



MANIFESTO FOR

# La città che vorrei

Reinventare la città a misura di donna

The city I would like  
Reinventing a woman-friendly city

Proposals of Soroptimist International of Italy

30.09.2022

a global voice  
for women

Soroptimist International d'Italia



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*Soroptimist International is a worldwide Association of Women, engaged in professional and managerial activities, it is a universal voice for Women expressed through awareness, support, empowerment and action. It is accredited to the UN and its international agencies, has representation at the Council of Europe and at the OSCE and in Italy is a full member of the Observatory of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers-Department for Equal Opportunities and the Family and of the National Equality Committee of the Ministry of Labour.*

# INTRODUCTION

## CITY FACING ITS CHALLENGES

Cities are at the centre of major environmental, social, and economic challenges. Climate emergencies, pandemics, geopolitical turmoil, technological and digital innovation interact with the “*urban fabric*”, which concentrates most people, work, business, and consumption.

More than half of the world's population (75% of the European population) live in urbanised areas. These have become real LAB of knowledge, innovation, and engines of the economy, concentrating 80% of global economic activity. At the same time, cities, in the current development model, are mainly responsible for unsustainable environmental problems (e.g., pollution, consumption of natural resources, and accumulation of waste), social fractures, and inequalities.

Therefore, cities must radically change their development model according to a more sustainable and resource-compatible paradigm of the planet, in line with Goal 11 of the UN 2030 Agenda: *'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, durable and sustainable'*.

Mayors, and their administrations, are the main actors of answering the citizens' needs, problems, and expectations. Citizens are asking to manage the crises and changes through a sustainable development, which involves all economic production, trade, agriculture, services, transport, consumption, and lifestyles.

A collective effort is asked to create the future city. Everyone contribution must be based on dialogue, collaboration, confrontation, and objectives sharing. Thus, the participation of women, as responsible citizens, is fundamental. Moreover, thinking that nowadays women are still under-represented in the decision-making processes of change, despite constituting 50% of communities.

Today, mayors and urban communities have a unique opportunity to concretely redesign their cities by accessing European funds “*Next Generation EU plan*” until 2026 (e.g., the Italian *Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza - PNRR*).

## THE WOMEN ROLE IN THE FUTURE CITY

What can women do to contribute to the redesign of tomorrow cities, taking the challenges of a sustainable development and the European economic resources?

Women presence in the decision-making processes of urban transformation contributes to the revitalisation of territories by creating new paths of economic, social and cultural wealth, putting people at the centre of the transition.

Hence, the need for concrete action on the part of women in their role as responsible citizens, in the presence of the unique opportunity of the PNRR, not to be subjected to its measures, but to be able to seize and make the most of its opportunities.

## **THE CITY I WOULD LIKE. Reinventing the city on a woman scale: the national Soroptimist project**

To promote and facilitate the effective participation of women in decision-making processes towards the radical changes needed to create the tomorrow city, Soroptimist of Italy has launched in December 2021 the national project “*La città che vorrei. Reiventare la città a misura di donna*”, a creativity and ideas and good practices sharing LAB, with four main lines of action:

- **Research:** a survey conducted by Lexis Research for Soroptimist International of Italy on 5 000 women with the objective to investigate the women vision of today cities VS. tomorrow ones. The results have been elaborated for the present Soroptimist Manifesto “*La città che vorrei. Reiventare la città a misura di donna*”. The outcomes of the research and the manifesto are presented during a dedicated event (14 October 2022).
- **Advocacy:** women's participation, as active citizens, in the various decision-making processes of urban regeneration envisaged with PNRR funds (and not only). To this end, the Protocol of Understanding between Soroptimist International of Italy and ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) was signed on 7 June 2022.
- **Debates and events promotion at a local level** with local public bodies with respect to visions, directions, impact of projects financed with the PNRR funds, with the involvement of other actors present in the territory
- **Projects implementation by Soroptimist clubs** in the local territories with a focus on social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

## **5 000 women voice on today cities**

Starting from the today city analysis of the research, Soroptimist of Italy listened to the voice of 5 000 women about the livability of city, highlighting geographical, economic, and demographic drivers, that offer the nowadays strenghts and weaknesses. Women voices express that cities are not perceived livable. Compared to a barely sufficient general assessment of the quality of life (6.05 out of 10.00), there are too many critical topics, such as the involvement of female citizens by local government (4.67 out of

10.00), the economic, and fulfilment opportunities offered by the city (59% consider themselves dissatisfied with job and career opportunities). The fight against pollution on the part of the administrations is not perceived as sufficient (57% are dissatisfied), as is the maintenance of green areas (51% are dissatisfied) and the offer of public transport (57% are dissatisfied with the frequency). A noteworthy element, which also highlights social and economic disparities, is the assessment of the availability of reasonably priced houses: 54% consider themselves dissatisfied, with strong differences between the Centre-South and the North of Italy, indicating how far the distance from the transversal gender objectives of the PNRR is evident.

## **THE ECO-SUSTAINABLE CITY PROPOSED BY SOROPTIMIST WOMEN**

There is no single model for the tomorrow city, as each reality is different in terms of culture, artistic heritage, history, size and location, socio-economic composition, and availability of resources. On the one hand, history and identity, which represent an intrinsic value, will need to be protected. On the other hand, a planification for the future will be necessary to integrate the great potential and opportunities, and to avoid the risks of creating economic and social marginalization.

The changes for the tomorrow city also involve small and medium-sized cities, which are essential to avoid rural depopulation and urban drift, and indispensable for balanced territorial development, cohesion and sustainability of territories, as also recognized by the PNRR.

From the 5 000 Soroptimist research responses emerge that women's choice (with a score of 8.77 out of a maximum of 10) goes in the direction of a general model of an 'eco-sustainable city of tomorrow', with a clear role as responsible citizens, actively participating in the city's transition. It also radically changes the concept of women's urban quality of life that goes beyond the working dimension. It is a vision of quality of life that takes on a broader and different dimension from the traditional one and that includes: quality economic opportunities, educational and training opportunities, quality of public services, care for the environment and biodiversity, care and beauty of the land, soft mobility, and a well-rounded social, cultural and leisure life.

From the research responses emerges a vision of an 'eco-sustainable' city as a system of interactions that allow for the following models:

**CITIZENS CITY, ATTRACTIVE CITY, GREEN, LIVABLE & RESILIENT CITY,  
INCLUSIVE & SAFE CITY.**

# THE MANIFESTO

## *LA CITTÀ CHE VORREI.*

### *Reinventare la città a misura di donna*

#### **CITIZENS CITY:**

##### **People at the centre of change**

The city recognizes the essential role of citizens in participating in the public choices that affect them. Participation should cover all phases of planning, from the choice of objectives to the development and implementation of measures, to the evaluation of the impacts produced by projects and the use of resources (accountability). The city considers the involvement of citizens to be fundamental in order to rebuild sociality, trust and collaboration between institutions and citizens.

A city of citizens cannot do without investments to disseminate and enhance education, knowledge, life-long learning and digital education, including through public-private partnerships.

##### *Proposals:*

- Stimulate valuing women as active citizens in decision-making processes for change, as an important and essential part of the community;
- Invest in quality education, new skills and the need for reskilling of citizens in order to make the most of the potential and contribution of individuals, also involving the best private partners in the area with their own specificities in this complex process;
- Educate, raise awareness and equip schools and pupils, helping them to learn about and deal with environmental, social, and climate issues that affect the quality of their future lives.

#### **ATTRACTIVE CITY:**

##### **Innovative and creativity LAB, promoting human, cultural, social, and economic progress**

The attractive city, of any size, is capable of taking up challenges, developing new wealth and promoting economic, social and cultural liveliness and opportunities, making the most of the potential of its territory (landscapes, local economies,

environment and artistic heritage), but also exploring new forms of artistic, technological (IT, biotechnology, multimedia), and innovative entrepreneurial creativity, involving people engaged in non-standard and routine activities, from any commodity or industrial sector, capable of tackling and solving new problems. An important contribution will come from the women participation in territorial promotion processes and the possibility of accessing to the benefits of this type of measure.

#### *Proposals:*

- Invest in culture, creativity, and beauty of the area, which are becoming elements of economic development, through new forms of entrepreneurship;
- Participate in national/international competitions dedicated to the future cities by involving the best resources in the area; activate partnerships with the best competitive and attractive realities, both Italian and foreign, to implement new strategies aimed at attracting talent and investment and creating jobs;
- Attract young talents, retaining them in the area by offering well-equipped workspaces and favorable contexts, such as affordable residential and commercial rents;
- Revitalize neighborhoods, expanding pedestrianized areas and green spaces, supporting artisans, historic shops and small local businesses in innovative ways, promoting zero km food and non-food products, giving new vitality and value to the area.

## **GREEN, LIVABLE & RESILIENT CITY:**

### **A responsible city**

The green, liveable, and resilient city functions and develops responsibly thanks to local government and citizen participation in decision-making. It is a city that has a clear vision of its pollution levels and commits with appropriate solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 and 100% by 2050, in line with the objectives of the European Commission and the UN Agenda. It is a responsible and resilient city, which therefore recognises environmental, health, economic, social and infrastructure vulnerabilities and risks and plans projects and land management to protect residents and the ecosystem.

#### *Proposals:*

- Strengthen, redevelop, and maintain urban green spaces, creating green corridors and gardens with a focus on biodiversity: there are many direct and indirect benefits both economically (jobs) and socially (health, liveability, and protection from climate risks). In this key, it is important to facilitate participatory solutions to convert abandoned or unused urban spaces into green and liveable areas;
- Avoid the consumption of new land and rationalize the land already occupied, giving priority to regenerative urban planning, recovering existing infrastructure and unused buildings;

- Promote the circular economy dissemination among citizens and businesses, in order to rethink the production and consumption system of cities - which consume more than 75% of natural resources, produce 50% of global waste and between 60 and 80% of greenhouse gases - to reduce or eliminate the waste, refuse and waste model typical of the current linear economy system;
- Increase pedestrianized areas, the use of public transport and cycle paths, also to encourage a more dynamic, healthy, social life, dedicating space to sport.

## **INCLUSIVE & SAFE CITY:** **Designed and fit for All**

The city must guarantee universal access to safe spaces for all, especially for women and the most fragile citizens. This must be conducted by exploiting the technological innovation solutions and facilitating collaboration with all local actors. The inclusive & safe city finds innovative solutions adequate to offer a dignified quality of life for all. Without leaving anyone behind, this city pays particular attention to social disadvantages, fragile people, ones affected by globalization, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the digital technologies. The proposed solutions include the involvement and enhancement of people's potential, with new formulas of public-private cooperation.

Living in a city that works for everyone changes life for everyone.

### *Proposals:*

- Facilitate innovative, and multifunctional spaces creation to promote cultural and social events;
- Provide adequate educational, economic, and social services to the most fragile people, promoting innovative interventions on the territory, implementing public-private partnerships and voluntary networks on a municipal/neighborhood scale;
- Develop platforms to facilitate relations, which can release energy and creativity, activating synergies between territorial policies and the needs expressed by citizens through active listening;
- Create opportunities for personal, cultural, and economic growth for all (especially, women and youth), by implementing active policies to counter Italy's high rate of childlessness;
- Activate courses, in partnership with private and non-profit organizations, in digital literacy for senior citizens, using successful good practices;
- Reduce the digital gap, facilitating the digital transition;
- Create spaces and opportunities to meet and facilitate intergenerational dialogue and collaboration;
- Promote the achievement of equal opportunities in economic, social, and political terms in cities by 2026, in line with one of the cross-cutting priorities of the PNRR (women and gender equality).

# CONCLUSIONS



In summary, this document on the vision of an eco-sustainable city of the future on a woman's scale is Soroptimist's contribution to foster comparisons, alliances and collaborations and to accompany, with the voice of women, the vast debate underway on the cities of the future. The time to act is now: climate, social and economic emergencies are evident and have negative impacts, particularly on women, and require urgent solutions. Already today, many cities large and small, Italian and otherwise, have implemented successful transformations that represent good practices to inspire other cities.

Soroptimist will be at the forefront with the project *The city I would like*. Reinventing the city on a woman's scale, with a vision that focuses on people, gender equality, social equity, and the common good, focusing on a strategy that includes:

- **Participation in urban change processes and decision-making tables**, , starting from the Protocol of Understanding between Soroptimist and ANCI (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani – National Association Italian Municipalities), thanks to the widespread presence of Soroptimist Clubs throughout the country;
- **Organization of debates and collaborations at local and national level**, between different actors, including other women's associations, on the ongoing transformations and opportunities of the PNRR;
- **The creation of eco-sustainable projects in the area.**

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