THE NEW URBAN QUESTION
URBANISM BEYOND NEO-LIBERALISM

4th Conference of International Forum on Urbanism

Conference Proceedings

edited by Lei Qu, Chingwen Yang, Xiaoxi Hui and Diego Sepúlveda
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CONDITIONS FOR NEW NEIGHBORHOODS

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ABSTRACT: Concepts and criteria for creating new neighborhoods based particularly on considering everyday life as prime factor. Analytical and project parameters that introduce the gender perspective in the pursuit of sustainable and inclusive cities.


1- INTRODUCTION

The criteria for urban organization and assessment of new neighborhoods are based on seeing everyday life as the essential factor for defining and articulating neighborhoods. This means valuing the proximity of a variety of facilities, services and shops; the gender perspective in urbanism; sustainability as a multiple urban, economic, social and cultural criterion; and design elements that make a city friendly, capable of expressing diversity and enhancing dwelling without any sort of discrimination (by gender, age, class, religion, origin or ethnicity).

What do the best neighborhoods we have lived in or been in -as permanent or temporary inhabitants- have? In addition to the affection enveloping all the spaces in which we have lived some part of our lives, there is an outward-looking affection, toward the public side of our experiences, the spaces for sociability. The possibilities for doing and choosing are what distinguish these places: the everyday spots, stores and people who become our support system, our security. A certainty afforded by our recognition of the place and by our knowing how to read its everyday normality, lived and inhabited by a variety of people.

How can we build neighborhoods that afford these possibilities? To create this support for social networks it is not only necessary to create housing, but instead it is equally important to create workplaces, shops, services and facilities so that everyone can have a range of opportunities in terms of work and economic activities in the neighborhood. We are talking about a complex network that involves everyone’s life, and thus it is a matter of offering diverse spaces for socialization for both the productive and the reproductive world, to shape a neighborhood.

How can an integrated and egalitarian urban space be created, particularly since urban space is not neutral, but instead assigns priorities, reflects powers and rights? Urban project management has led for a variety of reasons to the simplification of uses, times and users, for the most part reflecting a progression of linear and temporally successive activities, leaving aside the experience of women, who make use of the more diverse and less linear city. As Jane Jacobs would say, in the choreography of the city, women’s role is diverse and complex.

Urbanism with a gender vision redefines the objectives of urbanism in line with the needs of a new society that embraces, in addition to gender differences, the diversity of situations of which men and women form part: different cultural and geographical origins, ages with particular capacities and needs, diverse family groups, etc.; incorporating them as urban project data will lead to creation of new types of facilities. New facilities in which it is possible to socialize reproductive tasks. From the gender perspective these facilities are called infrastructures for everyday life.

What are the parameters on which we should base housing quality? For a society that wants to move forward on equality it is key to rethink and get beyond many spatial structures that are part of another era,
another society, and another way of thinking. Space is a representation of the social values that have created it. A society that recognizes the importance of caring for the home and people will generate spaces that are appropriate for those tasks, starting from the basis that they do not have to be hidden but instead are shared responsibilities. Hence, the essential features that all dwellings must provide are: flexibility, adequate volume depending on environment and activities, spatial dehierarchization, space for reproductive and productive work, an own exterior space, natural cross-ventilation, appropriate hours of sunlight, and passive and active energy efficiency.

2- CRITERIA FOR URBAN ORGANIZATION AND ASSESSMENT OF NEW NEIGHBORHOODS

2.1 PRE-PROJECT MANAGEMENT CRITERIA:

1. Knowledge of the physical and social context: territorial data and conditioning factors, type of urban fabric in the intervention area, economic activities, proximity, quantity and quality of facilities and services in the area under analysis, features of the public space, and type of housing prevailing in the area. Insofar as sustainability consists of rational use of the territory and the environment, the physical analysis should be preceded by a justification of the need for a new area of residential development, or absence thereof, given the other formulas for expanding available housing without consuming more territory, for example, acupuncture work in the existing city, policies favoring rentals or rehabilitation of buildings.

This analysis must include another parallel analysis closely related to the social, which has to do with knowledge of the inhabitants and their characteristics, the economic activities they perform, occupancy rates, percentage of formal and informal work, domestic work, economic level, degree of cohesion and social activity according to presence of citizens’ associations and entities, the types of groups living together in housing (segregated by sex). Ensuing from this analysis will be further more in-depths ones that have to do specifically with other variables like participation, public space, security, mobility, facilities and housing.

2. Participation processes. Participation is a value that must come into play in all spheres so as to include future inhabitants from different growth sectors, as well as the population already residing in the intervened neighborhoods or cities. Participation is a process that must be present from the diagnosis of urban planning through its evaluation, and it must be the fruit of an interdisciplinary, crosscutting team. New instruments must also be introduced to try to understand and make visible what is happening in a space, to put on paper all the knowledge accrued by a community, specifically women, based on observation of their everyday life, their territory, given that they are the ones who know it best.

2.2 DESIGN CRITERIA

1. Urban morphology and relationship with the existing city: good relationships must be fostered with existing architectural, urban and landscape structures, adapting to both natural and artificial preexisting elements. This implies a strong relationship with the existing urban network, that is, the distinction between new and old must disappear. What is most important in neighborhood morphology is the establishment of relationships between residential buildings, facilities and free spaces, fostering the neighborhood’s character as an urban system, rather than the autonomy of objects.

Neighborhoods must be made visible as a space to get to know, to visit in order to do something. New centralities must be created in cities where new growth takes place, either through facilities, workplaces, public spaces or other agglutinating strategies for a new neighborhood, strengthening multiple uses and mixtures.

2. Typological grouping: if we want a neighborhood with a lot of social life, capable of fostering the creation of networks among its inhabitants, the typological grouping must provide spaces for meeting and intermediary spaces. Hence, according to the grouping of housing proposed, these relationships will be favored or not. A gradual and secure transition between public and private is essential, to generate different scales of encounters and recognition. Another quality we must seek in dwellings is natural cross-ventilation. Attached houses are not acceptable insofar as they are not sustainable. Among other reasons, because suburban and low-density mono-functional urban developments, with isolated houses, hinder implementation of public transportation facilitating the activities of everyday life.

3. Densities and mixed uses: an in-depth study must be made of the most appropriate ratios of dwellings per hectare, the relationship between built and free spaces, grouping of constructions or dispersion, taking
into account that before creating new urban zones there must be an assessment of redensification of existing areas and of the possibility of densifying created areas, if necessary.

We must ask if the proposed densities are appropriate (from 50 to 200 dwellings per hectare) in relation to the natural and urban environment and in relation to morphologies that are stepped up.

Densities must also permit construction and maintenance of services, facilities and public transportation; hence, whenever possible densities permitting a sufficient critical mass to provide efficient and quality services should be taken into account.

4. Mobility: supply of means of transportation and features of access spaces determine ways of living and quality of life. All persons plan and modify their behavior to a greater or lesser extent according to the possibilities afforded by the means available to them. The diversity of everyday needs and obligations related to work, daily purchases, walks, parents’ duties, and any other type of task determine a relationship with the surroundings and thus imply displacements, characterized by not being linear or uniform.

Existence of a multifunctional fabric, equipped with all types of facilities and infrastructures at neighborhood scale, enhances the possibilities for short displacements that can be made on foot. Existence of sustainable, integrated, adapted, diverse and frequent transportation allows for increasing distances, broadening possibilities, and cutting times in getting from one place to another.

When the priority for new growth are the people who move on foot, the urban physical solutions must adapt to their situation: sidewalk dimensions must be provide the necessary width; corners must be widened to improve visibility among pedestrians and automobiles; architectural obstacles and barriers must be eliminated; protection must be provided for inclement weather; differentiation between levels or functions must be designed using different textured and colored materials, etc.

5. Facilities: facilities supplied are enriched when society promotes real values of equality, justice, inclusion and solidarity, and when it recognizes, assumes and values the work deriving from gender roles. Facilities complement the urban structure of cities and make the public-private, interior-exterior, housing-city duality richer by providing specific spaces for health, learning, service, commerce, cultural dissemination, youth centers, etc. Their distribution in the territory in relation to their uses and mobility networks guarantees the quality of life, so that they become strategies for fostering social networks, generating exchanges of services, and allowing for different hours of use, bringing their functioning closer to the complexity of everyday life.

The space for facilities must be linked to the city’s public space, with a view to maximizing permeability, flexibilizing their use, so as to maximize utilization of the spaces. That is to say, the school playground, a civic center’s multifunction room, a library’s newspaper reading room, or a student residence laundry room are spaces that we can incorporate in all the neighborhood’s everyday life and that will aid in public sharing of reproduction tasks.

The idea of facilities for everyday life implies incorporating a new generation of indispensable facilities, favoring equal opportunities for women and men, which aid performance of reproductive tasks and caretaking, starting with the essential element, the childcare center, in addition to daytime centers for older and younger people, education support spaces, etc.

6. Shops and other services: as important as good accessibility to facilities is having shops nearby, with the greatest possible diversity in terms of volume, set in the fabric of everyday activities. It is especially important to foster the existence of small premises appropriate for sole-proprietorships or family businesses, which are sometimes started up with the aid of micro-loans. Under the concept of proximity of facilities, workplaces for cooperatives providing labor insertion can also be fostered. The diversity and variety of shops ultimately helps to strengthen local economies, the basis for the vitality and vigor of communities. Hence, any proposal must start by taking into account the diversity and typologies of shops, hours and users, and situations.

7. Facilities and services provided by residential buildings themselves: the services that residential buildings themselves provide, for use both by residents and by neighbors, are key in connection with the quality of public spaces and facilities. Community facilities are even more necessary when dwellings are small and need to be complemented by the spaces and features of collective services, strengthening extension from the household. It is a way of fostering community living, by sharing many household activities.

8. Public space is key in each city: it is where the city’s society becomes visible. The quality of living, working and relating in a neighborhood has much to do with the qualities of the public space available. Public space conceived for equal opportunities fosters people’s autonomy and socialization, since it
prioritizes design and adaptability for the needs of women and men. The public space is the connector for activities where we individually or collectively live our everyday lives and establish social and cultural links. Consequently, from a gender perspective, public space is not understood merely as functional space, but instead as a space for life experience, and thus it must guarantee equal opportunities and equity of use. Mixed uses must be sought, providing activity, sustainable mobility that values proximity and prioritizes pedestrian movements, accessibility without discrimination, a positive perception of security, and an active and interlinked relationship with facilities, shops and buildings in general.

9. Transition between public and private spaces: the key to the social success of new residential neighborhoods rests in the emphasis each project places on the quality of the visual and functional relationship between housing space and public space. The relationship of sidewalks and public spaces with the vertical plane of façades is the meeting point of two ecological systems, where lies the potential for maximum activity and variety. But likewise important is the quality of the building’s interior communal spaces planned for fostering interaction between neighbors of the same community. Moreover, the quality of housing has much to do with the relationships with the exterior and views, orientation, sunlight, participation in community life and childcare, which are fostered by houses with terraces, galleries, balconies and gardens.

10. Aesthetic dimension and architectural quality: beyond these urban, environmental and social values, the quality of neighborhoods also has to do with the aesthetic values of architecture that is friendly and expressive, that uses pleasant materials, textures and colors, and that ultimately favors appropriation and identification by its inhabitants, and the pride and satisfaction from living in the neighborhood. Buildings must have clear forms, signaling accesses and façades, and encouraging people to put up their own personalized signs.

The most important issue, which is totally related to sustainability and quality of life, is that each of the façades should be different based on orientation, making use of the most appropriate architectural elements: windows, balconies, open terraces, protected terraces, galleries, etc.

11. Vegetation and water: appropriate use of vegetation has positive effects, since it absorbs solar radiation and mitigates human heat, thereby decreasing the demand for energy. Hence it impacts on cooling, and water cycle, favors drainage, and ultimately increases production of biomass thanks to its absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere, creating a positive effect for combating climate change. It is advisable to include green façades and garden spaces in neighborhoods, which can be own gardens.

In relation to public space, design of green areas must be a priority issue in projects, along with urban equipment and presence of water. Special care must be taken with pavements moving from one level to another; surfaces should be diverse and soft, to avoid concentration of heat. A visible and efficient water cycle should be planned from the outset, with fountains, canals, tanks and other elements that enhance the water cycle, provide humidity and drainage, with good management of rainwater and natural resources, returning cleaned water to the natural cycle.

12. Sustainability and resources: the eleven criteria presented thus far deal with sustainability from a social and urban standpoint. Reference must also be made to all construction aspects that have major repercussions on the good use of energy, selective waste collection, management of green areas, separation of graywater and rainwater, reusable/recyclable construction, vegetation, decreasing CO₂ emissions.
ABSTRACT: At the end of the 60’s the so called Urban Social Movements were groups that coming from different locally rooted entities or associations, asked for new approaches to planning that meant taking care of people’s needs and memories.

As a result of the experience that came from the gendered division of work, duties and spaces women had a deep and broad knowledge of the urban circumstances. At the very beginning of the Urban Social Movements in Barcelona we could find women’s meetings where they asked for better condition of living, claiming for better and safer public spaces, more public facilities for daily life and better public transport, all of these with the aim to allow everyone, but specially women, to conciliated public, personal and family life.


1 INTRODUCTION

In the late 1960s new agents began appearing on the Western urban scene who would play different roles from those of the powers that be, giving new meaning to the processes of urban renewal and development.

These new agents came to be known as Urban Social Movements, and arose in an effort to solve urban problems caused by advanced capitalism’s contradictions (Martínez, 1998) in cities and the negative results of application of urban proposals of the Modern Movement’s avantgardes. The unyielding zonification they proposed ended up destroying essential values of cities as a place for meeting and for communication, disconnecting and destroying basic activities that traditionally had maintained the spirit of the city as a place for exchange and encounters, interrupting its historical continuity.

Urban Social Movements demanded new approaches to city planning that meant taking people and their needs and imaginaries into account. Thus, rather than planning that was implemented taking everything as a tabula rasa, Urban Social Movements, in contact with people’s reality, proposed improving their lives and their relationships with the neighborhood. They fought for urbanism to propose a series of spaces, facilities and services that would not only satisfy citizens’ needs, but also enhance their living experience and communication. Although USMs are different in each country, what they share is that they are the expression of the citizenry’s will to be involved in the creation and construction of their own urban space (Domingo-Bonet, 1996).

One of the most significant thinkers of urbanism, both from the technical standpoint and in Urban Social Movement struggles, is Jane Jacobs. In her book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961), she argues for new urban planning principles different from those taught in architecture schools, based on her experience as a woman in the city and its immediate surroundings. She advocates a new method of urban research based on constantly thinking about structures in movement, in processes underway; on working inductively, reasoning from particular to general; and on looking for unique indications or signs, different from the generality.

Jane Jacobs talks about the importance of security on city streets, about the components characterizing successful public spaces, about urban regeneration, everyday life and day-to-day activities in the neighborhood. She defends urban diversity vis-à-vis global, uniform planning, valuing high-density, mixed-use urban fabrics, from the danger implied by single-function interventions focusing on infrastructure. To
achieve these objectives she proposed community participation, thereby trusting individual capacities as a tool against the devastating impact of urban developers and their corporate clients.

In her view, cities are complex emerging systems that are the result of the unplanned actions of individuals and small groups, where local knowledge is key.

Urban Social Movements arose in Barcelona in the late 1960s in response to the needs of certain neighborhoods. These movements were primarily vehicularized through neighborhood associations. In Spain under the Franco dictatorship neighborhood associations played a political role when political party activity was still prohibited.

Women’s participation in these associations was very important, not only because it implied support and cohesiveness for men’s work, but also because they organized independently to demand certain neighborhood conditions that would resolve their specific needs as those responsible for reproduction and as women. As a consequence of a gender-based division of labor, women for the most part dealt with reproductive tasks\(^1\), which provided them with a different, profound and broad knowledge of urban wants (fig.1).

![Figure 1: Everyday life of women in the neighborhoods. (photos from the magazine *Vindicación feminista* nº 22 and from the magazine *La veu del carrer* nº 21: “La ciutat i les dones”).](image)

2 URBAN CONFLICTS AS EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN.

In the 1970s working-class women endured dual discrimination: as belonging to a margiinated and exploited social class, and as women, there were excluded and marginalized in the groups they belonged to themselves. Gender inequality was articulated in the public-private dichotomy, also supported by capitalism and patriarchy, which mutually reinforced one another. These women were relegated to the private space, as persons exclusively responsible for reproductive tasks, although many of them also worked in the productive sphere. Women’s reproductive work was invisibilized, since as it was not remunerated it did not fall within the system of values of capitalist production and, moreover, they were barred from the political sphere. The exclusion suffered by women during the dictatorship implied a setback in their situation as a collective, and they lost space in terms of power and decision-making. During those years, the oppression of women was manifest in the family, in society, in education, in work, and in sexuality.

Dolores Hayden (Hayden, 1981)\(^2\) explained the relationship between the situation of women relegated to domestic chores and urban planning. The author criticizes the idea that “woman’s place is in the home” as a principle of architectural design and urban planning. Dwellings, neighborhoods and cities were designed for women confined to their homes, and this limited them physically, socially and economically. When in

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\(^1\) Tasks making possible the natural, physical and social development of persons, as the basis for productive tasks.

\(^2\) Based on the conference “Planning and Designing a Non-Sexist Society,” held at the University of California, Los Angeles, April 21, 1979.
addition to reproductive tasks women have to deal with productive work the frustrations are accentuated. In the author’s view a solution must be found for the limitations and difficulties women encounter both in the private and the public spheres, given that conventional households were not appropriate for women who cared for their families and were also employed. One of the problems implied by living in an outlying neighborhood was the scarcity of shared public spaces, stores, daycare, and laundry services. As remedy Hayden proposes attacking the traditional division between public and private space, in addition to linking housing and workplaces in proximity, so as to avoid long commutes.

Manuel Castells (Castells, 1975) refers to the urban problem as a series of everyday acts and situations whose performance and features closely depend on general social organization. Those urban problems include the case of women as a specific social group. They are the women who want to leave the private sphere but who do not make it, or who find it very difficult because of the impediments they encounter in the city, which include the lack of services as well as hours not suited to their needs. The author refers specifically to the phalocratic cultural model, which keeps women at home, submitted, and isolated.

The theoretical debates were endorsed by women involved in USMs, since in fulfilling the assigned role of dealing with reproductive chores, it was women who suffered the inconveniences and deficiencies of the physical support in which those chores had to be performed, i.e., dwellings and neighborhoods. A 1970 study in Barcelona’s Besòs neighborhood\(^3\) to determine the number of daycare centers that were needed (Matas Pericé, 1971) found that 22% of women worked outside the home, and 50% worked in exchange for a salary within their own homes. In general there were no collective or social services allowing women to rid themselves of some of their reproductive obligations in order to be able to take on remunerated work.

The specific problems of women in the neighborhood started coming to light, making it clear that they needed to have their own organization to denounce the problems they face and demand solutions that would take them into account. Otherwise women would continue to bear the brunt of the situation. (fig.2)

![Figure 2](image_url): Women protesting in Barcelona City Hall against rubbish in Collserola hill (photo Nash, 2007). Woman demanding better public spaces (Photo magazine La veu del carrer nº 21) and women group demonstrating for better houses.

3 **ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION.**\(^4\)

Yet women have always participated in USMs and have often led them, although their roles as promoters of social change have received little attention. There has been acceptance of the hegemonic discourse that says that women are politically passive and submissive, even when this contradicts reality, and their work has often been presented as complementary to and functional for the work of men within the movement.

It is not that women do not do important things, but instead that what women do is not considered important.

\(^3\) El Besòs is a traditional worker and industrial neighborhood of Barcelona. In the 1970s it was on the outskirts of the city.

\(^4\) The concept of empowerment with a dual dimension appeared as of the 1995 Beijing Declaration, at the Fourth World Conference on Women. On the one hand, it involved awareness of the individual and collective power held by women. And on the other, a political dimension, insofar as women seek to be present in decision-making places, i.e., exercising power.
To rewrite the history of USMs from a gender perspective we would have to invert the scale of values where significance has been related to the male world, to now give importance to the female world, that proper to women, with other systems of value, relationships and internal articulation.

The organization of women within neighborhood associations is different from that of men, since women, in addition to fighting for cohesion and improvement of the neighborhood, have to fight for personal emancipation, bringing other factors into the mix.

The characteristic of women’s struggles are (Trayner i Vilanova, 1997):
1- The ways in which women act in mobilizations follow behavior patterns in line with values assigned to the female gender.
2- They bring entertainment and festive elements to their protests.
3- Organization of women in more informal structures and without strict rules as to membership and operation.
4- In women’s groups the public-private and individual-collective dichotomies are less patent than in traditional social and political organizations.
5- Communication and participation are more direct.
6- Women’s participation in specific urban demands leads to a change in the social relationships of the demanding group, since gender awareness is added to class consciousness.

Feminist theories would accompany development of neighborhood and urban demands of women. It was as of 1975, declared by the UN as International Women’s Year, that feminist women in Spain began to meet and establish contacts that led to proposing alternatives to official events. Feminist groups organized the First Workshop for Women’s Liberation in Madrid from December 6 to 8. In March 1976 the First Catalan Women’s Workshop was held in Barcelona.

Figure 3: First Catalan Women’s Workshop held in Barcelona University main hall. (from Pilar Aymerich, Exhibition Catalogue Memoria d’un temps.)

One of the presentations focused on women and neighborhoods, underscoring two important issues:

1) Poor neighborhood living conditions most affect women, since they are the ones who spend most time and do most chores there;
2) The problem of citizen participation is more serious in women because they are in a position of inferiority, due to the oppression to which they are subjected and their exclusion from public space, with respect to men.

Proposals to deal with this situation included:

a- The women’s economic emancipation.

To achieve it, it was important to collectivize domestic services (laundries, dining halls, etc.), create free social services (daycare centers, schools, adult education centers), and ensure good mobility within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and the rest of the city.

b- The incorporation of women in political life.

c- The creation of women’s subgroups.
Although the debate does not reflect a unified perspective, it is evident that the urban question is not neutral and affects women differently. For that reasons, the magazine *Vindicación feminista* began publishing a new section as of its October 4, 1976 edition, called “Woman in neighborhoods” (fig. 4) attempting to present “as faithfully as possible the conditions in which hundreds of thousands of women live in neighborhoods, the kinds of oppression they face there, and their brutally or subtly discriminatory reality” (Pineda, 1976).

**Figure 4**: Cover from magazine *Vindicación feminista* nº 1 and nº 4. Opening article of the new section in the magazine “The Woman in the Neighborhoods” signed by Amparo Pineda.

### 4 GENERATING THE CITY*

Gender grievances imply speaking from the experience of the city and neighborhoods beyond oneself, and having made it possible to reconcile reproduction and production times (not to mention own time) despite the difficulties posed by the physical surroundings. The female experience, even today, can unfortunately not be de-linked from imposed roles. The decisions made about the city are informed by an exclusive experience, which is by no means universal.

The right to the city, which can be understood abstractly and philosophically, has a first level that is evidently material, affording women the same opportunities of choice as men. Hence the charter of rights can be materialized in a series of services and facilities for which neighborhood women have struggled, and continue to struggle.

Among the most important claims made over these years have been those for collective services, particularly childcare centers, for all neighborhoods and with sufficient space for all children. They should also be free and have flexible hours. It was a matter of creating services that would make women’s remunerated and reproductive work compatible, since creation of care centers for children was essential for women’s emancipation.

So, the most important women’s claims in the 70’s were (fig. 5):
- Children care centers.
- Adult education institute.
- Public kindergardens and schools.
- Neighborhood health centers.
- All these easily reachable on foot or by public transport in all neighborhood.

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*Vindicación feminista* was a magazine published between 1976 and 1979 that was a platform for dissemination of claims by the Feminist Movement in Spain.

*In the view of Deleuze (LARRAURI, 2000) the logic of life is not the logic of being but of becoming. What is important is that which passes, which is gone through, which changes. This gives rise to the concept of “generating,” the power to generate the city. It is also a play on words with “género,” i.e., “gender” in the Spanish language.*
And last but not least, housing claims extended to the quality of the quality neighborhood public space.

Figure 5: Children and women demonstrating for public and free childcare centers. (magazine *Triunfo* nº 698)

5 CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between women’s activism and Urban Social Movements has been conflictive from the outset. Urban Social Movements often assume a bourgeois position of segregating women from spheres of power (Fig.6).

There have always been women who have tried to bring feminist claims into movements, such as Federica Montseny in the Catalan anarchist movement, Flora Tristán in the French socialist movement, or Clara Zetkin in the communist movement. Yet they were never priority grievances for movement leaders. They seemed to feel that giving them too much attention would weaken the priority objectives, and that once the priorities had been met, the others, those of women, would fall into place.

Figure 6: Cartoon criticizing men that belongs to the left movement because they were indifferent to women’s rights

Feminist claims as of the 1970s focused on the fact that being a male citizen is not the same as being a female citizen, insofar as it does not provide access to spheres of power on equal terms. Hence they focused on questioning the separation between public and private, and on strengthening other ways of viewing the world, different from the patriarchal ideology (Alfama and Miró, 2005).

For urban planning it is important to take away the lesson that a good neighborhood, a good city, cannot be planned if we fail to take into account the knowledge afforded by women’s experience. And although over thirty years have gone by from the time of the experiences related here, the burden of responsibility linked to gender roles continues to be totally unequal, and according to Spain 2007 statistics, it is we women who perform nearly 70% of reproductive work. Urban forms condition opportunities for equality, and the segregated and disperse growth of urban developments in the closing decades of the 20th century reinforce the division deriving from gender roles and the patriarchal hierarchy structure.

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7 Eva Alfama i Neus Miró, 2005. Pg.19.
A first, evident, conclusion is that the improvements in cities and in Barcelona in particular during the last quarter of the 20th century derive from claims and urban projects conceived and defended from the bottom up.

As a second conclusion, it has been demonstrated that urban experience is not neutral. Hence the experience of women, both as differently-sexed beings and because of assigned gender roles, reveals other dysfunctions and needs from those seen from men’s perspective. Consequently, enhancing the visibility of women’s contributions to the city constitutes a debt to our predecessors, as well as a necessary revision in order to build equitable societies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT


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CATALONIAN NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT LAW: THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE AS A PLANNING TOOL

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ABSTRACT: The Catalan Law 2 / 2004, improvement for districts, urban areas and villages that require special attention, has been a leading tool to start developing an urban planning with a gender perspective. The point 6 of the law is about the promotion of equal opportunities in the use of public facilities and public spaces by the means of urban renovation.

A comparative analysis of a selection of the proposals submitted so far, and an on-site analysis of the projects already completed will permit to draw the evolution of the application of gender perspective on urban planning.

Summing up, this research could be the opportunity to review what has been done and how, giving as result new recommendations for next interventions to be applying the gender perspective in urban planning.


I/ INTRODUCTION

A close and complex look on urban space is needed; that is, there should be a planning program with no simplifications which includes analysis and interpretations at different levels. Everyday situations, needs of the reproductive world should be considered just the way in which needs of the productive world are considered. The two spheres, that of reproductive and that of productive work, should be put in the same level and thus appraised in equal terms. Disregarding the needs derived from the tasks ascribed to the female gender (as has been the situation so far) results in unequal opportunities and duties which are mainly prejudicial to women and people who depend on others like children, the elderly and people affected with illness.

In order to reverse this situation, it is essential to foster women’s involvement in the processes of acknowledgment, exploration and development of neighbourhoods, so that their involvement allows us to draw direct knowledge of urban realities from their very experiences, stemmed from the role traditionally and culturally assigned to women. Women are the social actors who mostly use, enjoy and put up with public spaces and facilities, and often the use they make of public spaces and facilities revolves around the use made of them by others.

The wide variety of activities we carry out and of which we are accountable for leads us to seek routes for optimizing time. We women seek to manage our time in the most efficient way possible, and for this, there should be complex urban spaces combining different uses (shopping, schools, civil and administrative activities, etc.) while being linked to other city areas by means of efficient and varied public transport services.

Public space is the connecting space of activities where people live their daily lives individually or collectively and where they establish social and cultural bonds. Thus, from a gender perspective, public space is not considered a merely functional space but as a space of vital experiences, and that is why it should guarantee equal opportunities and equity of use. In this sense, mixed uses should be sought granting the activity a sustainable mobility which values proximity and prioritizes pedestrian movement, equal

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1Research referred to group CSO2008-04337/SOCI. Principal researcher: Pilar García Almirall. UPC, Centro de Políticas de Suelo y Valoraciones. Inmigración, vivienda y ciudad. Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación.
accessibility for all, a positive perception of safety and an active, interwoven relation with facilities, shops and buildings in general.

As a space of memory and social identity, it should be a referent of women, acknowledging the importance of their contributions. One of the most immediate mechanisms for this is naming public spaces in feminine forms, which highlights the active role played by women in the history of neighbourhoods, towns or cities, which in general is inexistent in current names of streets.

In order to balance responsibilities, organize reproductive tasks assigned to the gender and provide equal opportunities to women and men, facilities should incorporate the concept of “infrastructure for everyday life” by providing new spaces of activities or facilities as society evolves. A reflection on different experiences in the contemporary city broadens the list of needs and makes sure that the physical space of facilities provides room for exchanging, sharing, supporting, integrating and viewing the “time of use” as a determining factor to promote access and participation.

For all of what we have just explained, one of the most innovative contributions of the 2/2004 Law is the inclusion of the gender perspective in planning and urban development legislation. The sixth field of intervention establishes “gender equity in the use of urban space and facilities” as one of the financeable aspects that should be considered in urban reform projects submitted by Catalanian town councils. The general aim of the Law is improving neighborhoods, urban areas and towns requiring special attention.

As in the case of every law, the political context in which it has been drafted is a clue, so that a brief explanation follows. In 2004, the Autonomous Government of Catalonia was a coalition government made up by three progressive political forces, within which the Catalanian Institute of Women (Institut Catalá de les Dones, ICD) responds directly to the president’s office. This situation in the political organizational structure resulted in a broad reach of the gender question in all public policies. A transversal approach is an essential tool for behaving with a gender perspective, as it entails (among other things) that women are not considered a minority or a problem, but an essential constituent of society, and for this, it is necessary to redirect the systems of thought and behaviour in place, which are based on an abstract neutrality corresponding to exclusively male experiences and trends of thought. Thus, the fact that the ICD responded to the president’s office enabled its four women governors to play an active role within government in all spheres, bringing their knowledge and expertise from the women’s perspective to their job. The present Neighbourhood Development Law has been embraced in all of these interventions.

CASE ANALYSIS WITHIN CURRENT LEGISLATION

Within the framework of this law, our aim is to analyze the past, present and future implications of the sixth field of intervention for urban reform proposals and, more widely, the implications of the gender perspective for the urban development project.

As we have already mentioned, the sixth field of intervention is an innovative contribution which has given rise to considerable uncertainties. Throughout different calls for proposals, it can be noticed how progress has been made on these matters, and how some technical teams have gained new valuable knowledge and have incorporated gender as a tool for analysis, understanding and drafting of projects. There is still a lot of work to be done, but the examples we had analyzed shown different ways to approach urban projects from a gender perspective.

In the first years of the call for proposals, most fields of action were restricted to the following:
1. Social activities: Workshops and awareness-raising campaigns on gender. Immigrant women and integration
2. Facilities needed to carry out above activities
3. Safety. In most of the cases, it refers to improving street lighting in dark public space areas

The enhancement of available knowledge and the improvement in the use of gender criteria in projects have been possible thanks to the support provided to experts’ research by different government levels (Generalitat, Regional Council of Barcelona and other town councils), the organization of meetings and workshops, the publication of bibliographic works and the delivery of technical and civic responsibility courses.

2 ICD’s President Marta Selva i Masoliver, Deputy President Mercé Fernández i Gesalí, Manager Anna Solà i Argüimbau and Program Director Isabel Segura i Soriano (2003-2006)
Today, August 2009, it is not possible to make a complete assessment of the outcomes achieved by the implementation of these criteria, as only two of the ninety-two projects funded by the Neighbourhood Development Law have finished, namely the neighbourhoods of Santa Caterina in Barcelona and Can Anglada in Terrassa. In any case, the implementation of the law can already be analyzed provisionally in many neighbourhoods included in the first and second calls for proposals. It can also be observed that in the latest proposals submitted, attempts are being made to work in more transversal ways, applying gender criteria comprehensively within the urban reform project.

Projects related to the public space and mobility aimed at improving aspects of people’s daily lives show efforts in which the transversality of the implementation of the gender perspective can be traced.

From our analysis from the gender perspective of three cases we would seek to determine if the implementation of the sixth field of intervention improves the public space and facilities for women, and in a further transversal analysis we will seek to determine if efforts in other fields have been made from the gender perspective as well. The cases we have selected for analysis view the implementation of social participation as a tool for urban project development in many different ways.

CASE STUDIES


Regarding its urban typology, Collblanc-Torrasa neighbourhood is a historic site, with a high density of residential buildings dating from the fifties and sixties. Besides the poor quality of many of the buildings, the narrowness of streets hinders inner mobility and affects the quality of public spaces.

The Gender Equity Project, promoted by the Municipal Program for Women, is a proposal which has been submitted by the social policies area aimed at making the program a tool for including social issues and gender perspective in urban projects. With this objective in mind, efforts were made to strengthen the social fabric through exchange and mutual understanding. One of the main primary aims was creating an association of women who lived in the neighbourhood, which (unlike in other districts) did not exist there before.

The proposal includes six related programs:
- Coho: Mediation services to share housing
- Apropar (“coming closer”): Social involvement of immigrant women
- Bellugant-nos (“moving”): Physical exercise and intercultural coexistence
- Participa: Promoting the creation of a women’s association in the neighbourhood
- Xarxa de dones (“women’s network”): Involvement of women living in the neighbourhood in planning process from a gender perspective
- Estudi de mobilitat (“mobility study”): Mobility adjusted to meet the needs of daily life.

As a characteristic of the social fabric, nearly 30% of the neighbourhood’s population is made up of non-EU immigrants, a population which has consolidated in the last six years. In many cases, this gives rise to coexistence issues in the use of public spaces, mainly because people do not know each other and are afraid of each other.

Women’s perception of safety is much influenced by this phenomenon. The Information Centre for Women, which runs the Gender Equity Project, aims at promoting mutual understanding among different cultures and enhancing their coexistence.

Within the framework of this program, once the women’s association was set up, a report on the perception and demands for improvement of public spaces was drafted and submitted to the town council for analysis. The main points include:
- Improvement of public spaces:
  - Planting trees, placing benches under the shade of trees and improving existing green areas (Guernica square).
  - Perception of urban insecurity (Marquesa Park).
  - Cleanliness in the neighbourhood: cleaning services should be deployed in all streets, not only the main ones.
- Appraisal of spaces for practicing sports:
  - Today, they are inadequate, due to the large population and the territorial extension of the district.
Opening up school facilities for the general public beyond school hours, without ruling out the possibility of building adequate sports facilities in the long term.

Providing nursery services or children’s play centres in sports facilities, so that women with children can have access to sports.

More adequate facilities for the women’s group:
Premises in a central area, outward-facing and visible to the general public, well-ventilated and well-lit.

The mobility study is probably the approach which is most closely linked to the urban development project proper. Carried out by the Institute of Regional and Metropolitan Studies of Barcelona (Institut d’Estudis Regionals i Metropolitans de Barcelona, IERMB) run by Carme Miralles-Guash, assisted by researchers Gemma Solé Masó and Angel Cebollada Frontera. Besides analyzing the uses and perception of public spaces and mobility strategies, the study puts forward eleven proposals for action, among them:
Ensuring safety in public spaces with the presence of people in the streets.
Prevention policies in order to prevent the setting up of unsafe areas.
In the development of public spaces, avoiding out-of-sight hidden areas and areas which may give rise to urban insecurity.
Adjusting and expanding the scope of public services to suit the current needs of the population.
Develop the Urban Mobility Plan with the maximum involvement of the general public.
Improving safety in metro stations and wagons.
Widening sidewalks, putting up handrails in the streets and ensuring street lighting and visibility.

The Gender Equity Project also delivered participatory workshops to women in the neighbourhood where they described their daily lives and shared their knowledge about the neighbourhood from their own experience. Experiences shared at these sessions were then featured in a dossier called “Urbanismo y género, el papel de las mujeres en la configuración de la ciudad” (“Urban Development and Gender: The Role of Women in the City Configuration; Zaida Muxí Martínez and Col·lectiu punt6 www.punt6.net). This work aimed at acquainting all women to the reflection on urban issues by offering a tool for the visibility, information and technical training from the gender perspective in urban spaces.

Figure 1: guide book, Urban Development and Gender: The Role of Women in the City Configuration


The neighborhood is characterized by a high percentage of immigrants who dwell in social housing blocks built in the sixties. Its location between the bank of River Congost and the railway route hinders communications and mobility to adjacent neighbourhoods. Added to this, the neighbourhood has significant urban development deficits due to poor or lack of public spaces and facilities.

One of the main aims of the project is improving mobility, public spaces and facilities of collective use in line with social programs which foster coexistence and equal opportunities.
The Equal Opportunities Plan is the tool used by the Equity Department to carry out activities with the specific aim of involving women in the neighbourhoods to play an active role in urban development in the framework of the Neighbourhood Development Law.

In order to know the multicultural reality of women in the neighbourhood, it was necessary to gather statistic data by sex, as these data were not broken down in most census. Demographic, socioeconomic and family situation indicators were used. This information was further completed with qualitative data gathered from interviews to different groups of women grouped by nationalities (Spanish, Latin American, Maghrebi, and sub-Saharan), representatives of the neighbourhood school and technical staff from the city council. This information made it possible to carry out a previous analysis with a gender perspective.

The first contributions regarding women’s needs in relation to their urban experiences can be drawn from the social work carried out by intercultural discussion groups, on the one hand, which created the Intercultural Commission of Women of Congost, and a first experience known as “Banco de tiempo”, on the other.

Figure 2: Workshop 1st session in El Congost. The Major assumes the necessities expressed by women as a must for the urban project.

The commission worked jointly with the Gender Equity Department in the Equal Opportunities Plan, by defining the criteria to deliver a participatory workshop with the women of Congost (“Las mujeres hacemos piña”). The aims set by the workshop were detecting issues to be dealt with and listening to women’s needs and concerns.

The first meeting included a full day’s work attended by 98 women accompanied by 87 children. Children took part in special activities guided by trained staff so that mothers could participate in the full day’s work simultaneously.

Discussion groups were set up under the supervision of Col·lectiu punt 6 (www.punt6.net) specialized in urban development and gender, who delivered four thematic workshops: public spaces, safety, mobility, and public facilities, and a workshop including a photographic tour around the neighbourhood on foot for recognizing the area.

The most outstanding outcomes of the first meeting were:
- Perception of urban insecurity in public spaces caused by different factors: low walls which are architectural barriers and hinder vision as well; dirty streets; inadequate lighting; street furniture and trees damaged by vandalism; the misappropriation of public spaces by groups which engage in illegal activities; buildings with empty flats; dangerous tunnel under the train which lacks lighting and visibility.
- Accessibility and mobility problems: sidewalks and streets in poor conditions; lack of ramps; pedestrian crossing not respected; speeding; lack of public transport to and from densely-concentrated working areas; lack of cycleways; lack of information at bus stops.

The requested facilities were a sports hall, which already exists but is closed and in poor conditions; a playground for young people to play basketball, and a municipal nursery.
During a second meeting, the neighbourhood’s office proposed solutions for the requests made at the first meeting. The proposals involved general improvements of public spaces regarding women’s demands of good lighting and visibility; civic education campaigns to improve relations within the neighbourhood; improvements in the public transport system and remodeling of the tunnel under the railway lines. As regards facilities, proposals include remodelling the sports hall; putting up basketball hooks in squares; opening school playgrounds beyond school hours as public spaces; a municipal nursery.

At present, the process continues to be conducted with the transversal work group. People living in the neighbourhood are invited to receive information on the project and share their views on every work that is completed, and meetings are held with the intercultural commission of women of the Congost so that efforts are coordinated for improving the neighbourhood.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ANALYZED PROJECTS

The first conclusions we can draw based on the aims established as a starting point are:

There is an essential combination of parallel social cohesion processes, though they were started before the urban development project itself.

These projects have made progress by shaping or strengthening the social fabric that will participate in the modification of its own daily surroundings. We should consider that even though everybody has empirical knowledge of public spaces, it is necessary to teach people to appraise and take part in daily experiences as a wealth of knowledge of a certain reality.

As for the sixth field of intervention specifically, there is a wide range of methodologies for integrating women living in the neighbourhoods into civic and participatory life and, in particular, for reinforcing networks of knowledge and solidarity among them, as well as drawing the value of their experiences as a form of urban knowledge.

The analyzed cases integrate women in more direct aspects of the urban development project to a greater or lesser extent. A more general analysis of the ninety-neighbourhood projects in place by the
beginning of 2009 shows that a great number of projects view women’s involvement and gender perspective applied to the urban development project as social integration aspects. The proposals range from training to recreational activities for “women” (cookery courses, knitting courses, etc.) and, in the best of cases, building facilities for carrying out these activities.

The lack of interwoven relations between social aspects and spatial or urban aspects (if they can possibly be set apart) impoverishes the projects and undermines their legitimacy.

The projects which best seem to understand and adopt the incorporation of the gender perspective are those which help integrate all the fields of intervention proposed by the law (which are then broken down for administrative purposes in their corresponding budgets) in the written reports submitted for subsidies.

Points to consider regarding the design of public spaces, facilities and the gender perspective

Carrying out detailed studies of street typologies which allow the drafting of specific, non-generic proposals. In these studies, it is essential to analyze the permeability relations which allow ground-floor buildings both in their design and their proposed uses. Prioritizing pedestrians, bearing in mind that the work unit is the neighbourhood itself, and that efforts should aim at reinforcing its inner structure. Public spaces should be viewed as a space for building relations and gathering.

Integrating public facilities to public spaces of daily use. Enabling visual permeability of school courtyards, for instance, contributes to safety in the streets: it is preferable to use railings than blind walls. Widening sidewalks in the access to public facilities in order to create relationship spaces.

Integrating poorly used or isolated spaces to the most widely used route networks. Reducing stairs, uneven surfaces and walls which hinder pedestrians’ way and visual continuity, guaranteeing all forms of mobility with adequate accessibility. A perception of safety can be achieved through intensive and varied use of public spaces.

Integrating a variety of activities in daily routes so that the time of travelling routes is a practical and safe experience.

Planning public facilities with a focus on their visual and spatial permeability in relation to the surrounding public spaces.

Granting visibility to the stamp left by women’s actions and lives in the city. Spaces used by women in the past may be recovered, such as old washhouses in towns, and streets, squares and facilities may be named after women as well.

Aspects related to the studies carried out as part of the project

Carrying out qualitative studies to gather more detailed and significant information, setting up work groups made up by women living in the neighborhoods willing to appraise public spaces and facilities of the daily use network.

It is vital to incorporate daily mobility studies that indicate how public spaces are used as a connecting element of different activities carried out by people. It is important to take into account statistical data broken down by sex besides age, as well as to identify which issues stemmed from the perception of insecurity affect the free mobility of women in the neighbourhood.

This information is essential for designing and improving pedestrians’ routes, as well as for stops at bus and metro stations.

Knowing the social dynamics of public spaces. The design of a sociogram allows gathering information of how social organizations and bodies of the neighbourhood relate to each other. This information is essential for knowing public space social actors, their dynamics, identities and sense of belonging.

Participatory design. Making direct consultations on specific public spaces in order to set design criteria jointly with users. The special need programs of projects should be based on direct participation processes.

Incorporating the views of the little ones, as they and their caregivers are the ones who use public spaces most and have specific needs to be considered.

Aspects related to management-coordination
The running of the project should be transversal and dynamic, with direct knowledge of the sector in which works are being carried out in order to know social dynamics and the spatial situation directly. Very often statistical knowledge gathered through census and planimetries does not reflect the complexity of reality, especially the different roles and uses of spaces by men and women.

Having an office for delivering information and promoting the project near the community.

Timely information, before and during the implementation of a project, in the cases of public space works, has an impact on the trust of affected people who can participate and get involved directly. Information channels should be as varied as possible so that information reaches every man and woman in the neighbourhood.

Most importantly, the members of the technical staff working in the project should be sympathetic and sensitive. Moreover, they should coordinate their efforts into a flexible organization which makes it possible to adjust to situations or modify their course of action based on the daily experiences on site.

The technical staff should include interdisciplin ary teams; the exchange of knowledge and information among the different fields of intervention is vital.

The appraisal of the project should be ongoing so that the project is a living process instead of a closed formula.

Urban development teams and social workers’ teams should work in close cooperation. Building on knowledge drawn from previous experiences in the neighbourhood and, as done through the neighbourhood network, learning from other neighbourhood development projects. Guaranteeing equal participation for both sexes, all ages and cultures is vital to carry out the project successfully. The projects should take into account the aspects of daily life of all the people who will use those spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

The Neighbourhood Development Law has allowed the clear identification of women’s needs in the neighborhoods. Although there is still a lot to be done to fully incorporate their daily lives and reproduction-related needs in conditions equal to those derived from production, urban development planning has adopted a course of action which will modify and further develop future urban development projects.