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Global urban development frameworks landing in Latin America: Insights from Ecuador and Bolivia

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Summary

Motivation: The global urban development frameworks defined by the United Nations are circulating worldwide and a race towards their domestic adoption has risen since the approval of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Their institutionalization at the domestic level is favoured by the rather aseptic "urban paradigm shift" that these documents bring forward. However, the process according to which this happens is subject to path-dependent logics and varies from one context to another.

Purpose: Stemming from the policy mobilities literature, the article explores the role that "pasteurized" urban narratives play in the domestic institutionalization of the global urban development frameworks. At the same time, it analyses how domestic institutional configurations have influenced their differential implementation in two Latin American countries.

Methods and approach: The article details the cases of the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda and the Bolivian National Urban Policy, employing a

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mixed methodology that includes participant observation, consultancy activities, desk-research and semi-structured interviews.

Findings: The analysis findings show that, on the one hand, the "comfortable landscape" offered by the "pasteurized concepts" that comprise the global urban development frameworks served as "coalition magnet" favouring the building of consensus among stakeholders with rather different positions. On the other hand, however, this may result in a "fast-track institutionalization" that prevents the concrete engagement of local governments in the process, in turn undermining the relevance of the results achieved.

Policy implications: Whereas further comparative research on the institutionalization of global urban development frameworks in Latin America and beyond is certainly needed, to further understand the hidden pitfalls of their domestic adoption, the evidence presented may contribute to inform the action of policy-makers and practitioners dealing with their implementation at all levels.

Keywords: institutionalization, Latin America, path dependence, policy mobilities, urban development

1 INTRODUCTION

Cities are increasingly regarded as "the core of the planet's future" (Parnell et al., 2018, p. 1) and "the everyday reality of the twenty-first-century urban is, out of necessity, the focus on the cities of the global south" (Ibid., p. 7). In order to address the future of cities, on the occasion of the Habitat III conference that took place in Quito in 2016, the United Nations approved the New Urban Agenda, drawing on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015), aiming at the promotion of a worldwide "urban paradigm shift" (United Nations, 2017). National Urban Policies (NUPs) "emerged from Habitat III as the instrument with which to give meaning to the recognition that national governments can enhance the success of all cities" (Cartwright et al., 2018, p.26) and a widespread race towards their adoption has since then been triggered, involving in particular lower- and upper-middle-income countries, irrespective of their political leanings.

The implementation of global urban development frameworks at the domestic level has been mostly described as a top-down activity (Barnett & Parnell, 2016; Caprotti et al., 2017; Kaika, 2017; Novovic, 2021), favoured by the "pasteurized" narratives (Peck & Theodore, 2015) that they bring forward (e.g. the "right to the city" discourse. Kuymulu, 2013; Turok & Scheba, 2018), albeit leading to rather questionable results (Cartwright et al., 2018). In this article, we argue that, whereas pasteurized urban narratives function as a "coalition magnet" (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2021) that favours the consolidation of an "overlapping consensus" (Barnett & Parnell, 2016) over the domestic institutionalization of global urban development frameworks, the actual *iter* that this process follows in a given country is shaped by path-dependent logics, in turn leading to differential outcomes.

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To support our argument, we examine and compare the development and institutionalization of two national urban development documents, namely the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda (Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda, 2020) and the Bolivian National Urban Policy (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Servicios y Vivienda, 2020) that are similar to many domestic implementations of the global urban development frameworks defined by the United Nations (i.e. the New Urban Agenda and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 11). In doing so, we engage with the policy mobilities literature focusing on the worldwide circulation of urban policies and best urban practices (Jajamovich, 2013; Jajamovich & Delgadillo, 2020; McCann, 2011; Montero, 2020; Stone et al., 2020; Wood, 2015) and on its framing as a "global-local assembling process" (Temenos & McCann, 2013) frequently subject to "pasteurization" (Peck & Theodore, 2015). In greater detail, we draw on and combine the outcomes of two recent studies focusing on the Latin American context, one inquiring on the role of mobile policies as a tool for coalition building (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2021) and the other warning about the perils of the "fast-track institutionalization" in policy circulation (Whitney & López-García, 2020). When doing so, we devote particular attention to the "silenced" institutional configurations (Montero & Baiocchi, 2021) that influence the domestic landing of global urban development frameworks path-dependency (Forestier & Kim, 2020; Horn & Grugel, 2018).

Ecuador and Bolivia constitute two interesting and under-explored case studies among Latin American lower- and upper-middle-income countries. They are both in the Andean region and for more than a decade have been undergoing important reforms, which started with the approval of new political constitutions around the *Buen Vivir*/*Vivir Bien* paradigm[1] (respectively in 2008 and 2009. República del Ecuador, 2008; Asamblea Constituyente de Bolivia, 2009) and have since then led to the decentralization of the territorial administration system, in line with a process that had already started in the twentieth century. As the article will argue, the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda (*Agenda Hábitat Sostenible Ecuador 2036*) and the Bolivian National Urban Policy (*Política Nacional de Desarrollo Integral de Ciudades*) tap into these ongoing processes of governance and institutionalization, hence offering relevant case studies in relation to our main focus.

Following this introduction, in section 2 we detail the theoretical framework upon which our work is based, and in section 3 the methodology we employed. Then we reveal in sections 4 and 5 the processes behind the development of the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda and of the Bolivian National Urban Policy. In section 6 we discuss the findings of our research, by addressing two critical aspects emerging from the case studies: (i) the frequent 'pasteurization' (Peck & Theodore, 2015) of the concepts and the resulting "comfortable landscape of the SDGs`" (personal communication, June 15, 2021) stemming from the global urban development frameworks act as a "coalition magnet" (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2021) towards the construction of consensus among stakeholders with very different positions (Barnett & Parnell, 2016); (ii) at the same time, when the process follows a "fast-track institutionalization" (Whitney & López-García, 2020), it prevents the concrete

[1] The Ecuadorian *Buen Vivir* and the Bolivian *Vivir Bien* concepts (both translated as 'Good Living' in English) take direct inspiration from the worldview of the indigenous communities living in various Latin American countries. Whereas the potential of this paradigm to produce a change of the ongoing development dynamics is subject to debate (see Radcliffe, 2012; Walsh, 2010), Ecuador and Bolivia are till date the only two countries that have included this paradigm into their charts, hence constituting interesting cases to explore the implications and limits of its operationalization.

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engagement of local governments, in so doing potentially undermining the relevance of the result achieved. Finally, a concluding section 7 rounds off the article, arguing for the need for further comparative research on the domestic implementation of global urban development frameworks, in order to reveal the potential pitfalls that may be hidden in the process.

2 CIRCULATING GLOBAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

The New Urban Agenda (United Nations, 2017) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) opened the path to various critical academic contributions, which have focused on their seemingly neutral contents as well as on their questionable implementation at the domestic level (Caprotti et al., 2017; Cartwright et al., 2018; Novovic, 2021, among others). On the one hand, Kaika (2017) drew critical attention to the fact that the concepts of "resilience, safety, inclusiveness and sustainability" are undeniably allocated "from those in power to those in need," in so doing following a rather top-down approach (Kaika, 2017, p. 98). On the other hand, other authors have highlighted how the implementation of the SDGs is often subjected to a "cherry-picking" process, finalized to the selective legitimization of existing domestic interests and priorities (Forestier & Kim, 2020) and to the actual fit with "domestic governance structures" and ongoing decentralization patterns (Berisha et al., 2022; Horn & Grugel, 2018, p. 74). According to Barnett and Parnell, the Urban SDG (i.e. SDG 11) is itself "a product of a fluid alliance of interests and organizations that generated a coherent pro-urban discourse through which to assert the importance of cities in future development policy agendas" (Barnett & Parnell, 2016, p. 89). The "impulse towards inclusivity" for complying with many different positionalities has resulted in what Barnett and Parnell (2016) call "overlapping consensus," hiding what are actually conflicting positions. Similarly, Dagnino (2010) has warned about the "perverse confluence" between neo-liberal and democratic participatory projects in Latin America, merged under the meaning of "citizenship," which has been nuanced and applied by governments with very different political leanings.

The National Urban Policies "emerged from Habitat III as the instrument with which to give meaning to the recognition that national governments can enhance the success of all cities" (Cartwright et al., 2018, p. 26), and quickly led to a race around the world towards the formulation of such documents, in particular in relation to lower- and upper-middle-income countries. More in detail, according to the National Urban Policy Database developed by the United Nations (2021), as many as 160 countries over the 194 included in the world database are engaged in the process at the time of writing. In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), of a total of 33 countries, eight are already implementing their National Urban Policies (Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela); seven countries are formulating them (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, and Peru); three are developing feasibility studies (El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti) and one is going through the diagnosis stage (Panama). When it comes to other lower- and upper-middle-income countries, the numbers are even higher: across sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, 85% of these countries embraced National Urban Policies, with more than a 60% that are already implementing or monitoring and evaluating them.

Whereas at first glance, the development of National Urban Policies may resemble "donor-funded tick-box compliance" (Cartwright et al., 2018, p. 12), the domestic institutionalization

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of global urban development frameworks that occurs through the latter follows peculiar path-dependent logics that are worth investigating. To shed light on the matter, we substantiate critical instances of the implementation of global urban development frameworks with concepts stemming from the literature on policy mobilities, and in particular from a number of recent works focusing on the Latin America context (among others: Jajamovich, 2013; Jajamovich & Delgadillo, 2020; Montero, 2020; Montero & Baiocchi, 2021; Stone et al., 2020; Whitney & López-García, 2020; Wood, 2015). Following Montero's work (2020), we argue that the international organizations and the multilateral donors involved in the "global circuits of knowledge" (McCann, 2011; McCann & Ward, 2012, 2013) are crucial in selecting what narrative, concepts, and practices will travel, favouring at the same time their "pasteurization" (Peck & Theodore, 2015). Then we adopt the concept of policies as "coalition magnet," highlighted by Silvestre & Jajamovich (2021) to describe the application of the "Barcelona model" to a number of Argentinian and Brazilian cities, and explore how the pasteurized urban narratives that compose global urban development frameworks manage to quickly and easily merge different positions towards an "overlapping consensus" (Barnett and Parnell, 2016).

Finally, we dig into the "silenced" institutional conditions (Montero & Baiocchi, 2021) that have influenced their differential institutionalization, to explore the implication of path-dependence (Pierson, 2000; Sorensen, 2020), understood as "self-reinforcing pathways of institutional development" (Sorensen, 2018, p. 618) due to long-past policy choices that influence present possibilities and limitations (Sorensen, 2018), as already undertaken by other scholars in the analysis of the SDGs' domestic implementation (Horn & Grugel, 2018; Tosun & Leininger, 2017). In doing so, we borrow the concept of a "fast-track" (*versus* incremental) institutionalization, as framed by Whitney & López-García (2020) in relation to the adoption (and possible failures) of best urban practices by local Mexican urban agencies, in order to highlight the risks that such a process encompasses.

3 METHODOLOGY

This article is the result of the combination of (i) the participant observation developed in 2018 when one of the authors worked as a consultant for the UN-Habitat office in La Paz, Bolivia; (ii) the consultancy activities developed in Ecuador since 2011 as part of the UNESCO Chair on Intermediary Cities; (iii) a thorough documentary review of the global urban development frameworks promoted by the United Nations and the Bolivian and Ecuadorian relevant policy documents; and (iv) a total of 30 semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders who have been involved in the formulation of the Bolivian National Urban Policy and the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda.

The authors have been involved in the Ecuadorian and the Bolivian urban debates, particularly in the formulation of some of their urban development policy documents. Since 2011, the first author has been involved with the UNESCO Chair on Intermediary Cities on the development of seminars and peer-to-peer learning activities, promoting the circulation of "best urban practices" among Ecuadorian intermediary cities and the implementation of the national spatial planning law approved in 2016. Furthermore, in 2018 the same author was involved in consultancy activities related to the preliminary diagnostic phase of the Bolivian National Urban Policy.

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On the one hand, this insider perspective facilitated access to information and the engagement of the interviewees. On the other hand, the overlap between the role and activity of the researchers and the object of research has raised a number of ethical and methodological challenges (see also Lapdat, 2017; Whitney, 2022) in particular in relation to the use of working materials and the possible bias deriving from the role played in the process. To overcome these challenges, the article draws only on documents and materials that were made publicly available. The possible bias deriving from the insider role played by the first author have been addressed through repeated feedback from former colleagues and interviews, as well as through the interaction with the second author. Furthermore, the information deriving from the interviews and the participant observation were triangulated with the results of the analysis of relevant legislative and policy documents from the selected countries.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted from the end of 2019 to mid-2021 by telephone or through digital communication platforms, and concerned relevant stakeholders from national and local governments, international organizations, universities and representatives of citizens' organizations who were involved in the formulation of the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda and the Bolivian National Urban Policy. The interviews concerned the role played by the different stakeholders, the rationale and contents of the documents and their compliance with the global urban development frameworks, the process behind their approval and the following implementation phase. All interviewees were informed from the beginning of the reasons for undertaking the interviews, and all quotes deriving from the latter have been explicitly authorized.

4 THE ECUADORIAN NATIONAL URBAN AGENDA

From the right to the city to the "leaving no one behind" discourse

> "One of the main problems in the country at the moment is the urban chaos and disorder. This is the reason why we propose an urban revolution" (SENPLADES, 2013).

The "urban revolution" in Ecuador started in the second half of the 2000s, with the election of Correa's government in 2007 and the undertaking of the so-called "citizens revolution," a national development strategy aiming at reforming existing institutions and ameliorating infrastructures and the implementation of public welfare (Ayllón Pino, 2014). In 2008 the country approved a new political Constitution based on the *Buen Vivir* paradigm and acknowledging the right to the city, among other human rights. In 2016, the "urban revolution" led to the enactment of the country's first spatial planning law (the so-called LOOTUGS – *Ley orgánica de ordenamiento territorial, uso y gestión de suelo*. República del Ecuador, 2016; Blanc, 2022) and, in the same year, the country hosted the Habitat III Conference on Sustainable Urban Development, that paved the way for the approval of the United Nations' New Urban Agenda (United Nations, 2017). These subsequent steps contributed to progressively intertwining the fulfilment of the right to the city promoted by both the Constitution (Art. 31) and the LOOTUGS (Art. 1) to the United Nations' "leaving no

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one behind" discourse, as had already happened in other countries (Turok & Scheba, 2018, among others).[2]

The resulting discourse inspired the development of the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda (*Agenda Hábitat Sostenible del Ecuador 2036*)[3], which was launched in 2020 by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda*, MIDUVI) and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH. German co-operation aid funded the National Urban Agenda formulation within a broader programme called Sustainable Intermediate Cities[4] (*Ciudades Intermedias Sostenibles*).[5] Its main goal has been to strengthen the enabling conditions for more sustainable urban development in Ecuador, in line with the narratives brought forward by the New Urban Agenda, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

Within the precarious political scenario that characterized the *post*-Correa period, the action of the German co-operation aid agency and its legitimacy made it possible to bring very different positions to some convergence on the contents of the document. In this sense, in the hands of the GIZ, the National Urban Agenda has functioned as a "coalition magnet" (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2021) towards "a wider acceptance of the SDGs," as described by a senior Ecuadorian academic (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

A process of incremental institutionalization

As argued by Horn & Grugel (2018), in Ecuador "here is particularly strong engagement with SDG 10.2 (breaking inequalities) and SDG 11 (inclusive cities), both of which were already identified as priority areas in earlier national planning rounds" (Horn & Grugel, 2018, p. 74), i.e., in the national development plans, where urban development played a key role. Furthermore, as argued by the same authors, the "domestic governance structure" and its recent decentralization have contributed to influencing the domestic institutionalization of global urban development frameworks, and this is evident in relation to the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda (Horn & Grugel, 2018, p. 74). In this sense, the *Agenda Hábitat Sostenible del Ecuador 2036* contributed to legitimizing a path that had been already undertaken. In so doing, it constitutes the most recent step towards the recognition of the role that local governments should play in urban development issues, as already acknowledged by the legal and institutional changes introduced since the 2000s (Blanc, 2022; Vivanco Cruz & Cordero, 2019).

Local governments have been involved in the formulation of the National Urban Agenda since the beginning of the process, through the urban labs organized by GIZ in several intermediate cities of the country. As acknowledged by a senior GTZ officer, "the urban labs

[2] A similar fate has concerned the *Buen Vivir* paradigm*,* which has been framed as a "discursive tool and co-opted term" (Walsh, 2010, p. 20) based on postcolonial conditions of development (Radcliffe, 2012) and progressively emptied of significance (Blanc, 2022).

[3] See, for instance, the preface to the *Agenda Hábitat Sostenible del Ecuador 2036:* "Having hosted this event [Habitat III] supposes for Ecuador an immense commitment to advance towards the fulfilment of the objectives agreed in the New Urban Agenda in order to achieve cities and human settlements where all people can enjoy equal rights and opportunities, and where "no one is left behind" (Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda, 2020, p. 9).

[4] For more detailed information on the concept of intermediate cities see Llop et al., 2019.

[5] For more information on the *Ciudades Intermedias Sostenibles* programme see https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/63269.html [Accessed 08/02/2020]

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are virtual spaces for working together, not spaces to come and visit" (personal communication, April 27, 2021). Their aim has been to reflect upon and support local urban development policies, in so doing feeding back to the National Urban Agenda with practical examples. Among many others, the Loja's urban lab focused on improving the management of existing urban public spaces, resulting in a legitimization of the cross-cutting green spaces management system already introduced by the LOOTUGS' local spatial planning tools. A senior officer working for GIZ affirmed that "even if there was no second phase of the programme, it [the urban lab experience] would still continue" (personal communication, April 27, 2021). A senior officer working for the local government (personal communication, October 9, 2020) argued that this result has been possible because the urban lab has progressively carved itself a position among the city's institutions and now "it works independently," a process that GIZ and, more generally, the overall National Urban Agenda process contributed to consolidating. Alongside local governments, also several actors from the academic world and more than 70 citizens' organizations were involved in the formulation of the National Urban Agenda, through a process that since its inception configured itself as open and inclusive. This inclusiveness contributed to enhancing the visibility and the social recognition and acceptance of the process, in so doing facilitating the incremental institutionalization of the National Urban Agenda in the country and at the same time limiting the emergence of conflicting positions.

The next stage of the National Urban Agenda process is once again linked to the GIZ Sustainable Intermediate Cities programme (2021–2024), and focuses on the matchmaking between financiers, banks, and municipalities regarding the existing global climate funds. The State Bank (*Banco del Estado*) has so far been the main funder of local governments. However, the process proved rather too complex for intermediate cities to manage, given their limited economic and technical capacities. The business of international climate change funds is so huge that small and medium-sized cities need to organize their participation jointly, which is why the GIZ has been recently working on the organization of an "urban investment platform for climate change," as acknowledged by the GIZ programme leader (personal communication, May 25, 2021). Within this stage, three Ecuadorian cities (Cuenca, Loja and Portoviejo)—each having hosted an urban lab during the previous stage—are developing their local Urban Agenda. This pilot activity will pave the way for other intermediate cities to follow suit and to develop their own local Urban Agenda for applying to national and international climate funds.

5 THE BOLIVIAN NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

The "comfortable landscape of the SDGs"

> "Bolivia has been waking up into a new world. The country realises that it has become urban. Already the 2012 census showed an official rate of 67% urban population (an increase of 30% compared to the 2001 census; while the total population had only increased by 20%); however, mentalities remained frozen to the 60% indigenous population of the previous census, and by assimilation, in a rural world" (Mazurek, 2020, p. 133).

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Urban development issues have been historically neglected in Bolivia (Prado, 2008, 2017) and, when the Habitat III conference took place in 2016, the country had just acknowledged its urban nature. When Evo Morales' government was invited to participate in the Habitat III conference, the national government rushed through the development of an *ad hoc* document called "Building Urban Communities for the Good Living in the 21st Century" (*Construyendo Comunidades Urbanas para Vivir Bien en el Siglo XXI*) (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Servicios y Vivienda, 2016). As explicitly stated by a senior academic, however, the narrative proposed by the document was deliberately built in a rather short time, in turn resembling more a list of issues to be tackled rather than a coherent vision for the future:

> 'The national government built the discourse on the urban communities, which was a demonstrative declaration, where the words "*Vivir Bien"*, "commons" and "well-being" were merged with the cultural telling and the one on the mother earth and the environment. It was approved in a hurry and resulted in a to-do declaration" (personal communication, October 7, 2020).

Following this momentum, in 2018 the same government launched the formulation of the Bolivian National Urban Policy (*Política Nacional de Desarrollo Integral de Ciudades*) and, after the troubled 2019 general elections, the interim Añez's government brought the process forward until its finalization. The process was funded by the Swedish co-operation aid and UN-Habitat carried out the technical assistance for its development.[6] As highlighted by one of its former officers, within the Swedish co-operation, "the original idea was to use it [the process] as an example of cooperation 2.0, by employing the urban issue to achieve different development goals" (personal communication, August 13, 2021).

The Bolivian National Urban Policy is a clear example of domestic translation of global urban development frameworks. It draws on the UN-Habitat's guiding framework published in 2015 (UN-Habitat, 2015), which defines the different stages for setting up the National Urban Policies worldwide. At the same time, it also counts on the technical support of UN-Habitat to smooth the process. As highlighted by a senior leader officer working for UN-Habitat, their role was "to deliver [the National Urban Policy framework] on a silver platter and make it digestible" for national governments (personal communication, June 11, 2021). However, a senior consultant working for the same agency reckoned that their "headquarters have a huge problem: they make golden eggs that are supposed to be perfect, but they are not applicable everywhere" (personal communication, October 13, 2020). Seemingly, from the perspective of UN-Habitat, having a National Urban Policy approved is more relevant than the process leading to its construction and institutionalization, as the final goal is having as many different National Urban Policies as possible to be compared at the global level. However, as pointed out by a senior scholar, to achieve a high level of global comparability "obliviously, it's great, but it cannot be the main purpose," as the latter should lie in the actual results that the adopted policies produce on the ground (personal communication, June 14, 2021).

[6] As it did in the case of other lower- and upper-middle-income countries, "the Swedish cooperation aid channelled its funds through the United Nations which have a higher bureaucracy capacity (e.g. fund application, money management) that smaller agencies do not have" (Swedish co-operation, personal communication, August 13, 2021).

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When looking at the document, the mismatch between the pro-rural and pro-indigenous discourse developed by the government (Mazurek, 2020) and the compliance with the UN-Habitat NUP framework centred on cities and the urban environment clearly stands out. The former National Development Plan (*Agenda Patriótica 2025*) (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 2014) has been focused on the economic and industrial development of the country, framed under the *Vivir Bien* paradigm and disregarding to a large extent urban development issues. This narrative permeates also the National Urban Policy, with the latter that, as also acknowledged by an interviewee from the Swedish co-operation aid, was mainly seen as a possibility to legitimize predetermined national development priorities, within a specific governance set-up (Horn & Grugel, 2018).

Despite the many critical positions recorded against the decision to formulate a National Urban Policy for the country and during the early stages of its development, the "comfortable landscape of the SDGs" brought forward by the global urban development frameworks, as defined by a senior development researcher (personal communication, June 15, 2021), was also in this case used as a powerful "coalition magnet" (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2021) that managed to anaesthetize the opposing positions and to catalyse the required "overlapping consensus" (Barnett & Parnell, 2016). All the interviewees agree upon the role that UN-Habitat has played in allowing stakeholders belonging to very different political groups "to stick together" (personal communication, June 14, 2020). In a rather controversial political context, the involvement of an international organization and its supposedly neutral discourse has legitimized the process and safeguarded it from possible crossfire.

A "fast-track institutionalization" process

The process of institutionalization of the Bolivian National Urban Policy has been very different from the one of the Ecuadorean National Urban Agenda. First of all, no real discursive shift has occurred in the country. The *ad hoc* introduction of the "urban communities for the good living" in the occasion of the Habitat III conference has not been accompanied by the emergence of a debate on urban development issues, nor by the introduction of any local action specifically devoted to urban development (Cabrera, 2011). At the same time, and perhaps among the elements that prevented the emergence of any local urban development discourse, the country still lacks a national spatial planning law, and is still characterized by a high degree of interference of the national government in the management of urban development issues—as is, for instance, witnessed by the need to require the central government's authorization to shift local land uses from rural to urban (Blanc et al., 2022).

As a consequence, the Bolivian National Urban Policy did not engage to any relevant extent with local governments and civil society, as many interviewees underlined. Despite the efforts of the UN-Habitat local team,[7] "the role of facilitator [played by UN-Habitat] has been frequently mixed with the one of consultant," in the judgment of a senior development

[7] UN-Habitat representatives have been travelling to many Bolivian local governments for sharing the National Urban Policy draft and several workshops have been set up to this end; 300 working sessions have been developed, almost 7,000 people have been involved through the whole country for structuring the diagnostic, according to a senior consultant working for UN-Habitat (personal communication, October 13, 2020) and at least the 50% of the citizens' organizations involved in urban issues in Bolivia have been included in these "consultations."

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researcher (personal communication, June 15, 2021), and the spaces for dialogue that were launched at the very beginning of the process did not result in any real engagement of the involved parties.[8] In the words of a member of a citizens' organization, the Bolivian National Urban Policy "could be acknowledged as an UN-Habitat's business, rather than a national government's outcome'"(personal communication, June 14, 2021). The missing engagement of the local governments and civil society has worsened the already existing perception of a "package" to be sold, as pointed out by a representative of a citizens' organization (personal communication, June 14, 2021), based on "concepts for export" (REHABITAR, 2020).

Among these concepts, particularly interesting is the implementation of the City Prosperity Index (CPI)[9] as an integral part of the Bolivian National Urban Policy. The CPI implies a rigid collection of data for building a "composite index made of six dimensions." However, most of these data were not available in the country, and the initial reluctance of the Bolivian government to adopt a rigid framework led to what a senior consultant working for UN-Habitat defined as the "Bolivianization of the CPI" (personal communication, April 27, 2021), i.e. the development of an alternative index based on the available statistical data. The results are controversial. On the one hand, this domestic implementation of the CPI represents an interesting example of proactive contextualization of the global urban development frameworks. On the other hand, however, the latter has not been acknowledged by the UN-Habitat headquarters because it does not follow the established rules and does not allow for any worldwide comparison.

Currently the National Urban Policy is being implemented in several local governments through the definition of their local urban agendas. Even if the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda are non-binding tools, "aligning to the SGDs is crucial for reaching international funds," as highlighted by a senior development researcher interviewed (personal communication, June 15, 2021). At the same time, a number of national and international sponsors are emerging, which are interested in funding the local implementation of the National Urban Policy.

6 ANALYTICAL COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION

The New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the SDGs defined by the latter, form an undeniably useful reference for many countries in the world, which influences the ways through which they address urbanization processes through national policies and agendas. When looking at National Urban Policies and Agendas from the perspective of the international development agencies, their main value lies in the fact that they allow the monitoring and global comparability of urbanization process worldwide. On the other hand, when adopting the perspective of the "demand side," their

[8] As mentioned by one interviewee from academia, "we were thrilled about our involvement in the formulation of the first National Urban Policy and we managed the setting-up of many public events from the academia for debating around the urban issue in Bolivia. Unfortunately, our contributions were not merged in the final document" (personal communication, June 10, 2021).

[9] The CPI is a monitoring framework firmly grounded on established principles and sound statistical practices that enables the tracking of progress and ensures accountability towards the implementation of the 2030 development agenda. It is proposed as a global framework for indicators and targets to monitor the progress in relation to SDG11. According to the UN-Habitat webpage, 46 countries worldwide have been engaged in the CPI definition, altogether covering over 400 cities. https://unhabitat.org/programme/city-prosperity-initiative.

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institutionalization and implementation within a given context stand out as a complex, inherently path-dependent process that may lead to very different outcomes.

The detailed analysis of the two case studies in this article highlighted both similarities and differences, making it possible to formulate a number of considerations in relation to the dynamics behind this peculiar type of policy mobilities. In Ecuador the progressive "pasteurization" of the right to the city discourse and its leaning towards the "leaving no one behind" paradigm brought forward by the global urban development frameworks has contributed, under the co-ordination of German co-operation aid, to favour the convergence of very different political positions on the country's National Urban Agenda. Similarly, in Bolivia the "comfortable landscape of the SDGs" has allowed for developing consensus among very different stakeholders, in this case however through the *ex-novo*, rapid development of a narrative concerning the country "urban communities," that was in partial conflict with the dominant rural narrative promoted until then by the national government.

Whereas in both cases the global urban development frameworks and their rather neutral nature acted as a "coalition magnet" (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2021), their domestic landing in the two countries is producing rather differential outcomes, as it followed path-dependent processes that were enabled and shaped by those peculiar institutional patterns that are frequently "silenced" in processes of policy mobilities (Montero & Baiocchi, 2021). In Ecuador the process of institutionalization has proceeded incrementally, and the National Urban Agenda has contributed to legitimizing and consolidating a set of institutional reforms and urban development processes that were already taking place in the country, as the progressive decentralization and the national spatial governance and planning reform (through the LOOTUGS) (Blanc, 2022). The setting-up of several urban labs and the involvement of the local governments—alongside academia and civil society—since the very beginning of the process have contributed to legitimizing the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda and to smoothing its implementation *vis-à-vis* all the involved actors. Conversely, the development of the Bolivian National Urban Policy has followed a "fast-track institutionalization" (Whitney & López-García, 2020), which should ideally have contributed to the development of an urban development discourse in the national context. However, the lack of consensus on what kind of urban development was suitable for the country and the virtual lack of engagement of the local stakeholders led to the general perception of the contents of the National Urban Policy as "golden eggs" that were produced elsewhere and then sold as a pre-cooked package at the domestic level.

In the light of these findings, we can argue that the international organizations involved in both case studies have given recognition to the process within unstable political contexts and played the role of mediators by enabling the urban debate and fostering the dialogue among conflicting stakeholders, eventually leading to the formulation of an "overlapping consensus" (Barnett & Parnell, 2016). Also in the Bolivian context, where the rural and the indigenous patterns are prevailing in the current political discourse and the government demonstrated a certain reticence about adopting global urban development frameworks focusing on urban areas, eventually the supposed neutrality of the discourses that underpin them have favoured their landing (Peck & Theodore, 2015). However, the path-dependent logics that contributed to shaping their domestic institutionalization has led to very different results, highlighting the risks of a "fast-track institutionalization" in comparison to the

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adoption of a more incremental, inclusive approach. In turn, these differences in the processes of institutionalization, which depend on contextual conditions that are often silenced in the policy mobility debate (Montero & Baiocchi, 2021), can mark the threshold between their success or failure and consequently threaten the domestic implementation of the global urban development frameworks themselves, among which the SDGSs' implementation stands out.

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

The article analysed and compared the development of the Ecuadorian National Urban Agenda and of the Bolivian National Urban Policy, by adopting the lens of the policy mobilities literature and, more particularly, combining a number of concepts that have been recently developed in relation to the Latin American context.

Looking at the under-explored Bolivian and Ecuadorian case studies has allowed us to shed light on the nuances that characterize the process of worldwide circulation and domestic institutionalization of global urban development frameworks, intended here as a peculiar type of policy mobilities, which is pivoted around the action of their pasteurized urban narratives as a "coalition magnet" and simultaneously shaped by the path-dependent influence of the "silenced" institutional configurations that characterize each context. In both cases, the "comfortable landscape of the SDGs" has smoothed the process and favoured the domestic penetration of the narratives that substantiate these global frameworks, even if the two institutional configurations are rather dissimilar, hence leading to different outcomes. On this basis it is possible to argue that, whereas the global circulation and domestic implementation of the global urban development frameworks is certainly useful to allow global comparability and the monitoring of the processes of urbanization worldwide and the implementation of the global urban development frameworks and of the SDGs, the specific institutional configurations that are frequently "silenced" when looking at their global circulation may severely undermine the results of these processes.

The development and implementation of the National Urban Agendas and Policies is still work-in-progress in many countries worldwide. Their institutionalization is certainly a crucial issue to be addressed and this article shows that the policy mobilities literature provides a number of interesting entry points to engage with the latter. In this light, further comparative research on the domestic implementation of the global urban development frameworks in Latin America and beyond is certainly needed, to identify and unfold the potential pitfalls that may be hidden in the process—such as the mentioned "fast-track institutionalization." The evidence collected through this analysis could contribute to inform the action of both domestic policy and decision-makers as well as of practitioners and consultants engaged in the activities of the various international organizations involved in the development and implementation of the global urban development frameworks.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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