



Group work summary

WOMEN AND CITIES



2021 - 2022

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"Transforming our cities for a better urban future"



Editorial

The social inequalities that great demographic growth trigger in our cities have become increasingly obvious, and gender inequalities are a very strong topic in our European cities and territories.

For our territories to be sustainable, they have to be egalitarian and open, they have to treat women and men equally. Today, the goal is to shed lights on disparities and to find solutions to tackle them. This is why we need to question our governance models while keeping in mind local practices and habits and making participation a top priority. Women have to be an important part in the conception of urban projects, of economic development and of political action. Likewise, local authorities have to take into account

how transversal this topic is and have to include all territorial actors when working on projects: municipal teams, housing developers, citizens, etc., with the aim to grow awareness and produce data which will help encompass the realities of a given territory.

The workgroup focused on Women and cities come up with projections for the 2050 horizon and envisioned a world where the needs of women and men are considered in an equal way. This group also made recommendations to face current challenges better and face how to implement concrete actions in order to lead the way toward more sustainable cities.

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Introduction

Inclusion is the heart of many conversations that are being held about cities of today and tomorrow. We brainstormed about why half of the people (meaning women) who live in cities today are victims of violence, physical and social insecurity, work and education rights inequalities, and we tried to think about why they have to move around urban spaces that weren't designed to serve their needs. The risk with discussing such a topic was to repeat things that were already said, to write about things that were already written about. Maybe we did just that, repeating. But we advocate for this repetition. The perspective we worked to picture the city in 2050 showed us how difficult it is to shape a clear mental image of a city that would be open and gender-inclusive. While scouting themes

in a preparatory phase, we realized that despite the issues being repeatedly identified, there has been very little progress on the matter, if at all.

This is why we it is so important for us to show why our cities aren't suited for women, and why the place of women in the public space is a big challenge. Something for instance as simple as access to public toilets for women remains is still an issue in France in 2022.

We made the choice to talk about women and cities following three main directions: women invisibilization in the public space; usages, sociability and mobility; and rights.

Simon Virlogeux, parliamentary assistant, co-leader of the workgroup on "Women and cities"



CHALLENGES

The place of women in the city is difficult to address because our visions are often biased. Inequalities between men and women are minimized based on false excuses, including one that says that women situation is already seeing a lot of improvement and that we don't have to do much anymore for them.

As simplistic as it may be, this vision has to be taken seriously because it is an inherent part of conversations and perceptions which use reason and accuracy as a veil and a cover up to make sure that nothing changes. Yet taking a real close look at tangible and measurable facts reveals the still very high level of discriminations, violence, rights inequalities and rights access difficulties – to name those only.

Fighting invisibilization

Fighting women invisibilization in the public space is a major and structuring challenge. Women have to constantly fight to recall their presence and their existence, meaning to claim the right they have to occupy the public space.

Someone who would have issues believing this only has to try and list up streets, squares, buildings or institutions with women's names. The list is very short. This symbolic invisibility is also to be understood as a process of historical eviction,

as if the things that deserved to be commemorated were only men deeds. There step is small from symbolic invisibilization to actual invisibilization, and this step has already been actually and broadly taken, making the public space uncomfortable if not hostile to women. Invisibilization is a social incitation that invites women to make themselves small and discreet in the public space, even though this space is meant to be "public". This results in women feeling obviously unsafe in places where they do not feel welcome. The "outside" is seen as uncomfortable, and in the meantime the private sphere can also be a place of abuse.

Public space usage and design

Public spaces are rarely designed and conceived for men and women to be equally able to use them. The question then arises of how to choose urban furniture, public lighting, pathways, cultural and sports equipment, local services (etc.) during conception phases. These various elements define in what ways people will be able to use that space or not, and they condition how able women are to appropriate that space and to decide what they can do with it. Making women feel more legitimate in using and occupying public space is crucial. Only by strengthening this feeling will be able to push for a change. One

instance of it is the matter of access to public toilet, which keeps coming back as a red thread.

The problem is the same with sociability and socialization places and for transportation. On that point, we know how much night transport frequentation matters, from a gender perspective.

This question also applies to professional places and more broadly to any moment or place of daily life.

The law as a vector of change

Implemented suitable legislation and ensuring that this legislation is respected is a necessary condition, but it isn't enough to fight gender inequalities. Though it can't fix all issues, the law nonetheless has the advantage to frequently bring to the political table the topic of inequalities between men and women. In the same way, working on the matter of rights can shed lights on how far we still need to go. Recently for instance, in 2020 in France, a law was suggested to promote gender equality in municipalities' executive positions, with municipalities of less than 1000. This law showed how delicate the topic

still is. These municipalities (less than 1000 inhabitants) represent 70% of the French towns. 80% of their mayors are men, and 89% of the presidents of inter-municipalities authorities are men too. The law is changing things positively, for sure, but there's a still a lot of progress needed.

At the European level, despite a feeling of relative homogeneity that composes with local specificities, the recent history of seen the EU become the stage of significant legal drawbacks on rights that were otherwise seen as unattackable. Such attacks very often have to do with the right for women to be free to use their bodies the way they want; as if limiting such a fundamental right was a corner stone that protects and preserve masculine domination alive and inequalities.

That's why, even if the law can be a real and very important vector of change, the law is also not enough in itself if we want to ground and solidify elements of law that should be granted today but in actuality, aren't.



2050 SCENARIO

Prerequisite for the 2050 scenario

One of the reasons why the law isn't enough to push for more equality between women and men is that a lot of barriers still exist "in our heads". We've been living in a patriarchal society for so long that our granted beliefs play against gender equality progress.

That's why we need educate, train and raise awareness to push for change, focusing on three main directions:

- Educating kids from a very young age about gender equality. This process can start already in kindergarten, and continue until high school, to try and open minds about fields of possibilities and to allow everyone to develop and project themselves into the future.
- Training public institutions employees all levels of hierarchy.
- Training private organizations' employees at all levels of hierarchy.

Only by growing aware of our practices, decisions and judgements can we make change happen. A proactive education policy of this kind, which would start at a young age, could reduce gaps while accelerating and setting up a new way of living together. If we look for instance at equal pays between men and women in France, the situation is fairly established, but studies show that avoidance strategies still exist to avoid equality of (seniority) bonuses, even within local public institutions.

Growing awareness about the topic implies to produce and collect gender-based data in order to analyze where and how gender equality is still being resisted. When discussions took place for instance about the law of august 4, 2021 relating to programming fair development and fight world inequalities, some amendments failed to be voted, namely that intending to systemize gender-based analysis of public development funds. This rejection occurred under the excuse that assessment methods already exist with targets focused on women and girls. This situation really shows the gap there was between a will to provide women and girls with development funds but the decision that was made to reject the means that would help assess how and if this goal is reached.

We have to be able to rely on data to fight inequalities, because data often reveals or highlights what common sense tends to minimize or make invisible.

An egalitarian world

A world that would make men and women equal and where gender wouldn't be an issue to access power position, education or jobs would be a world where, in fact, we would have almost ended inequalities between men and women.

Let's picture ourselves in 2050.

Local governments now guarantee their city with perfect equality between men and women in politics, thanks to the European Charter for Equality Women and Men in Local Life having been updated. Following the same trend, private companies ensure that their male and female employees are treated equally.

After the agreement was signed, cities have committed to implementing a formal regulatory framework. This framework was made coercive, to facilitate its implementation. Indexes were established upfront to assess cities' work every three months and check whether these cities stick to their commitment. This way, the years 2030 marked the beginning of a time of regulatory densification triggered and supported by mayors and community organizations while working on gender equality issues. And in 2050, the inclusive city is a reference point; there isn't a city where men and women aren't equal in accessing public spaces, hobby or sport places.

This trend has translated into various kinds of urban planning strategies in 2050. This trend has also ended women invisibility, in 2050. It made it easier for women to enjoy all uses they can make of the city and which the city has to offer. It made it easier, as well, for women to have the same rights as men and to be granted the rights that have to do with women exclusively, and which they didn't have in 2021. In this context, NGOs defend and promote this charter in various areas and territories and work on implementing it with elected representatives to include women more. In a reverse logic, elected representatives look for NGO support to make urban actors more aware on the issue.

Gender equality in the public space

In 2050, all cities have an equality committee. This way, any decision made in the city goes through a commission that has as many women as men and ensures equality. This is done partly by acknowledging the place women have, locally, and one visible result of this work is that more streets or new buildings are named after remarkable women. The committee also makes sure that women are represented in city planning programs and it makes sure that cities respect the equality principle they committed to, which now conditions access to public cultural funds. Clear territorial data is also available to assess the different situations that women have to face in a city.

At the same time, education and awareness are made top priorities. Education to equality starts at the youngest age in municipal and departmental school organizations, from pre-school to high school. Trainings schemes to fight sexist stereotypes have been set up and make it mandatory for urban actors to know and be educated

about gender issues and stereotypes. All professional sectors have access to both general and sector-specific training modules. Everyone who works with or for the city has had to take such a training, which breaks down gender representations stereotypes. Universities will have a big role to play in terms of awareness and education, and each university will be equipped with gender equality plan.

Matrimonial heritage will be also more and more discussed within cities, with one main question in mind: is matrimonial heritage only the gendered negative image of patriarchal heritage, like people tend to think, or is it rather an opportunity to advocate for values that are different from those promoted by a supposedly remarkable dominating elite? Can't we invent something else?

Safe public spaces and transport

In 2050, we have quality public spaces that were designed taking into consideration gender-related matters. They are welcoming and safe. Men and women are equal for instance in accessing public spaces dedicated to sports, and the use of these places is based on time slots shared between men and women. Besides, any public space, whether an actual public space or a private space meant to welcome the public, is equipped with sufficient toilets, free to use, and easy to access. Same thing for urban furniture, which is movable and designed to be adapted to everyone's needs.

Women are present on the public spaces and on terrasses, at cafés and restaurants, at any given time of the day, and until as late as they want. They don't have to put up with external constraints that prevents them from going where they would want to go. This situation was enabled by past education and awareness programs and actions which, in 2050, have resulted in a better split of domestic tasks, making it possible for women to enjoy their time outside of their home. This also decreased women insecurity and women abuse in the public space.

Public transport is easy to access, women can use it safely everywhere in the city no matter the time of day or night.

Equality of rights

In 2050, women have the effective right to feel and to be safe, whether at home and in the public space. The inclusive city is a kind of city where abuse against women is aggressively fought against.

Women and men get equal pay for the same job, without any derogation possible to go around this rule.

Any girl is free to choose to go to school beyond the legal age and they are free to keep on studying throughout their lives.

Women can dress and appear the way they want in front of others.

Women have the right to the same social fund or support and the same pension money as men. The 21st century fiscality should want to end women precarity instead of keeping them in uncomfortable situations. This is why the social support systems provided to single parent families is now seriously addressed by law makers, who provide single mothers with specific support mechanisms to pay for housing, work, education and transport.

Women have the right to use their bodies the way they way. No place allows for violent and coercive patriarchal domination to happen anymore, in no shape or form.

The law is one of the main foundations that made it possible for our cities to become more inclusive and egalitarian in 2050; but even though writing and implementing the law is a necessary condition, it isn't enough to achieve gender equality.

Focus

"The living resources of matrimonial heritage in street arts"

This project was started by stage director Nathalie Veuillet and the street art federation of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes to answer a project call put out by the Ministry of Culture. The project collects interviews and highlights different paths in the public space, unseen relations to that space, and shows that women have a legitimacy in making that space their own.
<https://tinyurl.com/23ycjyky>





PATHWAYS

The list of recommendations below doesn't intend to be exhaustive. The goal is here to feed ideas about how we can implement concrete actions that benefit more inclusive cities and territories. We structured our suggestions around three main lines of thoughts that served as a red thread: fighting invisibilization, questioning public space usages, and questioning rights.

The European Charter for Equality Women and Men in Local Life was set in the early years 2000. It defined the role that local authorities have to play to promote gender equality, involving all their competence: transport, urban development, environment, health, etc. Throughout the years, this charter lost in influence and, in 2021, it called to be brought back at the heart of discussions. This is why our group suggests updating this charter by 2030, completing it with missing topics, to would grant women a bigger place in conversations and in debates, and to advocate thereby for more gender equality in power positions. For local authorities, this process implies to strengthen dialogue and to have NGOs and elected representatives work together so that the community work done to support women gets better consideration from public policy makers.

Fight invisibilization

1. Ensure a good turn-over of university professors to make sure that teachings remain adapted to the context and to prevent people from staying in those positions if these people aren't able to question their own practices and beliefs.
2. Raise awareness and develop trainings in the public space to educate men (kids and adults) about women rights, equality and respect.
3. Create systems to raise awareness that would help guarantee better splits of domestic tasks.
4. Impose a minimum number of streets or buildings carrying the names of remarkable women.
5. Create monitoring systems to guarantee accurate territorial statistic about the topic.
6. Give women a voice in the public space, especially with the arts.
7. Educate kids on equality and diversity at an early age (through playful tools) and then throughout all school years using exercises matching the age.

Improve public space usage for women

1. Impose a minimum number of public toilets when conceiving urban projects and private places meant to welcome the public.
2. Impose mandatory time slots for sport equipment to allow both women and men to access them.
3. Install movable urban furniture, to allow for the public space to be better enjoyable
4. Familiarize women with nighttime so they can get to learn how to live with shadows and to tame them.
5. Create spaces that make room for voices and opinions, especially for women (agoras).

Implement suitable laws

1. Reassess women's wages and pension and use the law to make equality an obligation in this regard.
2. Make gender equality a condition to access national and European funding, using the EU to strengthen lobbying on the matter. Implement gender-based reporting criteria to assess how public funds are used.
3. Rethink fiscality to create a "fiscality of the 21st century", one that would end women's precarity.
4. Think about contractual ways to grow awareness within the companies that only produce male-oriented products (sun visor adjustment possibility in a car for instance, medication based on female metabolisms instead of men, etc.)
5. Improve the legal recognition of obstetrical abuse and of its consequence. Train the care on the matter and provide free support in case of trial.



Focus

The European Charter for Equality between Women and Men in Local Life

The European Charter for Equality Women and Men in Local Life was written in 2004 by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). Each municipality that signed the agreement committed to implementing the content of the agreement based on action plans for equality. This text sets the priorities, actions and resources needed for its implementation.
<https://tinyurl.com/4es3zv7r>

Gender-neutral school breaks in schools of Tours (France)

The “Récré en herbe” program in Tours was set up to design school yards in a way that rethinks and reconsiders gender-related issues.
<https://tinyurl.com/zsbnb2vu>

Focus

Culture access program

With the Culture Access program (programme Accès culture), funded by Institut Français and the French Development Agency (AFD), the Lyon-based performance group called Là Hors De, together with the performance group from Mali called Compagnie Nama, created a theater project in the public space at female students in Mali. These students are between 17 and 22 and chose to get involved to fight discriminations against women (child marriage, harassment in the arts, domestic abuse, romance scams on social media). They will show their work in what they call “cultural female grains”, sort of spontaneous meet up points in the public spaces, like a street corner, a little square between two houses, etc. The main strength of this mean of diffusion is that it spreads the word freely on the public space, to anyone who walks past.
<https://tinyurl.com/2p8b7rea>

Focus

2025 Plan in Vienna: “Including gender to urban planning and urban development”

Vienna, in Austria, worked in 2000 on developing gender mainstreaming, in parts to make this a transversal strategy applying to the town as a whole. The 2025 plan is a guideline to set strategic goals for the city and it provides some instruments to include gender-related topics to urban planning and urban development policies.
<https://tinyurl.com/4yk7a8nd>





Conclusion

When thinking about how to make cities more inclusive, equality between men and women is a transversal and structuring topic. How can we indeed think and design inclusive thus sustainable cities, when so many inequalities remain in most of the fields (if not all) that have to do with territorial and urban development?

Not only is this topic transversal, it is also one that we should consider seriously if we want to face the challenges of today and tomorrow. Our cities are the theater of great issues related to demography, to urbanization and world metropolization, to climate change, to housing and energy access – the list could go on.

Given this situation, we can't think of facing such challenges without also addressing the inequalities that half of the population (women) has to put up with. If we agree that a more inclusive city is a stronger city, one that's better equipped to offer adapted solutions to

current urban issues, pushing for more equality between men and women becomes an urgent priority.

To get there, as we said, we bet on success triangle: "education, awareness and rights". As we wrote in our introduction, this booklet doesn't intend to be exhaustive, it wants to highlight some issues that are neglected or hidden.

The members of our group didn't always agree on the observations and recommendations we made, but our conclusion is nonetheless unanimous: we all agree on the unavoidable need there is to constantly recall inequality situations, so we can hope for significant progress to happen by 2050 on the topic of gender equality. If we wish to push for a greater adequation between our actions and words, it is about time we get to it.



Started in 2011, the **French partnership for cities and territories (PFVT – Partenariat Français pour la Ville et les Territoires)** is a platform meant for the exchange and valorization of the French urban actor's expertise at the international level. It is a multi-actor partnership headed by Hubert JulienLaferrière, Member of Parliament, supported by the Ministry of Europe and of foreign affairs, the Ministry of territorial cohesion, the Ministry of the ecologic and fair transition, and the Ministry of culture. It brings together close to 200 organizations representing the diversity of the French expertise, contributing to the construction of a shared French vision based on a capitalization of exchanges and of innovative and sustainable experiences. <https://www.pfvt.fr/>

Food



International and cross-border cooperation



Informal City



Affordable housing



Mobilities



Digital technologies



Resilience



Health



Cities and Biodiversity



Creative city



Women and city

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