Duque-Sarango, and Paúl Álvarez-Lloret describes an initiative based on circular-economy concepts for developing smart energies. The described project consists of recycling battery waste to produce ZnO catalysts for biodiesel synthesis. Via a laboratory study, the main results reported in the article show promising outcomes and suggest pathways to integrate waste valorization into urban energy and resource systems (Seminario-Calle et al., 2023).

#### 4.6. Resilient Cities

The manuscript “Enumerating and Modelling the Seasonal alterations of Surface Urban Heat and Cool Island: A Case Study over Indian Cities” by Vinayak Bhanage, Sneha Kulkarni, Rajat Sharma, Han Soo Lee, and Shirishkumar Gedam analyzes seasonal changes in surface urban heat island and cool island effects using case studies in nine Indian cities. The study relates surface urban heat island magnitudes to vegetation gradient and urban surface temperatures. The applied regression models show that the vegetation gradient explains around 90% of surface urban heat island variations in pre-monsoon seasons and ~84% in winter, and that a drop of 0.1 in vegetation gradient corresponds to an increase of ~1.74 °C in surface urban heat island intensity. The findings imply that urban greening (vegetation coverage) and land cover planning are critical levers for mitigating seasonal heat stress under Indian climatic conditions.

In the manuscript “Developing Effective Project Management Strategy for Urban Flood Disaster Prevention Project in EDO State Capital, Nigeria” by Chima Ibeanu, Mazyar Ghadiri Nejad, and Matina Ghasemi, data from interviews with state emergency manage-

ment officials and surveys of both institutional staff and residents in Benin City, Nigeria, are used to identify effective project management strategies for urban flood prevention. The main result is that relevant strategies are establishing flood-warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and community programs using natural mitigation processes (watershed and land use planning), and establishing sustainable emergency planning that is strategic, inclusive, and maintained. The study underlines that project management for flood prevention needs to integrate structural (e.g., the development of drainage and resilient infrastructure), non-structural (e.g., warning systems and public awareness), and governance dimensions (coordination, stakeholder involvement, and laws/regulations) to reduce flood risk effectively (Ibeanu et al., 2022).

The manuscript “An Urban Density-Based Runoff Simulation Framework to Envisage Flood Resilience of Cities” by Naduni Wijayawardana, Chethika Abenayake, Amila Jayasinghe, and Nuwan Dias develops a runoff simulation framework to help design density-sensitive resilience strategies. A model that couples urban density metrics with hydrological modeling to assess flood resilience is presented. The developed tool is useful for planners evaluating density-related flood risk trade-offs and for resilience planning under the New Urban Agenda (Wijayawardana et al., 2023).

The manuscript “Mental Models for Assessing Impacts of Stormwater on Urban Social-Ecological Systems” by Caitlyn O’Connor and Phillip Levin uses stakeholder-elicited mental models to represent interactions among stormwater management, ecosystem services, and social outcomes. The main results of the analysis show how participatory modeling can reveal policy leverage points for integrated water governance in the context of the New Urban Agenda (O’Connor and Levin, 2023).

#### 4.7. Smart Tourism

The manuscript “Impact of Tourist Areas on the Electrical Grid: A Case Study of the Southern Dominican Republic” by Miguel Aybar-Mejía, Randy Andrés, Alam Cabral-Soto, Carlos Montás, Wilmer-Johann Núñez-García, Elvin Arnaldo Jiménez Matos, Giuseppe Sbriz-Zeitun, and Deyslen Mariano-Hernández analyzes how tourism hotspots and demand spikes stress local grids. Specific measures are proposed and explored as a means of mitigation, including adaptive grid design, demand-side management, the integration of renewable energies and storage, and policy actions for tourism-sensitive energy planning. The study provides data-driven recommendations for resilient small-grid planning in tourist economies, linking urban energy resilience to economic activity, two relevant concepts in the paradigm of the New Urban Agenda (Aybar et al., 2023).

The review presented in the manuscript “A Bibliometric and Content Analysis of Sustainability and Smart Tourism” by Clara Madeira, Paula Rodrigues, and Monica Gomez-Suarez summarizes 104 documents published between 2015 and 2022 on the subject of sustainability and smart tourism, using data from the Web of Science. Growth trends are mapped to leading authors/journals/countries (notably China, Spain, Korea, Portugal), thematic clusters (smart tourism, sustainable tourism, innovation, smart cities), and methodological patterns. Key findings include the strong dominance of smart tourism terminology over sustainability in keywords, and significant collaboration among authors. The identified drawbacks are the gaps in empirical research, theory–practice links, and stakeholder diversity. The review aligns with the New Urban Agenda’s emphasis on leveraging technology and innovation for sustainable service delivery and urban development and raises awareness about the need to integrate environmental, social, and economic aspects in tourism (Madeira et al., 2023).

#### 4.8. Other Topics

Regarding urban agriculture, the manuscript “Assessing Citizens’ Perceptions of Urban Agriculture and Its Contribution to Food Security—Worldwide Analysis and Specific Case Studies in Spain” by Ouiam Fatiha Boukharta, Leticia Chico Santamarta, Adriana Correa Guimaraes, and Luis Manuel Navas Gracia presents a global survey and case studies in Spain to investigate the attitudes of citizens towards urban agriculture, as well as its perceived benefits (food security and local consumption) and challenges. The survey finds generally positive perceptions about food security and social benefits but identifies barriers such as regulation and land access, recommending the integration of key concepts of the New Urban Agenda into urban planning policies. The study highlights the importance of awareness, integration during planning, and support for small-scale/local producers (Boukharta et al., 2025).

The relationship between waste, energy, and information systems is studied in the manuscript “Validating a Sustainable, Smart, and Circular City Architecture through Urban Living Lab Experiments” by Augusto Velasquez-Mendez, Jorge de Jesús Lozoya-Santos, and José Fernando Jiménez-Vargas. The article proposes an integrated architecture combining physical, digital, governance, and innovation layers to link waste, energy, and information systems. The proposal is validated through living-lab experiments (waste detection, IoT urban garden, etc.). Overall, the study shows how circularity, smart tech, and participatory governance are essential to circular urban transitions according to the New Urban Agenda concepts (Velásquez et al., 2025).

The manuscript “Defining the Organization of Municipal Solid Waste Management Based on Production Costs” by Massimo Beccarello and Giacomo Di Foggia analyzes how production costs can be used as the basis for defining the organizational models of municipal solid waste management systems in Italy. Using data on collection and treatment costs, the study identifies cost drivers and proposes efficiency benchmarks to optimize system design and governance. The authors argue that a cost-based organizational approach can enhance financial sustainability, transparency, and service quality, while supporting the broader transition toward circular economy goals. The study highlights the importance of cost transparency and organizational efficiency for local waste management services and contributes to sustainable urban metabolism, resource efficiency, and circular economy strategies central to the New Urban Agenda (Beccarello and Di Foggia, 2023).

The article “An Analysis of Urban Ethnic Inclusion of Master Plans—In the Case of Kabul City, Afghanistan” by Fakhrullah Sarwari and Hiroko Ono examines how the urban master plans of Kabul, Afghanistan, address—or fail to address—ethnic diversity and inclusion in the city. The study shows that, historically, planning practices have overlooked ethnic representation, reinforcing spatial and social inequalities across neighborhoods. Authors argue for more inclusive and participatory planning frameworks that recognize ethnic heterogeneity as a fundamental component of equitable and sustainable urban development. The study aligns directly with the emphasis of New Urban Agenda on inclusivity, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that marginalized groups are considered in urban policies (Sarwari and Ono, 2023).

## 5. Summary

Overall, the articles published in the Topical Collection “Urban Agenda” of the *Urban Science* journal collectively demonstrate the breadth and complexity of contemporary urban challenges and opportunities. Covering themes such as governance and citizen participation, sustainable mobility, housing and urban regeneration, nutrition and health, smart energy systems, smart tourism, and cross-cutting issues including climate change, waste management, and ethnic inclusion, the collection highlights the interdependence of the

social, environmental, technological, and economic dimensions of urban development. The studies range from empirical case analyses to systematic reviews and methodological innovations, offering insights into both Global South and Global North contexts. A recurring emphasis is placed on inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability as guiding principles of the New Urban Agenda, while also underscoring the role of digital technologies, participatory governance, and circular economy approaches in shaping urban transformation. Taken together, these contributions provide a valuable knowledge base that bridges theory and practice, and they reinforce the need for integrated, multi-scalar strategies to advance equitable and sustainable urban futures. Table 1 provides an overall description of the articles published in this Topical Collection.

**Table 1.** Overall description of articles published in this Topical Collection.

| Subject                                            | Title                                                                                                                       | Author(s)/Year                    | Main Concepts                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governance, legislation, and citizen participation | Socio-Economic Feasibility for Implementation of Environmental Legislation along Riparian Buffer Zones in Northern Tanzania | Mwasenga and Mjemah (2023)        | legislation, river buffers, enforcement, land tenure, community co-management                                                      |
|                                                    | Enhancing Citizen Participation in Citizen-Centered Smart Cities: Insights from Two European Case Studies                   | Landa et al. (2025)               | citizen participation, smart cities, co-design, governance barriers                                                                |
|                                                    | A Qualitative Methodology for Identifying Governance Challenges and Advancements in Positive Energy District Labs           | Soutullo et al. (2025)            | Positive Energy Districts, governance challenges, regulatory barriers, stakeholder conflicts, financing, participatory frameworks. |
| Sustainable mobility                               | Impact of COVID-19 on Public Transport in Montevideo, Uruguay                                                               | Nesmachnow and Tchernykh (2023)   | ridership collapse, resilience, contingency planning.                                                                              |
|                                                    | Pedestrian Flows Characterization with Computer Vision Techniques                                                           | Karagulian et al. (2023)          | pedestrian flows, artificial intelligence/computer vision, urban design, safety                                                    |
|                                                    | Assessment of Sustainable Mobility Initiatives in Montevideo, Uruguay                                                       | Nesmachnow and Hipogrosso (2024)  | public transportation, cycling, electric mobility, policy coordination.                                                            |
|                                                    | Carbon Intensity of Transportation Infrastructure in China (MLP Analysis)                                                   | Liu and Xu (2025)                 | carbon intensity, infrastructure, transportation, decarbonization.                                                                 |
| Urbanization, housing, and green spaces            | Sustainable Real Estate Design and Wellbeing (PLS-SEM Analysis)                                                             | Cortesi et al. (2022)             | sustainable housing, wellbeing, energy efficiency, indoor quality.                                                                 |
|                                                    | Urbanization and Land Use Planning for Achieving SDGs: A Case Study of Greece                                               | Kalfas et al. (2023)              | land use planning, SDGs, governance, integrated strategies.                                                                        |
|                                                    | Comparison of Green Space Usage During COVID-19                                                                             | Helmi et al. (2024)               | park use, pandemic, accessibility, urban design.                                                                                   |
|                                                    | Vulnerated Urban Areas under Regeneration: Strategies to Prevent Neighborhood Expulsion in Barcelona                        | Piasek and Garcia-Almirall (2024) | regeneration, gentrification, displacement, social housing.                                                                        |

Table 1. Cont.

| Subject              | Title                                                                                                                      | Author(s)/Year                | Main Concepts                                                                                     |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | Trends, Methods, Drivers, and Impacts of Housing Informalities: A Systematic Review                                        | Mrani et al. (2025)           | informal housing, drivers, impacts, policy agenda                                                 |
| Nutrition and health | Towards a New Urban Health Science                                                                                         | Gatzweiler et al. (2023)      | urban health, transdisciplinary research, planning–health nexus.                                  |
|                      | Sociodemographic Analysis of Disability in Rural Soria, Spain                                                              | Coca et al. (2023)            | disability inclusion, depopulated areas, service access, equity.                                  |
|                      | Mapping Nutritional Inequality: Food Deserts in Santiago de Chile                                                          | Landaeta-Díaz et al. (2024)   | food deserts, access inequality, spatial analysis.                                                |
|                      | Climate Change Awareness and Urban Food Choices: Short Food Chains                                                         | Kokthi et al. (2025)          | climate awareness, local food systems, consumer behavior.                                         |
| Smart energies       | Geographically Weighted Regression-Based Predictions of Water–Soil–Energy Nexus Solutions in Île-de-France                 | Al-Shaar et al. (2022)        | WSE nexus, GWR modeling, land use, population density, heat mitigation.                           |
|                      | Biodiesel Production with ZnO from Recycled Batteries                                                                      | Seminario-Calle et al. (2023) | circular economy, biodiesel, recycling, smart energy.                                             |
|                      | A Qualitative Methodology for Identifying Governance Challenges and Advancements in Positive Energy District Labs          | Soutullo et al. (2025)        | energy-positive districts, governance, regulation, innovation.                                    |
| Resilient cities     | Urban Density-Based Runoff Simulation Framework for Flood Resilience                                                       | Wijayawardana et al. (2023)   | flood resilience, urban density, hydrological modeling.                                           |
|                      | Enumerating and Modelling the Seasonal Alterations of Surface Urban Heat and Cool Island: A Case Study over Indian Cities  | Bhanage et al. (2023)         | SUHI, $\Delta$ NDVI, seasonal variation, urban greening, climate adaptation.                      |
|                      | Developing Effective Project Management Strategy for Urban Flood Disaster Prevention Project in Edo State Capital, Nigeria | Ibeanu et al. (2023)          | flood prevention, project management, governance, resilient infrastructure, community engagement. |
|                      | Mental Models of Stormwater in Urban Social–Ecological Systems                                                             | O'Connor and Levin (2023)     | stormwater, stakeholder engagement, social–ecological systems.                                    |
| Smart tourism        | Impact of Tourist Areas on the Electrical Grid: A Case Study of the Southern Dominican Republic                            | Aibar et al. (2023)           | tourism energy demand, grid resilience, renewable integration, planning.                          |
|                      | A Bibliometric and Content Analysis of Sustainability and Smart Tourism                                                    | Madeira et al. (2023)         | bibliometric review, smart tourism, sustainability gaps, innovation, global research trends.      |

Table 1. Cont.

| Subject      | Title                                                                                                | Author(s)/Year                  | Main Concepts                                                               |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Other topics | An Analysis of Urban Ethnic Inclusion of Master Plans—In the Case of Kabul City, Afghanistan         | Sarwari and Ono (2023)          | ethnic inclusion, master plans, governance, participatory planning, equity. |
|              | Defining the Organization of Municipal Solid Waste Management Based on Production Costs              | Beccarello and Di Foggia (2023) | municipal waste management, cost analysis, governance, circular economy.    |
|              | Validating a Sustainable, Smart, and Circular City Architecture through Urban Living Lab Experiments | Velasquez et al. (2025)         | circular cities, waste management, IoT, governance models.                  |
|              | Urban Agriculture and Food Security: Citizens' Perceptions (Worldwide + Spain Case Studies)          | Boukharta et al. (2025)         | urban agriculture, food security, citizen attitudes.                        |

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