

SymbioCity

Gender Mainstreaming in
Sustainable Urban Development



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To develop cities for all there is a need to understand space from a gender perspective. Only when the diverse experiences and needs of women and men are integrated into urban planning and design, land management and governance it will be possible to develop our cities in a more inclusive and sustainable way. This brochure shares methods and examples of how to work with gender mainstreaming in sustainable urban development.

Why is gender perspective important in urban development?

In order to develop inclusive and sustainable cities that take consideration of our different needs, independently of age, gender or socio-economic group, it is important that we recognize that different groups have different needs and perceptions, identify the differences, and ensure that these perspectives are considered when developing our cities. We need to capture the different needs of users, identify and obtain a systematic understanding of these needs and take equal account of them. Gender issues in urban development include unequal resource allocations in planning, unequal or discriminatory service delivery, city planning and use of infrastructure and service.

Key areas to address in urban development in relation to gender equality include:

- Access to public services, e.g. transport, water and sanitation and healthcare and tenure.
- Livelihoods, and employment and self-employment constraints.
- Urban planning, housing and business development.

Only when the diverse experiences and needs of women and men are integrated into urban planning and design will it be possible to form inclusive urban planning procedures, public spaces and land management.

What are the challenges that need to be addressed?

- Lack of knowledge and awareness of gender inequalities and stereotypes, and how these affect urban development, that men and women have different experiences and tend to use the city in different ways.
- Lack of will to mainstream gender, and negative assumptions about gender equality.
- Lack of means and methods to address gender inequality, and the belief that achieving gender equality will be too expensive and time-consuming.
- Poor urban populations are very heterogeneous, and gender mainstreaming requires addressing diverse groups of men and women, as gender cuts across other groups (e.g. defined by ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, etc.).
- Gender can be forgotten when other concerns compete for attention.

How can we do it?

- Include both women and men of different age groups in the planning, implementation and operation of urban development.
- Have a gender perspective – ask, is this affecting men and women differently? How?
- Use disaggregated data according to sex, age, socio-economic status.

The importance of disaggregated data according to sex, age, socio-economic status



In order to make our cities attractive, safe, healthy and livable for all we need to fully understand our city and capture the different needs and perceptions of the citizens. By collecting disaggregated data according to sex, age and socio-economic status we are able to see the differences that may exist and develop solutions that take into consideration the needs of all.

We know for instance that patterns of mobility in cities are deeply gendered: women are more likely to travel off-peak hours, use less-expensive means of transportation and feel unsafe when moving through urban areas. Urban planning and design however often remain gender-blind, not taking these issues into account, partly due to lack of knowledge and awareness.

In Colombia, the city of Pitalito, Huila, wanted to develop, within the SymbioCity project, a mobility strategy for its city. To better understand the current situation in the city, the mayor's office took to the streets to ask its citizens their opinion regarding problems and possible improvements in mobility in the city. Questions were also asked to find out how citizens move around the city and their mode of transportation. All the data were disaggregated by sex and age, in order to be able to analyze differences that may exist.

Examples of method for analyzing a public space for a gender perspective:

If we want to create a public space for all, start by analyzing the space from a gender perspective in order to understand how it is used, who is using it, when and for what etc.

- Who is using the space? Who is not using the space?
Who is in spaces nearby? Who passes through the space?
- Are there different target groups present during different times of the day (morning/day/evening)?
- Who is active and uses all the functions of the space?
Who is passive, just watching?
- How are the people living nearby using the space?
What kind of activities are being done here? Is there a dimension of gender connected to the space?
- What gender is dominant?
- Is there a difference between gender and age in the way they use the space? If yes, in what way?
- Time of day that they use the space?
- Are there functions on or around the space which could make girls/women feel more or less welcome?

Neighborhood Safety Survey

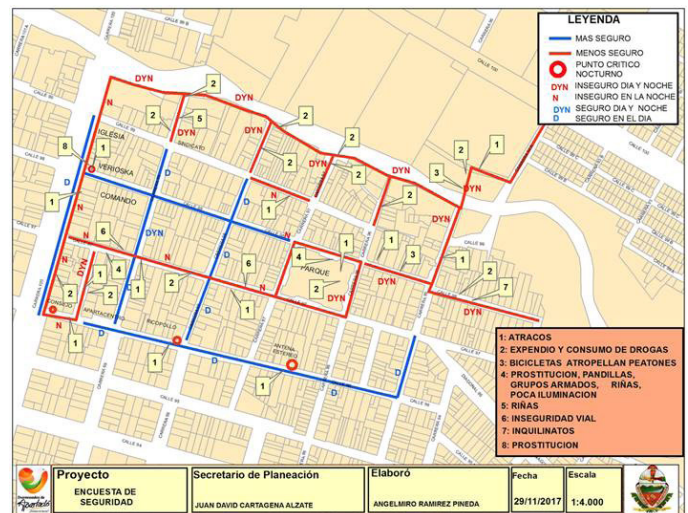


Safety in public places is an aspect to consider when providing equal opportunities for all. It is important to take into account the perspectives of different groups since these may perceive the city in different ways. Women generally feel more unsafe which limit full access to the city.

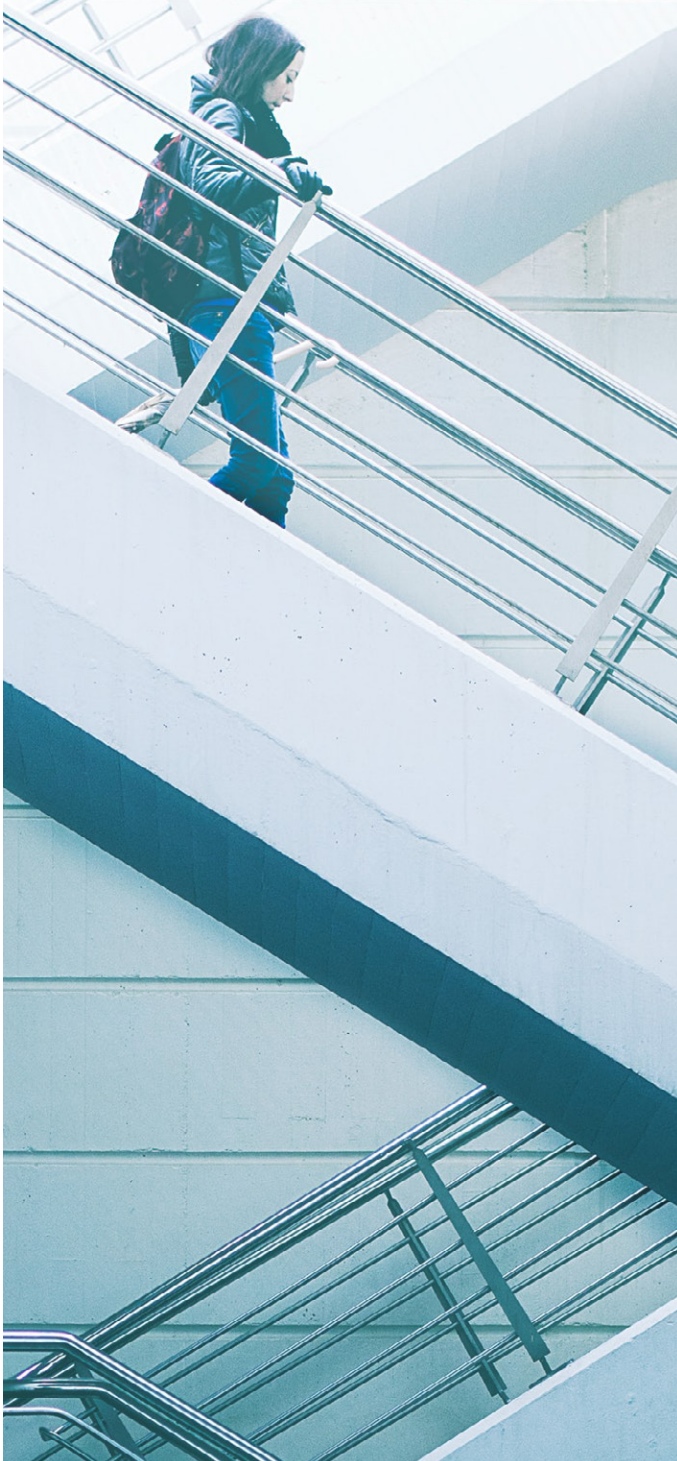
As part of the SymbioCity project in Apartadó, Colombia, the local government wanted to develop an integral strategy for the center. A neighborhood safety survey was conducted in Parque La Martina to identify challenges and possible solutions to improve the safety situation in the surrounding neighborhood. The local government gathered interested stakeholders active in the area and were able to talk to 40 people, approximately half men, half women, including vulnerable groups such as representatives of sex workers.

The participants were first organized in four groups. With a map and support of local government representatives, the participants indicated safe and unsafe areas on the map, as well as places where there had been an assault or theft. It was documented whether men, women, elderly or young people had same or different perceptions of the identified places.

In the second part of the survey, the participants took a walking tour of the area in order to understand the physical conditions of the urban environment, and identify possible physical improvements that could improve safety. The information was documented on a map and used as a starting point for the development of solutions for the center.



Gender mainstreaming a multi-story carpark



Carparks are generally pointed out as a special unsafe place in the public space. Research shows that insecurity and the feeling of unsafety is the one thing that limits women's possibility to move in a city. This in turn limits women's possibilities when it comes to work, pleasure, housing and mode of transport.

In the city of Umeå, in northern Sweden, the city-owned parking company Upab set out a goal that women and men in the city should be able to park on equal terms and that everyone should feel safe. They decided to see how they could improve a multi-story carpark downtown.

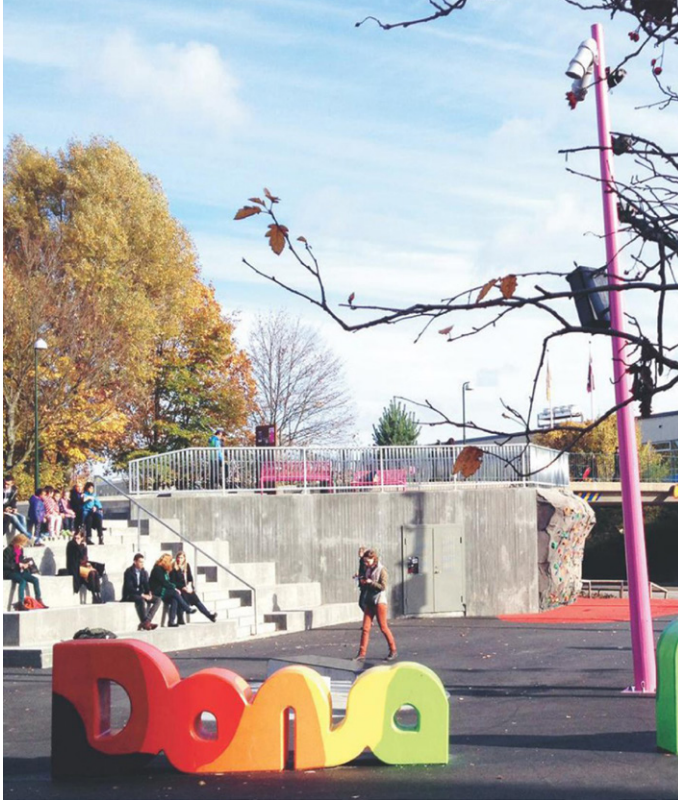
They first started by analyzing the carpark answering questions like:

Who is parking here? How do different groups experience the place? What type of resources exist? What issues should we focus on?

The main result was that the carpark was perceived as dark and an unsafe place. Based on this information Upab modified the carpark so that it would become a more attractive and accessible environment. The following actions were implemented:

- The carpark was repainted and graffiti was removed.
- Lighting was improved.
- The doors in the building were changed to doors that were lighter and easier to open.
- The stairwell was reconstructed where a brick wall facing the street was replaced with a wall made of glass. This allowed better visibility for those inside the stairwell. Previously, the stairwells were perceived as trapped and unpleasant.

Young girls design an activity area for all



The city of Malmö wanted to transform a parking area into an activity area for all, where girls and boys could hang out. The first sketches included conventional solutions such as a combined area for sports and skateboard, climbing and graffiti. Based on previous studies the city realized that these solutions would have meant that the users would be 80% boys. With the ambition to create a public space with a more equal mix of boys and girls, the city decided that they needed to take a different approach and decided to involve teenage girls in the planning process.

The girls came up with new and different ideas identifying music and dance as core topics. Working together with landscape architects, they created a meeting place that includes:

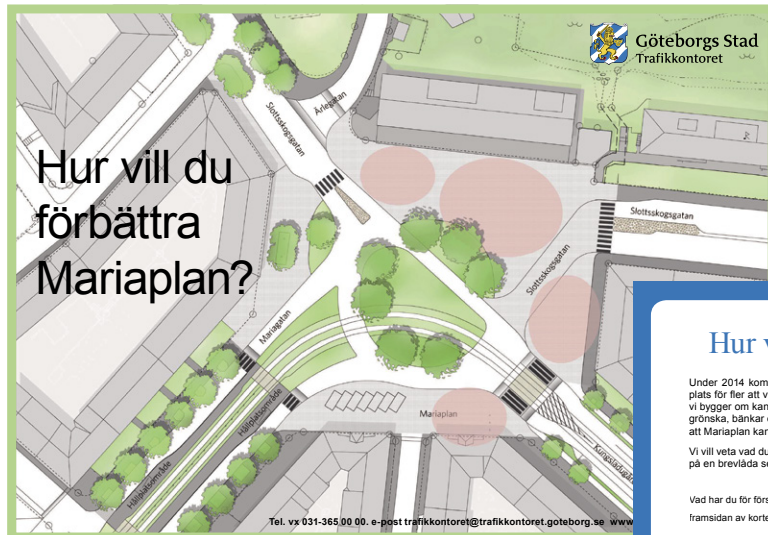
- Benches where people can hang out
- A stage for performance
- A climbing wall
- An outdoor gym, and
- Speakers where visitors can connect and play their music through Bluetooth

A name contest led to the name – Rosens röda matta – The Rose of the red carpet which was inaugurated, by the girls, in 2013. The result of this work was not just the public place but also that the young women involved have been empowered realizing that they have a part to play in the development of their city. The girls' commitment and engagement have spread and led to several new activity areas using the same process methods.



Photo: Moa Björnson

Dialogue through postcards gave more women the chance to influence the city



When the city of Gothenburg in Sweden was going to rebuild an area around a large square, Mariaplan, the city wanted to have a broad and inclusive dialogue with its citizens. A common way of communicating with the citizens about the design of the city is to have an open invitation to meetings at the city hall or at the local library. But often, visitors are a homogeneous crowd of middle-aged (or older), white men who gladly share their views.

In order to create an equal social planning, where all citizens are given the same opportunities and rights to influence, views from more groups are needed. Therefore it is important to find other ways of communicating with the citizens. The city of Gothenburg decided to try a different method. Postcards were sent out to a representative selection of citizens in the neighborhood. On the postcard there was a question asking "How

do you want to improve Mariaplan?" with a picture of what the traffic department had thought it could look like in the future. The receivers of the postcards could then both draw directly on the picture as well as write on the postcard their ideas and opinions and then send the postcard back to the city.

The dialogue through postcards resulted that the city received more comments on the proposal than in general. Moreover, more women than men had answered as well as a wider range of ages. This was reflected in the type of comments and suggestions that had been proposed. In general, comments are usually about traffic planning and how to make room for the cars. By using postcards more female voices were heard and the city received more opinions about living spaces, security issues and walking and bicycle paths.

SymbioCity supports local governments in addressing several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in implementing the principles of the New Urban Agenda. The overall goal is to improve living conditions with a special emphasis on the urban poor.



Cover photo: Cycling Festival in Pitalito, Huila, 2019. Photo taken by the press office of Alcaldía de Pitalito.



SymbioCity is based on Swedish municipalities' approach to urban development and experiences from implementing this in transition- and developing countries. Since 2010, with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and SALAR International have used SymbioCity as an approach and a method to promote sustainable urban development and contribute to the alleviation of urban poverty around the globe.

To learn more about SymbioCity please see www.symbiocity.org, call phone +46 (0)8 452 70 00 or send us an e-mail on info@salarinternational.se