

# IUT at the World Urban Forum

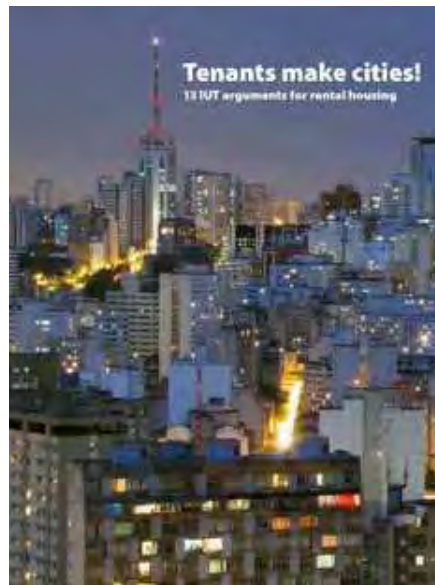
*In the beginning of September the UN, together with the city of Naples, arranged the 6th World Urban Forum, WUF. This Forum is the UN agency Habitat's international meeting place for sustainable urban development, organised every second year.*

*IUT was one of several participating non-governmental organisations which had travelled to Naples to bring up the importance of affordable rental housing, in order to achieve good city development.*



The conference was attended by over 10 000 delegates from 174 countries. The WUF is truly a forum for debate and discussion, and exchange of ideas and know-how. Even though national governments participate, no political decisions are made at these Forums. This year's theme was 'The Urban Future', with a focus on how to deal with increased urbanization without developing slums.

One of IUT's present priorities is to achieve tenure neutral housing policies – meaning that ownership should not be a lone star and favoured by governments. Ownership and rental housing should be more on equal footing, tax wise and legally wise. IUT's demand was approved of by many at the WUF, of which one was the Swedish housing minister Attefall. Minister Attefall clearly stated



that his government wanted more economic tenure neutrality between rental- and ownership housing and that rental housing is currently treated unfairly tax wise.

"Tenants make cities – cities need affordable rental housing", was the theme for IUT's networking event. The presenters stated that rental housing is needed in cities of today, and that rents should be affordable for the average household – at the same time as rental housing has been marginalised in many countries. Time has come to break this trend, and for this we need political commitment and will.

IUT President Sven Bergenstråhle stressed the importance of a sufficient rental

Naples is the capital of the region Campania. Naples has about 500 000 rental flats, which provides for roughly one third of the housing stock. Most rental flats are privately owned, with a minority of the tenants have written formal leases, where rent averages for € 450 per month for 70 m<sup>2</sup>. The city and its municipal bodies own and administrate about 100 000 flats for which the rent is set according to household income and size of family. The city has tried to sell some of its stock to the sitting tenants, but so far only a few thousand have been privatized.

sector in every country, as an integrated part of a well-functioning society.

Barbara Steenbergen, head of IUT liaison office in Brussels, observed that even though the EU does not have a housing policy, and should not have according to the principle of subsidiarity, the EU has more and more influence on the conditions for social/public rental housing in Europe. We have witnessed how public/social housing has been challenged by the private landlords in first Sweden, the Netherlands and now in France. Also, the demands from the EU to reduce deficits in the budgets of EU member states can have negative influence on the public/social rental sector.

Magnus Hammar, IUT secretary general, brought up '13 arguments for increased attention to affordable rental housing'; No capital is needed, it is convenient and flexible, and it is often preferred by the young and enhances social cohesion.

**Text** Peter Forsman,  
Swedish Union of Tenants



IUT at the World Urban Forum, from left: Guido Piran (Secretary General SICET), Sven Bergenstråhle (President IUT), Magnus Hammar (Secretary General IUT), Massimo Petterlin (National Secretary, SICET) and Barbara Steenbergen (Head of IUT Brussels).



# Naples, love at first sight

– but behind its beautiful façade another Naples stands out

*Naples is a city “where the moon hits you eye like a big pizza pie, that’s amore. When the world seems to shine like you’ve had too much wine, that’s amore...” according to Dean Martin.*

Naples is with its 4,5 million inhabitants in the top ten of the most populous urban areas in the Europe. The city has experienced significant economic growth since World War II. But today, the city is borne by high unemployment levels, of political and economic corruption and of organized crime and a thriving black market. Also, housing needs are pressing. The city is not exactly an example of orderly urban planning and good housing conditions. The devastating 1980 ‘Irpinia’ earthquake in Southern Italy, that killed almost 3 000 people and left 300 000 homeless, also stroke Naples and Campania region.

Scampia is probably the most well-known degraded neighbourhood in Italy. Scampia,



The Vele di Scampia, Sails of Scampia, constructed 1962 – 1975. Today in a state of decay, although still occupied by residents.

with its infamous housing estate ‘Vele di Scampia’ – the Sails of Scampia – played a prominent role in the 2008 movie Gomorra about the powerful Neapolitan mafia, Ndrangheta. According to Gomorra’s filmmaker, Roberto Saviano, Scampia is the biggest drug selling location in the world. The 14 floor housing complexes, into which low income people moved in the 1970s, has turned into a ghetto with a high level of mainly drug related crime. Many of its residents consider Le Vele to be a city beyond hope and advocate for its demolition, as well as a fair rehousing program for the inhabitants.

Romani people, of which there are some 170 000 living in Italy, often live under deplorable housing conditions in Europe. Only 40 000 live in camps tolerated by the Italian authorities, of which Giugliano in Naples is one of them. Others are shuffled around, often brutally evicted. These eviction orders violate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified by Italy) which prohibits evictions without adequate alternative housing. The Special UN-Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing,



PHOTO: MAGNUS HAMMAR / IUT

Somewhere in one of the streets of Naples the chef Esposito, in 1889, created the first real pizza, “Pizza Margherita”, with tomatoes, mozzarella cheese, and basil, to represent the colours of the Italian flag.

Raquel Rolnik was in Naples to take part in both the World Urban Forum and the Urban Social Forum. Due to the many problems faced in Naples and Italy, she has reiterated the need to carry out an official mission to Italy in the coming months.

**Text** Agnes Verweij, Woondbond