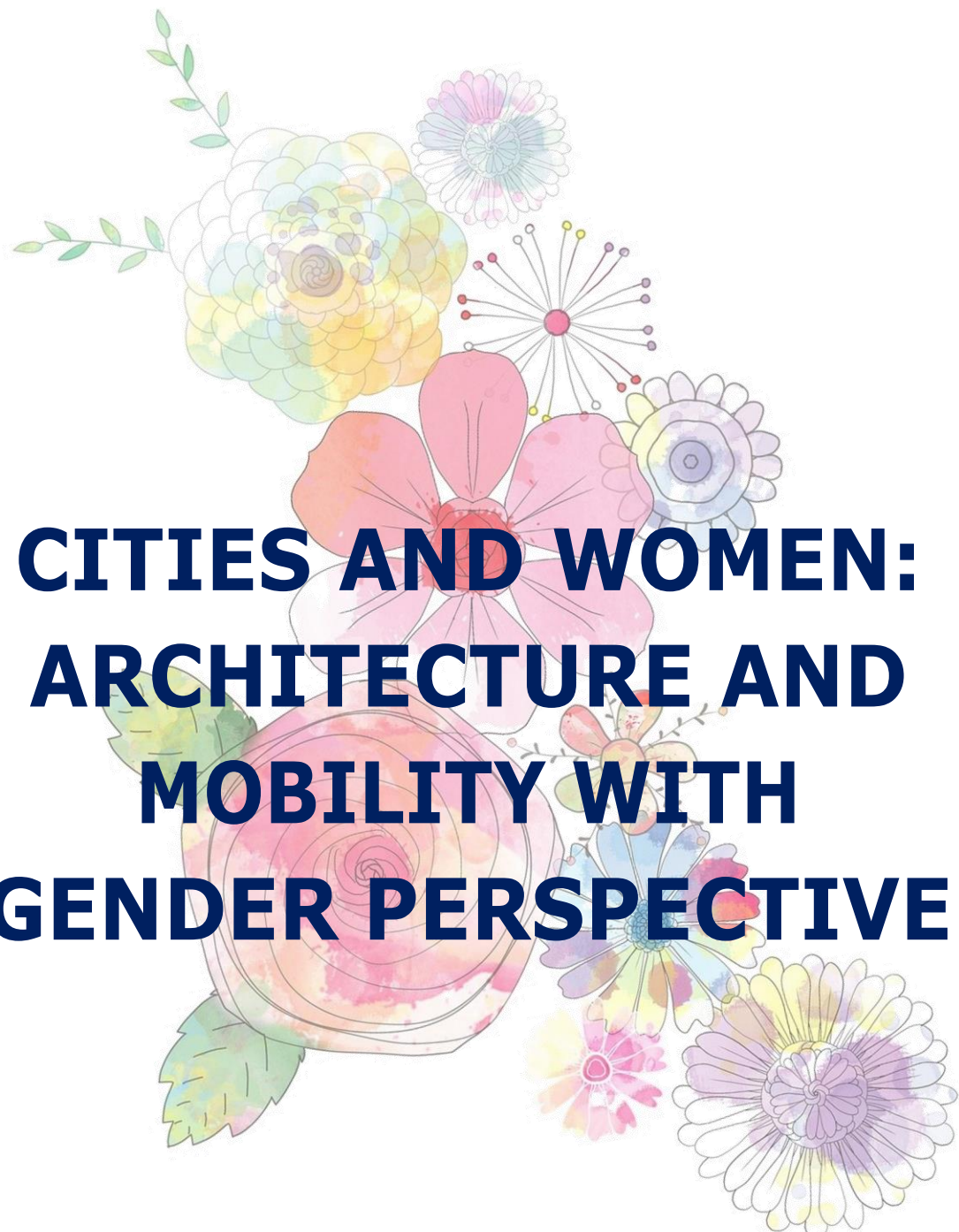


# CHAPTER 2



## **CITIES AND WOMEN: ARCHITECTURE AND MOBILITY WITH GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This chapter focuses on explaining why the space of our cities can and should be understood through a gender perspective. Simple concepts about built-up areas, the mobility that occurs in cities and the social implications they entail, especially for women, will be explored. The description of the change in urban structures, means of transport and the economic model will raise questions about whether access to the different spaces in the city takes place under equal conditions. Finally, future possibilities for improving unequal access to the city are discussed.

*Keywords:* Cities, Mobility, Gender Perspective, Right to the City.

## 1. Why is this topic important?

The urban space is a product of its physical characteristics, its history and the new conditions that emerge at present. The physical or natural characteristics of the place where an urban area is developed have a great weight in its configuration, such as the existence of watercourses or topographic discontinuities. Historical characteristics focus on how an urban space has varied according to the needs and possibilities of each era, as well as through the dominant culture. Finally, the new conditions that emerge in urban spaces are referred to the trends that are reflected in this space as a result of the evolution of society itself.

Urban space has a direct impact on people's daily life, because aspects such as access to services, the establishment of social relations, perception of security or sense of belonging depend on it. Urban planning is a discipline that has been developing as a science, so that decisions about the living space inhabited by citizens are seems neutral (Román & Velázquez, 2008). However, Lefebvre (1976) pointed out that urban space, despite its appearance of neutrality, is a product loaded with policies and ideologies, since it is the dominant culture that shapes it. From this perspective, there is no doubt that androcentrism is the vision that is mostly present in today's urban spaces.

People's needs are different, depending on multiple variables, and they are even different for the same person at different times in his or her life. The same street is not experienced in the same way by an elderly person, a girl, a man or a woman, someone pushing a baby or shopping cart, a person in a wheelchair... It is necessary to contemplate these needs in a differentiated manner in order to achieve inclusive spaces for all people so that public space can be experienced by them on equal terms (García-Fernández et al., 2022).

One of the key issues to understand the differences in use by gender in today's cities is zoning or functional specialization, which is based on creating physically differentiated spaces according to use (work, sleep, shopping or leisure) (Sendra & Sennett, 2020; Soja, 2000). This physical separation forces a strict temporal division of tasks, implying basic displacements (home–work) throughout the day, but making any other reality that involves going to several places extremely difficult. Physical segregation is one of the keys to explaining the gender bias in cities, since access to any function requires time, money and means of transport. But it shouldn't be forgotten that at the root of this question remains the fact that women continue to undertake the majority of the tasks related to care and the management of daily life.

The importance of developing the access to the city from a gender perspective is based on two fundamental issues. We must first understand why space has a gender bias and what implications this has for people, especially women, and, secondly, identify the new trends in this issue. In this way, it will be possible to gain knowledge of the problem, as well as to begin to reflect on other ways of constructing and inhabiting the city.

## 2. State of affairs

### 2.1. Changes in the urban structure: from the traditional to modern city

A city is a project of society and, as such, a social product. It is probably the most important cultural creation (Capel, 2002). In a patriarchal society such as the one that has historically existed

throughout the world, it has been designed by and for men, hence the inequality when it comes to inhabiting it (Muxí et al., 2011; Román & Velázquez, 2008; Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2004).

The traditional city was characterized by a mix of uses, a high population density and it didn't exceed 5–8 km in diameter (Newman & Kenworthy, 2006). This configuration of the urban space was necessary to allow accessibility, taking into account that travel on foot was the only means of transport available. It is considered that walking facilitates human interaction, economic efficiency and social cohesion (Huriot, 1998, cited in Marquet, Miralles-Guasch 2014). Before the arrival of automobiles, public spaces such as streets and squares were meeting places, where interactions took place easily because they were accessible and safe. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, because of the industrial revolution, an enormous quantity of people moved to the cities from the countryside. At that time, common spaces came to be understood as unsafe or unhealthy places.

At the beginning of the 20th century, urban planning discipline, with Le Corbusier as one of its main advocates, rationalised urban space in such a way as to divide it according to its main functions. The main idea was to separate spaces dedicated to residence, work, leisure and circulation; however, this functional specialization was based on the assumption that human needs are the same for everyone (Román & Velázquez, 2008). It brought advantages such as improved health conditions by separating factories from dwellings, but it profoundly changed spaces where human interactions took place. Instead of streets, urban motorways have been built with many lanes, along with squares and wide avenues whose space has been privatised, thus preventing daily life in them (Carrero de Roa, 2009). Also, this functional specialisation of the space increased the mobility needs of the population.

The change in the urban planning model was also necessarily supported by the appearance of new means of transportation. The train and the automobile made it possible to expand cities and make them accessible over time (Gómez-Antonio et al., 2016).

Since the 1970s in Europe, the urban sprawl model has been the main guide for growing cities. Urban sprawl is characterized by the stagnation or slowdown of population growth and the territorial expansion of urban uses. This last cycle of urbanisation in European cities coincides with the change in mobility patterns, with an exponential increase in the use of automobiles (Dupuy, 1995; Monclús, 1996). Within these dynamics, the idealisation of the individual house and the garden city became generalised, beginning a reinterpretation of the city and its spaces. The priority for the new residential areas was not to share spaces outside the family nucleus, promoting private open spaces.

In all these changes in urban planning, the economy has had a strong influence. The price of land, housing and infrastructure, has been the engine and filter for the development of the city and its access (Camilo Lois, R., González Pérez, J.M. & Escudero Gómez, 2012). Miralles-Guash (2002, p. 22) called the transformations occurring in space "territorializations of economic change". Lefebvre (1970) observed how, in the face of the deterioration of the traditional sectors of production, mainly industry, a new sector based on the creation of space was produced, to which large amounts of capital were being transferred. In his work "The Production of Space" (Lefebvre, 1974), he identified one of the most important processes for understanding today's cities, whereby the productive forces of capitalism used investments in urban goods to generate profits.

Until the advent of capitalism, the value of urban goods depended on their usefulness to enable activities, but later they came to be valued for their exchange alone. "The aim of the producers is

to procure exchange values, not use values" (Harvey, 2014, p. 17). The creation of urban spaces has absorbed and channelled large amounts of capital and it is linked to the explanation of how and why urban fabric have spread across the territory.

The commented changes in the city's physiognomy have had an impact on the daily life of citizens. Considering that not every person has the same necessities or resources, it is important to understand whether configuration has created or increased inequalities. Harvey (1989) pointed out that the modern city presents a rupture between productive and reproductive space. The productive space is all that which has to do with paid work and public participation, while the reproductive space is where the tasks of the private and family sphere are carried out, covering biological and care needs. The reproductive sphere is dedicated to covering the tasks that the market does not cover because they are not profitable.

The modern city was born out of the fact that the economic and productive city was considered more important than the reproductive city. In many cases, activities that do not respond to an economic activity or market logic are left unattended. These roles were historically, economically, and socially assigned to men and women respectively (Hernández-Pezzi, 2011; Muxí et al., 2011; Román & Velázquez, 2008; Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2004).

Nowadays, there is a strong current among academics and urban planners, recognizing that this way of producing the city was a mistake because it favours mobility, but not contact or accessibility. However, inertia and the market continue to have a strong influence (Román & Velázquez, 2008). As noted by Jacobs in her acclaimed book 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities' (Jacobs, 1961, p. 7): "They do not know what to do with automobiles in cities because they do not know how to plan for workable and vital cities anyhow – with or without automobiles."

## 2.2. Mobility with gender perspective

The configuration of today's cities is a determining factor in describing the mobility that takes place within them. The growth of urban areas and their growing zoning have meant that mobility needs have augmented. Improvements in the means of transport have made it possible to increase the speed at which travel occurs, making it possible to reach more distant places or a greater number of places in the same amount of time. But there is another variable in the equation, since in order to have good access to the city, it is necessary to have availability of different means of transport. Therefore, areas of the city that require private transportation are a source of inequality for its citizens (Miralles-Guasch, 2002).

There is a strong link between income level and motorization. Having a greater economic capacity means an increase in motorisation, which makes it possible to reduce travel times and thus to travel more times or farther (García Palomares, 2008). The physical capacity to use different means of transport is related to age, with children and the elderly being the least mobile groups. The presence of disabilities complicates the use of some means of transport.

Gender is a determining factor in how mobility develops in cities. One of the indicators provided by the Directorate General of Traffic in Spain is the census of drivers, which, for 2022, shows that 43% of drivers are women compared to 57% men. Vehicle ownership, according to the same source, is twice as high for men as for women. To know if there are gender differences in the use

of each mode of transport, it is necessary to use specific mobility surveys<sup>1</sup>. In 2022, as part of the *Genera Barri Project* (García-Fernández et al., 2022), a survey of these characteristics was carried out in peripheral neighbourhoods of the city of Valencia. Figure 1 shows the results regarding the different use of mobility modes according to each sex. This figure provides a clear perspective, pointing out the great differences in how both sexes move around the city. In the case of walking, 64% of trips are made by women, while 36% are made by men. The use of bicycles, whether shared or public, is much higher for men, an issue to highlight since it is the only sustainable means in which they have more presence. The metro, bus or taxi are the primary means of transport used by women, while the majority of motorcycles and private cars are used by men. These findings validate what previous research has suggested: that women tend to have more varied, shorter and more environmentally friendly mobility (Alvord, 2000; García Palomares & Rodríguez Moya, 2012).



Figure 1. Comparison of the different modes of mobility according to sex, in southern suburbs of the city of Valencia. Source: Translated from García-Fernández et al, 2022, p71.

Another important question asked in the same survey was about the perception of obstacles to mobility (Figure 2). This means whether people have perceived any constraint to mobility in different situations, such as: walkers, baby carriages, accompanying the elderly or children, etc. It

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dgt.es/menusecundario/dgt-en-cifras/dgt-en-cifras-resultados/dgt-en-cifras-detalle/?id=00861>

is observed that in every category, women are the ones who report the majority of constraints in their mobility. Men, with a percentage of 61.5%, indicate that they have not been affected in this regard. These results of perception, taking into account that if they have affected some people, it is because they exist, can be explained if the type of tasks performed by the two sexes is different.

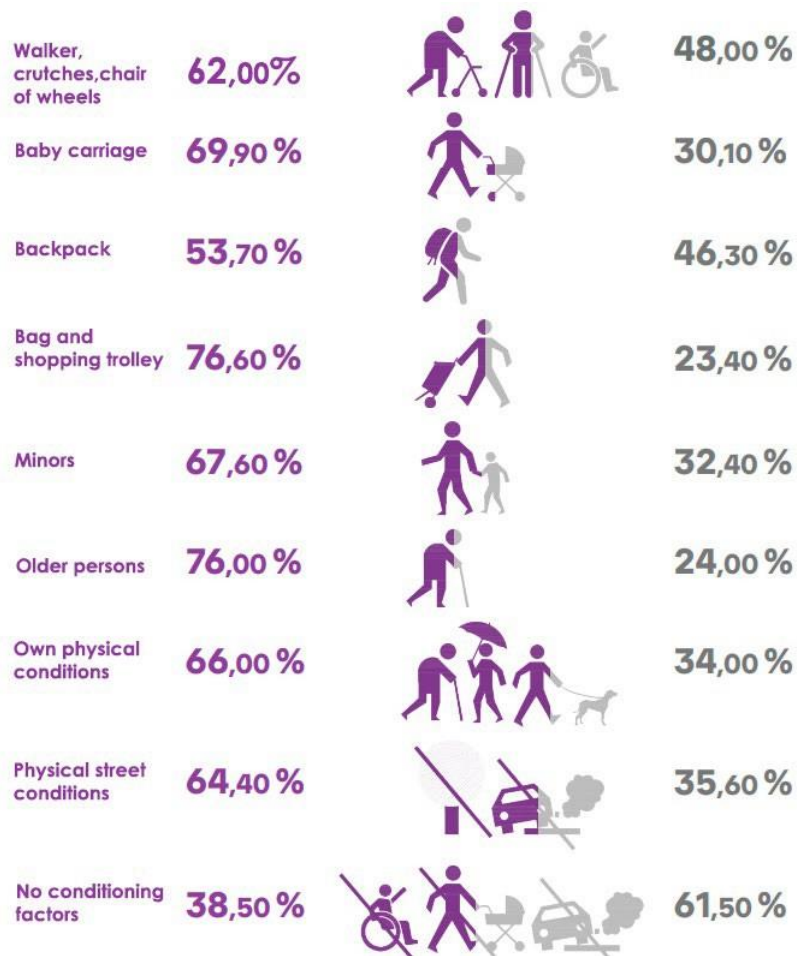


Figure 2. Comparison of the perception of the different conditioning factors for mobility according to sex. Source: Translated from García-Fernández et al, 2022, p71.

The two images (Figure 1 & 2) above illustrate well that women and men move differently in the city, use different means of transport and encounter different constraints on their daily mobility. These results serve to illustrate a reality in people's daily lives that must be taken into account by urban planning in order to avoid perpetuating situations of inequality in the accessibility and use of urban space.

With respect to this issue, Miralles-Guash (1998) has already carried out a reimagination of the mobility models to be promoted in order to achieve a more sustainable city and a more egalitarian society. She pointed out that society prioritizes mobility in relation to the productive space, where simple, long-distance, high-speed trips are mostly made using private vehicles. In other words, the dominant mobility model, to which greater positive externalities are traditionally associated, is the male model, also known as "obligatory mobility". In the reproductive space, the female presence has a much greater weight than the male. For this reason, the author states that women have to



combine the productive space with the reproductive space, which implies more reasons to move and, therefore, the need for closer displacements in order to meet their needs. It is precisely this model, which makes greater use of proximity, that is more rational and sustainable, even though it is precisely this type of travel that is referred to as "non-obligatory mobility". The name itself is part of the dominant culture, relegating the mobility produced in this reproductive or care space to second-class mobility.

Miralles-Guash (1998) projected a very clear vision of the prevailing model of the androcentric city, where "obligatory mobility" is only related to paid work. The pattern of citizen on which the city and the mobility that takes place in it is projected is that of a middle-aged person, with paid work, without mobility problems and without domestic responsibilities (Román & Velázquez, 2008). In the case of childhood, it can be considered that childhood without adult supervision has been removed from the public space. Children carry out their play and social activities in places where traffic is restricted, such as parks or pedestrian squares. The degradation of the street as a public space has meant that the need for surveillance and transportation has multiplied. Elderly people and those with some kind of functional diversity represent disadvantaged groups in a city model that prioritizes fast travel in private vehicles, which also places an extra burden on the people who take care of them.

In short, the zoning of spaces and the urban sprawl have meant that travel needs are much higher than those that can be found in compact cities with a mix of uses. In addition, dedicating enormous amounts of public space to the circulation and parking of private vehicles has led to a reduction in the main social space, which is the street. The occupation of this space and the insecurity associated with traffic have resulted in a lack of meeting spaces and, with it, a degradation of the social fabric and an increase in family burdens (Jacobs, 1961). This results in unequal access to urban space for caregivers, which is called the right to the city.

In today's society, many efforts are being made to reduce the gender gap in different aspects, including the promotion of male presence in the reproductive space. In order to evaluate the evolution of this aspect, Fajardo-Magraner (2020) conducted a study among families with school-age children in the city of Valencia. One of the topics of analysis was whether there was any gender bias in the tasks of accompanying children to school. The results of these surveys show that the person in charge of accompanying children to school is the mother 55.3% of the time, while fathers are responsible for 10.6%, with a higher percentage of grandparents (12.1%). This study also emphasized the difference in employability between fathers and mothers. The percentage of fathers with a full-time job is 83.64%, compared to 51.36% for mothers. It also points out that compared to 91.1% of fathers who have never had to turn down a job due to incompatibility of schedules, 77.9% of mothers have had to do so. Although perhaps these percentages were even worse a few years ago, we cannot affirm that a change in society and in the way of understanding upbringing, care or egalitarian relationships can be observed. Making a change in the dominant culture so that care and the so-called reproductive space is shared, in terms of time and implications, would be a primordial issue in order to advance social sustainability. But this should not mean that women take high speeds and long distances as a model to follow, but, conversely, that men value proximity as a model to imitate.

In conclusion, this section has highlighted the importance of the human scale in the design of a city. If urban planning prioritises economic logic and neglects care activities, the power relations in society are transferred to the space, and it reinforces inequalities and limits access to the city.

### 3. Outlook and actions for the future

In the 21st century, the situation in science and society has, unsurprisingly, been shifting towards a consideration of the problems of gender differences. Gradually, more and more women are working in professions related to urban planning: architects, engineers, geographers, politicians, etc., and it is necessary to face a change in urbanism. But the rules, standards, techniques and theories have been designed by men in the past, so now the vision of urbanism needs to be modified (Chías, 2011; Román & Velázquez, 2008; Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2004). However, gender inequalities are not the same for all women, they worsen with low social status. This is something essential to consider to achieve an urban space to integrate every citizen.

But, what does gender-sensitive urban planning look like? The first issue is to prioritise life, which is not just the exercising of basic activities (housing, work, leisure, transport, culture, etc.), but the exercising of these activities with equal opportunities, integrity and intensity. It is important to determine the complexity of uses and actions and to reduce the importance of the economic part (Muxí et al., 2011; Román & Velázquez, 2008; Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2004). For an egalitarian reenvisioning of the city, it is necessary to understand and change the methodology that has realised today's cities (Román & Velázquez, 2008).

Citizens need to be listened to, with special attention to those with less privileges. It is necessary to go down and observe life in the streets with the view of Hayden where the city is a holistic space that is both product and result (Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2004). It is a matter of exercising the right to the city from the very principle of democratic planning, which includes access and freedom to the whole city, both in its outcome and in its creation (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1976).

The parameters of the feminised city are (Muxí et al., 2011; Román & Velázquez, 2008; Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2004):

- Diversity of uses in the neighbourhoods. Every neighbourhood must have basic facilities and services. Even to the extent of reserving specific areas for such facilities, such as markets or convenience stores. They should be easily accessible.
- Open spaces with wide pavements and urban features such as trees and benches that encourage people to socialise. Women, children and the elderly are the main users of the streets. As they tend to carry heavy items, such as shopping, or be people with reduced mobility, these areas should be as flat and stable as possible.
- Varied and collective transport with different timetables, not only for working days, and accessible to all social classes.
- Public housing, both for rent and sale, should be evenly distributed in the different neighbourhoods of the city.
- Safe spaces where women and minorities can gain autonomy. For this to happen, there must be spaces with "eyes", as Jacobs said (1961, p. 35): "There must be eyes on the street, eyes that belong to those we might call the natural owners of the street."

Meanwhile, the working methods and the concept of the city need to change in the following aspects:

- Accept the complexity of the city and start from there.
- Use bottom-up methods for brainstorming and designing.

- Analyse space and urban planning as tools capable of transforming society and making life easier for citizens.
- To stop thinking of the city as just a market space, without forgetting this variable. To focus on the city as a service and a civic asset.
- Consider sustainability and health variables that go to the root of the problems; e.g., how big should a city grow?
- Seeking a city in which there is individual autonomy for all the sectors of the population that inhabit it.
- Promote the neighbourhood scale without losing sight of the city.
- Forget the old standards. Adapt and create the city to its own reality and idiosyncrasies.
- Include the social impact of urban policies and changes. How they affect the social fabric and the population that forms it.
- Participate in the urban development plans. It must be multidisciplinary and transversal, within the population of different ages, economic classes, religions, etc.
- Carry out a citizen's diagnosis of the city on variables such as accessibility and security.

Gradually, many of these elements are being introduced in cities such as Vienna, Barcelona and Valencia, in measures such as: superblocks, creation of squares, pedestrian streets, night-time public transport, social housing, etc. And many policies that are being discussed globally, such as the "15-minute city", come from feminist urbanism. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go and much room for improvement.

## 4. Conclusions

As discussed in this chapter, the space in cities and the mobility that takes place in them has a broad gender bias. Androcentrism together with the dominant economic model has created an urban space in which access to the city is very unequal.

It is essential to understand urban space from this perspective, since equity in its use and enjoyment must be guaranteed. The reality is that inequalities mainly affect the female gender, as they continue to be the main caregivers. One of the issues to be highlighted is the importance of citizen participation in the design of cities. The experience of spaces must be included in urban planning in order to create cities on a human scale and move towards the collective construction of the city. In this sense, taking into account that women are the main users of proximity space, it is essential to include their participation in any improvement process.

In conclusion, it is considered that a change in the conception of spaces is fundamental, but it must be accompanied by a society that advances in co-responsibility between genders. We must bear in mind that the construction of gender roles is social and cultural, so it is possible and necessary to modify it. In other words, not only should women's lives be made easier by making caregiving tasks more manageable, but it is also necessary for both genders to be equally involved in the productive and reproductive spheres.

Therefore, in order to advance gender equality and improve the quality of life of dwellers, the change must be twofold: spatial change and change in gender roles.

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## 6. Annexes

### OPEN ACCESS DOCUMENTS FOR PRE-SESSION PREPARATION:

<i>TITLE</i>	<i>CONTENTS</i>	<i>LINK:</i>
<b>State of the Art: Architecture and mobility with gender perspective</b>		
Gender and Mobility UN-HABITAT WORLDWIDE	<b>This short video explains why public spaces and transport are understood as dangerous for women all over the world.</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC54cTnVtSU&amp;t=227s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC54cTnVtSU&amp;t=227s</a>
The role of gender in urban mobility: women rights to the city	<b>This is an article in the web urban design LAB where Tiffany Nicoli França explains briefly how gender affects mobility.</b>	<a href="https://urbandesignlab.in/role-of-gender-in-urban-mobility/">https://urbandesignlab.in/role-of-gender-in-urban-mobility/</a>
The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life	<b>This paper discusses new forms of citizenship in globalised cities from a feminist perspective and connects them to women's everyday life and to cities' planning and governance.</b>	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09589230500264109">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09589230500264109</a>
Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design	<b>This is a handbook created by the World Bank Group where you will find extensive information about processes of gender inclusive planning. Read only after having read this book and if you are interested in the field.</b>	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urban-development/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design">https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urban-development/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design</a>