

Do metropolises have a gender?

Gender Keys 01

Think about the tangible aspects of urban spaces: buildings, streets, tunnels, squares, public transport stations... These structures have not always been there, nor have they been installed naturally. **Who built them, how and why?**

Throughout the centuries, **urban spaces have been built as a product of social conventions, models and practices** designed by only one part of society: man, Caucasian, adult, "healthy", with heterosexual orientation and privileged access to economic resources and political power; excluding all those visions different from his own.

This structure of power and social organization, called **patriarchy**, has its roots in the sexual division of labor, which places women and men in separate spaces with different roles: **the private or feminine sphere** and **the public or masculine sphere**. The different roles attributed to men and women have determined the rights of both, privileging the former and excluding the latter, in other words, **creating hierarchies for the access to rights and opportunities**. In this way, differentiated **uses of urban spaces, depending on the gender role attributed to women and men**, have generated and naturalized inequalities.

Historically, women and girls have seen their rights as citizens limited with restricted **access to economic, social and cultural** means, which have resulted in violence and oppression of their freedom. The differences are clear when we look closely at urban public spaces: streets, squares, parks and facilities, **although they may seem neutral, privilege the performance of activities classified as masculine**, such as **productive work**. On the other hand, they

make it difficult to carry out activities that are stereotyped as feminine (**reproductive work**), such as the management of the domestic space and the care of dependent persons (elderly, minors, with some kind of physical and/or mental limitation, etc.), who are often excluded from any process regarding the **right to the city**.

THE METROPOLITAN CHALLENGE

For a large part of the world's population, which is increasingly concentrated in metropolitan territories, the **right to the city** is restricted by economic, social, cultural and gender gaps, evidencing the great inequalities that are still presented as fundamental development challenges. On the other hand, it is in these same spaces where the **daily lives** of a multiplicity of people with different needs, opinions and experiences take place.



How can we build metropolises without inequalities, exclusions and segregations?

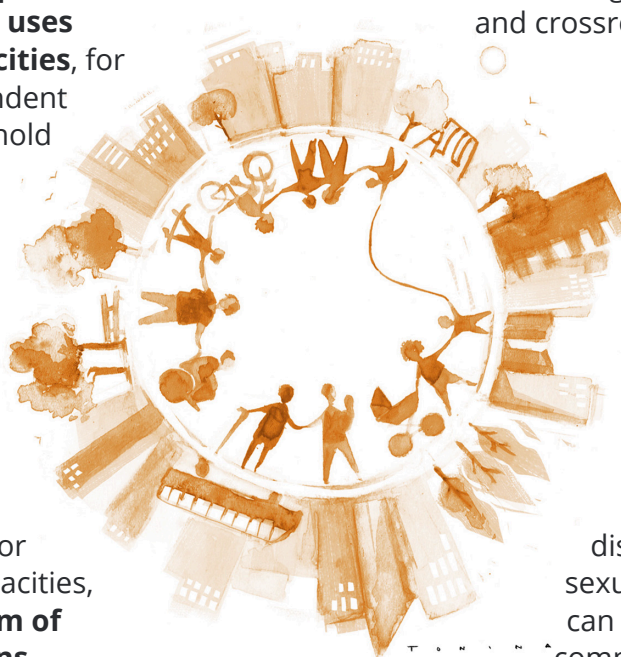
Incorporating the gender perspective in urban planning is a necessity and an opportunity to make our metropolises fairer, more efficient and sustainable.

The gender perspective helps us to incorporate the needs, opinions and experiences of the entire population in the same degree of importance. In this sense, in addition to the stereotyped male vision, the vision of women, girls and boys, the elderly, people with physical or mental disabilities will also be included.



Applied to urban planning, the **gender perspective proposes to put at the centre of decisions the multiple uses and tasks of daily life in cities**, for example the care of dependent persons or tasks of household management.

One of the starting points for urban planning with a **gender perspective** is to bear in mind that the **intersection of variables** such as: age, origin, sexual identity/orientation, skin colour, cohabitation unit type, social class, religion, or physical or intellectual capacities, **overlap and take the form of privileges and oppressions**, extending or restricting people's **right to the city**.



Being spaces of agglomeration and demographic growth, meeting points and crossroads between multiple human collectives, the **metropolises are the ideal place to put into practice urbanism with a gender perspective. Community participation** is the tool that allow us to **identify the varied needs and life styles of the citizens of our metropolises**. For example, in the same street, square or bus - spaces where older people, young women, girls and boys, people with disabilities, people with different sexual identities and orientation,... can and must coexist. In short, the complete multiplicity of agents that make a metropolis lively, inclusive and really smart.

TRANSFORMATIVE TOOLS

Planning focused on the sustainability of daily life

Understanding and planning our urban world, giving priority to all those tasks and needs (reproductive and collective) that make life possible in our metropolises, means **incorporating the diversity of uses, functions and values** of all the people who inhabit them.

Voice, visibility and decision from everyone

Community participation makes it possible to include, in any planning process, the diversity of voices and experiences of all people. The prominence of the historically most vulnerable people in the design, formulation and execution of urban policies is in fact fair and effective. It means to consider the needs, life styles and knowledge of **daily life and the plurality of uses** that are crucial for sustaining livelihoods in metropolises.