




# Women's Embodied Experiences: Qualitative Tools for a Gender-Conscious Approach to the Territory

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## Abstract

The way we experience our cities is not neutral: women and men experience it differently, depending on factors such as where they live, the social group which they belong to, the gender roles assigned, and intersectionality. *Urbanismo Mujeres y Ciudad en Latinoamérica* is a platform that works with qualitative methodologies with gender and feminist perspective.

This article presents a methodological proposal to answer the central question: How is the urban experience of women in two Latin American cities: Mexico City and Santiago de Chile. As a way of answering it, the following were developed: the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism, the My Walk Travel Log, the Immobility Log and the Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey. These are the tools of the urban analysis methodology proposed in order to understand the experience of women in the above-mentioned territory, including quantitative and qualitative variables, making perception the central element of the analysis.

## Keywords

women, territory, gender, body, perception, cares, qualitative methods

## Introduction

The way we experience our cities is not neutral: women and men have different experiences, depending on where they live, their social group or their occupation. However, gender roles and intersectionalities in general are the most prevalent factors in shaping the urban experience. As Leslie Kern (2020, p. 9) points out clearly, “gender is the difference that matters.”

Division into the public and the private has a direct impact on day-to-day lives of women. These concerns led researchers to utilize the feminist analysis in order to reintegrate the public and the private spheres and consider another category that was neglected for years in the pursuit to understand the territory: our bodies. It is through the body and perception that we approach, understand, and appropriate the space we inhabit, and although there are different bodies, perceptions, knowledge, appropriations and practices, urban planning has not recognised them, turning cities into territories for a few. So the body is considered a new category of analysis, a new urban research site (Massey, 1993; Segovia, 1996, as cited in Soto, 2016, p. 51).

This lack of recognition and inclusion of diversity is the topic that has been widely discussed. In this context, *caring*<sup>1</sup> seems to be the concept that can shed some light on how to recognise and incorporate the different ways of living and perceiving cities. For instance, as a city would welcome the tasks of the reproduction of daily life, facilitate the care and promotion of the autonomy of dependent people, and allow the different spheres of private and public life of men and women to be reconciled. It has to answer the needs “to domesticate all the spaces that we use and live in” (Bofill, 2006, p. 211, as cited in Segovia & Nieves Rico, 2017a, p. 62). Maria Gabriela Navas (2019) refers to emotions as indicators to vindicate “well-being” as it is a relevant aspect for a fairer concept of the city and a fundamental analytical axis of the feminist critique of the right to the city.

In this sense, the needs of women’s bodies have not been visibly reflected in our urban environment, the role of care has been delegated to the private, while the city, which does not consider this role, reproduces territories that exclude women from it. Given this role imposition, it becomes relevant to incorporate *caring* into projects to understand the experiences

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<sup>1</sup> As *care* work is understood here the unpaid work performed by adults – traditionally women – for children or other dependents, including work related to maintaining the home (Zucchini, 2015, as cited in Jirón, 2017). Care from the perspective of the city has been studied mainly by Durán, who points out that care must be a pillar in the organisation of daily coexistence (Durán, 2017, p. 105, as cited in Segovia & Nieves Rico, 2017c).

and needs of women's appropriation of the city, and it is here where perception is essential to recognise these habitats.

Considering this we could ask then: Is the city the same for all women? What kind of care do they provide and what kind they need provided to them? Is the perception of security the same for all? Although the gender role determines the way of inhabiting the city by women in most of the world, it is crucial to analyse it using a situated knowledge of the particularity of a place to understand what other categories intersect with gender. Our interest is to understand what are the particular women's experiences and urban needs in Latin America.

As Ana Falú (2009) and Sylvia Chant (2003) pointed out, the high level of feminisation of poverty in Latin America is a fact. Resultantly, they remain exposed to various forms of urban exclusion (Ziccardi, 2008). For example, in Mexico women on average spend 67% of their time in the week doing unpaid work, compared to only 28% of time in case of men (ENUT, 2019). Moreover, women work mainly in the informal and service sector (ENOE, 2021). Other data show that 78% of homemakers that provide care are in the informal sector without any benefits by law (OIT, 2016) and that 77% of female-run households are in an economically vulnerable situation (ENIGH, 2018). Furthermore, 8 out of 10 women in Mexico feel unsafe in public spaces, and more than 60% of women feel unsafe on the way to and from the public transport stop and inside public transport vehicles (ENVIPE, 2019).

The quoted pieces of data lead us to ask the following questions: What do these realities mean in the daily lives of women? Are our cities forcing them to implement individual and adaptive care strategies? Are city planners considering the costs and time that women spend commuting daily? Do planners know that women spend a considerable amounts of their salaries travelling without safety and comfort? Are transportation systems considering the care needs of women in their planning and operation? What can we do so that women can fully "inhabit their territories" in the future?

We consider that the theoretical approaches of feminist geography and urbanism are necessary to find urban solutions that respond to those realities, therefore, we take them as our framework and put them into practice through our research strategies that include qualitative methodologies with active women participation, as many other researchers have already done it (Jirón, 2007; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2014; Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019; Junqueira et al., 2019; Pumarino et al., 2018).

This article presents a methodological proposal to answer the central question: How is the urban experience of women in Latin American cities, particularly in Mexico City and Santiago de Chile? As a way of answering

it, the following were developed: the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism, the My Walk Travel Registry, the Immobility Registry and the Neighborhood Satisfaction Survey. These are the tools of the urban analysis methodology proposed to understand the experience of women in the territory, including quantitative and qualitative variables, making perception the central element of the analysis.

## Theoretical Framework

### Fair Cities and Neighbourhoods: Proposals from Feminist Geography and Urban Studies

Olga Segovia and Maria Nieves Rico (2017c) consider that the city as a construct, as a material and symbolic object, evidences the gender inequality of our society in different aspects such as the distribution of urban services, the demand for housing, mobility, security, and the availability of public spaces, to name just a few. Although many of these differences are documented in the research literature, most of them do not acknowledge women's experiences in everyday life. As Liliana Rainero (2009, p. 165) said, "the theoretical feminist approaches have provided subjects related to women's rights to land, housing, and legal services [...], construction of human settlements; the use of time and the differential impact of territorial organisation on women's lives which is a product of the sexual division of labour that persists in our societies." All these approaches have turned into reliable tools to analyse our cities and to transform our realities.

The proposal to incorporate the needs of women into the urban environment has been put forward by feminist geography, its precursors having been Doreen Massey (1994) and Linda McDowell (1999). The contemporary feminist geographer Kern (2020, p. 13), in turn, point out that the geographical perspective on gender offers a way of understanding how sexism works on the ground, as "any settlement is an inscription in space of the social relations in the society that built our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete" (Darke, as cited in Kern, 2020, p. 13).

Latin American feminist geographer Francesca Gargallo (2014) helps us understand the spatial character of the inequalities that women in Latin American cities experience, by pointing out that colonisation, race and class categories, apart from gender roles, are crucial for understanding the daily lives of women. Falú (2009, p. 20) argues that many women in Latin American cities live in unequal territories with high levels of feminisation of poverty and experience urban exclusion regarding the lack and poor quality of housing and public services in low-income neighbourhoods.

Therefore, the non-urban woman – the indigenous racialised woman – faces a city model that excludes her, so her needs are invisible. To better understand how the feminisation of poverty and urban exclusion impact women's lives and to go beyond the occidental definition of feminism, the concept of intersectionality will be helpful since it points out that different power structures run across us as individuals at the same time and in different directions, resulting in specific nodes of oppression (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2014, p. 3).

Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s (a term coined in 1989), helps to consider the interconnection between race and gender. Maria Rodó-de-Zárate praises it as a concept that has been one of the most important contributions of non-white feminism, given that it allows theorising oppressions understood as multiple and mutually constituted. The Crenshaw allows us to address gender, race, sexuality, age, and social class as categories that intersect and become oppressions or privileges as a result of this simultaneous experience. Moreover, Rodó-de-Zárate develops the methodology called Relief Maps of Experience as a step forward in the conceptualisation and empirical research on intersectionality, which is based on understanding the dynamics of power and inequalities as something experienced and spatial (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2014, p. 18).

Analyzing the urban environment in Latin America through gender and intersectional feminism approaches seems crucial due to their ultimate goal of achieving spatial justice,<sup>2</sup> the just city, as understood by Susan S. Fainstein (2013) and Nancy Fraser. Fraser, in her theory of gender justice,<sup>3</sup> points out that the dimensions of cultural recognition and redistribution are necessary to achieve the just city: “[...] gender is a bivalent community, which has an economic-political aspect, so a spatial and economic redistribution is required, and a cultural aspect that requires recognition” (Fraser, 1997, p. 14). The just city for women is one that gives them the freedom to choose complete access, and to have recognition of the diversity of experiences, age, employment, culture, socioeconomic class, place of residence, etc.

Nowadays, two approaches to using gender as a category of analysis are recognised in urban studies: gender perspective and feminist urbanism. The

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<sup>2</sup> Spatial (in)justice refers to an intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial or geographical aspects of justice and injustice. As a starting point, this involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them. Spatial justice is a way of looking at justice from a critical spatial perspective (Soja, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Gender justice is the equitable redistribution of opportunities as well as the equal recognition of differences; it requires (economic) redistribution and (cultural) recognition of women and their rights (Fraser, 2013, as cited in De Simone, 2018, p. 242).

former is defined as an analytical approach that has gone through various stages. These stages constitute a process that considers the implications, concerns, and women's and men's experiences that become an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies in all political, economic, and social spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated (Allen, 2018, p. 5). Meanwhile, Adriana Ciocoleto, Roser Casanovas, Marta Fonseca, Sara Ortiz Escalante and Blanca Valdivi from Col·lectiu Punt 6 (2019, p. 20) points out that urbanism with a gender perspective analyses differences, while feminist urbanism<sup>4</sup> seeks to eradicate inequalities.

Housing and mobility are essential elements for any just city, that is, the city which promotes special fairness. Alejandra Massolo (1994, p. 44, as cited in Soto, 2016, p. 44) argues that from a gender perspective, housing reveals aspects such as deficit, financing typology and characteristics of housing (size, state of housing, habitability, security, and physical and social environment, among others), which significantly affect women. These dimensions, which we could call structural, must be qualified with the meanings, practices, and experiences that are built into housing in urbanisation processes, under the assumption that “in addition to being a fundamental affective environment, the house is the space where the individual learns a way to conceive and give meaning” (Esquivel, 2004, p. 44, as cited in Soto, 2016, p. 44).

The mobility turn (Sheller & Urry, 2006, 2014) is recognized today as a theoretical approach paving the way to understand the complexity involved in mobility in the sense of who is moving, where, and what objects are involved in mobility. Although the commitment to incorporate gender and feminist analysis in architecture, urbanism, and mobility is not as vast as in geography, nowadays numerous research go beyond “the universal subject,” and indicate that examining the mobility of women and men allows us to understand the complexity of mobility decisions, such as the way care determines these. In this respect, the term Mobility of Care was coined by Sánchez de Madariaga (2020, p. 91), which is defined as the need to assess and identify daily trips related to caring activities. Furthermore, according to Paola Jirón et al., “interdependence and care are crucial aspects of gendered mobility” (2020, p. 205).

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<sup>4</sup> It is essential to say that feminism is a social and political movement that formally began at the end of the 18th century, although without adopting this denomination yet. It implies women's awareness, as a group or human collective, of the oppression, dominance, and exploitation that they have been and still are subjected to within the patriarchal structures throughout its different historical phases of production models. Such awareness moves them to action for the liberation of their sex with all the transformations of society that it requires (*Mujeres en Red*, 2008, <https://www.mujeresenred.net/>).

We consider it necessary to address housing and mobility as central dimensions of daily life in Latin American territories as mutually related elements. Women's experience cannot be understood by only studying their needs in public spaces, but their housing needs and how they commute and move around the urban environment. We propose that mobility and housing should be understood from a care viewpoint for they function as an element of care infrastructure. "The care" category has been extensively investigated by María Ángeles Duran (2017), who points out that nowadays, there is a debate on an appropriate definition of care in urban areas. Laura Pautassi indicates the temporality of definitions: care as work has been made visible by feminism (Borderías & Carrasco, 1994; Tronto, 1996, as cited in Pautassi 2017, p. 434). Feminist economics identifies care as an activity that generates economic value (Razavi, 2007; Rodríguez, 2012, as cited in Pautassi, 2017, p. 434), that allowed to differentiate between productive work and reproductive work (Marco & Rico, 2013, as cited in Pautassi, 2017, p. 434), and this allowed the recognition of care as a right (Pautassi, p. 434, as cited in Segovia & Nieves Rico, 2017c, p. 434).

Also, some elements that characterise the caring cities have been pointed out: 1) care practices, 2) care places, 3) care materialities, and 4) care subjects. Care practices are those activities that are required to reproduce life, raise, communicate, feed, clean, and maintain the city, provide emotional and affective stability. The places of care are the spaces where care work takes place, nurseries, the home, health centres, feeding places, parks, libraries, and museums. The materialities of care are objects, bodies, buildings, or materials, such as pavements, baby carriages, automobiles, homes, buildings. Subjects of care are not only recipients of care, but also active caregivers, that is, these relationships are always interdependent. These possible subjects can include the homeless, undocumented migrants, relatives, children, older adults, youth, the environment and food cooperatives, among many others (Power & Williams, 2020, p. 20, as cited in Jirón, 2020, p. 80).

Fraser points out that care – which encompasses both the affective and material spheres – is essential for sustaining life and society:

Without them there could be no culture, no economy, no political organisation. No society that systematically weakens its social reproduction can last long. Today, however, a new form of capitalist society is doing exactly that. The result is an enormous crisis, not only of care, but also of social reproduction in its broadest sense (Fraser, 2015, p. 111, as cited in Segovia & Nieves Rico, 2017c, p. 26).



Thus, we propose a gender approach that places care at the centre of public policy to reduce inequity in the distribution of space and assure the quality of life of women; it means to make care as a transversal logic.

## What Role Do Women's Perception and Experience Have in the Construction of Cities?

### *The Women's Experience and Perception as Key Elements*

As Paula Soto (2016, p. 51) points out, the city is a physical space with multiple identities, so its construction depends on the different views that converge there giving the territory a cultural and perceptual load of subjectivity. To do this, it is essential to diversify the scopes and places of analysis regarding the production of urban habitat, starting from the body as a new urban research site, and to rethink domestic spaces, neighbourhoods, places of recreation, and the community, since all of them can be analysed as material and symbolic places where geographic variations of gender are constructed.

Rebuilding territory according to women's experience and perception of the environment in physical space (in line with their needs and communities they belong to) becomes critical, since care is established as a central element in urban planning. The care/caring category acquires more relevance when we understand that, historically speaking, women have been in charge of caring while inhabiting territories that do not recognise their bodies in public and even private spaces traditionally assigned to women, which as a whole has been making their urban experience inefficient. For this reason Liliana De Simone (2018, p. 244) said that daily life and emotions are decisive in urban planning, considering that they can be quantified. Nevertheless, how can we define and rank those basic dimensions to develop an equitable planning of the city?

As Mateo Aguado and Jorge Riechmann (2013) point out, the wellbeing of inhabitants begins with the satisfaction of their most basic and fundamental needs. Therefore, meeting the said needs is of utmost importance for human wellbeing. Following this logic, Artur Manfred Max-Neff (1986) developed the idea of satisfiers for the needs based on Maslow's pyramid of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1962). In his model, Max-Neff identified a series of dimensions of human needs and their corresponding satisfiers with which human wellbeing would be achieved. Even though Maslow's initial theory is deficient in terms of empirical evidence for ordering needs, its logic is consistent with recent experiences at the local level as to what is needed and desired for comprehensive social development.

Understanding the territory by individuals and their communities would allow us to understand cities from the point of view of complexity of life



and recognise the problems that affect the inhabitants in a more specific way, translating this exercise into more accurate urban planning tools. In this sense, Max-Neff proposes a matrix of needs and satisfiers<sup>5</sup> divided into two categories: needs according to axial categories and needs according to axiological categories that propose satisfiers at their intersections.

In the development of the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism, the materialisation of the satisfiers of these two categories is assumed in new dimensions, now territorialised and with the recognition of women's experience in inhabiting space, its application reveals concrete satisfiers that will be defined in the following section: Dwelling, Mobility and Infrastructure, Security, Public Space, Sustainability in the urban environment and Urban Facilities.

In this way, to understand the role of care in the daily life of Latin American women, it is necessary to understand the needs of these specific bodies in the territory, as Gallardo (2014) points out, to go beyond the conceptions of the isolated body of any territorial reality and understand it from their different meanings, depending on the place and time. It becomes urgent, then, to problematise and understand what are the needs of Latin American women employed in public cleaning, for example, or those of an urban white woman who perform waged jobs, and then work on the satisfiers attentive to these needs.

### *Proposal's Methodology: The Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism*

Based on the already mentioned approaches, the epistemological tool is proposed called the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism, which aims to systematise the notion of Just City through two main concepts: Gender-Conscious Urbanism developed by De Simone (2018), influenced by the theory of Gender Justice by Fraser (1997). Gender-Conscious Urbanism redefines the concept of citizenship and its relationship with existing institutions and seeks to overcome binary categories to integrate the multiplicity of interactions between bodies and space.

Gender-Conscious Urbanism recognises that there is not only one way to grow as a woman; labour, race, identity, and symbolic differences determine the different bodies in space. The translation of experience in international gender-conscious design is vital. Cultural requests should not remain unattended, and for the same reason, the design must be born from local

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<sup>5</sup> Max-Neff's matrix of needs and satisfiers develops two axes of needs. The axis of existential categories (Being, Having, Doing and Interacting) and the axis of axiological categories (Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure (or Idleness), Creation, Identity, and Freedom). [http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/1989/05/89\\_1.pdf](http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/1989/05/89_1.pdf)

requests. Local translation and acculturation of formulas for constructing and managing cities with a gender perspective are required. The approach to achieve inclusion must be from justice and law, and it must advocate for “gender justice” (Fraser, 1997, 2015, 2020) that ensures the processes of redistribution and recognition of women and their rights.

The model is our guiding axis for any project, which is an instrument of evaluation of the urban environment from the perspective of perception and qualitative analysis. It seeks that women evaluate the effects that urban planning and built environment have in their daily lives and if it is responsive to their needs. From the results, urban proposals can be articulated that guarantee their inclusion and representation.

The model (see Figure 1) positions the care at the centre of urban decisions and as a condition to reach fairer cities. As Jirón (2020) describes it, care tasks are territorialised, carried out in specific environments and territories, so the model develops itself from this ideal. We propose that the following three considerations must be taken into account when rating the urban environment: 1) the axes of intersectionality that are age, socioeconomic class, ethnicity or culture, employment, physical condition; 2) daily life dimensions regarding both redistribution (care, time use, economy and security) and recognition: inclusion, autonomy, participation and representation, and 3) the evaluation of the urban space through six indicators: Dwelling, Mobility and Infrastructure, Public Spaces, Urban Facilities, Security and Sustainability of the urban environment. These six indicators are established according to what an urban environment must include to meet women’s needs and reflect their experiences in daily life.

We will now present some case studies using our methodological and epistemological tools. The model considerations are disaggregated into practical formats to analyse particular problems in the daily lives of women and different urban scales, for example, the problems that women face in their everyday mobility. In that sense, we propose a city walk as a method of urban analysis, based on the tool My Walk Travel Log (*Bitácora de viaje: Mi Caminata*) and The Immobility Log (*Bitácora de la Inmovilidad*), a recently proposed tool which we developed in the face of the COVID-19 emergency. Besides, we create the Urban Habitability and Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey to analyse the relationship of the built environment at the neighbourhood level, and, as a work in progress, we propose the Urban Habitability Index, which incorporates the tools mentioned above, to develop through indicators an index of analysis of the quality of the neighbourhood concerning different territorial scopes.

## Multidimensional Model of Gender Conscious Urbanism

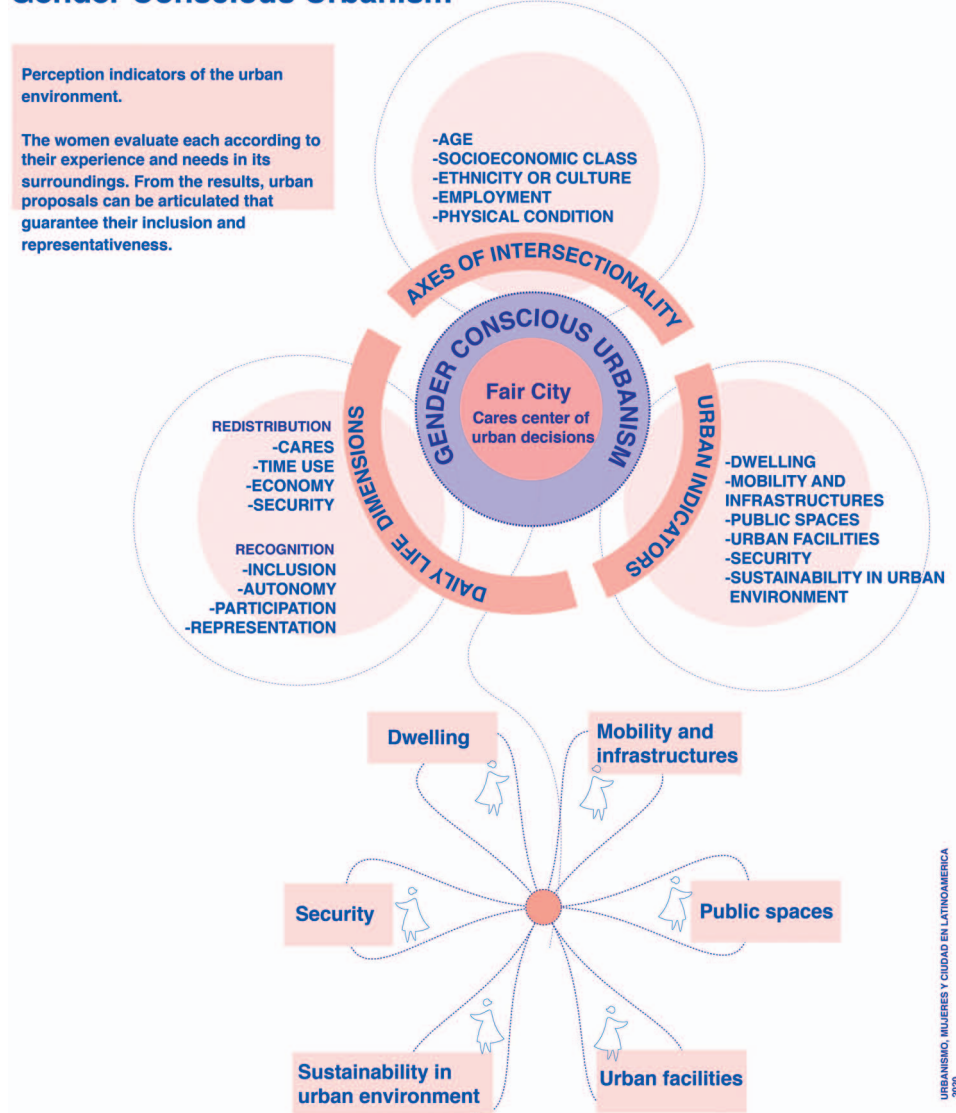


Figure 1

*Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism*

Source: Authors

### *My Walk Travel Log*

In Latin American cities, women's mobility depends on walking and public transport, but most urban environments do not recognize it. Women have a more profound knowledge of the public space and the proper location of services. Women are caregivers both in private and public space due to the gender role imposed on them. Cities are not designed for them, so women face territories that fragment their daily lives. Moreover, women compose the collective that has lived the most unfair consequences of the capitalist urban model. Our territories (Mexico City, Santiago de Chile) have not guaranteed our right to a dignified and fair life, and this is clear with the feminisation of poverty in some of Latin America cities, as Falú (2009) points out, where women have access only to low wage jobs, forcing them to live in the periphery without proper services. Furthermore, the current transport system is gender blind, taking a generalised individual as a model of persons who move across the city.

With these concerns in mind, was developed a qualitative research tool called *My Walk Travel Log*, which has been applied in Santiago de Chile and in the outskirts of Mexico City. This tool aims to characterize and compare the pedestrian mobility experiences of women dwelling in a particular territory. The tool in question elicits to characterize a full day in the mobility of women based on the following information:

- Characteristics of the participants, such as: age, occupation, neighbourhood of residence, frequency of walking, mobility restrictions, time to reach their activities, and cost of their journeys. The journeys they made are collected, indicating the origin, destination, mode, the reasons for commuting, combination of modes, if they carry objects, and if they commute accompanied and by whom.
- Evaluation of the walking experience. In this part, women indicate which city elements allow them to have a comfortable and enjoyable experience and those that generate an uncomfortable and unsafe experience. That includes a table to evaluate each route with four indicators: security, comfort, accessibility, and inclusion.
  - Security. It refers to the presence of elements in the environment, such as the public space infrastructure that makes it a safe place to walk and stay, regardless of the time of day. And to the perception of personal safety, specifically gender-based violence such as sexual harassment.
  - Comfort.<sup>6</sup> It is concerned with evaluating if the urban environment's characteristics and the infrastructure's quality and maintenance are

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<sup>6</sup> Proper width for sidewalks (without obstacles also), urban furniture to rest, trees, street lights, for example.

suitable for women's mobility needs. If the way they are designed invites to stay or just to walk through it. The exemplary elements evaluated in this indicator are: sidewalks in regard to their continuity and quality, comfort in public transport: possibility for sitting that is not very crowded, being able to get on without having to run to reach it, if the state of the bus stops are pleasant, with lighting, located at walking distances, public spaces with furniture for waiting and rest.

- Accessibility. It refers to evaluating the possibility of access and moving in a space without one's disability and/or age being a limitation/constraint.<sup>7</sup>
- Inclusion. It refers to evaluating whether the environment invites women to commute, walk, stay, without socioeconomic class, age, origin, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and occupation being a limitation. In addition, it refers to the various needs for use and mobility considered: the time and cost invested in each trip (whether these fit different budgets), care tasks (good offer of public transportation that satisfies the mobility of care, which includes picking someone up, making purchases, running errands, going to the doctor, and so on); the availability of urban facilities, and services that can be reached on foot or by public transport.
- Proposals to improve women's experience of walking in the city. Based on their everyday life experiences, women have the opportunity to suggest transformation on their territories freely.

In the case of studied women in the outskirts of Mexico City, they mainly moved across the city on foot, which was sometimes complemented by using public transport and/or individual motorized transport. Regarding their reasons for commuting, more than a half of them had to do with: accompanying relatives, picking up children, visiting shops and supply centres – all grouped in the category of care trips by Inés Sánchez de Madariaga (2020, p. 91). Concerning their travel experience, their perception of security in public space is negative when there are factors such as poor lighting, a large gathering of men, poor maintenance of green areas, lack of mixed spaces, dealing with drugs (illicit substances), and robbery. In terms of accessibility, women mentioned the importance of setting speed limits, extending the time when pedestrian is able to cross a street (the “green” light), less distance between individual pedestrian crossings, the

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<sup>7</sup> Here it is evaluated if the surroundings and the streets are designed in a network, continuous, if they have legible signage, lighting, sidewalks of sufficient width to walk pass several people at once, also with a stroller, with ramps for people with disabilities, with safe pedestrian crossings in each intersection, pedestrian traffic lights, tactile guides for people with reduced vision, public transport with ramp.

importance of proper street signposting, and keeping the sidewalks free of obstacles. Likewise, to have a comfortable commuting experience: street furniture to sit on and rest, adequate bathrooms, well-maintained green areas, playgrounds and equipment for outdoor exercise. Finally, among the proposals to improve public spaces, they emphasised the need for better lighting, continuous surveillance – especially at night – including security/CCTV cameras and panic buttons, clear sidewalks free of debris and parked vehicles, wider variety of public transport available, and safer crosswalks.

The data on how women travel within their neighbourhoods and cities, and what are their particular needs, problems, and perceptions. These insights are to be then translated into a neighbourhood project by and with women.

### *Immobility Log*

The web log in question is a digital tool to record the voices of women through their mobility experience during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. from May 2020 onwards). It collects their perceptions of the city following their daily commutes and mobility experience, with the aim to design a new normal with and for women. We propose to answer by employing the concepts of mobility and immobility. This last concept involves quantifying the trips made and those that a social group recognized, those they consider possible to do, and those they actually do. In this sense, immobility is a helpful approach to understand the dissatisfaction, desires, and perception of trips (Gutiérrez, 2009; Hernández & Witter, 2011; Gutiérrez, 2012, p. 85, as cited in Migleriana & Pereyra, 2017, p. 85).

We want to contribute to a better understanding of the mobility of care performed by women in their daily practices at the neighbourhood level. The COVID-19 pandemic made the city's inability to meet women's needs more evident, and it forced them to deploy individual strategies to adapt to the built environment. In Latin America, women work primarily in informal labour, in hospitals, in public cleaning services, to name a few, while facing empty streets and cities, increasing their perception of insecurity.

The questions included in the *Immobility Log* are: Could you stay at home all the time? If you had to go out, what was the reason? What transport did you use? How did you feel during the trip? What do you miss most about the trips you did before the lockdown? What is the main mode you used to move before the lockdown? In this “new normal”, what would you propose for your city so that you could feel more comfortable and happier?



The *Immobility Log* has been answered<sup>8</sup> by 30 women from 12 different cities of Mexico, with ages between 22 to 58, and most of them have jobs that do not allow them to stay at home all the times. They usually move across city on foot or by sharing taxis, and the main purposes of their commuting are to buy food, care for elderly relatives, paid work, medical consultation, visiting a bank, formalities?) and payments for services. Among their proposals, they mention the improvement of sidewalks quality (Belem, 32 years old), the need for activities and spaces that do not depend only on consumerism (Ana, 31 years old). A better understanding of the insecurity that is felt in different territories, for example, that outskirts of cities have infrastructures designed in a way that is hostile to women (Sonia, 42 years old).

### Urban Habitability and Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey

It is a cross-cutting aspect of Mexico and Chile that public and neighbourhood housing policies mainly address the issue pertaining to the number of available apartments leaving aside the problems of caregivers by making them invisible. It is no longer a question of ensuring access to housing but of guaranteeing a good quality thereof and an urban environment providing conditions and attributes that allow human development and a good quality of life through a distribution of more equitable space. This is why it is necessary to measure the satisfaction of women with their homes and neighbourhoods. The Concept of Habitability has been approached by several authors (e.g. Alcalá Pallini, 2007) from the point of view of the physical and material conditions of the house that together provide well-being to the residents. According to Laura Alcalá Pallini (2007, p. 42) a home has adequate standards of habitability not only because of its own characteristics, but also because it is or is not integrated into the city with access to services and facilities and an adequate surrounding public space. In this sense, Ana Elena Espinoza López and Gabriel Gómez Azpeitia (2010, p. 61) indicate that habitability is the interaction of some aspects of the built object (housing) and the architectural subject in an area (neighbourhood). In this way, to measure satisfaction with homes and the neighbourhood, architecture as a built object is not the only relevant element, but so are the environment and the conditions of interaction between the two, since this dialogic relationship can generate two possible results: one harmonious and enriching, the other chaotic and degrading.

Drawing on the above, and considering the theoretical approaches to human needs, perception, and experience from a gender perspective, a working definition of Urban Habitability is proposed: it is a set of physi-

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<sup>8</sup> From May 2020 till July 2021.



cal, spatial, and psychosocial attributes of the built environment that, on different relational and territorial scales, promotes wellbeing and satisfaction of needs as a basis for the development of the inhabitants. These characteristics and territorial dynamics are understood as a constitutive dimensions of the quality of daily life.

Thus, a satisfaction survey of the neighbourhood is proposed as a tool suitable to understand and make women's specific problems and needs visible from the perception of space. In terms of structure, this survey is based on the methodology developed by Emilio Moyano Díaz (1994) called "Satisfaction with housing in cooperative housing estates and its relationship with variables of the mesosystem" (originally: *Satisfacción con la vivienda en conjuntos residenciales de cooperativas y su relación con variables del mesosistema*). The surveyed dimensions arise from the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism and the application methodology of *My Walk Travel Log*, although it focuses on analysing a larger scale of mobility and how different women move around the city, while the Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey portrays what happens on a medium and micro scale, the neighbourhood and living place.

This survey is designed to be applied in social housing neighbourhoods of different cities. Initially designed for social housing condominiums in Santiago de Chile. Inhabitants and heads of household, primarily women,<sup>9</sup> were consulted about what they think and feel about the different variables that make up the neighbourhood.

The specific dimensions chosen are based on the subject literature studied by Doris Tarchópulos and Olga Lucía Ceballos (2005, p. 143) and Edwin Haramoto Nishikimoto (1984) that will be answered and complemented by the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism on a territorial and concrete level.

In this way, the dimensions in question are defined as:

**Territorial dimension.** It refers to the relationship of women with urban space at a certain time, understanding that they move extensively through the territory. This dimension analyzes accessibility and insertion in the city and the provision of infrastructure and transport necessary for mobility in public space. For example, *How do you consider the provision of public transportation in your neighbourhood? How satisfied are you with the public transportation that helps you get between your home and your destinations?*

**Environmental dimension.** For Claude Bertrand and George Bertrand (2007), the space-time relationship and the urban scale from a territorial

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<sup>9</sup> This is relevant because while in 1990 female heads of household amounted to 20.2% of all households nationwide (Chile), in 2017 this number increased to 42.4%, where half of them are single-parent families (CASEN, 2017).

point of view, give specificity to the environmental issue since this relationship influences and affects natural environments in terms of degradation or sustainability. Based on this understanding, the environmental dimension is defined as the attributes that correlate with the environmental impacts of exposure to, for example, risk zones or industrial areas. For example, *How satisfied are you with the environmental conditions in your neighbourhood? Do you consider the natural environment of your neighbourhood sufficient?*

**Social dimension.** It refers to the social effects resulting from the feeling that a subject belongs to its environment (qualitative indicators) and to the socio-spatial characteristics of the neighbourhood such as homogeneity, poverty indicators, etc. This dimension works as prevention from generating a deviation in the evaluation by simplifying the problem. For example, the indicator of constructive housing standards can present positive values, however, the constitution of the neighbourhoods that are generated without considering the pre-existing social networks, generate a lack of social cohesion, which are perceived by residents as not having support networks between neighbours. Exemplary questions regarding the qualitative indicators would be: Do you know the neighbours who live in your building? How satisfied are you with the relationship with your community?

**Economic and opportunity dimension.** It aims to recognise the logic of the market context and of public policies regarding urban planning in order to incorporate indicators referring mainly to labour markets and interests and opportunities presented by the environment (urban equipment aimed at delivering services, commercial centres, etc.) For example: How difficult is it to find work close to where you live?

**Dimension of the house built (constructive aspects).** It is related to the already defined, intermediate scale of the urban network in terms of the material state and the conditions of the services in the housing environment. The exemplary questions in this case would be: How satisfied are you with the material conditions of your home? What would you add to / change at your home? How satisfied are you with the surroundings?

The Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey was first prepared as a pilot input for the subsequent application of the urban indicators that made up the Urban Habitability Index (UHI, 2018). Applied in two neighbourhoods of social housing departments of Santiago de Chile that concentrate 43.2% of the national total (MINVU, 2014) of residential complexes of this type, the survey had a scope of 12 female heads of household.

Although the studied sample is small, it is sufficient to shed some light from a comparative perspective. In the first stage, the UHI was prepared with a quantitative methodology that indicates the lack or sufficiency of access to different services and urban facilities. From this point of view, the results are not far from the information available and known in of-

ficial sources. However, when incorporating the results of the residential survey as an indicator, the result of the territorial analysis varies, indicating essential issues. For example, within the indicator called “Access to public parks,” social housing condominiums report difficulty accessing these spaces in approximately 90% of the cases. However, concerning those who have access to these places, the survey reveals that these parks are not correctly enclosed or that there are no sufficient park lighting or conspicuously marked entrances that could invite the residents to enter them and spend their leisure time there. Therefore, do they really have access to this amenity? Are public policies for neighbourhood recovery and urban improvement targeting the correct items? Which ones do we need to consider? In what hierarchy?

### Urban Habitability Index (UHI)

According to the previously described tools, the Urban Habitability Index (UHI) is being at the stage of development, and its aim is to measure the quality of social housing and neighbourhoods in general. It seeks to identify the areas in which the neighbourhood compromises the quality standards. For this, qualitative and quantitative indicators are developed, the former being more important. In this way, the perception indicators affect the entire construction process of the final tool.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Regarding what we developed in this article, the methodological proposal of the Multidimensional Model of Gender-Conscious Urbanism and its particular tools (the web logs, the Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey, and the Urban Habitability Index), we can indicate some conclusions:

1. By implementing our methodology we confirmed the following: there are inequalities that women face when inhabiting the space, which clearly result from the structural failures of cities to recognise the daily body of women and their displacement. Moreover, subjectivities linked to territorial perception are not usually measured by urban planning instruments, even though they are relevant since, through these, the real impact of the environment on its inhabitants can be measured because they (subjectivities) show which dimension has not been considered to improve cities and involve their inhabitants in the construction of it.

2. By deploying a qualitative and perception-based methodology, we demonstrate the importance of incorporating elements which are vital for women when they walk in the streets, or crucial for the way they inhabit

their neighbourhoods, while noting which kind of urban environment can improve their activity in the city and better recognise their needs.

3. The approach to setting care at the centre of the discussion reveals the importance of the perception of Latin American women in urban planning: they are the ones that take care of the city. Therefore, it is relevant to understand Latin American women's urban experience concerning two key dimensions for a dignified life: dwelling and mobility.

4. These dimensions must be reviewed with a situated gender perspective, that is, from the viewpoint of particular experiences of the different places and neighbourhoods where women live, and with an approach that allows their active participation.

Thus, a gender-conscious urban territory must be construed not in terms of universal design,<sup>10</sup> since this only benefits one type of body, requiring women – who have been excluded – to devise various strategies to inhabit and develop in the city since many continue to have restrictive opportunities. Therefore, the experiences of women in the city continue to be marked by inequality, the need for adaptation, and restrictedness. They adapt to what the space offers by exercising particular strategies, as seen through some answers in My Walk Travel Log, such as avoiding places, schedules, and jobs. They also have to adapt to the conditions of their homes and neighbourhoods, which are generally deficient and unsatisfactory, and limit their daily life and their development. Many of the surveyed women live at the periphery, witnessing how many processes to improve the environment remain blind to their needs. Such processes only seek to improve the environment through universal recipes that do not recognise from the beginning of planning practices and local necessities, so that those “improvements” only perpetuate urban inequity.

Some concluding remarks about these instruments involve a perception that cities can achieve spatial and mobility justice if they incorporate women needs, practices and experience on a neighbourhood scale: a new understanding of mobility infrastructure from the viewpoint of women's needs, from accessibility to proximity, from neutral infrastructure towards urban care services.

Regarding the Survey of Urban Habitability and Neighbourhood Satisfaction designed in Santiago de Chile, we can point out that the levels of dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood in terms of the daily practices of

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<sup>10</sup> Feminist theorists criticize universal design for being the design that allowed an androcentric and patriarchal urbanism, a functionalist city; that took into account the Anglo-Saxon man as a design subject. Universal design does not address the diversity of women and men, but rather takes “universal” criteria that only serve a typical man defined in Le Corbusier's *The Athens Charter* [*La Charte d'Athènes*] (Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2020, p. 99).

women indicate that they are not recognised in the planning of neighbourhoods of social housing. Although we know that, in Chile, most of the households are managed by women, the location of social housing, the conditions of the house, and the neighbourhood, among other conditions, are not perceived as adequate, which is a problem when they inhabit these spaces, because they force women to make a more significant effort in their daily lives. In this way, being responsible for domestic affairs by incorporating the needs of women into urban planning in this new context not only generates benefits for them, but also contributes to building better cities for all, as soon as the territory recognises the particularities of this dwelling as Segovia and Nieves Rico (2017a) indicate.

In light of the specific results and in terms of future research, we need to continue increasing our study sample of mobility and immobility logs, since currently we only have testimonies of women living in similar conditions such as socioeconomic class, occupation, to name a few, so we want to explore and work with women who face other conditions in the city due to their occupations, such as domestic workers, public cleaners, street vendors. In addition to the sample, we consider that it is necessary to explore other important times of day to analyse urban issues, such as night and early morning, when women, mainly informal workers, do their jobs. Regarding the Neighbourhood Satisfaction Survey, the limitations also determine a sound sample universe of respondents that can be deemed representative. Besides, it may be necessary to make variations in the questions regarding specific dimensions, considering the different types of social housing neighbourhoods.

In future research, we need to ensure that the obtained evidence are reflected in urban projects. In this sense, we need to share the main results with urban designers, planners, and the governments to let them recognise that the knowledge obtained through qualitative methodologies are valid inputs, necessary and complementary for the instruments formulated by public institutions, such as urban development plans, housing policies, land management instruments, urban mobility plans etc.

The challenges that emerge from the initial approach to understanding women's experiences in Latin America are that the logic of care must be recognised and incorporated as critical in the functioning of a territory. It needs to be integrated in spatial terms, in affordable, dense mixed land use neighbourhoods, with management and redistribution of care, that will make women's daily lives more comfortable and enable them to face their current needs of double and triple hours of paid and unpaid work. At the same time, a type of social management of territory is required that would be responsive to women's needs to reduce the feminisation of poverty and urban exclusion.

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