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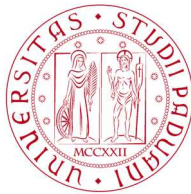
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, LAW AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

GENDER-MAINSTREAMING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN BARCELONA AND UMEÅ

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Summary

«Il paesaggio urbano non tiene in conto l'universo femminile».

Atlante di genere: la ricerca sugli spazi urbani di Florencia Andreola e Azzurra Muzzonigro.

Per Giulia, e tutte le sorelle che meritano di camminare libere nelle nostre città.

Introduction

Including a gender dimension in political debate and legislation has become more divisive in the current fragmented climate in the European Union, with far-right parties invoking the myth of "gender ideology" as an attack to traditional values and the natural order, thereby hindering cultural, legislative and socioeconomic progress in the form of gender equality and inclusive society. Since the 2008 crisis the EU has followed an austerity approach by putting economical goals above welfare initiatives, and in particular the dimension of gender has been often overlooked or outright removed from policy proposals regarding introduction of anti-discriminatory practices in public life and the necessity of gender equal pay. However, as lawful practice has demonstrated, naming a specific problem can help fill the gap of awareness and knowledge on the matter by showing that disparity - e.g. gender discrimination - does exist and it should not be ignored. In Chapter 1, the background and motivation of this research will be presented, supported by the methodology and State of art including data collection and analysis plus literature review aimed at showcasing both legislative framework and critical review of gender mainstreaming, and best practices stemming from it in local administrations. For this purpose, in Chapter 2, the research will examine gender-mainstreaming, its conception and history, also its capacity to promote gender equality at all levels and all stages of policymaking, as it was established by the international community in order to generally ameliorate the conditions of women's human rights and empowerment on the ground. Despite initial momentum in its implementation by States, feminist academics and advocates have highlighted for years the limits and contradictions of this approach to legislation, as it has been oftentimes restrained in its scope and action by opposition and lack of commitment to fully adopt a gender-sensitive perspective. However, experiences from several best practitioner cities demonstrate that gender mainstreaming contributes to setting the base for inclusive and equal policies promoting fair living conditions for all inhabitants and fighting discrimination in urban development. As for both case studies, five areas of research will analyze women's empowerment in the city, although incorporating an intersectional approach that considers needs of migrant and POC

women, LGBTQ+ community members, disabled and senior women, etc. In Chapter 3, therefore, Barcelona is identified as a long-standing gender-mainstreaming stronghold due to the city's early adoption and implementation in all policy areas of a gender-sensitive perspective, coupled with several grassroots initiatives from feminist organizations vital for fostering citizens participation and local democracy. Alternatively, in Chapter 4, the Swedish city of Umeå committed to the achievement of gender equality in the early 1990s through both legislative and cultural strategies, hallmarking for innovative solutions with architectural choices in public spaces that were planned for and by women, as well for fostering dialogue and inclusiveness regarding migrant and Indigenous communities. In conclusion, the research aims to showcase the potential of gender-mainstreaming practiced in local administrations' policymaking for both women and minorities' empowerment.

1. Chapter One: analysis on the effectiveness of implementing women's human rights within local policies for their empowerment

1.1. Background and motivation of research: the advancement of gender equality at a pivotal point

Women, and other marginalized groups, should be able to fully enjoy their human rights, however systemic inequality persists as deeply reported in both cultural, socio-economic and political dimensions to society. Identity - according to the intersectional framework, the combination of different aspects, such as their gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, that can overlap and interact in complex ways, leading to unique experiences of disadvantage or privilege - affects an individual's experience due to power relations and ensuing discrimination. In this scenario, sexist stereotypes and bias manifest not only through unfair laws and gender pay gaps, through language and media representation, but also by way of shaping the places people inhabit according to biased dynamics of urban planning. As the New Urban Agenda[1] and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[2] center efforts for the sustainable development that leaves no one behind, UN agencies have called for focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups through inclusive approaches to policy making for local development. This vision reflects specific goals set forward for the international community such as Goal 5 of 2030 Agenda, even though the importance of interconnection and mutual progress. Only on the ground people can perceive the full extent to which they can exercise and enjoy their rights - historically women have had to fight political and socio-cultural fights through activism and mobilization for recognition of their civil and political rights by the State and society. In a view of showcasing successful case studies of cities mainstreaming gender-sensitive policies and initiative, the research identifies Barcelona and Umeå as possible good practitioners for their commitment in the last decade to advance women's empowerment

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[1] UN, New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256, New York, NY: United Nations General Assembly, 2016.

[2] UN General Assembly, resolution "Transform Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Adopted on 25 September 2015 (A/RES/70/1). New York: United Nations, 2015.

on the ground. At an essential time where gender equality needs to become a paramount goal for institutions at all levels, the practice of gender mainstreaming might ensure that policies address and include the diverse needs and experiences of both women and men, especially in urban areas where policies attempt to bridge gaps in living conditions and foster cohabitation between different cultures in multi-ethnic societies. Understanding how this process unfolds at the local level is essential for fostering inclusive and equitable urban governance together with strong communities as envisioned by the UN New Urban Agenda. This research is currently being conducted keeping the Italian State as possible ground onto which importing and implementing GM practices to improve women's living conditions, as in 2023 Italian feminist movements greatly mobilized to protest against gender-based violence in all forms - sexual harassment, domestic violence, feminicide - and defend women's human rights, for instance the right to abortion, the right to equitable work and retribution. In 2023, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report[3] Italy ranked 76th out of 156 countries in terms of gender equality. The report found that women in Italy are more likely to be unemployed and earn less than men, and they also bear a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. One of the most pressing issues facing women in Italy is the gender pay gap and the difficulty for women in entering and staying in the workforce in order to obtain economic independence. According to Eurispes data, women in Italy earn on average 24% less than men for the same work.[4] This gap is even wider for women in managerial roles, where they earn 31% less than their male counterparts due to contributing factors, for instance occupational segregation, the motherhood penalty and the glass ceiling. Unpaid care work is another significant burden on women in Italy: as extensive literature on the care gap has proven women spend an average more hours per day on unpaid care work compared to men. This imbalance means that women have less time for paid work, education, and leisure, and it affects the decisions women take for their empowerment, renouncing careers and higher roles in decision making. These normalized discriminations reveal the systemic pervasiveness of patriarchal structures of society, where women are relegated to caretakers and "angelo del focolare", faraway from public sphere and public space.

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[3] World Economic Forum. " The Global Gender Gap Index 2023." Statista, Statista Inc., 20 Jun 2023, https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index/
[4] Eurispes (2022). Rapporto Italia 2022: dati e tendenze. Eurispes. https://eurispes.eu/ricerca-rapporto/rapporto-italia-2022/

However, homes are not safe spaces for women: according to the Italian National Anti-Crime Directorate, an average of 89 women per day are victims of domestic violence in Italy.[5] In 2023 news stories have involved public opinion strongly on gender violence, since in the summer more cases of sexual violence were reported in cities such as Palermo and Naples,[6] and every 3 days 1 woman remains a victim of femicide, for a total of 103 in the present year. Even though public opinion fails to recognize the urgent need for change in culture, violence is accompanied by a growing sense of insecurity for women and girls in public spaces and in the domestic environment, as responsibility for their own safety is often placed on the victims themselves. Local action to oppose gender-based violence arrived in the form of active support and rescue services founded and carried out by volunteers of anti-violence centers and feminist associations. Born from the Italian association DONNEXSTRADA, some strategies entail virtually accompanying women through video calls in risky places or situations, sharing best practices to repel attackers and checking the route on Open-source platforms that, through geolocation and dissemination of reviews by other pedestrians, allow a sort of security-mapping in cities and urban areas.[7] Moreover, urban centers are becoming melting pots where different communities have to learn to cohabit and adapt to the Green transition promoted by the European Union. Italian local administrations therefore should take advantage of the resources provided by recovery instruments such as the PNRR and the exchange of good practice through inter-European and transnational networks to plan urban development according to inclusive and fair principles involving the voices of women and vulnerable communities.

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[5] ISTAT. Il sistema della protezione per le donne vittime di violenza. Roma: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, 7 August 2023. https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/287411

[6] Pianagini G. Rape Cases Seize Italy's Attention and Expose Cultural Rifts. Reporting from Caivano, Italy. The New York Times. September 3 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/03/world/europe/italy-rape-women-violence.html

[7] DONNEXSTRADA, DONNEXSTRADA la startup che ti accompagna tramite le dirette Instagram, June 16 2022, https://donnexstrada.org/donnexstrada-la-startup-che-ti-accompagna-tramite-dirette-instagram/.

1.2. The gendered landscape of cities: urban planning that marginalizes women and minorities

Despite international commitments to gender equality, the translation of these principles into local policies remains a challenge: human rights, especially women's human rights, risk remaining a remote artifact if they do not become ingrained into good practices of local administration, spreading further on into a network from regional to national and finally international. There is a need to examine first, how gender mainstreaming has been conceptualized and implemented in the 30 years following its legal conception at the Fourth Conference at Beijing. This strategy was launched as the most effective tool to ingrain gender-sensitive practices into international and national law through a multilevel approach to promote and reach gender equality globally. However, during the years feminist scholars have conducted research on the impact of gender mainstreaming and unfortunately, they found that very little progress has been made in implementing it into policies and programs, as the practice often risks being forgotten or worse deliberately omitted. The limits and gaps of the gender mainstreaming initiative will be investigated, in addition to the obstacles found in the path of implementation including both ideological boycotts from conservative political actors and economic choices directed towards austerity regimes in times of crisis. Furthermore, the research will explore the potential of gender mainstreaming being operationalized and enhanced in the urban context, particularly in cities like Barcelona and Umeå, where practices of gender mainstreaming have been advocated and implemented with positive effects for the local female community. To compare these practices and analyze their effectiveness in advancing women's human rights and women's empowerment, the research identifies and compares policies in five determined areas of research between two cities known for their commitment to gender equality. The areas of research are divided as follow:

- Labor and work-life balance.
- Mobility and walkability.
- Violence within domestic and public spaces.
- Healthcare and reproductive rights.
- Migration, diversity and inclusion.

Discrimination and gender inequality impact women's life daily, but without knowledge on the gender dimension and how it shapes and affects people's experience, the problem can't be determined and therefore tackled. Cities, hubs of economic activity, cultural vibrancy, and social interaction, which are often seen as melting pots of diverse populations, are however designed and constructed in a way that favors men and disadvantages women and minorities. This gendered landscape of cities has far-reaching consequences, limiting opportunities, perpetuating inequalities, and shaping urban experiences in profound ways.[8] As found by extensive feminist research on urban planning since the mid-twentieth century small and big cities are often ill-suited to the needs and preferences of women and marginalized individuals. These communities often experience challenges to their living experience due to discrimination and negligence, for instance in the case of limited access to public spaces. Streets and parks, often designed for the convenience of male commuters and leisure activities, may feel unsafe or uncomfortable for women, particularly after dark. This lack of access to public spaces restricts women's mobility, opportunities for social interaction, and overall participation in civic life. Moreover, this issue is reinforced by inadequate public transportation systems, another crucial component of urban mobility, which often fail to accommodate the needs of women and minorities. Long waits, limited routes, and lack of safety measures can discourage people from using public transport, forcing them to choose less reliable and more expensive modes of transportation, such as taxis or private cars, and overall slowing down efforts for sustainable transitions to carbon-free emissions solutions. The layout of cities can also exacerbate social segregation and exclusion. Neighborhoods with poor infrastructure, inadequate amenities, and higher crime rates are often disproportionately home to women and minorities, creating a cycle of disadvantage and limiting their opportunities for upward mobility. To create more inclusive and equitable cities, urban planning must prioritize the needs and perspectives of all residents, including women and minorities. By learning from good practices shared between city coalitions and transnational networks, local administrations should prioritize safety and accessibility in public spaces by designing streets, parks, and other public spaces with a focus on safety for women and minorities, including adequate lighting, well-maintained

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[8] Wagner, Fritz, Riad Mahayni, and Andreas Piller, eds. Transforming Distressed Global Communities: Making Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015. pp.1-8
https://books.google.it/books

infrastructure, and clear signage. In addition, stakeholders should invest in sustainable public transportation systems that are safe, accessible, and affordable for all residents. To further address inequalities and systemic discrimination in urban areas, policy-makers should implement policies and programs that promote mixed-income housing, improve infrastructure in underserved neighborhoods, and create opportunities for economic development in areas that are currently marginalized. By reimagining urban planning from a gender-sensitive perspective, we can create cities that are truly inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all residents. This commitment is not just a matter of fairness and social justice; it is also an economic imperative, as cities that are more inclusive and equitable are better able to attract talent, foster innovation, and achieve sustainable growth.

1.3. Theoretical framework, literature review and methodology of research

This methodology provides a structured approach to investigate the international framework through which gender mainstreaming (GM) has been founded and developed to further promotion of women's human rights, implemented at all levels and all stages of policies and initiatives. The aim is to investigate the effectiveness of GM as a tool to identify and rectify discriminations against women and other minorities in urban centers - which become grounds of dispute and inclusion between different communities affected differently by power relations. Indeed, a point of reference remains critical literature by feminist scholars and grassroots movements engaged in activism and mobilization to raise awareness on unfulfilled human rights or deteriorating conditions to their full realization and to ignite administration's efforts on local policies. In this case, the cities of Barcelona and Umea were chosen to present different administrative responses to promote gender equality according to different contexts, as it will be shown the importance of tailor-made approaches and bottom-up initiatives - indeed, community-based collective action fosters democratic wellbeing. As the basis of this research, the State of Art presented will include a comprehensive literature review, qualitative data collection, case studies on successful GM practice and thriving urban areas, and a comparative analysis, allowing for a holistic assessment of the research question. Moreover, to investigate the effectiveness of women's human rights when concretized at the local level, a qualitative case study

methodology will be employed. In the first chapter, the research will present a comprehensive literature review, by examining the concepts of GM, women's human rights within the international legal framework, the importance of gender-sensitive approach to inclusive and sustainable development as globally contracted and existing empirical evidence on GM at the local level. In particular, the literature review takes into consideration feminist and academic research on gender mainstreaming conception and implementation, integrated with critical review on this approach, specifically building on observations within the "Rivista telematica di studi della memoria femminile" (DEP)[9]. In this volume, cities are identified as laboratories for change, where several initiatives for co-housing and repartition of domestic work inspire new forms of women's empowerment, even better conditions for all city's inhabitants. In the following chapters, the study offers two case studies of Barcelona and Umea, based on their distinct geographical and cultural contexts, as well as their varying approaches to gender mainstreaming. It is fundamental to consider the cultural context in which the research is conducted, as cultural norms and practices can play a significant role in shaping women's experiences and opportunities. The rationale for this comparative approach lies in the potential for identifying best practices and challenges within each context. Data collection will primarily involve qualitative methods such as a thorough analysis of relevant documents, policies, and reports. The data analysis process will employ thematic analysis for the qualitative data collected, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and patterns in policies and their effects. This analysis will enable a nuanced understanding of the impacts of gender-sensitive policies on women's human rights in the respective cities. Consideration will be also given to participatory practices adopted by local administration in relation to local grassroots movements and non-profit feminist organizations for the purpose of empowering local actors in democratic political participation to demand their rights and contribute to policy making in their cities. The theoretical framework for this study draws on feminist theories, particularly gender planning for sustainable development and feminist urbanism aimed at equal and inclusive cities. These frameworks will be employed to analyze the multifaceted nature of gender issues and the ways in which social, economic, and political factors intersect to shape the

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[9] Bianchi B., Catia Confortini, Geraldine Ludbrook ed. Monographic Issue Feminism and Urban Spaces, Issue 51. Venezia: DEP Rivista telematica di studi di memoria femminile. June 2023
https://www.unive.it/pag/48420/

experiences of individuals. Additionally, the Institutional Theory will be referred to understand how gender mainstreaming becomes embedded within the institutional structures of local governance, drawing from international tools such as the New Urban Agenda and the objectives related to gender equality and the rights to the city. It will also showcase the transferability of good practices for gender equality between networks of cities and urban areas committed to equality and sustainability - Human Rights Cities. Furthermore, the UN conventions on gender equality provide a strong legal and policy framework for promoting gender mainstreaming. These instruments - which will be further analyzed in Chapter 2 - include:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[10]: ratified by 193 countries, CEDAW is a landmark treaty that defines discrimination against women and outlines measures to eliminate it.

- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[11]: adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Platform is a comprehensive plan of action for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

- The Millennium Development Goals[12] (MDGs) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals[13]: specifically Goal 5 targets gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, despite being interconnected and transversal to every SDG present in the 2030 Agenda.

- The Women's Empowerment Principles[14]: WEPs were established by UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact in 2010 and based on international labor and human rights standards. They enable both organizations and companies to

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[10] UN General Assembly. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249.

[11] United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html [accessed 23 January 2024]

[12] United Nations Development Programme. "Millennium Development Goals." UNDP. Accessed February 25, 2024. http://www.undp.org/mdg/.

[13] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR and the 2030 Agenda - Sustainable Development Goals, 2017, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/59db4b224.html [accessed 24 January 2024]

[14] UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business, April 2010, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/4bcc0fcf2.html [accessed 24 January 2024]

evaluate and assess their policies and practices and to identify areas for improvement.

Women's empowerment is a multifaceted concept that has been defined in a variety of ways. Some of the most common definitions include "the expansion of women's capabilities, opportunities, and choices"[15] as stated by the World Bank, and even "a process of achieving gender equality through the full and effective participation of women in all aspects of society"[16] according to the UN. These definitions emphasize the importance of women's agency, autonomy, and participation in achieving gender equality. Women's empowerment is "a process of enabling women to take control of their own lives and make choices that are in their best interests"[17] with the aim of creating a world in which women have the same opportunities as men to access education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. Moreover, the empowerment of women's human rights is about ensuring that women can fully enjoy their human rights, addressing the barriers that prevent women from exercising their rights and creating a world in which women are equal to men in law and in practice. Women's empowerment is therefore fundamental in order to achieve gender equality, as women must be viewed as active rights-bearers that through participation and agency aim to change experienced disparities. Institutionalized GM is guided by a set of core principles that emphasize its transformative nature and its commitment to achieving substantive equality between men and women, as included:

- Systematic integration: GM should be embedded into all policies, programs, and initiatives across all sectors and levels of government and civil society.
- Cross-cutting capacity: gender issues should be addressed in a comprehensive and transversal manner, recognizing that gender intersects with other social factors

[15] World Bank. (2001). Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/512911468327401785/engendering-development-through-gender-equality-in-rights-resources-and-voice https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-1997

[16] United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html [accessed 23 January 2024]

[17] UNDP. (1997). Human Development Report 1997: Human Development to Eradicate Poverty. New York: Oxford University Press. https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-1997

such as race, class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and identity, religion and disability.

- Continuous process: GM is an ongoing and iterative process that requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation.

- Universality: the global community formally recognized that gender equality is a universal right and a fundamental goal for common efforts, hence commitment that should be upheld and promoted in all societies.

- Institutionalization of gender equality: the international arena made possible to establish dedicated gender equality units or focal points within government and civil society organizations to coordinate and oversee GM efforts.

In today's world, some of the key challenges to equality include deep-rooted gender stereotypes and discrimination which continue to hinder women's full participation and advancement in society; likewise, a lack of political will on the implementation of GM has led to small progress, even though commitment and good governance of institutions are essential to achieve gender equality. As feminist research demonstrates, political initiatives and campaigns launched for the advancement of women's empowerment have undergone several resource constraints and outright interference from opposing actors. Nonetheless, one of the most underrated shortcomings is the lack of data and evidence, as inadequate sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis can hamper efforts to identify and address gender-related gaps and disparities. The case studies of Barcelona and Umea showcase insight into the implementation of gender-sensitive policies in each city through the identification of GM instruments in all stages of local policy making, alas the research recognizes the role played by grassroots groups which took part in data collection, advocacy and legislative proposals for the promotion of women's empowerment. To highlight the necessity of action-oriented political initiatives, the two case studies identify and focus on five key areas: labor and work-life balance, mobility and walkability, violence within domestic and public spaces, healthcare and reproductive rights, and alas migration, diversity and inclusion. For these areas an intersectional approach will be adopted to analyze how policies aimed at women also take into consideration different levels of discrimination and oppression, such is the case of migrant women of color and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, the literature review includes several theoretical perspectives that have been used to understand women's

empowerment. Feminist theory provides a critical analysis of the ways in which gender inequality is structured and perpetuated in society. It highlights the importance of challenging patriarchal power structures and promoting women's rights. Additionally, participatory development theory emphasizes the importance of involving stakeholders in the development process, particularly those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. This awareness can help to ensure that development initiatives are more effective and sustainable in both implementation and impacts. Consideration will also be given to social capital theory which focuses on the importance of social networks and relationships in promoting individual and collective well-being. Strong social networks provide women with access to resources, support, and opportunities. Likewise, cities and urban areas benefit from those networks as they foster inclusive and resilient communities through participatory and democratic practices, creating so called "care networks". Moreover, these different theories have been developed to explain the process of women's empowerment according to their context. Consideration will be given also to hierarchical power theory that argues the achievement of women's empowerment by challenging and dismantling existing power structures that disadvantage women and affect them differently as demonstrated by the intersectional approach. As the purpose of the research aims to showcase good practices to foster context-based capacity building in gender-perspectives to policy-making at the local level, it identifies initiatives and actors with transformative potential that contributed to promoting and effectively implementing the gender dimension in urban development. In a growing number of European cities, different in scale and population, citizens are actively participating and collaborating to demonstrate their capacity in developing inventive solutions to address significant social and spatial issues; "we are witnessing a different set of micro-practices that are transforming cities 'from below', thus questioning not only the relation between active citizenship and the State […] but also forms of urban activation themselves"[18]. Local-level initiatives play a crucial role in promoting women's empowerment and realizing their human rights in everyday life. For instance, education and training programs provide women and other minorities with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their lives. Local administration should also consider economic

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[18] Ostanel, Elena, and Giovanni Attili. "Self-organization practices in cities: discussing the transformative potential." Tracce Urbane 4 (2018): 6-17. https://iris.uniroma1.it/handle/11573/1244600

empowerment programs to increase access for women to financial resources, skills training, and employment opportunities, especially in cases of gate-keeping and gendered jobs. With a view of strengthening democracy and participation in public debate, municipalities should promote social mobilization in the form of active citizenship and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about women's rights through an inclusive and intersectional standpoint. In particular, the term intersectionality describes the overlap of reciprocally constructing phenomena an individual experiences because of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, country of origin and education, age, disabilities, and other social identities to create a whole that is different from the component identities. The framework of intersectionality that arose from feminist - bell hooks - and critical race theory - Kimberle Crenshaw, 1989 - explains how related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination depend upon and reinforce each other to lead to systemic injustice and social inequality. Since policies and laws usually attempt to correct only one form of marginalized identity rather than interlocking multiple oppressed identities, intersectional identities may be overlooked or ignored. In her influential 1984 essay, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Resistance"[19] bell hooks argues that marginality, often seen as a site of deprivation and exclusion, can also be a space of resistance and possibility. hooks challenges the dominant discourse that positions marginalized individuals as passive victims, instead asserting that they can actively engage with their marginality to challenge oppressive structures and create new realities. By existing "in the margins," individuals have a unique perspective on societal norms and power structures, allowing them to challenge and critique the status quo. hooks emphasized that marginality could serve as a space for "radical openness," a place where individuals are free to question and redefine conventional thinking. This openness fosters critical consciousness, enabling individuals to recognize and resist oppressive forces. bell hooks argued that marginalized individuals, in their struggle for survival and self-definition, often develop a keen awareness of power dynamics and the need for social change. Moreover, they have capacity for the so-called "borderwork": the act of straddling multiple cultures and perspectives allows for the creation of new hybrid identities and ways of knowing that resist categorization and homogenization. However, hooks

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[19] Hooks, Bell. "Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 36 (1989): 15–23. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44111660.

emphasizes that while marginality can be a site of power and resistance, it is also a site of pain and struggle due to the fact that marginalized individuals often face discrimination, marginalization, and lack of access to resources. This struggle can fuel resistance and provide the impetus for change. In conclusion, hooks' concept of marginality as a space of resistance has been influential in various fields, including feminist theory, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies. It has also been adopted by social movements and communities seeking to challenge oppression and create more just societies and, for the purpose of this research, marginality and intersectionality are considered crucial factors for urban development that aims to be inclusive and sustainable for the future to come.

1.4. Scope of the study: comparison of gender policies between two pioneer cities in the last decade

As gender mainstreaming has become a regular practice in recent years, this study focuses on the period from 2010 to 2023, allowing for an analysis of the recent developments in policies promoting gender equality in communities in everyday life. While most of international gender-mainstreaming machinery - comprised of treaties, agreements and strategies - was established throughout the last decades of the twentieth century thanks to the mobilization of women's rights and feminist transnational networks of advocates, States embraced and enacted GM differently in their domestic legislation with some virtuous pioneers and others recalcitrant in upholding their obligations, although the UN instituted monitoring mechanisms to regulate and support Member States towards gender equality. With the aim of analyzing different perspectives towards gender equality adopted in line with unique socio-cultural contexts, the research selected two case studies located in Spain and Sweden, EU Member States which were placed at 4th and 1st place respectively in the Gender Equality Index 2023[20] by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Although it is fundamental to consider the national framework and domestic law from which local municipalities establish policies, guidelines and strategies, consideration will be given to EU common agreements and EU overall influence in GM enforcement. After all, the EU is widely recognized for its progressive approach to gender

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[20] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2023). Gender Equality Index 2023: Towards a green transition in transport and energy. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/compare-countries

equality due to its commitment and collective goal-setting often lauded for its innovative and forward-thinking nature. For over four decades, the EU has established and enforced a set of progressive norms and values among its Member States, fostering a supportive environment for women's organizations and activism. However, the recent economic and budgetary crisis in 2008 presented challenges for the EU and its member states in maintaining these progressive advancements.[21] While economic goals of the Union prevailed over welfare and public services in the form of the austerity regime adopted in response to the Euro-crisis, cities and urban areas experimented innovative solutions to provide the fulfillment of fundamental rights to their inhabitants, often filling the gap left by national institutions and preferring to engage with local stakeholders.[22] In 2010, a study conducted by feminist researchers argued the comparison between Swedish and Spanish policy debates on paid domestic work as a means to examine the level of gender inequality in the context of changing European welfare states.[23] Sweden and Spain exhibit notable distinctions in their welfare systems, with stark disparities particularly evident in child and elderly care policies. Sweden's state and local governments offer extensive and flexible leave provisions, coupled with readily accessible childcare services. Elderly care is also comprehensively addressed through public care provisions. Notably, Swedish women participate actively in the labor market, even though part-time employment is prevalent. In contrast, Spain's official labor force participation rate for women is lower than Sweden's, but a significant portion of Spanish women engage in informal labor within the submerged economy. As for 2007, Spain's welfare system places a significant emphasis on familial support for personal and household needs, particularly in the context of child and elderly care, although several changes have occurred.[24] Correspondingly, public spending on family, infancy, and elderly care stands comparatively low among EU nations. In contrast, the Nordic welfare state model has typically served as a benchmark

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[21] Jacquot, Sophie. Transformations in EU Gender Equality Policy. From Emergence to Dismantling. Palgrave : Basingstoke (2015) (ISBN:978-1-137-43656-6) http://hdl.handle.net/2078.3/215262

[22] Kantola, Johanna and Emanuela Lombardo. 2017. "Gender and the Politics of the Economic Crisis in Europe". In Gender and the Economic Crisis in Europe, edited by Johanna Kantola and Emanuela Lombardo. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-25.

[23] Elin Kvist & Elin Peterson (2010) What Has Gender Equality Got to Do with It? An Analysis of Policy Debates Surrounding Domestic Services in the Welfare States of Spain and Sweden, NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 18:3, 185-203, DOI: 10.1080/08038740.2010.498326 https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2010.498326

[24] Eurostat (2007) Employment in Europe 2007 (Luxembourg: European Commission, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities).

for comparative welfare state analyses, while Mediterranean welfare states have been perceived as lagging in this regard. Sweden has embraced gender equality as an integral aspect of its national identity, aspiring to serve as a model for other countries and the EU. Sweden's reputation as a "women-friendly welfare state" has been challenged for overlooking the diverse experiences of women. Spain's changing demographics, including increasing labor force participation among women, an aging population, and migration patterns, seem to indicate a shift towards a "dual-breadwinner model." While there is a tendency to view the Nordic countries and EU policies as exemplary models, research suggests that reliance on private care solutions, albeit evolving, remains prevalent. Moreover, in both models' studies increasingly highlight the growing role of migrant female domestic workers in child and elderly care services. For the purpose of examining impact on a smaller scale, the two good practitioners identified Barcelona (Spain) and Umeå (Sweden) as both became renewed pioneers in gender equality through different approaches to metropolitan legislation and urban governance, which still provided for consistent implementation and improvement of gender mainstreaming in local policies in the last decade. Both cities are members of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) which was launched by UNESCO in 2004 and connects cities worldwide that are committed to fighting racism and discrimination, promoting social inclusion, and achieving sustainable development. Moreover, as further examined in this research, each city is actively part of different transnational networks between cities, launching campaigns and initiatives to ensure gender equality and contribute to social inclusion. Barcelona and Umeå will have to confront rising concerns and emergencies caused by climate change, even if both cities are committed towards the achievement of SDGs, inclusive and sustainable transition to a greener system and the goals of the Paris Agreement. Local administrations already faced a global health crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic by supporting frontline health services, food supplies, the local economy and people's mental well-being. During lockdowns, reports of domestic abuse have spiked all over Europe – by over 30% in some places - as restrictions on movement were implemented and many domestic spaces are nor safe for women.[25] Due to the pandemic and its implications, public space has gained new significance in urban

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[25] Euractiv Network, Domestic violence increases in France during COVID-19 lockdown, Euractiv, 31 march 2020, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/domestic-violence-increases-in-france-during-covid-19-lockdown/

development, as decision-makers and stakeholders are called to resolve new challenges while working to achieve gender equality and social inclusion. Moreover, "the lockdowns are also revealing how attainable more family-friendly, walkable cities are, with less congestion, better air quality - even hearing birdsong for the first time in years. Such cities have long been called for by gender mainstreaming campaigners, such as those in Vienna who developed specific guidelines for 'fairer cities'"[26]. The content scope hence includes an examination of local policies, initiatives, and practices related to gender mainstreaming within these cities, in addition presenting experiences of grassroots organizations and civil society participating in urban development through advocacy and decision-making.

1.5. Limitations

Ethical considerations will be a paramount concern throughout the research process. Moreover, potential biases and conflicts of interest will be acknowledged and managed transparently to maintain the integrity of the research. Limitations and delimitations of the study will also be clearly defined, considering factors such as time constraints and language barriers. Moreover, this study is conducted with a recognition of several inherent limitations that may impact the comprehensiveness and depth of the research findings. One primary limitation lies in the reliance on publicly available documents as a primary source of information. While efforts have been made to gather comprehensive and accurate data from official reports, policy documents, and other publicly accessible materials, the study is constrained by the availability and completeness of such resources. The potential limitation of document-based research is acknowledged, as it may not capture nuanced details or provide insights into informal practices and perspectives that may exist within the local governance structures. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the potential for biases in the data. The information collected from official documents may reflect institutional perspectives, and the absence of certain data points may inadvertently skew the analysis. Attempts have been made to mitigate bias by triangulating information from multiple sources and critically assessing the reliability of the data. However, it is crucial to approach the findings with an awareness of the

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[26] Kneeshaw Sally. Exploring the gendered impacts of Covid-19. URBACT Knowledge Hub. 20 April 2022. https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub

limitations inherent in the data collection process. Additionally, the research may not fully capture the entire spectrum of local perspectives on gender mainstreaming in the selected cities. Constraints on resources and time have necessitated a focused approach, emphasizing key policy documents and official records. While these sources provide valuable insights, they may not comprehensively represent the diverse array of opinions and experiences within the local communities. To address this limitation, the study encourages further research that incorporates interviews, surveys, and other qualitative methods to capture the rich tapestry of perspectives among local residents, activists, and policymakers.

1.6. List of abbreviations

GM - Gender Mainstreaming

EU - European Union

UN - United Nations

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

NGO - Non-governmental organization

NUA - New Urban Agenda

2. Chapter Two: gender mainstreaming from international to local level

2.1. Definition, purpose and general reception of GM

Worldwide, the roles of women and men are defined by historical, cultural, and religious factors. These social and political identities manifest daily in every person's life by placing them in situations of privilege and discrimination simultaneously, depending on the context and the circumstances. The concept and following approach of intersectionality was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, as she sought to describe how interlocking systems of power affect those who are most marginalized in society.[27] As further theorized by bell hooks, social factors such as gender, sex, race, class, sexual orientation etc. shape the experiences of individuals and hence impact the way people will perceive and inhabit the place where they live, as it will determine their ability to uphold and enjoy their rights.[28] In order to fill the gap in the legislation and promote a radical shift in the history of women's human rights, since the 1970s legal tools - conventions binding in principles and goals, symbolic treaties to showcase general commitment - were elaborated and reinstated by the international community with the aim of setting universally recognized standards to guarantee progress for gender equality. However, even if more research and knowledge on discrimination and patriarchal society is becoming accessible, gender inequality is still prevalent - if not pervasive - in most global societies, as social roles continue to place limitations on individuals' access to education and work as well as the ability to enjoy certain rights based on their gender. Furthermore, in 1993, the United Nations convened the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna to assess the progress of human rights protection mechanisms. Women's rights activists seized this opportunity to galvanize international attention and demand the

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[27] Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.
[28] hooks bell. 2000. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. 2nd ed. Cambridge MA: South End Press.

recognition of women's human rights as an integral part of universal human rights.[29] Under the banner "Women's Rights are Human Rights," they highlighted the pervasiveness of violence against women, previously relegated to the private sphere and often considered an inevitable aspect of women's lives. The Conference culminated in the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, the former explicitly affirming that "the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights"[30] (para. 18). The Program of Action also recognized the need to address conflicts arising between women's rights and harmful traditional practices, cultural prejudices, and religious extremism. called for "the eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism"[31] (para. 38). Born from the demands and proposals of grassroots women's rights movements mobilizing on occasion of the Beijing Conference, the gender mainstreaming model has proven to be an effective tool in changing the negative trend of gender inequality. The other terms associated with gender mainstreaming are gender equality and gender balance. The former refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. It is a human rights issue and a precondition for an indicator of sustainable people-centered development. Equality is not, however, sameness. The objective is not to deny and erase differences between men and women, or between people in general, but to take advantage of those differences and put them to use constructively in a way that benefits the whole society. While on the other hand, gender balance refers to the degree to which men and women hold the full range of positions in a society or organization.[32] Even if both work towards equality, only gender mainstreaming has the potential to imbed the gender dimension in the legislation and political agenda at all levels of governance as gender equality issues would have to be

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[29] UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Women's Rights are Human Rights, 2014, HR/PUB/14/2, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5566cfd14.html [accessed 23 January 2024]

[30] UN General Assembly, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 12 July 1993, A/CONF.157/23, para.18; available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b39ec.html [accessed 24 January 2024]

[31] UN General Assembly, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 12 July 1993, A/CONF.157/23, para. 38; available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b39ec.html [accessed 24 January 2024]

[32] Valenius, Johanna. "Gender Mainstreaming – What and Why?" *Gender Mainstreaming in ESDP Missions*. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2007. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07004.5.

dealt with within work on education, on transport or on healthcare in all State signatories.[33] Gender mainstreaming means making sure that the needs and rights of both men and women are visibly considered in all policies, programs, strategies, research and other areas. Because of longstanding hidden and obvious gender biases, policy decisions may increase inequality if gender-specific implications are not taken into consideration. In 1995 States unanimously agreed on this global strategy at the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, that it was essential to "design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programs, including development policies and programs at all levels, to foster the empowerment and advancement of women"[34]. In particular, the whole UN system committed to mainstreaming the gender perspectives in all policies and programs of its own system, starting with the Millennium Goals[35] and later with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda[36] - especially the achievement of gender equality through Goal 5. The outcome document of this Conference, the Beijing Platform for Action[37], identified twelve critical areas of concern for urgent action to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men.[38]

- The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women.
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training.
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to healthcare and related services.
- Violence against women - gender-based violence.
- The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation.

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[33] Idem, see above.

[34] United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html [accessed 23 January 2024]

[35] United Nations Millennium Declaration. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000 (A/RES/55/2). New York, United Nations, 2000.

[36] UN General Assembly, resolution "Transform Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Adopted on 25 September 2015 (A/RES/70/1). New York: United Nations, 2015.

[37] United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995.

[38] Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Resolution adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995. New York, United Nations, 1995.

- Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources.
- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels.
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women.
- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women.
- Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media.
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment.
- Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

It clearly recognizes the biological differences between women and men but does not accept any gender-based differences regarding equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities available to women and men. For the first time, the message "Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights"[39] resonated clearly from the speech delivered by the First Lady of the United States of America, Hillary Rodham Clinton, at the conference which became a feminist slogan for the following decades. Moreover, gender mainstreaming was officially endorsed as a strategy to integrate a gender perspective in all public policies by the European Commission on behalf of the European Union.[40] A clear and generally recognized definition of gender mainstreaming was elaborated by the UN ECOSOC, on July 25, 1997. It outlines the principles and guidelines for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs in the United Nations system: "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies

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[39] Clinton, Hillary Rodham. "Address to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women." United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 5, 1995.

[40] Commission of the European Communities (1996). Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all community policies and activities, COM (96) 67 final, 21.02.1996. Brussels Commission of the European Communities. Retrieved from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51996DC0067&from=EN

and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality"[41]. Moreover, the resolution was based on the recognition that gender inequality is a major obstacle to sustainable development and that gender equality is essential for achieving the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. It emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to gender equality that includes addressing the root causes of discrimination and promoting women's empowerment. Initial focus on its implementation regarded development organizations' operations, hence back in 1995 researcher R. Jahan divided the strategies used to mainstream gender in development organizations between institutional and operational strategies.[42] Institutional strategies are input-side interventions aimed at structural change within governments and agencies including issues of responsibility for mainstreaming, accountability, coordination, monitoring and evaluation and personnel policy. Operational strategies concern mainstreaming gender in country programs, macro policies, policy debates and include providing guidelines, training, research, analytical tools and special projects. A mainstreaming approach goes beyond integration and implies what Jahan has called "agenda-setting", an approach which seeks to transform the development agenda itself, through the introduction of a gender perspective at all levels and at all stages.[43] In a different framework, other feminist scholars identified three dimensions in which changes were needed - in gender infrastructure, within organizations and in institutions.[44] Gender infrastructure involves putting in place gender policies, gender units, increased female staff and managers and additional resources for women's programs. Organizational changes, similar to the "internal" formulation, pertain to "deep structure" such as improving the work-family balance and equalizing power relations within organizations. Institutional changes refer to broader societal shifts needed to change embedded power

[41] UN Economic and Social Council. Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. E/1997/27. New York: United Nations, 1997.

[42] Jahan, Rounaq, and Soofia Mumtaz. "The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development [with Comments]." *The Pakistan Development Review* 35, no. 4 (1996): 825–34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41260001.

[43] Kanji, Nazneen. "Strategies for Mainstreaming Gender: Achievements and Challenges." *Mind the Gap: Mainstreaming Gender and Participation in Development*. International Institute for Environment and Development, 2003. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18134.6

[44] Rao, Aruna and David Kelleher. "Unraveling Institutionalized Gender Inequality." AWID Occasional Paper Series No. 8. Toronto: AWID, 2002, http://www.genderatwork.org

relationships and gender roles and relationships throughout the social structure in families, communities, markets and the state. In their view, gender mainstreaming involves the development and implementation of processes, capacities and techniques, as well as shifts in structural and normative dimensions such as beliefs, norms and power.[45] Over the course of 20 years since its conception, reviews on the adoption of gender mainstreaming show that using it as a lead strategy has had valuable spin-off effects, for instance the development of new tools such as gender-sensitive data collection and analysis - gender statistics and sex disaggregated data -, gender budgeting, gender impact assessment, gender planning, gender monitoring and evaluation, and gender-responsive public procurement.

Gender-sensitive data collection and analysis: it helps foster gender equality and promote informed decision-making in various spheres of society. By capturing and analyzing data that considers gender differences and power dynamics, experts and the general public can gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of women and men, identify gender-based disparities, and develop effective strategies to address them.[46] This approach is essential for ensuring that policies, programs, and services are equitable and inclusive, benefiting all members of society.

Gender budgeting: according to the Council of Europe's definition, it is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process[47]. It involves conducting a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

Gender impact assessment: as defined by the European Commission, it is the process of comparing and assessing, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and

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[45] International Center for Research on Women. Gender mainstreaming: making it happen. ICRW, October 2016, https://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-mainstreaming-making-it-happen

[46] European Institute for Gender Equality. 2019. *Gender Analysis*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[47] Council of Europe (2005), Gender Budgeting: Final report of the Group of Specialists on Gender Budgeting, Council of Europe, Equality Division, Directorate-General of Human Rights, Strasbourg.

trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy with the aim of inclusive improvement.[48]

Gender planning: a strategic and participatory process that integrates gender equality into development programs and policies, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). It involves identifying gender-based needs and priorities, developing gender-sensitive strategies, and monitoring and evaluating progress towards gender equality objectives.[49]

Gender monitoring and evaluation: a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and using information to assess the impact of policies, programs, and projects on gender equality. It helps to identify and address gender-based disparities, ensure accountability, and demonstrate the value of gender-equality initiatives.

Gender-responsive public procurement: a strategic approach to public procurement that ensures that public spending promotes gender equality. It involves considering the gender implications of procurement decisions throughout the procurement cycle, from identifying needs and drafting specifications to evaluating suppliers and assessing the impact of procurement activities on gender equality.[50]

These tools and analyses are raising awareness, generating evidence, and even resulting in significant policy changes. Actors advocating for gender equality and women's rights - both grassroots movements, NGOs and civil society organizations lobbying through formal dialogue with EU institutions, for example the European Women's Lobby (EWL) - determined that accountability and implementation of agreements are critical to making progress as obstacles and even outright rejection remain. Gender mainstreaming is considered the re-organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking. Gender mainstreaming

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[48] EIGE, Gender Impact Assessment: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit. EIGE, 2023.
https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-impact-assessment/what-gender-impact-assessment?language_content_entity=en
[49] European Institute for Gender Equality. 2019. *Gender Planning*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
[50] idem above

means that gender equality is part of common policies, while also entailing a broader and more comprehensive definition of gender equality, giving value to differences and diversity. In stressing the need to organize, improve, develop and evaluate policy processes, gender mainstreaming makes it possible to challenge the male bias that characterizes society and the structural character of gender inequality. Mainstreaming also gets gender equality issues out of the isolation of gender equality machinery and involves more and new actors in building a balanced society.[51]

2.2.   History and general legal framework of GM

The global fight for equality for women formally began in 1975, a year proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly as "International Women's Year". For the next ten years, the United Nations called for a world-wide effort to examine the rights and status of women and bring more women into the decision-making process. During the "Decade for Women," as it was called, the General Assembly set a standard for equality between men and women in the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women[52] (CEDAW) in 1985. Mention of gender mainstreaming appeared for the first time in international texts after the United Nations Third World Conference on Women held at Nairobi in 1985, in relation to the debate within the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the promotion of the role of women in the field of development and of integrating women's values into development work. However, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 represented a turning point in the world's understanding of women's and girls' rights and ushered in a new mindset that realizing the full potential of women and girls is a powerful and essential component of successful, sustainable development. The Conference had the foresight to call for specific strategies to address sexual harassment at workplace, educational institutions and other spaces - an issue that has elicited global outrage and attention in recent years through campaigns such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Niunamenos, #NotOneMore, #BalanceTonPorc, etc. It also addressed the failure to incorporate a

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[51] Council of Europe. Final Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation project, October 2018. www.coe.int

[52] Rana, Bandana, and Victoria Perrie. "CEDAW: A Tool for Addressing Violence against Women." Edited by Sarah S. Aneel, Uzma T. Haroon, and Imrana Niazi. 70 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT: THE WAY FORWARD. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2019. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24393.12

gender perspective in all economic, political, and social planning to counteract the institutional causes which contribute to the feminization of poverty.[53] The Beijing Platform for Action was the first global policy framework to confirm gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for realizing gender equality and elevated its significance by calling on governments and other actors to apply it to all policies and programs. Since then, several UN intergovernmental resolutions, mandates and decisions have reaffirmed the commitment to gender mainstreaming, and the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These include the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development[54], the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement[55]. Moreover, throughout the years, regional law instruments for gender mainstreaming were established across different geographical areas, all sharing common goals and landmarks but applying tailor-made initiatives specific to the considered context. In response to the call for gender mainstreaming, many development organizations, private donors and NGOs took steps to implement mainstreaming policies. They set up gender units, hired gender specialists and adopted gender training. Some organizations also made budget allocations. On the operational side, they required gender analysis at various stages of development assistance and some started working with other organizations such as civil society or country governments and other donors. At the country level, governments established national women's machineries (ministry, department or office), charging them with responsibility for gender mainstreaming throughout government institutions and operations. In practice, women's machineries played multiple roles as policy coordinating units, knowledge and support providers and advocates and catalysts. Like development organizations, they also appointed gender specialists and focal points and launched training programs for all staff. A few countries also established accountability mechanisms to assess progress. The early and necessary steps to put structures and systems in place to begin to implement mainstreaming policies soon became the focus of

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[53] Dawson, Ruth P. "When Women Gather: The NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995." International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 10, no. 1 (1996): 7–27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20019871
[54] UN General Assembly, Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Resolution adopted on 27 July 2015 (A/RES/69/313). New York: United Nations, 2015.
[55] UN, Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. December 12, 2015, T.I.A.S. No. 16-1104.

gender mainstreaming. In the decade following Beijing, a great deal of energy and resources went into getting the organizational culture right. Organizations launched extensive transformation processes to restructure internal systems and procedures and to change attitudes and values, especially male bias, primarily through gender training. However, recent reviews and evaluations show a huge gap between policy commitments made at Beijing and actual implementation.[56] At international level, a review of UN agencies found that many had not even taken the first step of using gender analysis to inform policies and programs.[57] In this scenario, States have made little progress in implementing gender mainstreaming into their domestic law; indeed, in some cases, the issue is simply ignored. In 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women convened at its 59th session in New York to mark the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The gathering aimed to evaluate the progress made in upholding the commitments enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"[58]. Participants sought to identify persisting hurdles that impede the effective execution of the Platform for Action and hinder the full realization of women's and girls' human rights and fundamental freedoms, including ensuring gender equality and empowering women and girls throughout their lives. They also aimed to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action and seize opportunities within the post-2015 development agenda to incorporate a gender perspective into the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development[59]. Renewed commitment at international level came in the form of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development which explicitly integrates gender equality into its overarching goal of sustainable development. Goal 5 of the Agenda specifically focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and it outlines a range of targets and indicators that aim

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[56] Caroline Moser (2005) Has gender mainstreaming failed?, International Feminist Journal of Politics, 7:4, 576-590, DOI: 10.1080/14616740500284573, https://genderandsecurity.org

[57] International Center for Research on Women. Gender mainstreaming: making it happen. ICRW, October 2016, https://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-mainstreaming-making-it-happen

[58] United Nations. Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century. New York: United Nations, 2000.

[59] UN Women, Political declaration on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women : draft resolution / submitted by the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women on the basis of informal consultations, New York, UN, 5 Mar. 2015, E/CN.6/2015/L.1

to address gender-based discrimination in areas such as education, health, economic opportunities, political participation, and violence against women. For the purpose and scope of this research, the treaties, common policies and other agreements will be specifically considered from the EU regional system as gender equality is formally mentioned in its Regional Cohesion policy in relation to promoting economic development and pursuing women's empowerment. Moreover, EU institutions and specialized agencies monitor and evaluate the status of gender equality on the ground in each State Member, while also providing technical and economic support for capacity-building and awareness-raising programs. In particular, the European Union Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025[60] (GES) will be considered as the election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the EC brought renewed commitment on achieving gender equality within the EU institutions and throughout all Member States of the Union. In addition, the EC has committed to mainstreaming gender equality in all aspects of the European Green Deal[61] - the common strategy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 by leaving no one behind - and recognizes that gender equality is essential for a successful transition to a sustainable future. Even more, the EU's COVID-19 recovery plan, the Next Generation EU, explicitly included gender equality as a core objective. The plan allocated €100 billion to support gender equality initiatives, focusing on areas such as childcare, reskilling and upskilling, and combating domestic violence. From the outset, the EU acknowledged that the pandemic was exacerbating existing gender inequalities. Women were more likely to lose their jobs, face unpaid care responsibilities due to school and childcare closures, and experience increased levels of domestic violence. In particular, the EU's GES, adopted in March 2020, outlined specific actions to address these challenges and safeguard women's rights during the pandemic, by also enhancing women's participation in decision making, for instance the key role of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)[62]. Another

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[60] European Commission. Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. COM(2020) 152 final. Brussels: European Commission, 2020.

[61] European Commission. European Green Deal. COM(2019) 640 final. Brussels: European Commission, 2019.

[62] Elomäki, Anna, and Johanna Kantola. "Feminist Governance in the European Parliament: The Political Struggle over the Inclusion of Gender in the EU's COVID-19 Response." Politics & Gender 19, no. 2 (2023): 327-48. doi:10.1017/S1743923X21000544. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/feminist-governance-in-the-european-parliament-the-political-struggle-over-the-inclusion-of-gender-in-the-eus-covid19-response/D54F9E2B461E018B8149DF311B40BC81

crucial actor in this ambitious strategy is the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) - an EU agency established in 2007 to support the achievement of gender equality. EIGE is providing expertise on gender equality and the green transition to policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. It is also developing tools and guidance to help mainstream gender equality in green policies and initiatives through evidence-based research, policy support, and capacity building.

2.2.1 Treaties and Conventions

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The CEDAW treaty was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1979 and first ratified by Sweden in July 1980. It quickly became known as the "Women's Bill of Rights" for it represented the most comprehensive international treaty on women's rights by focusing on the elimination of discrimination against women defined in article 1 of CEDAW as - "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms"[63]. Moreover, CEDAW institutionalized protection for a series of basic civil, political, economic, and social rights for women. The CEDAW Convention is a non-coercive mechanism except for the expert committee's option to publicly voice criticism for insufficient state performance. The normative triad enshrined in CEDAW is elimination of discrimination against women, achievement of gender equality, and state responsibility. Every Article in the Convention addresses discrimination and direct or indirect forms of VAW and girls; such as constitutional and legislative framework; national machineries for the advancement of women; stereotypes and harmful practices; gender-based VAW and girls, including domestic violence; trafficking of women and exploitation of prostitution; participation of women in decision-making; nationality; education and training; employment; health; economic and social life; rural women; the situation of disadvantaged groups of women such as older women, women with disabilities, women in detention, indigenous women, women belonging to

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[63] UN General Assembly. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, p. 13.

ethnic minorities, refugee and migrant women, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women and intersex persons; equality before the law; marriage and family relations; and women, peace and security. CEDAW mandates countries "to pursue by all appropriate means and with outstanding delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women" (article 2). As a result of the Convention's treaty status, it demands the practical realization of rights, and compels each State Party to eliminate all forms of discrimination, intended or unintended, through law, policy, practice and custom on their own territories. The responsibility to approach the problem holistically and collectively belongs to state and non-state institutions, as well as private persons.[64] The Convention is monitored by a group of independent experts: the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, whose purpose is to monitor a state's progress on the implementation of the Convention and consider individual complaints. With ratification, states agree to eliminate direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women in any field of life. This responsibility contains both public, for example, legal, and private forms of discrimination such as family relations in which women have an inferior status. The attitude of state delegations strongly varies in commitment. Some states have limited their responsibilities under CEDAW by entering substantial reservations to the treaty. After 35 years of monitoring and advancement of women's rights, 189 State Parties have ratified CEDAW, but implementation continues to be hindered by reservations. CEDAW had a strong positive effect on political rights, no effect on economic rights, and initially negative effect on social rights. Within the category of women's political rights, CEDAW appeared to promote some kinds of women's share of women in national parliaments, but it had no appreciable effect on the adoption of legislative quotas guaranteeing female representation in Parliaments. Post-ratification improvements in women's rights outcomes were stronger among democratic countries and countries with already strong commitments to equality.[65] Finalized in 1999, the Optional Protocol enabled individuals, groups of individuals and NGOs to submit complaints of violation of their individual

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[64] Rana, Bandana, and Victoria Perrie. "CEDAW: A Tool for Addressing Violence against Women." Edited by Sarah S. Aneel, Uzma T. Haroon, and Imrana Niazi. *70 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT: THE WAY FORWARD*. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2019. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24393.12.

[65] Cole, Wade M. "Government Respect for Gendered Rights: The Effect of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Women's Rights Outcomes, 1981–2004." *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2013): 233–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24016136.

rights protected by the Convention - a significant step for claiming justice and accountability.[66] Under the OP, the Committee is mandated to consider communications brought by individuals or groups of individuals, subject to certain admissibility criteria, and secondly, to conduct inquiries into alleged grave or systematic violations of women's rights, based on reliable information.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

During the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, feminist movements and women's rights organizations advocated through mobilization for the introduction of gender-sensitive tools by the international community in order to advance equality; more than 30,000 activists and representatives of 189 countries gathered to make a gender-equal world.[67] Together, they created the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most comprehensive agenda to date, on gender equality and women's empowerment. It tackled issues such as, poverty, environment, violence against women, girls' education, equal participation of women in the labor market, especially in highly skilled jobs, STEM industries, and in senior management. It also committed to promote the balance of paid work and domestic responsibilities for women and men, and so much more. Anchored in human rights, the Beijing Platform for Action championed the notion that women were entitled to the full enjoyment of their rights, including their right to live free of gender-based violence.[68] It was the first international framework that addresses violence against women in a comprehensive manner and included prevention as a key strategy and changing social norms as a specific area of work. Furthermore, the Beijing Declaration called for grassroots and women's organizations to push for more effective welfare programs that target the causes of the feminization of poverty rather than merely addressing the effects. The Declaration suggests that these organizations continue to engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts and work with the government to ensure that female issues continue to be considered when legislation is implemented. An additional

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[66] United Nations General Assembly. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 6 October 1999, A/RES/54/4.

[67] Dawson, Ruth P. "When Women Gather: The NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 10, no. 1 (1996): 7–27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20019871.

[68] Bunch, Charlotte, and Susana Fried. "Beijing '95: Moving Women's Human Rights from Margin to Center." *Signs* 22, no. 1 (1996): 200–204. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175048.

goal is to develop and promote capacity-building, which requires the collection and sharing of best practices and lessons learned within the UN system and at the national level, including effective national initiatives. In addition, the Beijing Platform for Action called for the ratification of CEDAW.

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Also known as the Istanbul Convention[69], the treaty was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011 as the first legally binding treaty addressing all forms of violence against women. The Convention explicitly calls for the use of gender-mainstreaming as a strategy to prevent and combat violence against women. It provides a gendered framework on violence against women and domestic violence that explicitly defines violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women by which it codifies and further develops CEDAW Convention standards and establishes a platform for synergy between them. Its preamble contains reference to other important human rights instruments including the CEDAW Convention, specifically referring to General Recommendation No. 19. The Istanbul Convention in Article 3(a) defines violence against women "as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including treats of such act, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private"[70]. In addition, Article 3(d) separately defines "gender-based violence against women" as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately". Furthermore, the Istanbul Convention states as its goal to condemn all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, while also to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, thus indicating a clear link between violence against women and discrimination. The case law of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the jurisprudence of the CEDAW Committee relating to cases of violence against women were used during the drafting of

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[69] Council of Europe. Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul, 11 May 2011. CETS 210.

[70] Council of Europe. Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul, 11 May 2011. CETS 210, art.3.

the Istanbul Convention, which further strengthened the Istanbul Convention's normative standards concerning the prevention of similar cases.

The Treaty of Amsterdam

Signed on October 2, 1997, and entering into force on May 1, 1999, the Treaty of Amsterdam[71] was a significant step forward for gender equality in the European Union. The concept of gender mainstreaming was introduced for the first time into the text of the Treaties (Article 3(2) TEC) and at the same time promotion of equality between women and men became one of the tasks of the Community (Article 2 TEC). As noted by Masselot, "the introduction of Article 13 EC in the Treaty of Amsterdam changed this situation when, for the first time, competence was given to the Community to take appropriate actions to combat discrimination based on gender (racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation) outside the field of employment"[72]. The treaty formally recognized gender mainstreaming as a key principle of EU policy, and it established a legal basis for the EU to take action to promote gender equality. Therefore, gender mainstreaming became mandatory for EU member states in all policy fields, reinforced by new article 8 of the Treaty of the EU (TEU). This agreement strengthened Member States' commitment to implementing women's human rights as principles into domestic law and prompted the establishment of common goals to attain in all EU. Moreover, it reinforced the legal basis for the EU to take action to promote gender equality, by allowing the EU to adopt directives and regulations in areas such as equal pay and employment. However, according to feminist advocates and researchers, the adoption of GM as a policy strategy in the Treaty of Amsterdam contributed to the "hollowing out of the gender equality agenda, despite a sympathetic environment"[73]. GM was supposed to bring gender to all policy areas and to assess the impact of key decisions on different demographic groups, instead "this process of routinization has occurred more

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[71] European Union, Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version), Treaty of Amsterdam, 2 October 1997, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dec906d4.html [accessed 23 January 2024]

[72] Masselot A. (2007) The State of Gender Equality Law in the EU, European Law Journal, 13 (2), 153-168. https://www.europeansources.info/record/gender-equality-law-in-the-eu/

[73] Stratigaki M. (2005) Gender Mainstreaming vs Positive Action An Ongoing Conflict in EU Gender Equality Policy, European Journal of Women's Studies, 12 (2), 165–186. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506805051236, https://journals.sagepub.com

in a context of (polite) disinterest than in one of the deconstructions of gender norms and the transformation of dominant power structures"[74].

2.2.2. Soft Law Instruments

ECOSOC Resolution 1997/2

In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) passed a landmark resolution, 1997/2, on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs of the United Nations system. This resolution recognized the importance of incorporating gender considerations into all aspects of development and governance, and it set out a comprehensive framework for achieving gender equality.[75] The resolution emphasized that gender mainstreaming should be a systematic, strategic, and cross-cutting approach that is integrated into all areas of work, from policy formulation to implementation and evaluation. It also stressed the importance of participation and accountability, ensuring that women and men from all walks of life have a voice in the process and that progress is regularly monitored and reported on. As concluded in this resolution, adopting its principles can lead to significant benefits, including enhanced gender equality, improved development outcomes, stronger governance, advancement of human rights. However, it is also relieved that challenges such as lack of political will, lack of resources, lack of data will have to be faced to implement a gender-perspective in policymaking.

Sustainable Development Goals for Agenda 2030

Adopted in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were designed to replace the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a set of universal objectives to tackle political, environmental, and economic problems facing the globe. The heads of state and government and high representatives in the UN meeting put forward the 2030 Agenda, a global plan for human and environmental prosperity, structured in 17 SDGs and 169 targets, indicative of the scale and of the ambition of the global action to be

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[74] Jacquot S. (2015) Transformations in EU Gender Equality: From emergence to dismantling, London, Palgrave Macmillan UK.

[75] UN Economic and Social Council. Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. E/1997/27. New York: United Nations, 1997.

pursued. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the achievements of the 17 SDGs are linked to human and environmental prosperity, strengthening universal peace, greater freedom and promoting the eradication of poverty, discrimination and inequalities in all forms. SDG 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", reflects the efforts of the UN towards gender equality, earmarked with the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946 and the adoption of agreements such as the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the establishment of UN Women in 2010. SDG5 brings forward issues of gender-based discrimination such as unpaid work, sexual and reproductive rights, and gender-based violence. Its significance is such that it constitutes a cross-cutting theme spanning all the other 16 SDGs, with a total of 45 targets and 54 indicators gender-related.[76] It is suggested that not only is SDG 5 critical to all the other SDGs, with gender inequality being an obstacle to progress, but that it has the potential to serve as an SD accelerator, with a positive multiplier effect, to speed up the progress of the 2030 Agenda. Goal 5 posed several key targets:

- End discrimination against women and girls.
- End all violence against and exploitation of women and girls.
- Eliminate forced marriages and genital mutilation.
- Value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibilities.
- Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making.
- Universal access to reproductive rights and health.
- Equal rights to economic resources, property ownership, and financial services.
- Promote empowerment of women through technology.
- Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality.

Indeed, gender inequalities intersect other inequalities, power imbalance and discriminatory practices, and as such, they unequivocally serve as routes to addressing the causes preventing SD globally. Gender equality and women's empowerment should have a catalytic effect on human development if gender is in fact actively addressed across all SDGs. This global agenda recognizes that achieving gender equality requires a multi-sectoral approach that involves governments, civil society, the private sector, and

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[76] UN Inter-agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. 2023, Policy Brief No. 14. https://unstats.un.org

international organizations. It calls for strengthening national institutions and mechanisms responsible for gender equality, promoting gender-sensitive budgeting, and ensuring that all policies and programs are gender-responsive.

European Union Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

The EU GES is a comprehensive plan to advance gender equality and promote women's empowerment across the EU. The strategy is based on the understanding that gender equality is a fundamental right and is essential for economic growth, social cohesion, and democratic stability. It denotes five key objectives for EU Member States:

1. Ending gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls in all spheres of life.
2. Challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in education, training, and employment.
3. Closing gender gaps in the labor market and promoting women's economic independence.
4. Achieving equal participation and representation of women in decision-making at all levels.
5. Fostering a gender-equal society where women and men have equal opportunities to live fulfilling lives.

To achieve these objectives, the GES outlines a range of actions across different policy areas, including education, employment, health, social protection, and justice. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of data collection and analysis to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. The GES is a crucial tool for advancing gender equality in the EU, as it provides a clear vision and roadmap for action, and it is backed by a strong commitment from the EU institutions and Member States. The implementation of this strategy will be based on the dual approach of targeted measures to achieve gender equality, combined with strengthened gender mainstreaming. The Commission will enhance gender mainstreaming by systematically including a gender perspective in all stages of policy design in all EU policy areas, internal and external. The strategy will be implemented using intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle. In conclusion, building on the premises of this strategy, the Commission will launch an EU

network on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence, bringing together Member States and stakeholders to exchange good practice, and will provide funding for training, capacity-building and support services.

2.3. Feminist perspective and critical analysis of GM's potential for women's empowerment

Recognition of gender disparities and actual effort in overcoming them at international level was the result of global mobilization of women's rights movements whose struggles for social and economic equality in the 1970s - during the second wave of feminism - created momentum and common ground for the establishment of gender mainstreaming as a strategy in international systems. As times progressed, the movement evolved into the current wave of feminism, more focused on inclusion and effective enjoyment of basic rights for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Feminist advocates and actors - which include academics, civil society associations and local grassroots NGOs severely under-founded offering welfare services to vulnerable people in place of State institutions - tend to acknowledge intersectional struggles and promote inclusive perspectives in policymaking through participatory practices. However, even if great pledges on achieving gender equality were shared, gender experts shared reviews on progress and found in most cases that policy commitments to gender mainstreaming "evaporated" or became "invisible" in planning and implementation. Moreover, they conducted research and outlooks on the impact of gender mainstreaming with the result of producing extensive literature on the field. Other assessments describe implementation as "patchy" and "embryonic", for instance the gap is most pronounced in mainstreaming gender into operations.[77] According to feminist researchers, the potentialities of gender mainstreaming have been severely attenuated, distorted and thwarted due to a technocratic approach and it has lost its philosophical and moral underpinnings in most cases. As found by the Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to deliver on Gender Equality, while commendable progress was made over the past 15 years, a

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[77] Moser, Caroline, and Annalise Moser. "Gender Mainstreaming since Beijing: A Review of Success and Limitations in International Institutions." Gender and Development 13, no. 2 (2005): 11–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20053145.

familiar pattern persists: ineffective gender mainstreaming efforts by a small number of marginalized and overstretched gender equality advocates; competition over dwindling resources that cannot be reliably assessed across the system; inconsistent leadership and accountability; unclear authority and mandates; a patriarchal organizational culture; and strained relationships among MS.[78] In addition, academics such as Sweeney found in a comparative study of 160 states that a government's respect for women's economic, social, and political rights is directly linked to democracy, political secularism, and the internationalization of human rights.[79] Reviews on women's human rights implementation have shown that States are rather reluctant to make normative and institutional changes in regard to gender equality even if they rhetorically approve of the norm and if they generally seem to be abiding to international norms, due to "the gender-biased corporate identity of many states represents the most significant barrier to diffusion of sexual non-discrimination norms"[80]. The doubts and critiques on what gender mainstreaming means and has delivered are persistent, for instance that gender mainstreaming has been "vulnerable to technocratization, depoliticization and evaporation is a repeated criticism […]; even claims of gender mainstreaming being post-feminist or un-feminist are made, generating suggestions such as to take a break from feminism"[81]. According to gender advocates and experts' experience, it has resulted in the disappearance of attention to women's specific needs and the gender-differentiated impacts of policies and programs. Gender mainstreaming, and the challenges it faces, are not merely empirical observations but rather a complex interplay of value conflicts, power dynamics, analytical tensions, contradictions, and dilemmas that manifest across institutional, policy-making, and operational levels. At the heart of these challenges lies a persistent lack of genuine commitment and accountability to the fundamental principles of gender equality and gender justice. While some progress has been made in allocating

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[78] Papagioti, Foteini. "Watch the Gaps: A Feminist Reaction to the UN's Own Gender Equality Review." PassBlue, June 4, 2023. https://www.passblue.com/2023/06/04/watch-the-gaps-a-feminist-reaction-to-the-uns-own-gender-equality-review/.

[79] Zwingel, Susanne. "How Do Norms Travel? Theorizing International Women's Rights in Transnational Perspective." International Studies Quarterly 56, no. 1 (2012): p.19 http://www.jstor.org/stable/41409826.

[80] Lynn Savery (2005) Women's Human Rights and Changing State Practices, Journal of Critical Realism, 4:1, 89-111, https://doi.org/10.1558/jocr.v4i1.89

[81] Davids, T., van Driel, F. and Parren, F. (2014), Feminist change revisited: Gender mainstreaming as slow revolution. J. Int. Dev., 26: 396-408. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.2945

resources for women-centered programs, the underlying transformation of policymakers' mindsets and the structural integration of gender considerations into policies remain elusive aspirations. The reality is that gender mainstreaming initiatives, mechanisms and instruments have been under-funded and under-resourced.[82] Furthermore, "gender" became soon contested as it left open debates on social categories and it mostly excluded trans-women and non-binary people, even if they are affected by power relations. The meaning of gender as an underlying concept for understanding gender mainstreaming has been debated from the launch of gender mainstreaming as a strategy to fight gender inequality. The Beijing Conference highlighted this issue, with heated debates surrounding the connection between gender and sexuality.[83] Certain religious and governmental representatives raised concerns that the concept of gender might imply the recognition of sexual rights for non-heterosexual relationships. They advocated for restricting the conference's focus to formal marriages between men and women, as reflected in a footnote appended to the text. This framing of gender equality as an equality between men and women has been a major target for criticism, as it reinforces heteronormativity. Feminist researchers assert that this dominance of binary gender thinking and doing, coupled with the notion of autonomous subjects, perpetuates hierarchical power relations rather than dismantling them. This approach could be considered a sort of "bad feminism" inherent in gender mainstreaming, but it has been exceeded by the current feminist wave - equality is achieved through collective fight against all forms of discrimination from systemic oppression. However, in too many cases, "gender" has been misused and abused by those who refuse to recognize and act on women's subordination and the various forms of social and economic injustices in the economy and society. These gender equality opponents, who tend to have strong influence in any of the phases of gender mainstreaming, have given their energy to sidelining the issue of women's oppression and systematic inequalities. As a matter of fact, over the past decade, "a growing and increasingly vocal movement has emerged in Europe that seeks to challenge and overturn what it perceives as a dangerous and insidious

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[82] Williams, W. (2009). Gender mainstreaming: Can it work for women's rights? Gender & Development, 17(4), 629-639. https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/spotlight_-_gender_mainstreaming_-_can_it_work_for_womens_rights.pdf

[83] Baden, S., & Goetz, A. M. (1997). Who Needs [Sex] When you can have [Gender]?: Conflicting Discourses on Gender at Beijing. Feminist Review, 56(1), 3-25. https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1997.13

trend in modern society: the promotion of so-called "gender ideology"[84]. Often calling themselves the "anti-gender" or "pro-family" movement, this loose coalition of individuals, organizations, and political parties has garnered significant attention and influence in a number of European countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.[85] Even for its many faults, many gender equality advocates consider it the only strategy that will keep women's issues from being relegated to the margins and it will lead to the integration of gender equality and women's rights objectives into "hard issues" of macroeconomics and poverty eradication. In feminist researchers' words, "gender mainstreaming is not an objective or an end in itself. It is a means to achieve gender equality; the required end remains equality, human rights and justice, as well as fundamental change in power relations between women and men"[86]. Despite facing genuine, even fundamental barriers, it can still serve as a tool for shaping and implementing national and international pledges to women's economic rights and enhancing women's access to social and economic resources. Moreover, possible potentials of gender mainstreaming have been identified:

- the possibility of conscientizing citizens, technocrats and economic decision-makers about the critical dimensions of women's and men's lives.
- the possibility of devising local, national, regional and international approaches to dealing with the problem of gender discrimination and inequality.
- the possibility of enlivening interlocking policy approaches for more targeted, long-lasting and sustainable impacts of taxation, budgeting, lending, borrowing and interest rate policies on the caring, entrepreneurial, and labor market activities of men and women as they carry out their multiple roles and functions in society.

Ultimately, gender mainstreaming can also be a powerful tool for grounding the cultural, economic and social rights of girls, boys, women and men and as such can provide the

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[84] Dietze Gabriele and Julia Roth. 2020. Right-Wing Populism and Gender : European Perspectives and Beyond. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2458519.
[85] Corredor, Elizabeth S. "Unpacking 'Gender Ideology' and the Global Right's Antigender Countermovement", Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 2019 44:3, 613-638.
https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/701171?mobileUi=0&
[86] Williams, W. (2009). Gender mainstreaming: Can it work for women's rights? Gender & Development, 17(4), p.7, https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/spotlight_-_gender_mainstreaming_-_can_it_work_for_womens_rights.pdf

solid foundation for advancing economic empowerment and sustainable development. The premise to a functioning strategy lies in feminist practice and participation, as feminism has shown to possess a transformative and revolutionary potential that became lost somewhere along the road of mainstreaming gender. Although the criticism of gender mainstreaming has revealed its limitations, particularly its narrow focus on women and its heteronormative assumptions, it has also contributed to a more nuanced understanding of gender. Over the last two decades, international human rights law has acknowledged the interconnected nature of gender structures with other societal frameworks, leading to adverse effects on women. Despite recommendations from international bodies and scholarly research, national laws persist in tackling discrimination through isolated or additive methods. Without enforceable national standards, governmental policies often overlook the intersections of various inequalities. However, certain public entities have recently aimed to address the intertwined nature of social disparities through policy initiatives, a topic explored in emerging literature.[87] For instance, in Spain, select local authorities, such as the municipalities of Madrid, Barcelona, and Terrassa, along with the province of Biscay, have integrated intersectionality into their initiatives. Specifically, the Human Rights Strategic Plan of the Madrid City Council, adopted in 2017, emphasizes the integration of human rights, gender perspectives, and intersectionality into municipal planning processes.[88] This strategic plan outlines various intersectionality-informed initiatives, including the establishment of an ethical committee to mitigate bias within the municipal police force, the promotion of inclusive cultural, sports, and leisure activities for individuals with disabilities, particularly focusing on children and adolescents, and the encouragement of engagement from civic organizations, particularly those representing women and marginalized groups. The intertwined impact of sexism, xenophobia, and socioeconomic stratification uniquely and disproportionately affects migrant women in Spain compared to both Spanish women and migrant men.[89] To ensure

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[87] La Barbera, MariaCaterina & Espinosa-Fajardo, Julia & Caravantes, Paloma. (2022). Implementing Intersectionality in Public Policies: Key Factors in the Madrid City Council, Spain. Politics and Gender. 19. 10.1017/S1743923X22000241. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363846977

[88] Madrid City Council. 2017. "Plan Estratégico de Derechos Humanos (2017–2019)" [Human Rights Strategic Plan (2017–2019)]. Accessed February 25 2024 https://www.madrid.es/UnidadWeb/Contenidos/Descriptivos/ficheros/PlanDDHH_Madrid.pdf

[89] La Barbera, MariaCaterina. 2013. "A Path towards Interdisciplinary Research Methodologies in Human and Social Sciences: On the Use of Intersectionality to Address the Status of Migrant Women in Spain." International Journal of the Humanities 9 (12): 193–201.

comprehensive protection against all forms of discrimination, it is imperative for legal frameworks and public policies to take into account these complex intersections. Moreover, the intersectionality perspective underscores the profound impact of one's social identities on their beliefs about and experiences of gender. As a result, feminist researchers prioritize the individual's social location, as reflected in intersecting identities, in any investigation of gender. Specifically, gender must be understood within the context of power dynamics embedded within social identities. However, the evaluation of gender mainstreaming is still largely influenced by an implicit but revolutionary notion of social transformation. By showing the current limits of gender mainstreaming, the intent is to therefore highlight the need to re-evaluate the revolutionary potential and, consequently, the core tenets of radical feminism as a political movement.[90] Intersectionality provides a valuable framework for understanding and addressing gender inequality in its multifaceted form. Intersectional practice gives voice to and amplifies the experiences of marginalized groups, shedding light on the unique challenges they face due to the intersection of their social identities. This recognition can lead to the development of targeted policies and programs that address the specific needs of these groups and promote their inclusion and empowerment. In 2023, the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) unequivocally advocates for the mainstreaming of gender into all policy making to achieve an inclusive and equal society, and it recognizes the intersectional dynamics of gender, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, ability, and stage within the life course. The 2023 GEAC calls upon the G7 leaders to make significant commitments to promoting gender equality in all areas, including economic policy, climate change, paid and unpaid care work, access to quality sexual and reproductive health care, and LGBTQIA+ issues. The 2023 GEAC Recommendations highlight four fundamental pillars of gender equality: Funding, Education, Peace Building, and Data.[91]

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[90] Davids, T., van Driel, F. and Parren, F. (2014), Feminist change revisited: Gender mainstreaming as slow revolution. J. Int. Dev., 26: 396-408. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.2945
[91] Shirahase, Sawako. Gender Mainstreaming for an Inclusive, Peaceful, and Just Society. Gender Equality Advisory Council. 2023. Available at: https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100501402.pdf

2.4. "Think global, act local": gender mainstreaming through a multilevel approach to governance

Achieving gender equality remains a pressing global challenge, requiring a comprehensive and transformative approach. The international community recognizes gender mainstreaming as a crucial strategy to address gender disparities and promote women's empowerment but effectively implementing it across all levels of governance remains a significant challenge. Indeed, over the last four decades, gender equality norms have been integrated into international law and multilateral institutions at an unprecedented pace thanks to transnational networks committed to equality. A multilevel approach that includes transnational, national, and local policymaking offers a promising avenue to address challenges to gender-mainstreaming by fostering collaboration, leveraging expertise, and ensuring consistent implementation of gender-sensitive policies throughout the policy cycle. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of different levels of governance, from international bodies to local governments, and emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts to achieve gender equality. Moreover, as further elaborated in the Beijing Declaration, it was agreed that capacity-building on gender mainstreaming should build on the potential of working with national commissions, national institutions for the advancement of women and non-governmental organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations, and developing partnerships with them. Through a multilevel approach international women's rights norms travel through a multi-layered process that involves the interplay of various actors and mechanisms and are integrated into domestic law.[92] In this context international organizations play a crucial role in the norm diffusion process by providing a forum for policymakers to meet and exchange ideas, by providing resources for norm promotion, and by creating a sense of legitimacy for new norms. While the state is considered the most relevant actor in implementing international norms into domestic contexts, non-state actors, such as NGOs, also play a significant role in norm diffusion by conducting research, advocating for change, and mobilizing public opinion. For instance, academics therefore highlight

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[92] Zwingel, Susanne. "How Do Norms Travel? Theorizing International Women's Rights in Transnational Perspective." *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2012): 115–29. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41409826.

the importance of agency in the norm diffusion process as policy-makers at all levels, whether they are individuals or organizations, play a key role in identifying and promoting norms anchored in human rights and fundamental freedoms. As found in extensive research, transnational networks are essential for disseminating knowledge and expertise on GM to policymakers and civil society actors around the world, for creating institutional linkages between actors from different countries, and finally facilitating the exchange of ideas, experience, and resources.[93] In addition, researchers argue that transnational feminist networks have been particularly effective in promoting GM in developing countries, where they have helped to overcome the lack of domestic resources and expertise. They also note that transnational networks have played a role in shaping the specific form of GM that has been adopted in different countries, reflecting the diverse cultural, political, and economic contexts of these countries. Ultimately, the success of norm diffusion is ultimately dependent on the willingness of States and governments to adopt and implement new norms, but local civil society often allies with transnational networks to mobilize and advocate for legislative change through lobbying, mobilizing public opinion, and engaging in legal and policy advocacy. This alliance between local and transnational networks helps to bridge the gap between international institutions and local administrations, which, according to the principle of due diligence, must adapt and normalize the commitment to gender equality in domestic law in such a way that women's rights are visible and regularly enjoyed. In this scenario the slogan "Think global, act local" resonates as a call to action that encourages people to consider the broader global impact of their actions while taking concrete steps to make a difference in their own communities. It originated in the early 1970s as a rallying cry for environmental activists, but it has since been adopted by a wide range of organizations and individuals working to address various social and environmental issues. Individual actions, when multiplied by the actions of many, can collectively have a significant impact, and consequently it becomes evident the power of grassroots movements and local initiatives to drive positive change at a global scale. The potential of a bottom-up approach has been highlighted by new global strategies connected to climate change response, for instance the 2030 Agenda

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[93] True, Jacqui, and Michael Mintrom. "Transnational Networks and Policy Diffusion: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming." *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2001): 27–57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3096100.

SDGs and the UN NUA.[94] Firstly, the Agenda 2030 outlined the central role of local governments in achieving sustainable development goals, highlighting their proximity to communities and their ability to effectively tailor solutions to local contexts. Numerous countries now have multilevel governance structures, which means that urban and local governments play a direct role in fulfilling a significant portion of their national governments' commitments to the SDGs. In fact, up to 65% of the SDG agenda may not be achieved without the participation of urban and local stakeholders. Given their critical position, local governments cannot be merely passive implementers of a global or national SDG agenda; rather, they must be active participants in co-creating and defining policy and programmatic solutions, as well as in implementing and monitoring progress towards the goals and targets. As urban planners have asserted, cities are key to achieving the SDGs and those adopting a human rights-based approach may be at the forefront of experimenting and establishing good practices reproducible by other local administrations in the EU. In particular, Kanuri proposes a territorial approach to achieving the SDGs, which emphasizes the integration of urban, rural, and peri-urban areas as part of larger territorial systems and transnational networks, not isolated entities.[95] In the report "The Contribution of the European Cohesion Policy to the 2030 Agenda", experts highlighted the need for decentralized governance, participatory decision-making, and a focus on resource efficiency, social inclusion, and inclusive urban planning.[96] There are challenges posed by bridging the gap between global aspirations and local actions and further complexities involved in aligning national and regional policies with the SDGs, particularly in resource-constrained settings. The European Union, with its Member States, has been fully committed towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, starting with the European Commission communication of the 22nd of November 2016, to the conclusions of Council of the European Union "A sustainable

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[94] UN, New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256, New York, NY: United Nations General Assembly, 2016.

[95] Kanuri, Chaitanya, Aromar Revi, Jessica Espey, and Holger Kuhle. "Cities and a Territorial Approach to the SDGs." Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities: A Guide for Stakeholders. Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep15872.9

[96] Cavalli, Laura, Sandro Sanna, Mia Alibegovic, Filippo Arras, Gianluca Cocco, Luca Farnia, Emanuela Manca, et al. "The 2030 Agenda - from Global to Local." Edited by Sergio Vergalli. *The Contribution of the European Cohesion Policy to the 2030 Agenda: An Application to the Autonomous Region of Sardinia*. Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26336.4

European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"[97]. Another important document is the European Commission's reflection paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030"[98], which reiterates the centrality of the Union in the definition of the 2030 Agenda and has set itself the goal of fully integrating the SDGs in the EU policy and strategic framework, as well as in its priority issues. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, EU common policies underscore the importance of empowering local governments to lead and coordinate sustainable development efforts - through the Next Generation EU[99] - emphasizing the need for decentralized decision-making and resource allocation. Local governments can make a significant impact on sustainable development in several key areas:

- Enhancing urban planning and infrastructure: local governments play a critical role in designing and implementing sustainable urban planning strategies, including promoting green spaces, improving public transportation systems, and fostering walkable communities.

- Promoting resource efficiency and waste management: local authorities can lead initiatives to reduce resource consumption, promote renewable energy, and implement effective waste management systems to minimize environmental impact.

- Strengthening social inclusion and equity: local governments can foster inclusive communities by ensuring access to education, healthcare, and basic services, particularly for marginalized groups.

- Empowering local communities and civil society: local governance should be participatory and inclusive, involving local communities and civil society organizations in decision-making processes and ensuring their voices are heard.

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[97] Council of European Union, A sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - Council conclusions, Brussels, 20 June 2017, 10370/17. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23989/st10370-en17.pdfhttps://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23989/st10370-en17.pdf

[98] European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030 – Reflection paper, Publications Office, 2019, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/676251

[99] European Commission, Directorate-General for Budget, EU budget policy brief – The EU as an issuer – The Next Generation EU transformation. #3, July 2022, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2761/111076

- Fostering collaboration and partnerships: local governments should collaborate with national and regional authorities, as well as civil society organizations and the private sector, to maximize resources and expertise in achieving sustainable development goals.

Moreover, municipalities are also uniquely positioned to translate the global goals into concrete actions on the ground, seen as cities are where people live, work, and play, and that they therefore have the power to shape the lives of their residents in significant ways. In the momentum towards a green transition that "leaves no one behind"[100], it becomes crucial to reach the targets outlined in Goal 5 regarding gender equality as women and other minorities are more vulnerable to effects of climate change due to power imbalances both in Western countries and the Global South. According to gender advocates: "a situation where approximately half of the population is denied equal opportunities, equal participation in decision-making, and equal access to resources, education and employment will contribute to severely inhibiting SD and global prosperity"[101]. Indeed, achieving gender equality and empowering women can significantly accelerate progress towards all SDGs, for instance women's role in education and the labor market contributes to improving the gross domestic product and should help to reduce extreme poverty by 2030. In this scenario, gender experts identify three main frames that dominate the discourse on gender equality in Europe: the equity frame, the efficiency frame, and the empowerment frame. The equity frame emphasizes the need to address gender inequalities to achieve fairness and justice. Instead, the efficiency frame focuses on the economic benefits of gender equality, arguing that it leads to higher productivity and economic growth. Finally, the empowerment frame highlights the importance of women's empowerment and the need to create a more just and equitable society. By balancing the different frames, a more comprehensive and transformative approach to gender equality can be implemented in policies binding to all EU Member States and in each State's program for SD. In the second place, the NUA, adopted by the United Nations General

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[100] European Commission, The Just Transition Mechanism: making sure no one is left behind, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism_en

[101] Leal Filho, W., Kovaleva, M., Tsani, S., et al. (2023). Promoting gender equality across the sustainable development goals. Environment, Development & Sustainability, 25, 14177–14198. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-022-02656-1.

Assembly in 2016, provides a specific set of commitments for making cities more sustainable. This action-oriented declaration aims to create inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities that are livable for all. It recognizes that urbanization is a major driving force of global change, with over half of the world's population now living in urban areas. The NUA is the first UN declaration to attribute direct responsibility to local authorities for protecting, fulfilling, respecting, and promoting human rights in all fields of local competence; "as a means to localize the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the NUA leverages the role of cities and human settlements as drivers of inclusive and sustainable development"[102]. Moreover, the NUA emphasizes the need for sustainable urban development, which is defined as "the use of land, resources, energy, buildings, and infrastructure in a way that minimizes environmental impacts, enhances social equity, and promotes economic productivity"[103]. Nonetheless, this pledge is based on several principles:

- People-centered development: as people are put at the heart of urban planning and decision-making, the NUA recognizes that cities should be designed to meet the needs of all residents, regardless of their income, age, gender, or disability.

- Inclusive and equitable development: "the NUA urges local institutions to promote pluralism and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies by strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and tolerance"[104], ensuring that all residents have access to opportunities and services. It also calls for the protection of vulnerable groups, such as the poor, women, children, people of color and people with disabilities.

- Sustainable consumption and production: it promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns, reducing waste and minimizing the environmental impact of cities. It also calls for the use of renewable energy and efficient infrastructure.

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[102] da Silva, K. G. (2018). The new urban agenda and human rights cities: Interconnections between the global and the local. Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights, 36(4), 290-310. https://doi.org/10.1177/0924051918806721
[103] UN, New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256, New York, NY: United Nations General Assembly, 2016.
[104] UN, New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256, New York, NY: United Nations General Assembly, 2016, Paragraph 40.

- <u>Climate resilience</u>: in order for cities to be prepared for and can adapt to the impacts of climate change, the NUA calls for investment in infrastructure and policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- <u>Governance, participation, and transparency</u>: namely effective governance, participatory processes, and transparency in urban planning and decision-making will be fundamental, as will the involvement of stakeholders at all levels and at all stages.

While the NUA was the first UN document to acknowledge the right to the city - the right "to equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice"[105] - the concept was originally developed by French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre. According to his theory, citizens and inhabitants have the right not only to access the resources of the city but also to be part of the process of developing, transforming, and shaping the city - a dynamic space that is produced by the city's residents, reflecting "movement, complexity, conflicts and contradictions, as it manifests itself as a superior form of rights: the right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit"[106]. Bringing human rights home starts with local action. It is on the ground where the impact of human rights realization or their violation is felt. Moreover, Papisca has described local authorities as primary sources of protection of people's needs as they are closer to the demands emerging from the grassroots than any other public actor.[107] Consequently, city governments can be seen as having a duty to deliver where governments and States have failed to ensure the right to the city. In an effort to bridge the gap in the implementation of international human rights standards, self-identified human rights cities have emerged as living laboratories for bringing human rights into everyday life. These cities have integrated human rights realization as a central tenet of municipal governance, ensuring that decision-making and service provision are guided by a non-discriminatory and comprehensive approach that prioritizes the well-

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[105] Eva Garćıa Chueca, 'Human Rights in the city and the Right to the City' in Barbara Oomen, Martha F. Davis and Michele Grigolo (eds), Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities. Cambridge University Press, 2016, 116. https://hdl.handle.net/1814/45292

[106] Lefèvre Henri. (1996) Writings on Cities, Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (trans.) (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell). ISBN: 978-0-631-19188-9

[107] Antonio Papisca, International Law and Human Rights as a Legal Basis for the International Involvement of Local Governments in Arne Musch, Chris van der Valk, Alexandra Sizoo and Kian Tajbakhsh (eds), City Diplomacy (VNG International 2008).

being of all city dwellers and the promotion of their rights. A growing and diverse community of formal and informal city-based organizations, movements, and partnerships has come to the fore in addressing the implementation of human rights at the local level, aligning with the UN's urban framework. These include United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), EUROCITIES, a network of major European cities with an anti-discrimination policy toolkit, and the Strasbourg Club, a network of cities focused on empowering citizens through local public policies. Some of these actors specialize in particular groups, such as Rainbow Cities, a network of international cities concerned with LGBTI policies, and the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities program, which focuses on migrant and minority integration. At the European level, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Committee of the Regions, and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) foster knowledge on legal obligations and raising awareness on human rights issues. Furthermore, a crucial mechanism for implementing the NUA is the Urban Agenda for the EU. This agenda aims to fortify the urban dimension of EU policies, emphasizing better regulation, funding, and knowledge sharing. It serves as an instrument for multilevel collaboration between Member States, cities, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. The agenda prioritizes twelve key areas of urban development, including the inclusion of migrants and refugees, energy transition, and urban mobility. According to researchers, human rights city refers to "an urban entity or local government that explicitly bases its policies, or some of them, on human rights as laid down in international treaties, and, in doing so, distinguishes itself from other local authorities"[108]. Self-declared human rights cities try to develop new methods to generate human rights solutions and infuse these into their daily work of governance and service provision. Human rights cities are founded on three pillars: societal development, a culture of human rights, and urban justice. Adopting a human rights-centered approach to planning, execution, and assessment, human rights cities establish specialized mechanisms and institutions to monitor, account for, and advance human rights. Some human rights cities also use SDG indicators and targets to measure progress on human rights. In 2017, the city of Utrecht started to apply operational targets of the SDGs to evaluate the impact of

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[108] Barbara Oomen and Moritz Baumgärtel, 'Human Rights Cities' in Anja Mihr and Mark Gibney (eds), The SAGE Handbook of Human Rights, vol 2 (SAGE 2014) 709.

local human rights policies, such as Goal 11/Target 1 (on access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services, and to upgrade slums) and Goal 11/Target 3 (on participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management).[109]. Networks offer potential for growth and capacity-building: for instance, the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) is a non-profit organization involving over 60 cities that aims to promote and protect human rights in cities across Europe by providing resources, support, and a platform for collaboration for cities committed to human rights. Its mission is to create an information hub and support people to connect and scale up the successful expansion of human rights cities.[110] Considering the importance of local policies in guaranteeing basic human rights and SD, when gender is not taken into account in urban planning, it can lead to the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and the provision of services and to prolonged negative impact on women's access to opportunities and resources.[111] Several strategies for mainstreaming gender in urban planning and development have been identified by gender advocates and experts, for instance:

- Collecting and analyzing data on gender.
- Developing gender-sensitive policies and plan.
- Training planners and decision-makers on gender issues.
- Engaging with women's organizations.

Due to the EU legislative framework, despite the variation in the implementation of gender planning across Europe, with some cases being more fragile and generally far from institutionalization, there is a growing body of experiences that demonstrate the integration of gender into the urban planning agenda. In conclusion, gender mainstreaming at the local level is an essential component of achieving sustainable and equitable development. Cities, as hubs of economic activity and social innovation, have

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[109] Starl, Klaus. "Human Rights and the City: Obligations, Commitments and Opportunities: Do Human Rights Cities Make a Difference for Citizens and Authorities? Two Cases Studies on the Freedom of Expression." In Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities, edited by Barbara Oomen, Martha F. Davis, and Michele Grigolo, 199-219. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. doi:10.1017/CBO9781316544792.012.

[110] Human Rights Cities Network, https://humanrightscities.net/human-rights-cities/.

[111] Sánchez de Madariaga, Inés, and Michael Neuman. "Mainstreaming Gender in the City." Town Planning Review 87, no. 5 (2016): 493-504. http://dx.doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2016.33

a critical role to play in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. By adopting gender-sensitive policies and programs, cities can create more inclusive and equitable environments for all residents. Women's empowerment is not just a women's issue; it is a matter of social justice and sustainable development. Ultimately cities can create a more fair and equitable future for all because of sharing good practices and support coming from networks dedicated to human rights. To achieve and ensure SD, cities must include local stakeholders such as feminist grassroots movements, feminist researchers and academics and active citizens that foster participation in civil society and democracy.

2.5. Women's right to the city: change through making their voices heard and involved

Even though basic material needs are generally met in most OECD countries, women still face more limitations than men in their daily lives. These constraints stem from: "unequal access to employment opportunities, which includes the gender pay gap and a larger proportion of women working part-time; a greater burden of household and caregiving responsibilities; and limited free time for leisure and personal care"[112]. The structure of cities and transportation systems can hinder the movement of individuals who must balance caregiving responsibilities and paid employment. This is exacerbated by the lack of adequate support services for caring for children and the elderly, which are often not conveniently located or accessible. Gender stereotypes, unconscious gender bias, and discrimination, even in Europe despite being illegal, contribute to this situation.[113] In 2019, Caroline Criado Cortez argued that the default male perspective in data collection and analysis has led to a lack of understanding of women's needs and experiences due to persistent lack of gender data gap and women's lives are affected daily in various aspects of society.[114] The author delves into areas such as healthcare, transportation, the

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[112] Ferrant G., Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka, Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labor outcomes. OECD, December 2014. https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf

[113] Sánchez de Madariaga, Inés, and Michael Neuman. "Mainstreaming Gender in the City." Town Planning Review 87, no. 5 (2016): 493-504. http://dx.doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2016.33

[114] Criado Perez, Caroline. Invisible Women: Data Bias in A World Designed for Men. Harry N. Abrams, 2019.

workplace, and urban planning to demonstrate how the absence of gender-disaggregated data contributes to systemic gender bias. cities and public spaces are often designed without considering the specific needs and experiences of women. Several instances exist where urban planning neglects the gender dimension, leading to unintended consequences for women, for instance:

- Public Transportation and mobility: public transportation systems are often designed based on the commuting patterns and needs of men. Schedules, routes, and safety measures may not adequately account for women's travel patterns, such as trip-chaining (multiple stops for caregiving and errands) or concerns about personal safety. Lack of lighting, poorly located stops, and inadequate information can disproportionately affect women's ability to access and use public transportation.
- Street Design: the design of streets and public spaces are frequently planned with a male-centric perspective; issues such as poor lighting, narrow sidewalks, and the absence of public restrooms can create discomfort and safety concerns for women.
- Workplace and Home Proximity: women's employment opportunities and housing choices can be influenced by the availability of childcare facilities, schools, and healthcare services. Inflexible urban structures may limit women's options in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities, contributing to gender disparities in employment and economic opportunities.
- Data Collection in Urban Planning: the lack of gender-disaggregated data in urban planning hampers efforts to fully understand the diverse needs of men and women. Without accurate data, policymakers may make decisions that inadvertently perpetuate gender inequalities.

Moreover, because of gender roles and sexual divisions of labor, women face what has been called a "double workload": in paid employment and in the home. The Harmonized European Time Use Statistics (HETUS)[115] – the European survey on the use of time – still shows significant gender differences in the time allocated to work, household tasks and leisure. Women in urban areas are "especially vulnerable because of the multiple

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[115] European Commission, Eurostat, Harmonised European Time Use Surveys – 2018 guidelines, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2785/926903

roles and additional responsibilities that they shoulder; they often lack support from extended family networks and take on unpaid care work in addition to the paid work they are compelled to undertake due to the cash-based urban economies"[116]. Such power relations deeply affect also the space women and men inhabit both in private and in public life. In recent years research has been conducted on the relationship between urban adaptation interventions and gender equality, particularly in the context of the SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Experts are highlighting the increasing vulnerability of urban areas to climate risks, which disproportionately affect women due to their differential access to resources, decision-making power, and mobility. Recognizing this imbalance, cities are implementing various adaptation measures, including infrastructural improvements, ecosystem-based approaches, institutional reforms, and behavioral changes. However, the extent to which these interventions contribute to gender equality remains unclear. Solomon, Singh and Islam further emphasize the need to consider the gendered dimensions of urban adaptation interventions throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases.[117] They call for a more intersectional and relational approach to gender equality, recognizing that it is not simply a matter of increasing women's representation but also ensuring their equitable access to resources, participation in decision-making processes, and protection from gender-based discrimination and violence. Cities for the most part are built according to men's needs. This outdated approach fails to acknowledge the reality that women use the city differently from men. Women's priorities and demands for urban planning differ from those of men. When these differences are not considered, gender-based inequalities in access to services, infrastructure, and other amenities arise. These inequalities are often more pronounced in informal settlements. Therefore, in projects aimed at addressing the needs of marginalized communities, gender-sensitive participatory planning is essential to address unequal power dynamics and ensure that both women and men have access to decent and equitable urban environments. Such dynamics were not lost by urban planners, at least not those adopting feminism as an

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[116] Solomon, D. S., Singh, C., & Islam, F. (2021). Examining the outcomes of urban adaptation interventions on gender equality using SDG 5. Climate and Development, 13(9), 830-841, p.1. https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2021.1939643

[117] Solomon, D. S., Singh, C., & Islam, F. (2021). Examining the outcomes of urban adaptation interventions on gender equality using SDG 5. Climate and Development, 13(9), 830-841. https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2021.1939643

approach to urban planning, rooted in feminist theory and aimed at creating cities that are more equitable, inclusive, and safe for all people, particularly women and girls. It challenges the traditional ways of planning cities, which have often been based on the needs and priorities of men, and instead considers the different experiences and needs of women and girls. In her 1958 essay "Downtown is for People," Jane Jacobs, an American urban planner and activist, challenged prevailing notions of urban planning and economic development.[118] Jacobs's approach to urban planning implicitly challenged the traditional gender roles that were prevalent in her time because of her emphasis on public spaces, street life, and mixed-use zoning which encouraged women to be more active participants in urban life. Female agency and public participation have been a cornerstone of feminist urban planning initiatives in the decades since Jacobs's work. human-scale neighborhoods, mixed-use zoning, walkability, and public spaces. Recently, Lisa Horelli argued that women's place-based politics can be a powerful tool for achieving gender equality in urban planning and development.[119] By engaging with local communities and highlighting the experiences of women, these interventions can help to shift the focus from top-down planning to more participatory and inclusive approaches. Through her analysis, Horelli demonstrates that gender mainstreaming is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It must be tailored to the specific context of each city and community, considering the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women. One striking example presented by Horelli showcases the efforts of women in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, who advocated for the creation of "ruas amigas das mulheres" (women-friendly streets). These initiatives aimed to transform public spaces into safer and more inclusive environments for women, addressing concerns like street harassment, inadequate lighting, and a lack of accessible transportation options. Through sustained campaigning and collaboration with local authorities, these women successfully influenced the redesign of streets, the installation of safety lighting, and the implementation of public transportation programs tailored to women's needs. In Nairobi, Kenya, women's groups championed the cause of economic empowerment, organizing self-help programs, establishing microcredit initiatives, and advocating for policies that promoted women's participation

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[118] Jacobs, J. (1958). Downtown is for people. Fortune, 67(6), 124-128.

[119] Horelli, Lisa. "Gender mainstreaming, urban planning and development - experiences of women's place based politics." Madrid: Escuela Tecnica Superior de Arquitectura (2002).

in the informal economy. These efforts empowered women to gain financial independence, enhance their entrepreneurial skills, and contribute to their families' well-being. Nonetheless, thanks to the cross-cutting efforts put forward by the SDGs and the NUA, several cities' administrations are adopting and implementing a gender-perspective in local policies, programs and even initiatives, with the aim of fostering inclusive and resilient communities. SDG 11 calls for "universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities"[120] as well as acknowledging their needs in providing safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems. It has become apparent that "mainstreaming gender in an urban planning project ensures that the diverse needs, interests and realities of all genders are being considered and integrated across the whole project cycle"[121]. Moreover, cities such as Vienna and Barcelona have established Gender Action Plans (GAPs), which are strategic documents that outline specific actions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment - often developed in response to a recognized gender gap or to proactively address gender-based issues. They provide a roadmap for identifying, addressing, and eliminating gender-based discrimination and inequalities that hinder women's full participation in urban life. GAPS have been shown to:

- Improve access to opportunities for women and girls in education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement.
- Ensure safe and inclusive public spaces for women and girls to move around and participate freely.
- Promote women's leadership and representation in decision-making bodies and government institutions.
- Address gender-based violence and discrimination in all aspects of urban life.
- Create more equitable and inclusive cities for all residents.

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[120] Joint SDG Fund, Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities, Joint SDG Fund website, https://jointsdgfund.org/sustainable-development-goals/goal-11-sustainable-cities-and-communities; Date of access: 2024-01-16

[121] Sida. (2019). Checklist for Mainstreaming Gender in Urban Projects based on a Participatory Approach. Stockholm, Sweden: Sida. https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/22034_CheckList_v08_RC_doublespreads.pdf

However, already in the 1980s feminist urban planner Dolores Hayden recognized the importance of incorporating women's voices and perspectives into the decision-making processes of urban planning. Traditional urban planning practices have often excluded women's perspectives, resulting in cities that are not designed to meet their needs and aspirations. For instance, the focus on single-family homes and suburban living has often reinforced gender stereotypes, confining women to domestic responsibilities while men were primarily associated with the public sphere of work and commerce. A participatory approach involves actively engaging women in the decision-making processes from the outset, ensuring that their needs and concerns are considered throughout the planning process.[122] As argued by several researchers, women must reclaim the right to the city, interpreted also as the power to shape and control those spaces. They draw on the experiences of women in the cities of Melbourne (Australia) and Bengaluru (India) to show how their experiences of exclusion and reduced citizenship are shaped by their identities, including their gender, disability, and socioeconomic status.[123] According to planners and community leaders encouraging citizen involvement, it is beneficial when individuals - especially inhabitants belonging to minorities - actively participate in local matters and attend meetings. These individuals serve as crucial points of contact within the community, act as organizers, and play a pivotal role in driving positive changes in the neighborhood. This need is particularly pronounced in areas where integration proves challenging, such as segregated housing zones, highlighting the essential role of locally engaged individuals.[124] In this context, when women and other marginalized groups are actively involved in shaping the development of cities, spaces are created that are more equitable, accessible, and livable for all according to international agreements and standards.

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[122] Hayden, Dolores. "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work." Signs 5, no. 3 (1980): S170–87. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173814

[123] Alicia Yon & SriPallavi Nadimpalli (2017) Cities for whom? Re-examining identity, to reclaim the right to the city for women, Australian Planner, 54:1, 33-40, https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2017.1297317

[124] Listerborn, C. (2019). Gender equality, urban planning and policy: A feminist critique. Routledge.

2.5.1 The role of feminist organizations and collective action on the ground

In Europe as in the rest of the world, feminist grassroots organizations play a crucial role in urban development by advocating for gender equality, inclusivity, and social justice in city planning and governance. Grassroots implies being widespread and common, though deeply rooted. The term also suggests being locally based and outside the control of any state, church, union or political party. Through their own approach, research associations, NGOs, student-led collectives and anti-violence centers challenge the patriarchal norms that often shape urban spaces, ensuring that cities are designed and managed to meet the needs of all residents, regardless of gender, race, class, or ability following the principles of intersectionality.[125] Moreover these local actors arrange for mobilization - through parades and demonstrations - and collective activism with the aim of raising awareness and promoting women's human rights. Across the globe, women have taken to the streets to demand their right to safety and security in public spaces, often to showcase a powerful testament to the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and the resilience of women's voices in challenging societal norms that perpetuate such violence. In Leeds, England, in 1977, the first Reclaim the Night march was held as a response to the fear and anxiety women experienced due to the rise of violent crimes against women. These marches have long been regular manifestations in cities around the world for decades with the aim of challenging the fear that many women experience when walking alone at night and to reclaim public spaces for women.[126] Feminist movements recognized the gendered nature of public spaces and the impacts on vulnerable individuals while demanding structural changes to address violence against women. Participants in the marches often wear brightly colored clothing and carry flashlights or other safety devices, sending a message that they will not be intimidated by the threat of violence. In 2011, the "Ni una Menos" movement erupted in Argentina, sparked by the brutal murder of a young woman named Chiara Páez. It quickly spread across Latin America, galvanizing women to protest against femicide and gender-based violence: their fight gained momentum also in Europe as it transcended transnational borders. Indeed, the Non Una di Meno movement was

[125] Kaplan, T. (2001). Women's Rights as Human Rights: Grassroots Women Redefine Citizenship in a Global Context. In: Grimshaw, P., Holmes, K., Lake, M. (eds) Women's Rights and Human Rights. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780333977644_19

[126] Newspapers.com. The Guardian, 2 March 1979. https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-guardian/20420228/.

founded in 2016 to protest against the rising number of femicides, rapes and kidnappings in Italy. The movement's catalyst was the brutal killing and burning of a young woman, Sara di Pietrantonio, by her ex-partner. The movement's initial assembly and subsequent national demonstration in Rome on November 26, 2016, brought together a diverse group of feminist groups, LGBTQIA+ collectives, unions, parties, and individuals who were outraged by the relentless femicides and the media's tendency to justify the perpetrators. Moreover, across geographical boundaries, in 2017 #MeToo movement sparked as women from all walks of life shared their experiences of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace and everyday life. This digital uprising highlighted the pervasiveness of sexual violence and empowered survivors to speak out against their perpetrators. Furthermore, the emergence of transnational feminist movements such as "the SlutWalk, the antirape protests in India, women's par-ticipation in the Arab Spring, Pussy Riot in Russia, FEMEN in Ukraine, the Pol-ish Women Strike, the Women's Marches, mass feminist protests in Spain and Turkey, and the #MeToo and Time's Up campaigns also signal the systemic and widespread character of patriarchal violence and are evidence of a reignited sense of urgency to denounce and eradicate it"[127]. These global manifestations for women's safety in the streets and cities represent a collective effort to dismantle the patriarchal structures that contribute to gender-based violence. They serve as a reminder that women's voices are powerful agents for change, and that their right to safety and security is non-negotiable. Feminist movements have also been instrumental in advocating for policy changes that can improve women's safety in public spaces, which include measures such as increased police presence, better lighting, and the creation of gender-neutral public space.[128] These efforts have helped to make cities safer for women and to challenge the misconception that violence against women is an inevitable part of life. Furthermore, feminist grassroots organizations work to ensure that urban planning processes consider the needs and perspectives of women and girls, even more they often include instances from other marginalized communities. They advocate for the inclusion of gender-sensitive policies and guidelines in urban planning and development, such as:

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[127] Salvatori, Lidia. "The Deep River of Feminism: From Ni Una Menos to Non Una di Meno." Critical Times 5, no. 1 (2022): 241-248. https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-9536591

[128] Sara Ortiz Escalante & Blanca Gutiérrez Valdivia (2015) Planning from below: using feminist participatory methods to increase women's participation in urban planning, Gender & Development, 23:1, 113-126, https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2015.1014206

- Safe and accessible public spaces for women, including transportation, parks, and workplaces.
- Gender-responsive infrastructure, such as childcare facilities, eldercare services, and accessible housing.
- Inclusive participation in decision-making processes, ensuring that vulnerable individuals have a voice in shaping the development of their communities.

Moreover, grassroots organizations are usually at the forefront in addressing gender-based violence in urban spaces through prevention and protection of survivors, often operating with limited funds and covering significant gaps in institutional action. They raise awareness about GBV, provide support services to survivors, and work to prevent GBV through community education and advocacy. They also challenge harmful norms and stereotypes that contribute to GBV, such as gender discrimination and the expectation of women's conformity to traditional gender roles. As the intersectional approach is becoming common practice in facing discrimination, feminist grassroots groups are increasingly focusing on the promotion of social justice and equity in cities and urban areas. They work to address issues of poverty, housing discrimination, and environmental injustice whereas they advocate for policies that promote social inclusion and economic opportunities for marginalized groups. However, challenges arise often due to feminist organizations' grassroots nature, as resources and funds are limited depending on the State's welfare policies and its commitment to financing independent initiatives. In Italy, during November 2023, the first feminist fund Semia was created with the aim of providing funding for feminist organizations operating in all the territory. Semia "supports and accompanies organizations, collectives, networks, and associations by financing three thematic areas that represent the issues identified by the feminist movement in Italy as the most urgent in the fight against gender inequality"[129]. Feminist funding is a type of philanthropy that supports organizations and individuals working to advance gender equality and social justice. It is characterized by a focus on providing comprehensive support, including financial assistance, technical assistance, and capacity building. This approach is designed to help beneficiary organizations achieve their goals and make a lasting impact on the lives of women and other marginalized groups. Despite

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[129] Semiosis Fund. (2024). Chi siamo. https://semiafund.org/chi-siamo/ (accessed January 2, 2024).

resources to self-finance and consequently concrete actions being limited, feminist grassroots movements have demonstrated capacity in intercepting and reproducing transnational struggles related to women's human rights in local contexts, with the result of directly involving people and increasing participation in democratic processes.[130] In addition, civic engagement is fundamental to raise awareness on inequalities and possible improvements in policies at all levels, and within urban areas resides potential to enhance public participation of citizens and inhabitants in order to develop inclusive and sustainable urban planning. As found in research conducted in Dakar, Senegal, women's associations have been instrumental in addressing issues such as access to water, sanitation, and education.[131] These organizations demonstrated to be more effective than top-down government programs in reaching marginalized communities and building trust. The study identifies four key factors that contribute to the success of women's associations in Dakar:

- Bottom-up approach: women's associations are deeply rooted in the communities they serve, and they show capacity in identifying and addressing local needs more effectively than government agencies.
- Grassroots leadership: women's associations are often led by women who are well-respected and trusted members of their communities. This leadership enables them to build consensus and mobilize support for their initiatives.
- Collective action: greater achievements are reached by working together, not individually, as collective action, activism and voluntary support allows them to pool resources, share knowledge, and advocate for change.
- Strong relationships with government: while women's associations are often critical of government policies, they also recognize the importance of working with government agencies to achieve their goals.

A more participatory approach to urban governance would give women's voices a greater role in decision-making in their everyday struggles related to systemic imbalances.

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[130] Peters, J.S., & Wolper, A. (Eds.). (1995). Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315656571

[131] Hainard, François, and Christine Verschuur. "Filling the Urban Policy Breach: Women's Empowerment, Grass-Roots Organizations, and Urban Governance." International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique 22, no. 1 (2001): 33–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1601284

Empowering women through grass-roots organizations is hence not only essential for gender equality but also for building more inclusive and equitable cities.[132] Moreover, over the last years, feminist research on urban development has become a fundamental perspective for relieving sex-disaggregated data and consequently raising awareness on inequalities. Researchers developed maps and atlas on the ground of women's perception of cities and urban areas with the intent of mapping locations and spaces of security or public instability, The design and construction of cities often prioritize the needs and abilities of an idealized average person, typically an able-bodied male without the need for childcare equipment. This narrow focus creates significant architectural barriers for individuals who differ from this norm, even as cities strive to become more sustainable and "smart." Real sustainability in urban environments cannot be achieved without considering the full range of human needs and abilities. Ensuring that urban spaces are livable and safe for all people is essential to creating truly sustainable cities. The "Milano Atlante di Genere"[133] is an example of this approach, aiming to provide tools to make Milan more attentive to the needs of women and minority groups, while discussing various approaches to inclusive city planning, drawing upon examples from pioneering European cities like Vienna, Paris, Barcelona, and Berlin. These cities have incorporated gender mainstreaming, embedding a gender perspective into all aspects of urban governance. As a result, they have experimented with innovative city design tools to cater to the needs of not only women but all urban residents. The aim of this atlas was to create momentum for dialogue with local stakeholders and institutions to promote closer inspection of relieved disparities and change through policy-making and urban inclusive practices. Moreover, as evidence of transferable potential, Sex and the City research association is currently developing a follow-up project based in Bologna, with the intent of "gender-mapping" the city through interviews, questionnaires and data shared by the municipality which will lead to transformative urban actions.[134] Action for change can therefore spring from small local initiatives, born with efforts of common citizens using their skills and platforms for the betterment of living conditions for all inhabitants of cities

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[132] Listerborn, Carina. "Who Speaks? And Who Listens? The Relationship between Planners and Women's Participation in Local Planning in a Multi-Cultural Urban Environment." *GeoJournal* 70, no. 1 (2007): 61–74. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148207

[133] Muzzonigro A. and Florencia Andreola. Milan Gender Atlas, Milan Urban Center. Milan, Italy (2023)

[134] Sex and the City. (2024). Verso un Atlante di genere di Bologna. Retrieved January 17, 2024, from https://sexandthecity.space/verso-un-atlante-di-genere-di-bologna/

and urban areas. Participation in shaping urban transformation has already been achieved through placemaking approaches due to the capacity to enhance a sense of agency and belonging within the context of public spaces, while it also facilitates empowerment by preparing the ground for civic engagement and the ability to collectively demand and exercise rights.[135] Thus, civic engagement may be conceptualized as "the feelings of responsibility toward the common good, the actions aimed at solving community issues and improving the well-being of its members and the competencies required to participate in civic life"[136]. In this framework, feminist grassroots actors present as important interlocutors that rely on an extended network at national and transnational level to promote campaigns and demonstrations to spark civic participation for women's empowerment, which include human rights for all people. Engaging with local actors will be instrumental for the realization of the SDGs and NUA, as they promote local engagement and mobilize to report gaps in local government policies with the intent of engaging institutions in inclusive policy-making practices.

2.5.2 Intersectional approach for inclusion and community-building

A just transition towards a sustainable society entails that no one is left behind, especially these marginalized communities facing the brunt of climate change and catastrophic natural disasters.[137] Discrimination on grounds of different social factors - ethnic or racial background, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability, age, etc. - persists considering that a large number of people living in Europe face discrimination, affecting their human dignity, life opportunities, prosperity, well-being, and often also personal safety. An intersectional and holistic approach considers experiences of women with different age groups and identities, including but not limited to women of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, and asexual and other related communities, older women, those with different employment statuses, disabilities, or risk of economic deprivation; "without considering intersectionality, we cannot

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[135] Hou Jeffrey. 2013. *Transcultural Cities : Border Crossing & Placemaking*. New York: Routledge. http://www.123library.org/book_details/?id=65265

[136] Landman, K. Inclusive public space: rethinking practices of mitigation, adaptation and transformation. Urban Des Int 25, 211–214 (2020) https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-020-00136-4

[137] Wagner, Fritz, Riad Mahayni, and Andreas Piller, eds. Transforming Distressed Global Communities: Making Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015.

sufficiently address the subordination of marginalized groups"[138]. Steps are being taken forward as discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin is prohibited in the EU as established in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU Charter)[139]. However, in urban contexts racial inequalities manifest in many forms, from complex access to housing, education and the labor market to public services; but people of color experience direct "casual" racism in everyday life. Women and girls of color especially endure discrimination not only because of their gender, but also because of their racial, ethnic and/ or religious identity. For instance, "harassment based on both misogyny and xenophobia can mean that women and girls of color have greater concerns about security in public space"[140]. Addressing racial inequities requires cities to adopt a proactive approach to fostering long-term institutional and cultural transformation, acknowledging the unique experiences of women from diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, prioritizing their voices, and ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals. Moreover, urban areas frequently serve as the primary destinations for migration, attracting individuals seeking opportunities and connections. To cope with incoming migration, many local authorities have adopted strategies such as promoting economic integration, reducing the risk of social exclusion, improving educational achievement of second and third-generation migrants and combating the rise of racist and xenophobic movements. According to the European Network of Migrant Women (ENW) a migrant woman, on average is nearly 10% less likely to read and write, more likely to struggle with her mental health and also more likely to be paid less; she is also more likely to bear a heavier load than men in balancing work and caring responsibilities.[141] Owing to its capacity to dialogue with EU institutions, the ENW launches campaigns and projects yearly to combat the stigmatization of migrants and refugees, specifically women, through intercultural dialogues, raising knowledge about the EU policies and promoting

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[138] Candiracci S. and Kim Power, Cities Alive: Designing cities that work for women. Arup, University of Liverpool and UNDP, October 2022, https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cities-alive-designing-cities-that-work-for-women

[139] European Union. (2000/C 364/01). Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Official Journal of the European Communities, 18 December 2000.

[140] URBACT, Gender Equal Cities Report 2022, URBACT Knowledge Hub, Paris, June 2022, pp.74-76. https://urbact.eu/gender-equal-cities-report-2022

[141] The World Bank (2021), 'Literacy rate, adult female', (% of females ages 15 and above)', available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS

democratic and civic participation.[142] Indeed for undocumented migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, the gendered challenges they face are amplified significantly; cities have a duty to incorporate gender-based considerations into their efforts to support vulnerable refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. For this purpose, UNESCO established the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) in 2004 to assist local authorities in combating discrimination through their capacity as policy maker and service provider in areas of education, employment, housing provision and cultural activities. Furthermore, UNESCO launched in the same year several regional coalitions, namely the European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCR)[143], to establish networks of cities interested in sharing experiences and consequently improving their policies to eradicate racism. Furthermore, other minorities experience vulnerable stances where their effective enjoyment of basic human rights is hindered during their daily lives. Women and girls with disabilities comprise 16% of the total population of women in the EU and 60% of the overall population of 100 million persons with disabilities. Over the years research has underscored that "they are likely to experience double discrimination, including increased risk of gender-based violence, socio-economic disadvantages, social isolation, and abuse and marginalization"[144]. Due to intersecting forms of discrimination, indeed women and girls with disabilities face disproportionately detrimental disadvantages in various aspects of life, including employment and healthcare access, compared to both men with disabilities and women without disabilities. While the image of a wheelchair is often used to represent all disabilities, many disabilities are invisible, which can make them more likely to be overlooked in urban planning. For example, the introduction of autonomous and electric vehicles, such as municipal buses, can pose challenges for blind women who rely on the sound of motors to navigate safely. By adopting a gendered perspective on disabilities, local administrations will be able to identify these disadvantages and ensure the equal rights of all whiles incorporating the SDGs and the NUA for a sustainable development of cities. Among the ideas and values that constitute the concept of an inclusive city are accessibility, multi-functionality, equity, partiality and

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[142] European Network of Migrant Women, 'Projects and Actions', available at: https://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/projects/

[143] ECCAR (European Centre for Comparative Urban Research), Vision and Mission, ECCAR website, https://www.europeancoalitions.eu/. Date of access: 2024-01-16

[144] URBACT, Gender Equal Cities Report 2022, URBACT Knowledge Hub, Paris, June 2022, pp.78-79. https://urbact.eu/gender-equal-cities-report-2022

universality. Advocates and academics remark on the meaning of cities as physical spaces for people with disabilities: "accessibility is a vital key in the interaction between people and the built environment. Disabled people in urban environments face considerable discrimination regarding mobility and accessing infrastructure and services"[145]. To foster inclusive urban development, it is essential to adopt planning methodologies that prioritize gender equality and universal accessibility, combined with the integration of age-sensitive and disability-centered principles into all urban development projects and service delivery mechanisms. Moreover, accessibility and inclusivity would be further strengthened by providing financial and technical assistance to inclusion initiatives and implementing preferential procurement policies for women and persons with disabilities. In conclusion, designing safe, accessible, and affordable urban transport and mobility infrastructure that caters to the needs of women, children, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers, particularly focusing on non-motorized transport options and last-mile connectivity, is essential for creating an equitable urban environment for all.[146] Cities and urban areas worldwide have emerged as beacons of LGBTQI acceptance and support, setting the standard for gender equity in society as a whole. By embracing inclusive messaging and policy leadership across all aspects of urban planning, governance, and service delivery, local administrations influence and foster a more accepting and equitable society. Their efforts can even influence national policies and laws, propelling progress towards a more inclusive world. Although progress was made in policies, laws, and societal attitudes, LGBTQ+ individuals continue to encounter gender-based discrimination in various aspects of their lives, from housing and employment to education, consumer goods and services, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Even initiatives intended to promote gender equality can inadvertently perpetuate challenges faced by the queer community. For instance, "many gender equality, gender management, and gender mainstreaming approaches overlook problems faced by queer people and women of color, framing their target stakeholders as white,

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[145] Jones, D. and Payne, A. (1997). Disability and Diversity in the City, pp. 130-140, In J. Beall (Ed.) A City for All: Valuing Difference and Working with Diversity. London: Zed Books.

[146] Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, Gender and Disability Inclusion in Urban Development, NIUA and UN in India, policy brief, Karnataka, India, 2022. https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Policy-Brief_English-accessible-version.pdf

cisgender, and heterosexual"[147]. Signatories MS should comply with due diligence and implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, especially in regard to the elimination of any discrimination on the basis of gender identity - for example, recognizing that the gender identity of transgender persons does not exclude them from receiving domestic violence, sexual assault or rape supports. Likewise, women involved in same-sex relationships, including lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, should have equal access to domestic violence shelters and municipal awareness campaigns raising awareness should encompass non-heterosexual couples as well. Transgender and non-binary individuals, often overlooked in LGBTQ+ claims and discourses, require municipalities to acknowledge and address their unique needs. This process includes legal recognition of gender identity, allowing individuals to change their ID documents to reflect their preferred gender marker and name, and providing access to affordable and safe medical interventions when desired. As mandated by the Council of Europe, procedures for legal gender recognition should be direct, transparent, and readily accessible, solely based on the individual's self-identification.[148] The Rainbow Cities Network implementation plan aims to foster greater societal acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community by providing safe living environments, incorporating queer perspectives into organizational policies, and enhancing visibility and resilience within the LGBTQ+ community.[149] To achieve these objectives, the Rainbow Cities Network connects stakeholders from local governments, policymakers, and experts to facilitate the exchange of best practices and improve existing LGBTQ+ policies. International agreements, conventions, and declarations formulated at the global level must be ratified and implemented by States to effectively combat all forms of discrimination towards women and minorities affected. Additionally, in order to normalize good practices in everyday life, local institutions and municipalities should engage with stakeholders on the ground, especially communities affected by racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism or other forms of discrimination, to ensure that these international and national instruments are applied

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[147] URBACT, Gender Equal Cities Report 2022, URBACT Knowledge Hub, Paris, June 2022, p.81. https://urbact.eu/gender-equal-cities-report-2022

[148] Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), Thematic report on legal gender recognition in Europe, First thematic implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5, Council of Europe, June 2022.

[149] Rainbow Cities Network. (n.d.). About us. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from https://www.rainbowcities.com/about-us/

effectively and address real-world concerns. Through this bottom-up and people-centered approach, cities have a better chance of resolving issues such as homelessness, poverty and crime, which are interconnected with discrimination and often the result of systemic inequity.

3. Chapter Three: the case study of Barcelona, Spain

3.1. Overview of the Spanish gender equality framework

Over a relatively brief period, Spain has undergone a remarkable transformation from an authoritarian regime to a thoroughly established democracy. This transition has been accompanied by a swift evolution in social and gender norms, and a growing recognition of gender equality as a fundamental political principle, albeit with variations in emphasis across different political areas. This transformation spurred the establishment and strengthening of institutions dedicated to women's advancement and gender equality, with initiatives implemented at national and regional governmental levels over the past three decades, which were "at the vanguard in European Gender Equality Policies"[150]. These results were confirmed by the Gender Equality Index[151], released in 2013 by EIGE, which combines gender indicators across six core domains: "work participation in the labor market and segregation and quality of work; money - financial resources and the economic situation; knowledge - educational attainment and segregation and life-long learning; time - care and social activities; power - political and economic - and health - status and access". This index measures how far the EU-27 and its Member States were from achieving gender equality in 2010. A decade later, in the year 2023, with a score of 76.4 out of 100, Spain holds the fourth position in the European Union's Gender Equality Index. Notably, Spain's highest ranking (third among all Member States) is in the domain of political power; however, progress in this domain has seemingly stagnated since 2020.[152] While Spain has made significant strides in the domain of time, particularly in the sub-domain of care activities, gender inequality in the domain of work remains a pressing concern. Spain's ranking in this domain is 17th among EU Member States.

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[150] Valiente, C. (2008). Spain at the vanguard in European gender equality policies. In S. Roth (Ed.), Gender politics in the expanding European Union: Mobilization, inclusion, exclusion (pp. 101– 117). New York: Berghahn. https://books.google.it/

[151] EIGE. (2013). The gender equality index. Report. European Institute for Gender Equality. Retrieved from http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Gender-Equality-Index-Report.pdf

[152] EIGE, The Gender Equality Index 2023, Spain, EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country/ES#

Moreover, the gender gap in this domain is particularly prominent among non-EU migrants, with women facing more significant disadvantages. In 2021, 30% of non-EU migrant women reported facing difficulties in maintaining adequate home heating, compared to 27% of non-EU migrant men. A similar struggle was observed among lone parents, with 26% of lone mothers and 25% of lone fathers experiencing difficulties in keeping their homes warm. Due to growing efforts towards the sustainable transition at EU level and to the correlation between gender equality and the achievement of a more ecological system, this latest report also focuses specifically on the socially fair transition of the European Green Deal. Its thematic focus analyzes the following aspects: public attitudes and behaviors on climate change and mitigation; energy; transport; decision-making. indicate that Spain has been making notable progress in achieving gender equality. Its Gender Equality Index score consistently exceeds the EU average, and its growth rate in this area has surpassed the rest of the bloc. Over time, the gap between Spain's score and the EU's average has widened, showcasing its remarkable advancements in gender equality. Spain has demonstrated consistent commitment in achieving gender equality since the institution of international law dedicated, since the Spanish State ratified the CEDAW in 1984, despite initiating the ratification process in 1980. Moreover, Spain was one of the first States to ratify the Optional Protocol and to promote a meeting with civil society, in 2000, to disseminate the Protocol's contents. In regards to recent agreements, Spain ratified the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention in April 2014, even though the Spanish Government itself admits that: "there is a clear difference under Spanish law between gender violence (which is committed by the male who is or who has been the partner or spouse of the woman victim) and domestic violence (which is committed in the home by any of the members of the family); nevertheless, current legislation is being revised in order to consider any form of violence against women as gender violence, including that which occurs outside the context of partners and ex-partners"[153]. In general, State feminism in Spain emerged in the late 1980s, primarily driven by the establishment of the Instituto de la Mujer (IM) under the Socialist Party (PSOE) government, also because of with Spain's candidature for accession to the EU in 1986, highlighting the country's growing commitment to gender equality. Additionally,

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[153] Report submitted by Spain pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report) Received by GREVIO on 18 February 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/53b735ad-2af9-40a9-98c3-151ffc6954ef

Spain underwent a remarkable transformation from a highly centralized state to a quasi-federal system within two decades. Between 1979 and 1983, 17 regions were established, each with varying degrees of administrative and political autonomy, until this decentralization process culminated in the addition of the cities of Ceuta and Melilla in 1995, further strengthening the country's pluralistic governance structure. All Spanish regions have played a prominent role in advancing gender equality initiatives, developing distinctive policies and approaches that reflect their unique contexts and political landscapes. These regions, often referred to as "femocracy strongholds," have followed the national government's lead in adopting gender equality plans and implementing a range of measures to promote women's empowerment and address gender disparities. While there is some degree of similarity in their efforts, reflecting the influence of European Union directives, each region has also developed its own distinctive policy framework, discourse, and methods of intervention. These variations are shaped by factors such as regional political dynamics, historical legacies, and the involvement of women's movements. In particular, the region of Catalunya established the Comisión Interdepartamental de Promoción de la Mujer (Interdepartmental Commission of Woman's Promotion) in 1987 and later the Institut Catalá de la Dona (Catalonian Women's Institute) in 1989. Furthermore, "if an overall assessment of the Spanish Equality machinery is carried out, which also includes the regional level, we find a consolidated landscape of equality institutions, which is still strong"[154]. From 1988 onwards, Spain's Ministry of Equality (IME) initiated a series of national equality plans, setting the stage for six comprehensive initiatives to address gender disparities. These plans, including the Strategic Plans for Equal Opportunities (2008-2011 and 2014-2016), have been instrumental in shaping Spain's gender equality policy landscape. Following the national lead, regional governments also embarked on developing their own equality plans, aligning with the central government's efforts. These regional plans, spearheaded by women's agencies and involving various government departments, have spanned multiple cycles, reaching four or five rounds in some cases. For several decades, these plans served as the primary and sole policy instrument for implementing gender equality measures across Spain. Each equality plan meticulously outlines specific goals,

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[154] Bustelo, María. "Three decades of state feminism and gender equality policies in multi-governed Spain." Sex roles 74, no. 3-4 (2016): 107-120. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-014-0381-9

objectives, and actions to be undertaken by relevant government departments within a defined timeframe, outlining a roadmap for advancing gender equality in various spheres of society. While formally endorsed by cabinet bodies, these plans are often characterized as "soft law," placing a significant emphasis on the persuasive power of gender equality proponents.[155] Initially, regional plans drew inspiration from their national counterparts, gradually incorporating international guidelines - the UN Beijing Platform - and, particularly in subsequent iterations, European directives - Strategic Framework and Action Plan IV. Despite their effectiveness, gender equality plans face limitations when serving as the sole policy instrument, particularly in the absence of legally binding frameworks, as was the case in Spain until the early 2000s. To address these shortcomings, Spain has introduced additional policy tools to augment equality plans. These include equality laws established at both the national and regional levels, as well as gender units specifically designed to provide support to public administrations and their staff in promoting gender equality. According to academics and researchers, "it can be claimed that this tendency towards 'hard legislation' has a European Union influence, especially about anti-discrimination policies, an area very much influenced by legal expert actors and by the pressure to adapt to EU legislation"[156]. Considering gender mainstreaming as a guiding principle, the Spanish national parliament passed their equality law, the Law for Effective Equality Between Women and Men[157], on 22nd March 2007. The issues addressed here are: "the equality principle and protection against discrimination; public policies for equality; equality and mass media; the right to work, with equal opportunities (reconciliation measures and equality plans for private enterprises); the equality principle in public administrations (including the military and the security corps); equal treatment in access to goods and services; equality in private enterprises' social responsibility; and organizational regulations". In addition to gender equality plans, Spain established several institutions to further strengthen its efforts, for instance the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Equality Between Women and Men (CMIM) serves as a coordinating body, ensuring that gender equality is integrated into policies

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[155] Bustelo, M. (2004). La evaluación de las políticas de género en España. Madrid: La Catarata.

[156] Bustelo, M. (2009). Spain: Intersectionality faces the strong gender norm. International Feminist Journal of Politics, 11, 530–546. doi:10. 1080/14616740903237491.

[157] Constitutional Act 3/2007 of 22 March for effective equality between women and men. http://www.isotita.gr/var/uploads/NOMOTHESIA/INTERNATIONAL/SPANISH%20constitutional%20 act3_2007_en.pdf

across various government ministries. Each ministry also established an Equality Unit, tasked with gathering and analyzing statistics, providing statistical advice, conducting research on gender equality, contributing to gender impact assessments, proposing training programs, and monitoring compliance with gender equality legislation. These gender equality agencies have played a crucial role in advancing gender equality in Spain, collaborating closely with feminist movements to advocate for policies that promote women's rights and address gender-based discrimination. For instance, they played a key role in securing legal protections for abortion and sex workers, as well as in increasing women's political representation. From the mid-1980s the Women's Institute supported demands from the feminist movements for abortion on demand, until the right was institutionalized in 1985 with the Abortion Act, which partly coincided with the goals of the feminist activism thanks to WI institution-building efforts for open access to policy environment.[158] In a landmark move, Spain enacted a comprehensive law on comprehensive protection against gender violence in 2004, garnering unanimous support from all parliamentary parties - namely Ley Organica 1/2004 on measures of comprehensive protection against gender violence[159]. This groundbreaking legislation encompassed a comprehensive approach to preventing, safeguarding, and punishing violence against women. One of its most notable innovations was the imposition of stricter penalties for domestic violence perpetrated by men compared to women. The fight against violence against women has been a galvanizing force and a unifying cause for the Spanish feminist movement in recent decades. Moreover, Spain amended its Civil Code in 2005 through Article 68[160], explicitly mandating that both spouses share household responsibilities and caregiving duties - although the practical implementation of this mandate remains challenging. The feminist movement has persistently advocated for male involvement in household and caregiving tasks as a fundamental pillar of an equitable society. On November 30, 2006, Parliament passed a comprehensive law aimed at empowering dependent individuals and promoting their well-being, namely the Ley de

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[158] Valiente, Celia. "Are Gender Equality Institutions the Policy Allies of the Feminist Movement? A Contingent 'Yes' in the Spanish Central State." In New and Alternative Social Movements in Spain, pp. 43-62. Routledge, 2015.https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/29399759.pdf

[159] Gobierno de España, Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género. BOE núm. 313, de 29/12/2004. Entrada en vigor: 28/01/2005. Jefatura de Estado BOE-A-2004-21760. Permalink ELI:https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2004/12/28/1/con

[160] Código Civil Español, art. 68.

promoción de la autonomía personal y atención a las personas en situación de dependencia[161]. It established the universal right of dependent people to receive care partly or completely financed by the state. For decades, the feminist movement has denounced that dependent people were cared for mainly by female relatives on an unpaid basis.[162] However, since 2008 austerity measures imposed by the European Union and the Spanish government in response to the economic crisis have influenced the Spanish gender regime, steering it towards a more neoliberal and conservative direction. Instead, feminist movements and civil society organizations have actively resisted these changes, alongside women's refusal to be relegated to domestic roles. The emergence of new local governments with a civic platform has also provided a platform for opposing these shifts. Despite deregulatory employment policies, budget cuts in gender equality initiatives, and restructuring of equality mechanisms, the ongoing feminist and civil society efforts have largely thwarted the re-domestication of women. In the spring of 2011, a wave of protests swept across Spain, as thousands of citizens occupied public squares to demand social reforms and a more responsive political system.[163] This movement, known as the Indignados or 15M movement, continues to advocate for change today, but instead of large-scale demonstrations and occupations, the movement has shifted its focus to grassroots organizing at the neighborhood level, primarily addressing issues of housing and social solidarity. Through the practice of direct democracy over time in the assemblies of various Spanish towns women have gained more space and visibility compared with previous social movements and several frames incorporate the intersectionality of inequalities and oppressions. Over the past decade, gender issues have emerged as a key point of contention in the political discourse between right- and left-wing parties in Spain. Due to the division of administrative responsibilities between regional and local governments, Spanish municipalities possess the authority to formulate and implement

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[161] Gobierno de España, Ley 39/2006, de 14 de diciembre, de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de dependencia. BOE núm. 299, de 15/12/2006. Entrada en vigor: 01/01/2007. Jefatura del Estado. BOE-A-2006-21990 Permalink ELI: https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2006/12/14/39/con

[162] Valiente, Celia. "Spain at the Vanguard in European Gender Equality Policies." In Gender Politics in the Expanding European Union: Mobilization, Inclusion, Exclusion, edited by Silke Roth, NED-New edition, 1., 101–17. Berghahn Books, 2008. Pp.106. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qd92z.10

[163] Dufour, Pascale, Héloïse Nez, and Marcos Ancelovici. "Introduction: From the Indignados to Occupy: Prospects for Comparison." In *Street Politics in the Age of Austerity: From the Indignados to Occupy*, edited by Pascale Dufour, Héloïse Nez, and Marcos Ancelovici, 11–40. Amsterdam University Press, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d8hb8t.4

gender equality initiatives. Moreover, Spanish municipalities have witnessed a growing politicization following a period of predominantly technocratic local governance. This trend culminated in 2015 with the electoral triumphs of NM platforms in major Spanish cities, including Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, and Valencia. The newly elected governments made substantial strides in advancing gender equality policies during their 2015-2019 tenure. The Spanish State offers a scenario where feminism and democracy are interwoven cornerstones in modern municipalism discourses and initiatives; so much that the terminology of "feminization of politics" has been adopted to encapsulate the democratic renewal in periods of institutional political crisis. Furthermore, "organized in citizen-led platforms, across activism and institutional politics and transcending traditional party lines, new municipal actors seek to exceed the limitations of electoral politics through the implementation of deliberative and participatory mechanisms"[164]. In the words of Laura Pérez, the head of Feminism and LGTBI at Barcelona City Council, "feminism is the perspective that empowers us to perceive the world through the eyes of those who have always been relegated to the fringes"[165] and municipalism fosters the inclusion of all citizens and the democratization of political practices. The feminist dimension of municipalism rests on the notion that local governments function as public institutions of proximity, a territorial scale that allegedly facilitates the politicization of the private and everyday and the implementation of tangible actions to effect change in the present of people's lives; for example, through fundamental needs such as food, housing, streets (overall urban planning), and waste collection. Indeed this politics of common can be interpreted in two distinct ways: 1) as a collective endeavor where members of a community work together to safeguard shared resources and assets, often by implementing community wealth building methodologies that redistribute locally generated wealth; and 2) as a political response to the neoliberal management of economic crises and the gender-based governance structures that austerity measures often reinforce in post-crisis settings.[166] Similar to other Southern European nations, Spain experienced

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[164] González, Paloma Caravantes. "Feminism, populism, and local democracy: the feminist policy agenda of new municipalist governments in Spain." https://www.recp.es/files/view/pdf/congress-papers/15-0/2711/

[165] Pérez, Laura. 2018. "El devenir feminista de las instituciones." Catalunya plural, February 27. Accessed April 21, 2018. http://catalunyaplural.cat/es/devenir-feminista-las-instituciones/

[166] Federici, Silvia. 2018. Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons. Oakland and Brooklyn: PM Press and Kairos.

a surge in non-EU immigration flows from the 1990s onwards. In this context, policies aimed at managing the growing cultural diversity associated with these migrations gained prominence. Paradoxically, this approach inadvertently shifted the focus of racism to a perceived recent phenomenon, framing it as a negative response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration.[167] This close association between racism and non-EU migration not only blurred the lines between xenophobia and racism but also served to suppress the historical discrimination faced by non-white nationals, such as Roma and Black citizens, and perpetuated the perception of immigrants as perpetual outsiders, forever 'unbelonging' to Europe. Additionally, discussions about racism rarely gained traction in public discourse or media attention, often relegated to isolated instances of violent acts committed by extremist individuals.[168] As a counter-response, anti-racist grassroots movements that confront this narrative have emerged in recent years showcasing links between racism, modernity and the constitution of the Spanish State.[169] While Spanish politicians have not formally acknowledged racism as a distinct public issue warranting specific interventions, there exists a somewhat nebulous field of anti-racism that emerges from the intersection of various political spheres, each encompassing an anti-racist element to varying degrees. This awareness is evident in the anti-discrimination framework established in response to the European Union's Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/CE)[170], which incorporates provisions addressing ethnic and racial discrimination. Anti-racism also finds expression in immigrant integration policies. For instance, under the Socialist Party administration, the Ministry General Secretariat for Immigration and Emigration drafted a "Comprehensive strategy against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and other related forms of intolerance"[171] in 2011. Additionally, consultative platforms have emerged under this umbrella, addressing race-

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[167] Sebastiani, Luca. "Problematising mainstream Spanish antiracism: race, racism and whiteness." Social Identities 28, no. 1 (2022): 74-89. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2021.1966762

[168] SOS Racismo. (2001). El Ejido. Racismo y explotación laboral. Icaria.

[169] Garcés, F. H., & Amzian, S. (2017, September 22). 1492: por un antirracismo político. El Salto. https://www.elsaltodiario.com/1492/1492-por-un-antirracismo-politico

[170] Council of the European Union, Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 29/06/2000. Date of effect: 19/07/2000. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/procedure/EN/1999_253

[171] Ministry of Labor and Immigration, Comprehensive Strategy against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Madrid, 4 November 2011. NIPO: 790-11-183-8 General State Administration Catalogue of Publications http://publicacionesoficiales.boe.es

related issues. Moreover, and under the advocacy of Roma organizations, policies implementing the "EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2012–2020"[172] have recently begun to address the struggle against anti-gypsyism. The annual survey "Evolution of Racism, Xenophobia, and Other Forms of Intolerance in Spain," conducted since 2007 by the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE)[173], provides an example of how racism is downplayed. While acknowledging that intolerant attitudes are rooted in stereotypes and prejudices, the 2015 edition of the survey notes the "practical absence of racist or xenophobic incidents" in recent years. This assertion has been criticized for its potential to obscure the pervasiveness of racism and xenophobia in Spanish society. In regard to progress on equal rights also for the LGBTQ+ community, since 1994 the Ley de Arrendamientos Urbanos[174] has institutionalized same-sex couples some recognition rights. In a landmark decision, Spain legalized same-sex marriage and adoption through Act 13/2005[175] in 2005 under the leadership of Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, becoming the third country in the world to do so. Spanish legislation explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, and "any other personal or social condition or circumstance" in both employment and the provision of goods and services. A comprehensive anti-discrimination law, known as the Zerolo Law[176], was enacted by the Spanish parliament on June 30, 2022, further strengthening protections for LGBTQ+ individuals. On February 16, 2023 Spain's parliament passed a comprehensive law to expand protections and entrench rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual,

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[172] European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions, National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework. Bruxelles, 21 May 2011, /* COM/2012/0226 final */ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0226

[173] Fernández, M., Consuelo, V., & Caro, R. (2015). Evolución del racismo, la xenofobia y otras formas de intolerancia en España. Informe-Encuesta 2015. Gobierno de España & OBERAXE.

[174] Gobierno de España, Ley 29/1994, de 24 de noviembre, de Arrendamientos Urbanos. BOE núm. 282, de 25/11/1994. Entrada en vigor: 01/01/1995. Jefatura del Estado. BOE-A-1994-26003 Permalink ELI: https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/1994/11/24/29/con

[175] Gobierno de España, Ley 13/2005, de 1 de julio, por la que se modifica el Código Civil en materia de derecho a contraer matrimonio. BOE núm. 157, de 2 de julio de 2005, páginas 23632 a 23634 (3 págs.) Sección:I. Disposiciones generales. Jefatura del Estado. BOE-A-2005-11364 Permalink ELI: https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2005/07/01/13

[176] Gobierno de Espana, Ley 15/2022, de 12 de julio, integral para la igualdad de trato y la no discriminación. BOE núm. 167, de 13/07/2022. Entrada en vigor: 14/07/2022 Jefatura del Estado BOE-A-2022-11589 Permalink ELI: https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2022/07/12/15/con

transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people. The statute has become known colloquially as the Ley Trans[177] because provisions that allow for gender recognition based on self-identification through a simple administrative process have provoked heated public debate. As reported by Human Rights Watch, the law improves protections for LGBTI people more broadly "by expanding access to assisted reproductive techniques; strengthening sexuality education; banning medically unnecessary, 'normalizing' surgeries for intersex children before they can consent; enabling parental recognition for unmarried same-sex couples; and introducing measures to combat discrimination against LGBTI people in various sectors, including in healthcare, employment, and housing"[178]. However, adopting intersectionality in the pursuit of equality and nondiscrimination involves recognizing human rights as interconnected, benefiting not only those currently experiencing vulnerability but all inhabitants of the city. The Madrid City Council stands out as one of the pioneering local institutions that have embraced intersectionality in policy-making based on international recommendations.[179] Analyzing how its personnel navigate this novel policy concept within the existing knowledge base, tools, institutional framework, and organizational culture is crucial for identifying specific challenges in implementing intersectionality-informed policies. In addition, the Human Rights Strategic Plan demonstrates that intersectionality can be integrated into policy actions even without a mandate in national legislation. However, without enforceable national standards, the implementation of intersectionality faces issues of legitimacy and theoretical ambiguity. Developing guidelines encompassing operational definitions, illustrative examples of intersectionality, and protocols for assessing the intersectional impact of implemented measures can enhance successful implementation. The plan prioritizes the rights of women, the LGBTQ+ community, ethnic minorities, migrants, and individuals with disabilities to live free from discrimination and violence across all age groups. Through collaboration among department heads, specialized technical

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[177] Gobierno de España. Ley 4/2023, de 28 de febrero, para la igualdad real y efectiva de las personas trans y para la garantía de los derechos de las personas LGTB. BOE núm. 51, de 01/03/2023. Entrada en vigor: 02/03/2023. Jefatura del Estado Referencia: BOE-A-2023-5366 Permalink ELI: https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2023/02/28/4/con

[178] Human Rights Watch. (2023, February 16). Victory in Fight for Gender Recognition in Spain. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/16/victory-fight-gender-recognition-spain-0

[179] La Barbera, MariaCaterina & Espinosa-Fajardo, Julia & Caravantes, Paloma. (2022). Implementing Intersectionality in Public Policies: Key Factors in the Madrid City Council, Spain. Politics and Gender. 19. 10.1017/S1743923X22000241.

personnel, and civil society, the plan envisions the approval of municipal decrees, protocols, and the design of specific measures to be executed by various departments and municipal bodies.[180] Just as with the implementation of gender equality policies, if the intersectionality approach does not permeate the entire organizational structure horizontally and vertically, it risks remaining confined to the planning stage or sporadic and disjointed actions.[181] Another challenge came in the form of the global pandemic in 2020, indeed the imposition of lockdown measures in Spain resulted in the closure of businesses and the implementation of work-from-home policies, directly leading to labor market disruptions that are documented in this study. Additionally, the closure of schools amplified the impact of these disruptions by creating a sudden shortage of childcare options. Women were disproportionately affected by job losses during the COVID-19 crisis due to their overrepresentation in sectors that were severely impacted by the pandemic, such as the service industry. Previous recessions have typically disproportionately affected male-dominated sectors like manufacturing and construction, while the COVID-19 pandemic hit female-dominated sectors like restaurants, hotels, and travel more heavily. As a result of these factors, it is likely that women would assume a disproportionate share of household and childcare responsibilities.[182] The lockdown measures, coupled with the closure of schools, eliminated the option of outsourcing childcare through formal channels such as schools and significantly reduced the availability of informal childcare arrangements through sources like grandparents. Given the existing gender imbalance in the distribution of childcare and household tasks, this would lead to a significant increase in the burden on mothers. As similar research was conducted throughout Europe, a case study from Italy also finds gendered responses in housework and childcare, with men's response varying much more with the spousal work situation than women's.[183] They also note that working mothers with very young children

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[180] Madrid City Council. 2017. "Plan Estratégico de Derechos Humanos (2017–2019)" [Human Rights Strategic Plan (2017–2019)].
https://www.madrid.es/UnidadWeb/Contenidos/Descriptivos/ficheros/PlanDDHH_Madrid.pdf

[181] Espinosa-Fajardo, Julia. 2016. "La evaporación de los compromisos de género en la práctica del desarrollo" [The evaporation of gender commitments in development practice]. In El mundo que queremos: la Agenda 2030 [The world we want: The 2030 agenda]. Zaragoza: Mira Editores, 151–89.

[182] Hupkau, Claudia and Barbara Petrongolo. "Work, care and gender during the Covid-19 crisis" LSE Centre for Economic Performance, CEP Covid-19 analysis, Paper No.002, May 2020.

[183] Del Boca, Daniela, Noemi Oggero, Paola Profeta and Maria Cristina Rossi. "Women's work before and during covid-19." Covid Economics, Vetted and Real-Time Papers, The Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), ISSUE 28, June 12, 2020, pp.70-90.

(ages 0-5) had the hardest time balancing work and family demands. The results from the survey conducted in Spain in 2020 show that women were affected only slightly more by (temporary) job losses, and they were more likely to work from home during the confinement period. However, it finds that the volume of childcare and housework taken on by parents increased significantly during this period. This increase was absorbed by both mothers and fathers doing more hours, but women continued to shoulder most of the burden resulting in a gender gap in parents' shares of childcare and housework during the lockdown.[184] In response to the insecurity left in the wake of the pandemic, the Spanish government established the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan[185] in April 2021 to access Next Generation EU[186] funds, outlining its commitment for "the transformation and modernization of production and consumption models, employment and quality education, the fight against climate change based on ecological transition and decarbonization, the digital revolution and innovation, as well as health and social welfare". Delineated priorities align with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and necessitate further pursuit to attain and consolidate inclusive, equitable, and sustainable growth over the long term. Additionally, these priorities harmonize with the goals of the Spanish Urban Agenda, specifically Strategic Objective 7, which emphasizes fostering local productivity, job creation, and the revitalization and diversification of economic activities, while simultaneously promoting smart, sustainable, and high-quality tourism and key sectors within the local economy. Based on a report published in 2021 by the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, the Government of Spain concentrated efforts in this office in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda as it promoted the Spanish Urban Agenda (SUA)[187] which, as a National Urban Policy, is the key instrument in the process of implementing the UN's NUA in the country. Indeed, the

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[184] Farré, Lídia; Fawaz, Yarine; Gonzalez, Libertad; Graves, Jennifer (2020) : How the COVID-19 Lockdown Affected Gender Inequality in Paid and Unpaid Work in Spain, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 13434, Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), Bonn http://hdl.handle.net/10419/223876

[185] Gobierno de Espana, Plan de Recuperación, transformación y resiliencia, Madrid, 16 June 2021, https://www.mintur.gob.es/en-us/recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/Paginas/plan-recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia.aspx

[186] European Commission, Next Generation EU, Directorate-General for Budget, Bruxelles, 3 May 2020, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM:next_generation_eu

[187] Gobierno de España. Plan de acción para la implementación de la Agenda 2030. Madrid, 2018. https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/PublicacionesOficiales/INFORME%20DE%20PROGRESO.%20LA%20IMPLEMENTACIÓN%20DE%20LA%20AGENDA%202030%20EN%20ESPAÑA.pdf

NUA emphasizes that genuine progress lies in the development and adoption of a National Urban Policy that fosters a novel approach to urban development, encompassing an integrated, holistic, and comprehensive perspective.[188] The SUA, in force since February 2019, effectively translates global objectives with urban relevance (applicable to all urban environments) into a practical and pragmatic instrument for achieving them. By grounding these objectives in specific territories, the SUA facilitates a systematic and strategic approach to their implementation. The SUA enables the 'localization' of global goals at the municipal and sub-regional levels, aligning with the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. In fact, meeting the objectives of the SUA contributes to achieving 92 of these global targets. This approach aligns with the UN's recognition of cities as both the source of significant social, economic, and environmental challenges and the key to their solutions. The SUA serves as the national policy that bridges the gap between global objectives and the specific realities of urban, social, environmental, and economic contexts. Through its proposed methodology and enhanced governance mechanisms, the SUA empowers stakeholders to develop integrated and comprehensive strategic planning. Moreover, on 2 March 2019, the Council of Ministers approved the National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2019-2023[189].

3.2. Mainstreaming gender and non-discrimination in Barcelona

In 1978, the Spanish Constitution[190] ushered in a new era of recognizing and protecting fundamental rights, which was further strengthened by the Catalan Statute of Autonomy[191] in 2006, the first statutory document to explicitly enumerate these rights. Barcelona, in line with this commitment, has actively expressed its support for the protection of rights by ratifying the European Charter of the Rights of Cities, which is

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[188] Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, Progress report on the United Nations New Urban Agenda, Government of Spain, Madrid, April 2021, https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/node/781

[189] Gobierno de España, National strategy to combat homelessness in Spain 2019-2023, General Directorate for Family diversity and social services, Madrid, 23 March 2019. NIPO: 129-20-005-2. https://www.mdsocialesa2030.gob.es/derechos-sociales/inclusion/contenido-actual-web/estrategia_en.pdf

[190] Gobierno de España, Constitución Española, Ministry of Interior, 27 December 1978, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dbd6e7d7.html [accessed 1 February 2024

[191] Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya, aprovat per Llei Orgànica 6/2006, del 19 de juliol, de reforma del Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya (BOE núm. 174, de 20 de julio de 2006).

currently adhered to by nearly 500 cities across Europe. To promote coexistence and civility among citizens, the Barcelona City Council adopted the Ordinance on Measures to Enhance and Ensure Public Space Coexistence[192] in 2006. In addition, it promulgated the Charter of Rights and Duties of Citizens[193] in its seventh final provision, which seeks to advance the realization of rights and the fulfillment of responsibilities by Barcelona residents, echoing the principles enshrined in the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. As documented by extensive research, the province of Barcelona - currently counting 5,5 million residents - is "one of the leading Spanish regions in engendering urban planning due to its strong feminist movement from the 1970s on and several women's collectives"[194]. There are several feminist grassroots organizations operating on the ground, for instance Col.lectiu Punt 6 is a professional women's cooperative in the field of architecture, urban planning and sociology that strive to mobilize women in Catalonia to improve their environments from the gender perspective. Since 2005 it has launched several initiatives in partnerships with the Catalan Institute of Women involving over 2000 women, civil society organizations and all levels of local and regional administration. They have created "a collection of innovative methods and tools, such as guide-books, exploratory activist- and photo-walks, perceptive and community maps, street parties, workshops and exhibitions"[195]. Barcelona serves as a microcosm of societal conflicts arising from diverse individual and group aspirations, such as tranquility, leisure, and identity. The City Council plays a crucial role in addressing and mitigating these conflicts while fostering negotiated solutions by acting as a mediator between conflicting parties. However, it is essential for those residing in or simply enjoying Barcelona to acknowledge and uphold a shared set of rights and responsibilities, thereby

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[192] Ajuntament de Barcelona. (2006). Ordenança de mesures per fomentar i garantir la convivència ciutadana a l'espai públic. Butlletí Oficial de la Província de Barcelona, n.20, Annex 1, p.14, 24 January 2006. http://w110.bcn.cat/fitxers/ajuntament/consolidadescat/convivencia.436.pdf

[193] Ajuntament de Barcelona. (2010). Carta de Ciutadania: Carta de Drets i Deures de Barcelona. http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/%5BPDF%5D%20Carta%20de%20Ciutadania.Carta%20de%20drets%20i%20deures%20de%20Barcelona.pdf

[194] Casanovas, R., Ciocoletto, A., Salinas, M.F., Valdivia, B.G., Muxi, Z. & Ortiz Escalante, S. (2015). Women Working. Urban assessment guide from a Gender Perspective. Barcelona: Col.lectiu Punt 6.

[195] Horelli, Liisa. "Engendering urban planning in different contexts–successes, constraints and consequences." European Planning Studies 25, no. 10 (2017): 1779-1796. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Liisa-Horelli/publication/317564814_Engendering_urban_planning_in_different_contexts_-_successes_constraints_and_consequences/links/5c5706caa6fdccd6b5df93a2/Engendering-urban-planning-in-different-contexts-successes-constraints-and-consequences.pdf

establishing a foundation of trust among citizens. Moreover, the "Barcelona, city of rights"[196] program seeks to embed a human rights-centric approach into public policies and develop human rights-based policies aligned with specific thematic priorities, including advancing the right to the city and citizen rights, combating hate speech and discrimination, and promoting full citizenship. Among the program's key objectives is fostering a culture of human rights at the local level. To ensure the fulfillment of the right to the city and citizen rights, this department will implement a multifaceted approach involving internal initiatives to formulate specific human rights policies and external initiatives to raise awareness, provide training, and offer support to human rights organizations. The program actively collaborates with the Office for Non-Discrimination (OND) and the Barcelona Municipal Immigration Council to achieve its goals. The OND is a local agency and service established in 1998 within the Regidoria de Drets Civils (City Department for Civil Rights; RDC). As stated, "it has a mandate to protect human rights at the local level with an emphasis on non-discrimination; among its legal references there are international, EU and Spanish human rights-related norms, and the ECHR[197]. The OND pursues its mission by processing individual complaints in a similar way to that in which other international, state and local agencies already act. Complaints can be filed by individuals or NGOs and are collected through different channels. Since its establishment at international level, Barcelona City Council has embarked on a comprehensive gender mainstreaming initiative to ensure that all its endeavors promote gender equality. Its actions have entailed incorporating a gender-sensitive approach into the council's operations and organizational structure, as well as into all policies implemented throughout the city and its districts. This commitment to gender equity aligns with the council's vision of a Barcelona where everyone has equal opportunities and experiences a society free from discrimination. Barcelona's commitment to gender equality has a long and established history. However, efforts have primarily focused on implementing specific initiatives for women in various sectors and promoting participation through women's councils and two Women's Congresses held in 1999 and

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[196] Ajuntament de Barcelona. (2017). Programa Barcelona Ciutat de Drets: Accions de prevenció i garantia de drets de ciutadania i accions per incloure l'enfocament de drets humans. Barcelona: Àrea de Drets de Ciutadania, Transparència i Participació.
http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretsidiversitat/sites/default/files/MesuraGovernBCNDrets_CAT_0.pdf

[197] Grigolo, Michele. "Human rights and cities: the Barcelona Office for Non-Discrimination and its work for migrants." In Sociology and Human rights: new engagements, pp. 86-104. Routledge, 2014.

2009. Integrating gender perspectives into all municipal policies, a concept known as gender mainstreaming, is still in its early stages.[198] While various women's plans have included gender mainstreaming as a proposal since 1995, its effective implementation has been slow and limited. The first mention of gender mainstreaming appeared in the 'Municipal Plan for Women' (1995-1999), which emphasized the importance of non-discriminatory municipal policies. This included incorporating aspects such as non-sexist language, implementing a non-discriminatory personnel policy, addressing sexual harassment, and recognizing care work. The 'Municipal Program for Women' (2001-2004) further introduced the strategic line of transversalizing the woman's perspective as a criterion in municipal action and prioritizing work with the city's territories. This concept was reiterated in the 'Municipal Plan for Women' (2005-2009). In 2010, an assessment of gender mainstreaming implementation at the City Council revealed that practically none of the identified actions for effective "transversalizacion" of gender equality principles had been carried out. However, the implementation of the first internal equal opportunities plan for human resources in accordance with Law 3/2007 was highlighted as a positive step. This first Internal Equality Plan, valid for two years (2011-2013), aimed primarily to promote gender equality in the City Council's internal human resources policy. Its evaluation emphasized the need for a comprehensive second plan. Consequently, in March 2015, the more ambitious and consensus driven 'Second Plan for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men' (IIPIODH) was approved. Since then, the Barcelona City Council has taken several steps to promote gender mainstreaming in recent years. For instance, in 2013, the City Council approved a decree on responsible public procurement with social and environmental criteria, including some specific clauses aimed at promoting gender equality, such as requiring contractors to take into account the needs of women-owned businesses. Alas in 2015, the City Council approved two regulations that affect the promotion of gender mainstreaming by establishing requirements for the preparation of gender impact reports and for the use of non-sexist language in municipal documents. In 2013, the City Council established the Center for

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[198] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Departament de Transversalitat de Gènere, Government measures: Gender mainstreaming in Barcelona City Council, Regidor de Cycle de Vida, Féminismes i LGTBI Gerència de Recursos. Barcelona, 17 December 2015. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/sites/default/files/documentacio/mesura-govern-transversalitat-genere-cat.pdf

Information and Resources for Women (CIRD) which provides technical support for gender mainstreaming and works to promote gender equality in the city. The CIRD has published two reports on the status of gender mainstreaming at the Barcelona City Council. These reports found that some progress has been made, but that there are still significant challenges to be addressed. One of the challenges is the distance between discourse and political practice around gender equality as the City Council has a strong commitment to gender equality, but this commitment is not always reflected in the day-to-day work of the Council. Another challenge is the persistence of specific difficulties in the most masculinized sectors. For example, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in the tech industry. The City Council is working to address these challenges, but it will take time and effort to achieve real change. Despite these challenges, the Barcelona City Council is committed to promoting gender mainstreaming. In this regard, the city government demonstrates its commitment to gender equality through a comprehensive public policy implemented by two distinct departments. The Department of Social Services, Equity, and Diversity focuses on initiatives directly impacting the population, such as programs targeting specific groups. Meanwhile, the Gender Integration Unit within the city administration works to ensure gender equality principles are embedded throughout all internal policies and practices. This unit, established in 2015, holds a high level of authority within the city's organizational structure. In 2017, through a government measure on the interconnection between urbanism and gender-perspective, the municipality "reaffirmed its commitment to gender mainstreaming in all its areas in order to create policies and mechanisms that guarantee the gender perspective at both political and technical levels in all the actions, programs, and urban policies of the city"[199]. The governance for the following years envisioned sustainable urban planning that incorporates the gender dimension into account emphasizes the importance of care. From an ecofeminist perspective, care is not just a women's issue, but a responsibility of everyone. A compassionate approach to urban planning aims to create cities that prioritize the well-being of residents, the natural environment, and the planet as a whole. This involves designing cities that are inclusive and accessible to all, ensuring that safe, affordable housing, transportation, and childcare

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[199] Ajuntament de Barcelona. Mesura de govern, Urbanisme amb perspectiva de gènere: L'urbanisme de la vida quotidiana. Àrea d'Ecologia, Urbanisme i Mobilitat, Barcelona, 22 March 2017. www.barcelona.cat

are readily available. It also entails creating public spaces that cater to individuals of all ages and abilities, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Additionally, promoting sustainable practices is crucial for fostering a caring city due to reduction of reliance on private vehicles, adoption of recycling and composting practices, and conservation of energy resources. Supporting businesses and organizations dedicated to sustainability further contributes to creating a greener and more environmentally conscious urban landscape. For this purpose, the Government measure of participatory process for the elaboration of the Municipal Action Program (PAM) and the District Action Programs (PAD) 2016-2019 was promulgated, establishing that for genuine inclusivity in city planning, the government should actively seek participation from individuals from diverse backgrounds, particularly those who may not be traditionally represented in decision-making processes. It hence includes groups such as immigrants, individuals facing personal or social challenges, and those who have historically been marginalized, such as women, caregivers, young people, and individuals with disabilities; "given that its ultimate goal is to make Barcelona a city for living in, today's streets need to be redefined as public spaces; as habitable places; as community spaces; as an extension of housing territory; as a space for games, greenery, history and local life of neighborhoods"[200]. Drawing on the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (ECSHRC)[201] Barcelona policy documents delineate the city as an ideal space to defend fundamental rights regarding socio-political participation, health, education, culture, leisure housing, environmental protection, etc. Strategies include: Barcelona's Programa d'Actuació Municipal 2016-2019[202] (MP), Barcelona's Plan para la Justicia de Género 2016-2020[203] (GEP), Barcelona's Pla Municipal per la Diversitat Sexual i de Gènere 2016-2020[204] (GSD). The localized nature of cities provides an

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[200] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Let's fill the streets with fun: Establishing superblocks in Barcelona. Commission for Ecology, Urban Planning and Mobility, Barcelona, May 2016. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ecologiaurbana/sites/default/files/en_gb_MESURA%20GOVERN%20SUPERILLES.pdf

[201] UCLG, European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City. Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights. 2001. Available from: https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/sites/default/files/UCLG_Global_Charter_Agenda_HR_City_0.pdf

[202] Barcelona City Council. 2016c. "Programa d'Actuació Municipal 2016-2019". https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/mercats/sites/default/files/pam2016.pdf

[203] Barcelona City Council. 2016b. "Plan para la Justicia de Género 2016-2020". Accessed July 16, 2020. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/es/plan-para-la-justicia-de-genero-2016-2020-0

[204] Barcelona City Council. 2016a. "Pla Municipal per la Diversitat Sexual i de Gènere 2016-2020 ". https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnvsodi/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PLA-M_LGTBI_2016-2020.pdf.

opportunity to utilize "proximity tools" to address gender-based crises (GEP 13) and build a more inclusive and sustainable urban environment (MP 29, 31, 172). As is happening in the Spanish capital of Madrid, Barcelona city prioritizes decentralization, both within and beyond their city limits, by delegating administrative authority to neighborhoods and asserting the role of local governments in state governance. Efficiency, equity, and democratization underpin the pursuit of decentralization. Local governments possess a greater understanding of community needs and can effectively address everyday concerns, fostering a more responsive and citizen-centric municipal approach (MP 158, 177; GEP 18). Additionally, citizens gain greater oversight of public affairs through direct participation (MP 35). While Barcelona's municipal plan recognizes the limitations of local authority, such as the lack of legally binding participatory processes (MP 172, 177), it also emphasizes the potential of cities to act as knowledge hubs for other governance levels (MP 192, 193). The gender equality plans underscore the importance of recognizing the diverse nature of the population, particularly the intersections of gender with other axes of inequality, including age, class, sexual identity and orientation, ethnic origin, and so on (GEP 59), as a key factor in achieving social equity. Moreover, the MP identifies two interlinked challenges: growing economic disparities, evident in class and regional distinctions (MP 13, 18, 45), and a faltering democratic system marked by a decline in trust in public representatives and institutions (MP 35, 171-173). These crises are analyzed through a gender lens, highlighting how the economic framework relies on gendered labor arrangements, disproportionately impacting migrant women (MP 123). The policy document also denounces the unequal distribution of power and decision-making positions along gender lines (MP 61). The gender equality plan of the city expands on this economic analysis, providing a specific diagnosis of the feminization of employment and precarity (GEP 7), the gender imbalance in care responsibilities, and the undervaluation of traditionally female-dominated occupations. The proposed measures include fostering a social economy rooted in collaboration and territorial connections (MP 116, 123, 126), recognizing, valuing, and restructuring care work (MP 56, 62, 127). As emphasized by the GEP (56), "a public policy aimed at socializing and democratizing care responsibilities is essential" and in its definition of a "necessarily feminist" politics of the common (7), it also advocates for reclaiming public spaces for community use, particularly with regard to the diverse gendered experiences and perceptions of urban

amenities and public transportation (GEP 85-93). The MP recognizes the existing network of associations in Barcelona neighborhoods and proposes strengthening community life by facilitating self-organizing initiatives (MP 172, 182) and ensuring the conditions for citizen empowerment (MP 35, 171). Moreover, Barcelona documents underscore the importance of inclusive citizen participation, addressing gender disparities that hinder women's involvement in all their diversity (MP 178-179; GEP 47). The municipalist agenda is envisioned as a "collective project" (MP 4, 35, 171) founded on the "co-responsibility and co-creation of policies among technical professionals, politicians, and citizens" (MP 172). Gender equity serves as a central objective of institutional reform (MP 62), and citywide plans emphasize the significance of incorporating a gender lens into municipal operations. For instance, MP incorporates gender equality and social clauses into its plans for restructuring the City Council (MP 128, 185). At the same time the GEP identifies common obstacles in institutional settings: a lack of gender-specific diagnosis, evaluation, and limited utilization of disaggregated data (GEP 35); reduced reliance on gender-based analysis reports and varying interpretations of "gender equity" (GEP 36); disjointed structures or the absence of such structures that hinder the implementation of gender mainstreaming (GEP 36-38); inadequate training on gender perspectives (GEP 39); a lack of gender considerations in budgeting, hiring criteria, and labor policy (GEP 40-42); and the absence of women's collectives in participation mechanisms (GEP 47). To address these limitations, the city's gender equality plan advocates for restructuring the municipal institution, establishing gender mainstreaming departments and structures, such as Barcelona's Department of Feminism and LGBTI, and implementing gender-specific training and a gender strategy for budgeting (GEP 25-47). In addition, the GEP aims to facilitate collaboration between women's groups and other areas and departments of the City Council. When local organizations and governments collaborate, tools like women's safety audits can be mobilized to share information and policy recommendations that can inform policy development and urban planning. It can be very beneficial when non-governmental organizations and grassroots organizations collaborate with local metropolitan governments. On Barcelona's official website a map of the city illustrates a good part of the feminist and women's entities and groups that work for gender equality in the city,

carrying out several activities in very plural fields of action.[205] Currently it counts almost 250 feminist organizations operating throughout the metropolitan area, identifiable according to scope of action, type of action and district.

3.2.1 Partnership with cities' networks

In addition to fostering active and synergic participation on the ground, Barcelona engages in several transnational and interregional networks of cities exchanging capacity building knowledge and resources. In 2018, the mayors of Barcelona, Milan, and Athens committed to addressing inequality and promoting social justice as part of their efforts to achieve the Paris Agreement goals. They urged the European Commission, European governments, and all EU citizens to join them in this endeavor. C40 is a global network of nearly 100 mayors from leading cities worldwide, united in tackling the climate crisis.[206] These mayors are committed to ambitious goals: reducing emissions by half by 2030, contributing to limiting global warming to 1.5°C, and building healthy, equitable, and resilient communities through an inclusive, science-based, and collaborative approach. Climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations, despite being primarily caused by a select few. Recognizing this injustice, mayors signing the C40 Equity Pledge commit to taking stronger action in several areas:

- Community-driven development: Empowering communities to lead their own development initiatives, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.
- Inclusive climate action: Implementing climate-focused projects that deliver significant environmental, health, social, and economic benefits, especially in low-income and vulnerable communities.
- Equitable climate benefits: Ensuring that bold climate action benefits all residents equally, leaving no one behind.

Barcelona engages as a member of the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the largest organization of local and regional governments in the

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[205] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Mapa de entidades feministas. Mujeres y feminismos, Área de Derechos Sociales, Cultura, Educación y Ciclos de Vida. 2018. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/es/equidad-de-genero/mapa-de-entidades-feministas

[206] C40 Cities. "About C40." C40 Cities, 2024. https://www.c40.org/about-c40/.

world. Global cities and local governments, united through a network, strive to amplify the voices of their communities. This network aims to ensure local experiences shape global agendas by sharing stories and informing national reports. By fostering participation, creating tools for collaboration, and building partnerships, the network promotes transparency, democracy, and accountability. Notably, this network champions a gender-equal future, empowering communities and prioritizing well-being. A central initiative is the Feminist Municipal Movement, dedicated to building equitable territories where everyone can thrive. Local feminist efforts aim to redefine care as a right and responsibility, with local governments playing a leading role through public services. Ultimately, the network is committed to planning and providing public services inclusively and democratically, valuing and redistributing care work, upholding human rights, and ensuring equal opportunities for all, contributing to a better future for people and the planet; "mainstreaming accessibility and universal design as fundamental principles in public policies and plans benefits society as a whole by creating welcoming, safe, and user-friendly environments for everyone"[207]. Moreover, Barcelona participates in the Urban 20 (U20), a global network of mayors from major G20 cities and other significant urban centers that collaborates to influence the discussions of national leaders. This collaboration focuses on responding to the climate crisis by promoting and accelerating the transition to societies that are carbon-neutral, more inclusive, and more resilient. This network facilitates ongoing engagement between the G20 and cities, raises the profile of urban issues in the G20 agenda, and provides a platform for cities to develop a unified message and perspective that informs G20 negotiations. Each participating city is represented by its mayor and a key representative throughout the network's cycle. The primary outcome of this collaboration is a communique, delivered to the G20, that summarizes the collective perspective of the participating cities. This communique, along with any additional recommendations, is shared with the G20 leadership during their annual summit, which precedes the G20 Leaders' Summit. Similar to the G20's engagement with other organizations to gain diverse viewpoints on financial and socioeconomic challenges, this network operates independently and gathers input from a variety of sources. The network is permanently convened by two organizations, C40

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[207] UCLG, UCLG Decalogue: Towards cities, governments and a multilateral system that care for people, democracy and our planet. SDG Summit 2023, https://uclg.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/DECALOGUE_SDG-Summit-UCLG.pdf

Cities and United Cities and Local Governments, and its leadership rotates annually among participating cities, following the G20 cycle. The City Hub and Network for Gender Equity (CHANGE) is a global network of cities committed to advancing gender equality through innovative initiatives and sharing best practices. Barcelona is one of the founding members of CHANGE, and the city has actively participated in the network's activities since its inception. It convenes and supports city members committed to a shared goal but operating in distinct local contexts in order to transform government systems and services for more than 50 million women, girls, and people with non-binary gender identities living in CHANGE cities. Specifically, local policymakers can significantly impact the lives of caregivers, particularly in areas lacking government support. This initiative works with urban leaders to recognize and understand the critical role caregivers play with the aim to empower cities to strengthen care systems, alleviate burdens often placed on women and girls, and distribute care responsibilities more equitably within communities. In regard to gender-based violence, CHANGE cities aim to create public, private, and digital spaces that are safer and more inclusive. The initiative believes everyone should have free access to essential services and be able to actively engage and contribute to their communities. Key areas of focus include violence prevention, victim and survivor support, building trust in local institutions, and holding perpetrators accountable. Another key challenge relieved, while localized data is crucial for tailoring policies and programs, many municipalities lack detailed information. Recognizing the importance of data-driven approaches, the initiative assists cities in gathering and interpreting data against specific indicators related to women's experiences in various areas, such as the built environment, governance, economic opportunity, and physical autonomy. In addition, Barcelona is part of the ECCAR, an initiative launched by UNESCO in 2004 to establish a network of cities interested in sharing experiences to improve their policies to put an end to racism. This coalition operates under a 10-point action plan, open for any European city to adopt. Participating cities commit to integrating these principles into their policies and allocating necessary resources for their implementation. Key goals include establishing a city-level monitoring network against racism, collecting data to measure progress, supporting victims and empowering them to defend themselves. Moreover, municipalities have "to ensure better information for city dwellers on their rights and obligations, on protection and legal options and on the

penalties for racist acts or behavior, by using a participatory approach, notably through consultations with service users and service providers"[208]. Barcelona is a member of the HRCN, a network of European cities that are committed to promoting human rights in all aspects of urban life. The HRCN provides a platform for cities to share knowledge, develop joint projects, and advocate for human rights at the local, national, and international levels. This online platform creates an interactive community of human rights city practitioners, while promoting the development of human rights in Europe and beyond. Its mission is to create an information hub and support people to connect and scale up the successful expansion of human rights cities, with a vision to help make human rights a reality for every citizen, in every city; and in doing so to foster participatory democracy and social justice. With this vision, Barcelona has become a member of a global collaborative effort, Cities Alliance which tackles urban poverty by empowering cities to achieve sustainable development. Since 1999, they've partnered with national and local governments to enhance urban governance, service delivery, and resilience through inclusive and effective management of urbanization. Hosted by UNOPS, Cities Alliance unites 23 members, including national governments, civil society organizations, international organizations, and UN agencies. Local and regional representation comes from UCLG, C40, ICLEI, and CGLF. Focused on innovative, multi-sectoral solutions, Cities Alliance aims to improve the lives of residents in 200 cities across 20 countries by 2030. They achieve this by supporting and implementing comprehensive programs worldwide, leveraging the expertise of diverse partnerships to drive positive urban change on a global scale.

3.3. First area of research: labor and work-life balance

Labor market access is a key factor in economic and social inequality between genders. While women's presence in the workforce has grown in recent decades, the economic crisis has stalled this progress. Based on the report "Gender in numbers"[209], men's activity rate - the percentage of men working or looking for work - has remained relatively stable

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[208] ECCAR, Toolkit for Equality: City policies against racism. UNESCO and ECCAR foreword, https://www.eccar.info/en/eccar-toolkit-equality

[209] Observatori IQ, El gènere en xifres: Condicions de vida de les dones i desigualtats de gènere a Barcelona (2019), Departament de Transversalitat de Gènere. Gerencia de Recursos. Barcelona, 2019. pp. 8-19 https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/ca

between 2013 and 2017, at around 66%. Women's activity rate, however, has declined slightly from 57.8% in 2013 to 55% in 2017. This decline is likely due to a number of factors, including the economic crisis, the gender pay gap, and the lack of affordable childcare. In 2018, the male activity rate increased to 68%, while the female activity rate remained unchanged at 55%. This suggests that men are recovering from the economic crisis more quickly than women. In Barcelona, there are more women employed than men as a direct contrast to the rest of Catalonia, where male employment is higher. However, in Barcelona, the employment rate for men is eight points higher than for women in the fourth quarter of 2018. In fact, the proportion of men of working age who are actually employed (the specific employment rate) increased between 2013 and 2015, and then remained almost stable. In contrast, the proportion of women employed has increased since then - in the period 2015-2017 - and has decreased in 2018, from 69.2% to 67%. Thus, in terms of the specific employment rate, inequality between men and women has increased: in the fourth quarter of 2013 there was a difference of 3.3 points and in the fourth quarter of 2018 the difference is 7.10 points. On the other hand, in terms of labor market permanence, the average number of years of paid work for men is 26 years and for women is 22. This difference reflects the inequalities in the professional trajectories of men and women, which are more continuous in the former case and more discontinuous or fragmented in the latter. In terms of the unemployment situation, it is observed that the unemployment rate has decreased for both men and women since 2013, and comparing the rates of the fourth quarter, it has done so in a very similar way between male and female workers. In the fourth quarter of 2018, the male unemployment rate is 9.1% and the female unemployment rate is 11.3%. This element, like the employment rate itself, points to the hypothesis formulated by feminist economists that the exit from the labor crisis would be faster and more successful for men than for women. In terms of working conditions, there is a significant difference in the male and female part-time rates, which are twice as high for women as for men in the city, as well as in Catalonia and the rest of Spain. In the case of Barcelona, an analysis of working hours shows that the feminization of part-time work has not changed during the years of the crisis, and that in 2014 and 2015 the incidence of part-time work was higher for both sexes than it is now. Women are much more present in the public sector, while men are more present in self-employment and entrepreneurship. Specifically, the bulk of the employed population in

Barcelona is concentrated in areas such as education (10.3%), health and social services (8.8%), hospitality (8.6%) and extraterritorial organizations and other services (23%). In terms of gender differences, in more than half of sectors and economic activities there is an uneven distribution between men and women. This inequality is due to the horizontal segregation between areas of work, which means that women are concentrated in jobs that are characterized by lower pay and social prestige, which are largely an extension of activities related to the domestic and reproductive sphere. For example, activities related to construction and domestic work are extreme cases (with more than 80% male participation in the former case, and 90% female participation in the latter). There is also a gender pattern in terms of the type of occupation: women are more present in professions related to personal services or security and in administrative positions in the public or private sector. On the other hand, men are more present in professions of management, in professions related to trade and catering and in the industrial and construction sectors. Horizontal segregation is also complemented by vertical segregation: management positions are 63% male, although the gender gap is smaller than in Catalonia, where men represent 68%. Thus, it can be inferred that the glass ceiling in Barcelona is lower than in Catalonia as a whole, possibly due to the important weight of the public administration, a space where women and men have more equity in terms of promotion. Regarding domestic and care work, while both men and women in Barcelona acknowledge the significant value of caregiving, there's a gender gap in perceived social recognition of its importance. Women tend to assign higher importance (10 on a scale of 0-10) to caregiving compared to men (47% versus 35%). This discrepancy suggests a disconnect between personal understanding of care's importance and how valued it is within society. Women are even more critical of this gap: only 23% believe caregiving receives adequate social recognition (scoring 7-10), compared to 32% of men holding this view. Gender roles may influence how people perceive their care needs and willingness to seek help. Notably, 10% of women report needing regular or occasional assistance for daily tasks, compared to less than 5% of men. Interestingly, men report more difficulty than women only in childcare. In contrast, women more frequently experience challenges in finances, work, and emotional well-being. Informal support networks, often built around childcare needs, are crucial. Women primarily turn to their parents for help, while men seek assistance from partners or other family members. Formal care services show

gender disparities, because even if women use them more than men, the utilization remains lower than anticipated given their higher care needs, suggesting potential barriers like limited information, financial constraints, or cultural factors that hinder women's access to formal care. Women overwhelmingly shoulder the burden of unpaid caregiving, dedicating significantly more time to caring for dependent relatives compared to men. This disparity leads to distinct experiences for different groups of female caregivers. Older women caring for their husbands often find acceptance within their traditional roles, experiencing lower levels of anger and guilt. Young women caring for dependent parents, however, face isolation and frustration, especially when lacking support from other family members. The responsibility of caring for children further amplifies the strain, with young mothers reporting worsened social and economic situations. Paid domestic work also reflects gender imbalances. Women dominate the sector, with a substantial portion being migrants in irregular situations. This lack of legal protection makes them vulnerable to exploitation and hinders their ability to advocate for better working conditions. While data on informal caregiving is scarce, reports suggest a significant portion goes unreported, particularly among migrant workers, therefore highlighting the need for comprehensive data collection and initiatives addressing the challenges faced by both paid and unpaid caregivers. Before the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis, the gender pay gap in Barcelona stood at 21.8%, according to the 2016 Barcelona Municipal Salary Report, lower than the national and regional averages, yet still translates to men earning roughly €7,000 more annually than women. Furthermore, disparities extend to public transfers as men receive on average more for unemployment, retirement, and disability benefits compared to women (34.4%, 33.3%, and 18.5% more, respectively). Smaller gender gaps exist in other transfer categories like illness and education, while women receive slightly more for survivor benefits. Additional data indicates the gap is wider in the private sector (26.1%) compared to the public sector (15.7%). It's smallest for younger workers (16-24) and increases with age, peaking for those aged 55-64. Higher education levels tend to correlate with a narrower gap. Though Barcelona fares better than national averages, addressing this disparity remains crucial. Initiatives to increase affordable childcare, promote equal pay, and combat workplace discrimination are vital steps towards achieving greater gender equality in income and

societal well-being. In this direction, Barcelona's Employment Strategy 2016-2020[210] prioritized gender equality, aligning with the Municipal Action Plan. Standing point of this initiative was to create a city-wide, coordinated approach to job programs that actively promotes equal opportunities for all, focusing on closing the gender gap and addressing diversity needs by integrating a gender perspective into every aspect of the Employment Strategy. Its aim was to combat the gender pay gap, a clear sign of workplace discrimination against women and to value and recognize the unpaid work, primarily done by women, in households and caregiving roles. A significant portion of Barcelona's population faces challenges as data indicates that over a quarter, roughly 28%, are vulnerable to marginalization, specifically women are disproportionately affected by this situation, comprising around 55% of this group compared to 45% of men. Poverty analysis goes beyond income levels to also include factors such as time constraints, excessive workload, and health status significantly impact how individuals, particularly women, experience poverty and instability. Therefore, effective interventions by the city council and other authorities require addressing these broader challenges, alongside long-term strategies like the Feminization of Poverty and Precariousness initiative[211]. Social movements, including feminist groups, have broadened the definition of precariousness beyond just economic hardship. While linked to poor working conditions, it now encompasses various aspects of daily life not solely tied to formal employment. This condition includes the challenges faced by individuals in all types of work, paid or unpaid, and the limitations imposed by time constraints, inequality, and lack of opportunities, despite potentially higher education levels compared to previous generations. Precariousness often manifests in women's lives as stress, dependency, reduced participation, and even disempowerment. Consequently, policies tackling poverty and precariousness must be tailored to different needs and the Barcelona City Council's commitment to a gender-focused and structural action program reflects this understanding. Ultimately, reducing poverty and precariousness means ensuring access

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[210] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Estratègia per l'Ocupació de Barcelona (EOB) 2016-2020, Barcelona, 2016. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/sites/default/files/documentacio/6_estrategia-ocupacio-barcelona-final-ok_tcm101-46509.pdf

[211] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Estratègia contra la feminització de la pobresa i la precarietat a Barcelona. 2016-2024, Departament de Transversalitat de Gènere. CIRD, Regidoria de Feminismes i LGTBI, Barcelona, 1 June 2016.
https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/sites/default/files/documentacio/p_4.2_estrategia-contra-feminitzacio-pobresa-precarietat-barcelona-2016-2024_1.pdf

to basic needs, rights, and genuine opportunities for individual development. Barcelona Activa, a key player in the local development network, has a long-standing commitment to supporting women's entrepreneurial journey and paving their path to leadership roles. This commitment manifested through various initiatives in partnership with local administrations and civil society, with the latest and most innovative being the Lidera strategy.[212] Launched in 2016, Lidera aims to accelerate the creation and growth of female-led businesses, ultimately increasing the presence of women in management positions. This multi-pronged approach focuses on:

- Promoting equal opportunities throughout career progression and business creation, encouraging women to embrace entrepreneurship and pursue leadership roles in traditionally male-dominated fields.
- Nurturing a vibrant entrepreneurial culture that fosters innovation and empowers aspiring female entrepreneurs.
- Equipping women with the necessary tools to launch and scale their businesses, providing guidance and resources throughout their entrepreneurial journey.
- Serving as a central hub connecting female entrepreneurs, business figures, and startups led by women, facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Addressing systemic challenges like the "glass ceiling" and gender pay gap, working towards a more equitable and inclusive business landscape.

Lidera's impact extends beyond economic empowerment, contributing to the overall development of the city's districts by promoting entrepreneurship, business growth, and professional development. This holistic approach strengthens the social and economic fabric of the community, paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

3.4.   Second area of research: mobility and walkability

The Barcelona City Council is committed to creating a more equitable society for all, including residents of marginalized groups. Its aim is to guarantee residents' proximity to,

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[212] Barcelona Activa, Gendered Landscape: Action planning network for gender equality, URBACT, Barcelona, 2019. https://urbact.eu

and fair access to, adequate housing, essential local services, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities through planning practices that are both sustainable and by broadening the definition of essential services to encompass the right to participate fully in city life and access to digital connectivity. However, cities often are theatre to varying degrees of sexual violence, often impacting women disproportionately. Surveys reveal that public spaces, transportation, and leisure areas are common locations for these incidents. These experiences contribute to a perceived difference in safety between genders, with women expressing lower scores regarding urban security.[213] Moreover, women tend to demonstrate a higher awareness of daily habits influencing environmental sustainability, leading to more sustainable practices related to consumption and waste management, compared to men. However, men often report greater concern for energy-related sustainability initiatives. These potential gender differences might stem from differing responsibilities and roles within society and highlight the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces for all, alongside promoting sustainable practices across various domains. Tasks associated with household management and caregiving, often undertaken by women, exhibit more sustainable mobility patterns compared to work or leisure activities, primarily due to their local nature, frequently confined to the immediate neighborhood. Within this proximity, walking becomes the dominant mode of travel, eliminating the need for cars or public transport.[214] Consequently, the neighborhood serves as a central hub for activities like daily errands, recreational walks, assisting dependents, and engaging in community initiatives. Strengthening these communities not only facilitates shared responsibility for essential tasks but also promotes a more sustainable and healthy approach to mobility by encouraging walking and reducing reliance on motorized transport. A bustling metropolis like Barcelona witnesses 6.9 million of daily journeys through public transportation, with nearly five million originating from its residents alone. Interestingly, non-work and non-educational motivations drive a significant portion of these trips, especially within the city limits as everyday errands, leisure activities, and personal engagements like doctor visits or

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[213] Mejía-Dorantes,L.; Montero, L.; Barceló, J. Mobility Trends before and after the Pandemic Outbreak: Analyzing the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona through the Lens of Equality and Sustainability. Sustainability 2021, 13, 7908. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13147908

[214] Women4Climate, A gender perspective in urban mobility: Barcelona's plan for justice 2016-2020. C40, 2019. https://www.c40.org/women4climate/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/W4C_Report_Barcelona_Infographic_CS.pdf

accompanying others contribute heavily to this trend. Notably, care-related tasks constitute over half of these "personal" trips. While both genders average roughly the same number of daily journeys, a higher percentage of women report being stationary on a given day. This trend suggests that among active movers, women tend to make more frequent trips on average. It's important to note that the population with limited mobility might face increased vulnerability due to health or social factors. Women's travel patterns shift significantly throughout their lives, with a notable increase in trips between ages 30 and 64 and a sharp decline later on, while men's mobility trends show less variation across life stages. As the study "Gender in numbers" reveals gender roles influence travel motivations.[215] Work trips are the most common for men (20.5%), while women primarily travel for domestic and caregiving tasks (22.1%), with work journeys trailing at 16%. Both genders make similar proportions of trips for leisure, health, and education but transportation choices also differ by gender. Men favor private vehicles like motorcycles and cars (29% of trips) compared to women (12%). Similarly, men use bicycles more (4.8% vs. 2% for women). Conversely, women rely more heavily on public transport (40.9% vs. 27.3% for men) and walking (44.6% vs. 38.2% for men). Convenience is the primary reason for using public transportation, with around 1 in 6 users citing it as their main motivator. However, women find its convenience even more valuable than men, with 20.3% prioritizing it compared to 16.5%. It's important to remember that public transport has also been identified as a location where sexual assaults occur more frequently, as highlighted earlier. Despite this concern, four out of ten women in Barcelona still choose this option, making it less common than walking but more popular than private vehicles. Notably, women are the majority users of both the T10 and Targeta Rosa public transport passes. In order to address inequalities, since 2011 the city of Barcelona has instituted the Urban Mobility Plan (PMU) as a planning tool delineating the lines of action governing urban mobility in the coming years. Currently the "Pla de mobilitat urbana 2024"[216] officially integrates gender analysis and gender impact assessment in planning out urban mobility with the purpose of identifying the differences

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[215] Observatori IQ, El gènere en xifres: Condicions de vida de les dones i desigualtats de gènere a Barcelona (2019), Departament de Transversalitat de Gènere. Gerència de Recursos. Barcelona, 2019. pp.35-40 https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/ca

[216] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Pla de Mobilitat Urbana 2024: Ens movem cap al futur de manera més sostenible, segura, saludable, equitativa i eficient. Barcelona, 2022. http://hdl.handle.net/11703/128157

in habits and needs between social groups. Its analysis found that accessibility considerations highlight gender disparities as, for instance women often carry heavier loads due to caregiving responsibilities and personal errands during their movements, while 40% of women with disabilities experience motor limitations. Additionally, studies show that older women are disproportionately affected by physical disabilities compared to men. These factors contribute to accessibility challenges faced by a significant portion of the female population. Moreover, the PMU integrates inclusive and forward-looking principles such as "Sustainable Cities as a Human Right", which entails favoring women's access to housing and urban services, meeting in adequate fashion the needs of women for safe public transportation, promoting safe cities for women - with public urban security policies to gender-based violence. In addition, it aims to foster "cultural transformations that reverse situations of social inequality and gender subordination in all areas of life, through training in gender mainstreaming for civil servants, technicians and professionals, and the commitment of the education sector, especially universities, to incorporate gender into the study and research of architecture and urban planning". For this purpose, the plan recognizes the importance of ensuring gender equality in urban design through the integration of gender lens throughout urban planning, design, implementation, and evaluation. It entails treating the needs and priorities arising from paid work, domestic work, and caregiving equally when shaping physical spaces to eliminate existing gender inequalities in public spaces. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in empowering women's voices in urban planning by actively promoting the participation of women and women's rights organizations in urban design processes. They should provide transparent feedback throughout these processes to ensure their contributions are incorporated into the results. On the other hand, public administration personnel engage in gender training with the aim of raising awareness on otherwise invisible patterns of discrimination in mobility planning. The PMU recognizes the importance of inclusive urban design and proposes various measures to achieve this, focusing on addressing gender segregation and safety concerns. Key measures proposed entail:

- Combatting discrimination in public spaces through a specific protocol established to address aggression, threats, and discriminatory attitudes, ensuring a safe environment for all.

- Enhancing pedestrian safety by conducting an inventory of public spaces (streets, parks, etc.) to identify areas needing safety improvements for pedestrians. This survey will help increase security elements in areas with higher perceived insecurity, improving lighting, and encouraging open and visually accessible urban spaces.

- Gender-disaggregated data-driven planning through surveys and population studies - information on accompaniment - will inform planning decisions that better reflect the needs of the entire population.

- Accessibility criteria will consider the needs of individuals managing care work by also strategically placing urban elements (terraces, bollards, furniture) to avoid obstructing movement. The urban habitat can be therefore adapted to the needs of people inhabiting it, without excluding diverse perspectives.

In conclusion, the latest urban policy delineates the consideration of gender and age as a priority in travel pattern analysis to practice better decision-making and foster more inclusive mobility for all city inhabitants. Key actions include the analysis of public transport through an intersectional approach that identifies inequalities and the different needs impacting travel choices, like the role of the Neighborhood Bus in caregiving tasks. It provides for the increase of service frequencies during off-peak hours and strategically located stops and facilities for better accessibility. In regard to the issue of security, it aims to implement on-demand stops on night buses and in peripheral areas in order to empower women and minors to safely request drop-off points, enhancing their safety and mobility options. Moreover, it will develop robust mechanisms to prevent and address gender-based violence in public transport, for instance by implementing action protocols, installing video surveillance, and encouraging reporting through awareness campaigns. The existing plan for preventing sexual harassment on metro and bus networks (TMB) will be strictly enforced to protect passengers from inappropriate behavior, and in addition other measures are adopted, for instance: the increase of security presence to deter potential harassers and provide a sense of security for travelers; the improvement of lighting in vestibules, platforms, and corridors of public transportation infrastructure; and better visibility at bus stops, designed and positioned to ensure clear visibility, minimizing potential hiding spots for criminals and promoting a safer environment. In addition, the PMU recognizes the importance of participation and civic engagement in urban planning

and plans to conduct mobility and gender audits led by diverse groups, including women. By prioritizing this perspective in surveys and audits, safety concerns and inclusivity needs can be better addressed. On this matter, the plan raises awareness about civic behavior through public awareness campaigns to encourage passengers to give up their seats to the elderly, people with reduced mobility, and pregnant women, promoting a culture of respect and consideration.

3.5. Third area of research: violence within domestic and public spaces

Throughout the years Barcelona City Council has adopted several progressive urban measures to prevent and contrast gender-based violence, which take part in a comprehensive and multi-sectoral framework of policies and initiatives that recognize the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. Building on the legislative system established by EU and both national and regional institutions, it emphasizes that gender-based violence occurs in many forms and both in domestic and public spaces, manifesting in instances of domestic violence, sexual violence in public transport and the workplace, or in subtler cases such as obstetric violence and impossibility of access to abortion services. According to the report "Gender in numbers"[217], 72,30% of women in the city have reported experiencing male aggression and violence, encompassing various forms such as comments, sexual gestures, and exhibitionism. Shockingly, one in three women has encountered extremely severe instances of violence. Analysis by age group reveals that the highest levels of victimization are observed among younger women, aged 16 to 29. When examining male violence experienced since the age of 15, it appears that women in Barcelona have faced higher percentages compared to those in Catalonia as a whole. However, these discrepancies diminish notably when focusing solely on violence encountered in the past year. Further data reveals that approximately 37% of women living in Barcelona have encountered some form of male violence from either their former or current partner since they were 15 years old, with 8.6% experiencing it within the past

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[217] De la Fuente Maria, Júlia Bolao, Sílvia Carrillo i Mireia Duran. El gènere en xifres - Condicions de vida de les dones: i desigualtats de gènere a Barcelona (2019), Observatori IQ. Barcelona, 2019. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dones/ca

year. Specifically regarding former partners, about 43.3% of women have been subjected to violence since they were 15, and 6.5% experienced it in the last year. Among these recent cases, approximately 60% recognized the violence as criminal, yet only 20% lodged a formal complaint. The most prevalent forms of violence from former partners since the age of 15 include psychological (39%), physical (14%), economic (13.3%), sexual (10.4%), and directed towards children (4.1%). Concerning current partners at the time of the survey, about 12.8% of women reported experiencing male violence. In the past year, 6.2% of women experienced it, with 15.6% acknowledging it as such, but only 0.03% initiating legal action. The predominant forms of violence within current partner relationships have been psychological (11.3%), economic (2.1%), physical (1.6%), sexual (1.5%), and towards children (0.7%). About instances of sexual violence occurring within social and familial circles by individuals not in romantic relationships, 32.7% of women in Barcelona have faced some form of aggression since turning 15 (excluding comments, sexual gestures, and exhibitionism), with 6.8% reporting such experiences within the last year of the survey. In the professional sphere, 16.5% of employed women in Barcelona encountered male violence in 2016. Broadly, 16.3% of women have encountered workplace discrimination regarding salary differentials (54.2%) and promotion disparities (53.5%), attributed to a lack of personal respect (52.7%) and job undervaluation (52.6%), among other factors. Additionally, 10.2% of women have endured sexual harassment in the workplace since turning 15, primarily perpetrated by supervisors or superiors (94.5%), colleagues (39.5%), and clients, customers, or patients (6.2%). Simultaneously, excluding instances of comments, sexual gestures, and exhibitionism, 15.9% of Barcelona women have experienced childhood aggression and violence, with 14% facing severe acts of violence. When it comes to recognizing and tolerating male violence, men face more challenges than women in identifying it: 28% of women and 43% of men fail to perceive controlling or restricting decisions about their personal finances or household funds as violence; 26% of women and 37% of men don't acknowledge controlling their partner's whereabouts, activities, and interactions as violence; additionally, 22% of women and 30% of men don't view preventing them from communicating with other men as violence. Finally, 15% of women and 85% of men don't categorize hitting, punching, or pushing as acts of violence. Over the past two decades, the Barcelona City Council has steadily embraced a commitment to combating

this issue, evidenced by a gradual increase in funding. The initial budget of €4,708,638.57 was dedicated to initiatives focused on prevention, detection, support, and rehabilitation and it has been consistent through the years, with some slight reduction due to pandemic and ensuing crisis. However, given the persistent and widespread nature of this problem, the diverse contexts in which it occurs, the limited number of women and families accessing administrative support - only a small percentage of women who have experienced violence from their current or former partners have sought assistance from social services, and the significant infringement upon the fundamental right to live free from violence, urgent measures are needed to bolster the city's system for detecting, addressing, rehabilitating, and preventing male violence. In 2015 the new governance improvement measures sought "the establishment of a data collection system to periodically and systematically understand the phenomenon in the city; the evaluation, review, and enhancement of the entire system for detecting, supporting, and rehabilitating women, children, and adolescents, who are also affected by violence; the promotion of a policy to prevent male violence in the city"[218]. In addition, the institutional approach to addressing male violence in Barcelona is organized through various services, including Women's Information and Support Points (PIAD), the Care, Recovery, and Shelter Service (SARA), Basic Social Services Centers (CSS), the Mobile Teleassistance Program for victims of gender violence (ATENPRO), and the Service for Men's Support in promoting non-violent relationships (SAH), alongside emergency and long-term shelter facilities, among others. Municipal institutions and stakeholder work closely together, specifically the Women's Information and Assistance Points (PIAD) are decentralized services located in each district, offering close support to women. They provide information, guidance, counseling, and both individual and group support, including psychological assistance and legal advice. Moreover, they aim to promote specific measures for preventing, raising awareness, and early detecting instances of discrimination and violence against women, both at an individual level and within the broader community. However, until the 2010s, these services did not address cases of male violence, and their collaboration with social and community networks in preventing and detecting such violence has been severely restricted due to limited human and

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[218] Ajuntament de Barcelona. Mesura de govern, Urbanisme amb perspectiva de gènere: L'urbanisme de la vida quotidiana. Àrea d'Ecologia, Urbanisme i Mobilitat, Barcelona, 22 March 2017. pp.5-7. www.barcelona.cat

financial resources. As a result of this governance approach, in 2018, Barcelona City Council implemented a comprehensive protocol called "No callamos"[219] to combat gender violence, particularly sexual and LGBTI-phobic violence, in nightlife establishments, combined with several security policies and public space with a gender perspective in the city of Barcelona. It builds on the Catalan Act 5/2008[220], on the right of women to eradicate gender-based violence, comprehensively defines sexual violence and abuse to encompass any non-consensual sexual act, including exposure, stalking, and forced sexual relations obtained through coercion, intimidation, dominance, or emotional manipulation. This definition applies regardless of the perpetrator's relationship to the victim, whether marital, intimate, familial, or otherwise. Furthermore, the Plan for Gender Justice 2021-2025 considering gender violence in Barcelona recognizes its unequal impact on women based on various factors such as age, socio-economic status, and cultural background. Different personal circumstances, including economic, legal, or health situations, can exacerbate the prevalence and impact of violence, leading to increased vulnerability and inequality. Additionally, functional diversity and disability significantly contribute to the escalation of violence, particularly among women facing physical or mental limitations, notably in intimate partner relationships and during childhood. While gender violence affects individuals differently, structural barriers hinder effective intervention and access to support for women in need. Challenges such as irregular administrative status, language barriers, lack of accessibility, and insufficient training or sensitivity among service providers must be addressed through policy changes to ensure everyone's right to a violence-free life. The goals established by this urban policy include:

- Update municipal services to align with new regulations concerning gender violence.
- Enhance the detection, assistance, and recovery processes for gender violence victims in the city.

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[219] Ajuntament de Barcelona (2018): Protocol "We won't keep quiet" campaign against sexual assault and harassment in private night-time leisure venues. [online] Available at: http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnantimasclista/sites/default/files/protocol_oci_nocturn_eng.pdf

[220] Plenary Assembly of the Parliament of Catalonia, Act 5/2008, of 24 April, on the right of women to eradicate sexist violence. 200-00022/08, Publication: BOPC 251; DOGC, 5123, del 02.05.2008 https://www.parlament.cat/document/intrade/152468

- Expand the range of tools and services available for preventing, detecting, and responding to gender violence.

- Incorporate an intersectional perspective into prevention, detection, and response efforts for gender violence.

- Develop a better understanding of the evolution of gender violence within the city.

3.6. Fourth area of research: healthcare and reproductive rights

According to the most recent official surveys, Barcelona residents enjoy a high life expectancy, exceeding the Catalan average. In 2016, the average life expectancy for men was 81.2 years and 86.9 years for women. However, perceived health status varies significantly based on socioeconomic background. While women generally live longer, a larger percentage report experiencing poor or regular health, highlighting a potential disparity in quality of life. This gap widens considerably across socioeconomic groups, with women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reporting poorer health at significantly higher rates compared to their more affluent counterparts. This difference is also observed in the prevalence of chronic illnesses, with women experiencing a slightly higher overall rate and notable disparities in conditions limiting mobility and daily functioning. Mental health also shows concerning trends, with approximately one in five women and one in six men over 15 years old at risk of psychological distress. Like physical health, socioeconomic disparities play a significant role, with individuals from lower socioeconomic groups experiencing a higher risk of poor mental health. This risk gap between genders is even more pronounced within these disadvantaged groups. These findings highlight the need for policies and interventions that address the social determinants of health and well-being, promoting greater equity and ensuring all residents, regardless of socioeconomic background, can live long and healthy lives. Another phenomenon within discrimination on the ground of health is the discrimination suffered by people with HIV/AIDS, which has been linked with the limitations affected people have had in accessing health services, as denounced by organizations such as Creación Positiva, which has recorded numerous situations through-out the year where

seropositive people were treated differently from other patients and where there was evidence of prejudices and a lack of real knowledge of risk situations linked to HIV/AIDS on the part of some professionals.[221] Moreover, the collaborative framework known as the "Sexual and Reproductive Health Action Plan"[222] aims to improve health outcomes in Barcelona. This initiative involves various local institutions, community organizations, and experts, while being monitored by the Observatory of impacts on health and quality of life of municipal policies. Core to the plan is the protection, respect, and guarantee of individual sexual and reproductive rights, recognized as fundamental human rights. Collaborations aim to prevent sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, and sexual violence by ensuring access to quality preventive methods and services. The plan aligns with international agreements like the Cairo Program of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action, which underpin the SDGs. Networking is fundamental to the plan, with various participatory structures established:

- A steering committee, composed of institutional representatives, community organizations, and experts, guides the plan's direction and makes key decisions.
- An operational working group implements the approved action plan.
- A broader network allows interested entities to contribute and participate in working groups focused on specific objectives.

These temporary working groups tackle defined goals and involve various stakeholders within the broader network. Participation is open but limited due to capacity constraints. Established in 2014 as part of a government initiative to promote sexual and reproductive health in Barcelona, the steering committee ensures collaborative implementation and development of the plan. The foundation lies in respecting individual sexual and reproductive rights, echoing the International Planned Parenthood Federation's definition: "Sexual health is an integral part of physical and emotional well-being for individuals, couples, and families. It empowers social and economic development and rests on the right to a safe and fulfilling sexual life". Through collaborative efforts since 2014, organizations within the Sexual and Reproductive Health Network have devised shared

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[221] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Barcelona Discrimination Observatory, Report 2020, June 2021, p.64
[222] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Shared strategy for sexual and reproductive health, https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/shared_strategy_sexual_and_reproductive_health_leaflet.pdf

strategies and plans to enhance the city's overall well-being in this area. Their focus areas have included:

- Curbing the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV.
- Reducing unplanned pregnancies.
- Empowering individuals with knowledge and resources regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Providing support and care to women who have experienced sexual violence.

Additionally, the Network has actively raised awareness about these crucial issues and encouraged residents to participate in shaping relevant policies and programs. Thanks to the Network's dedicated efforts, positive changes have been observed in the city's sexual and reproductive health landscape. Examples include a decrease in STI rates, a decline in unplanned pregnancies, and increased access to support services for victims of sexual violence. Committed to its mission, the Network continues its work to further improve the city's sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Tackling social health inequalities demands a broad and coordinated effort, addressing the social, economic, environmental, and lifestyle factors that contribute to these disparities. To achieve this, the Health Department actively collaborates with various city departments and community organizations. For instance, they partnered with the Barcelona Strategy for Inclusion and Social Equity (2017-2027) to foster a fairer city, and with the Barcelona Health Consortium (CSB) to enhance the quality and accessibility of public healthcare. These efforts are guided by key principles:

- Promoting health and equity across all policies is crucial to create a more just society and reduce social health inequalities.
- Public policies should aim to improve living conditions throughout people's lives.
- Health promotion should focus on creating environments that encourage healthy habits and prioritize the participation of disadvantaged groups.
- Maintaining and improving the coverage, access, and quality of the healthcare system is essential, with programs designed to ensure equitable access.
- Investing in data and surveillance systems, research, impact evaluation, and training for healthcare professionals and other relevant sectors is vital for sustainable progress.

As found by research, in the 2010 decade, the Neighborhoods Law in Catalonia provided funds and resources for municipalities to launch urban renewal projects within disadvantaged neighborhoods focusing on physical, social and economic improvements. The neighborhoods that received the intervention saw a notable decline in self-reported poor health for both genders, therefore reporting a significant improvement in their self-rated health, as health inequalities narrow. Similar trends were observed for women regarding self-reported poor mental health, while men in both groups reported declining mental health, with the decrease being more pronounced in the comparison group.[223] This trend has been reinforced by the establishment of Superblocks as a new urban development strategy throughout the metropolitan area, which will help reinforce social fabric for resilient communities. Additionally, it should be noted that "in Spain, in contrast to other European countries like Sweden, Germany, and the UK, rights to health care and education are recognized regardless of legal status"[224].

3.7. Fifth area of research: migration, diversity and inclusion

The integration of immigrants stands out as one of the foremost challenges confronting Spanish society presently and forms a fundamental component of the comprehensive integration strategy implemented by the Government since 2004. This strategy encompasses efforts to combat illegal immigration, align legal immigration with labor market demands, and promote development policies in countries of origin. The integration of immigrants as active members of a society characterized by cultural diversity remains a primary focus of current migration policies. This goal entails enhancing both tools and policies for integration, including public services and civic participation, to ensure equitable access for all citizens without compromising service quality. Moreover, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, including racism and xenophobia, is imperative to embedding human rights into the fabric of everyday life for

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[223] Mehdipanah R, Rodríguez-Sanz M, et al. The effects of an urban renewal project on health and health inequalities: a quasi-experimental study in Barcelona. J Epidemiol Community Health. 2014 Sep;68(9):811-7. doi:10.1136/jech-2013-203434. Epub 2014 May 6. PMID: 24803086. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24803086/

[224] Caixeta, Luzenir, Gutierrez Rodriguez, Encarnacion, Tate, Shirley & Vega Solis, Cristina (2004) Transnational Report: Homes, Caretaking, Frontiers (Madrid: Traficantes de Suenos)

all individuals. For this purpose, the Spanish government adopted the Comprehensive Strategy against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance[225] at national level, following several principles:

- The presence of diversity, which has long existed in Spanish society and has been further enriched by recent immigration.
- A response to the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance.
- The necessity to coordinate actions in this domain.

It is important to address the needs of the Roma population, as various surveys, reports, and studies consistently indicate that this group faces significant levels of rejection and discrimination. Additionally, other vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers and refugees, unaccompanied minors, and individuals experiencing intersectional discrimination based on factors like gender, beliefs, and religion, also require attention and support. Building on the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DPAD)[226] National strategy acknowledges that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance affect women and girls differently, emphasizing the necessity of incorporating a gender perspective into policies, strategies, and programs aimed at addressing these issues to effectively address the various forms of discrimination. Additionally, it underscores the importance of education, development, and the full implementation of all international human rights norms and obligations, including the enactment of laws and the formulation of political, social, and economic policies, in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. The statement reiterates that racism and related intolerance pose a significant threat to international peace and security, human dignity, and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for individuals worldwide. Moreover, in Barcelona, Concerning the achievement of full citizenship for women across all diversities, the spheres of interculturality and migration assume significant importance. As highlighted in the

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[225] Gobierno de Espana, Comprehensive Strategy against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance. Ministry of Labour and Immigration, Madrid. NIPO: 790-11-183-8 http://publicacionesoficiales.boe.es

[226] United Nations, Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, Adopted at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Violence, 8 September 2001, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3db573314.html [accessed 4 February 2024]

Barcelona Discrimination Observatory Report 2020, racism and xenophobia stand out as primary sources of discrimination within the city. Addressing the persistent issue of stigmatization and stereotypes impacting numerous immigrant and racialized individuals daily is a critical challenge in this context. This historical discrimination intersects with various forms of oppression, including sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, age, and religion, potentially relegating certain groups to situations where their rights and freedoms are compromised. Hence, enhancing and promoting the intersectional aspect of addressing these issues is a key objective of the new plan. In recent years, Barcelona has witnessed a rise in socio-cultural diversity, with 27.8% of residents being born outside of Spain. Among these residents, 51.4% are women and 48.6% are men, with at least three neighborhoods having foreign-born residents exceeding 50%. Additionally, the city boasts over 300 spoken languages, more than 500 places of worship representing 25 different religious denominations, and a substantial increase in refugee arrivals, from 195 in 2010 to 7,374 in 2018. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that diversity extends beyond migration and encompasses historically marginalized groups, such as the Roma community, as well as their intersections with other forms of diversity such as gender, age, social class, sexual orientation, and single parenthood. These intersections require comprehensive and integrated approaches. Regarding the migrant context, migrant women in Barcelona represent a diverse range of personal circumstances. However, many share experiences of multiple discrimination due to their gender, migrant status, employment, or affiliation with minority religions or cultures. Moreover, the current legal framework grants rights and citizenship status based on labor market needs rather than individuals' aspirations for personal development. This regulatory approach fails to ensure legal and secure pathways for entry, resulting in a significant number of migrant women facing irregular administrative status and forced to engage in precarious informal employment. In Catalonia, the unemployment rate in 2020 was 10.6% for individuals with Spanish nationality, while it surged to 23.9% for foreign nationals. Specifically, non-EU women faced an unemployment rate of 27.8%. Additionally, approximately one-third of workers in the household and care sector, a significant portion of whom are migrants, work informally without being registered with the Social Security scheme by their employers. Addressing these disparities requires the generation of intersectional knowledge that recognizes how various forms of

discrimination intersect and impact individuals' lives. Such insights are crucial for understanding the specific challenges faced by women in irregular administrative situations and with refugee status. However, as found by several reports, Barcelona City Hall's primary documents regarding migration are generally "vague and consist of guidelines outlining best practices to be implemented by municipal entities, civil society organizations, and the private sector; each document emphasizes access to employment as the central aspect of integration and addresses the presence of migrant women in the city, albeit with varying approaches"[227]. For instance, while the 2012 plan inadvertently reinforces gender stereotypes by associating women with the domestic sphere, the 2016 document adopts a feminist and intersectional standpoint, actively encouraging the participation of migrant women and their organizations through targeted measures. This trend is further emphasized in the 2018 plan. Furthermore, enhancing the socio-cultural diversity of the City Council's staff is imperative due to foreign nationals constituting only 27.8% of the city's population, only 1.4% of municipal staff are foreign-born. The feminization of migration is an integral part of the local administration's consideration of the phenomenon and gender mainstreaming in migration governance was reinforced with the Barcelona en Comú leadership.[228] Their approach takes its departure from a clearly feminist interpretation of the presence of migrant women in the city, specifically of their role in the reproductive sector. The city hall acknowledges and prioritizes the structural inequalities, intersectional discrimination and precarity affecting this group. In this direction, the Plan for Gender Justice 2021-2025 establishes as objectives to:

- Integrate a gender perspective into the design, planning, execution, and evaluation of the city's intercultural, refugee, reception, anti-discrimination, and religious and faith plurality policies.
- Promote programs (social, labor, educational, cultural, etc.) that consider women's diversity based on their ethnic and racial backgrounds, migratory history, and administrative status, fostering their participation throughout the entire process.

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[227] Domingo A., Juan Galeano et Jordi Bayona. Foreign migration in Barcelona: from the financial crisis of 2008 to the pandemic of 2020. Issue 28. Barcelona societat, Journal on social knowledge and analysis. September 2021. https://l1nq.com/w7Tbo

[228] Araújo C. Mainstreaming Migrant Rights for Gender Equality: Lessons from Lisbon and Barcelona, ICLD, Policy Brief No 11, 2021. https://icld.se/wp-content/uploads/media/policy-brief-11_web.pdf

In addition, migrant organizations and grassroots groups have actively participated in municipal plans since 2010 and have also been integral to Barcelona's "Barcelona Refuge City" initiative, initiated when the city declared itself a Sanctuary City in 2015 in response to the refugee crisis.[229] This project aims to advocate for the international community's adherence to humanitarian law, pressuring the Spanish government to fulfill its refugee quota, and preparing municipal services to receive and integrate refugees arriving in the city. Positioning itself as a Refuge City, Barcelona creates a platform for advocating for the rights of all migrants. The municipality asserts that economic migrants deserve the same international protection as refugees, as they also leave their countries in search of safety. Barcelona City Hall thus functions as an advocate for migrant rights, providing a voice for migrant organizations – including those led by women and involving women as active participants – to engage with international institutions, transnational Non-Governmental Organizations, and various levels of parliamentary groups, thereby elevating migrant rights advocacy to a prominent position.

[229] Ajuntament de Barcelona, Global Forum on Migration and Development - GFMD." GFMD. Accessed February 25, 2024. https://www.gfmd.org/pfp/ppd/11552.

4. Chapter Four: the case study of Umea, Sweden

4.1. Overview of the Swedish gender equality framework

According to extensive research on the relationship between the extent of women's human rights achievements and Sweden, it found a that " a prominent characteristic of the Swedish model is truly the fact that gender equality policy is closely intertwined with the Swedish welfare state ideology; […] by promoting a socially egalitarian citizenship based on notions of solidarity and redistributive social justice the Swedish social democratic welfare state has had a comparatively high degree of universalism regarding social benefits"[230]. Based on the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, the leading nine countries, including Iceland, Norway, and Finland, have closed over 80% of their gender gap. Sweden, holding the 5th position consistently, has narrowed its gender gap by 81.5%, slightly lower than in 2018.[231] In terms of Political Empowerment, with 46.4% women parliamentarians and 47.8% women leading ministries, Sweden reaches a 50.3% parity level. Economic Participation and Opportunity, standing at 79.5%, has seen a recent stagnation and even a slight reversal compared to the previous edition. While there's a standstill in labor-force participation, estimated earned income parity has declined by 7.3 percentage points. Encouragingly, the representation of women in technical roles has remained above 50% since 2006, and there has been consistent progress in women's presence in senior positions over the past decade. Sweden also boasts full parity in Educational Attainment. However, parity in Health and Survival, at 96.3%, has dipped due to a decrease of nearly 1.3 years in female healthy life expectancy since 2020. Furthermore, the gender equality index (GEI) redacted by EIGE for 2023, which is based on the six domains of work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health, has rated Sweden as the most gender-equal country in the EU since 2005.[232] Since 2010, Sweden has seen a steady increase overall in all domains, notably in power and knowledge domains. Despite a recent dip since 2020 due to the pandemic and ensuing economic

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[230] Svensson, Eva-Maria, and Asa Gunnarsson. "Gender equality in the Swedish welfare state." Feminists@ law 2, no. 1 (2012). https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/fal.51

[231] World Economic Forum. "The Global Gender Gap Index 2023." Statista, Statista Inc., 20 Jun 2023, pp.14-22, https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index/

[232] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) , The Gender Equality Index 2023, Sweden, EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country/ES#

crisis, Sweden maintains its top ranking among EU Member States, as the decline is mainly attributed to growing gender disparities in the time domain. While in the power domain, Sweden excels with 85.1 points, particularly in political decision-making, leading the EU. Social decision-making also sees Sweden at the forefront, while work domain scores show improvement, securing Sweden's first-place position. Segregation and quality of work witness a significant rise as for participation scores, elevating Sweden to 1st place. However, Sweden's lowest EU ranking lies in the money domain, though showing a slight increase since 2020 the economic situation and financial resources remain areas for growth. Conversely, the time domain experiences a notable decrease attributed to social activities, dropping Sweden to 3rd place, emphasizing the need for improvement in this area. Due to ongoing focus on the sustainable transition launched with the Green Deal, a survey conducted in 2018 revealed that approximately 76% of Swedish women felt personally responsible for mitigating climate change, compared to 66% of men, surpassing the EU averages of both genders. Regarding housework, about 56% of women in Sweden reported consistently opting for environmentally friendly choices, contrasting with 45% of men. Even prior to the full impact of the ongoing energy crisis, many individuals across the EU faced challenges in affording energy and heating expenses. In Sweden, non-EU migrant women and men experienced heightened difficulties in maintaining adequate warmth at home in 2021. In 2022, women represented only 29% of the workforce in Sweden's energy sector, and a mere 22% in the transportation sector. Within national ministries addressing environmental and climate change, women constituted 28% of senior administrators. However, in parliamentary committees focusing on environmental issues and climate change, women made up 44% of decision-makers in 2022, significantly exceeding the EU average of 30%. In 1980, Sweden became one of the early adopters of the CEDAW by ratifying it. Furthermore, Sweden signed the Istanbul Convention in May 2011 and completed its ratification process in July 2014. The treaty officially came into effect in November 2014. Gender equality stands as a fundamental constitutional principle and explicit policy goal within Sweden. Since the early 1970s, gender equality concerns have constituted a distinct policy domain, holding a prominent position in public discourse. The overarching objective of Swedish gender equality policy is to ensure equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities for women and men across all facets of life. In 1979, Sweden enacted its

first gender equality legislation, effective from July 1980, thereby formally establishing equal conditions for men and women in Swedish societal realms. The Gender Equality Act[233] sought to foster parity in rights and opportunities pertaining to employment, working conditions, and career advancement for both genders. Moreover, gender mainstreaming has served as a central strategy within Swedish gender equality policy since 1994. In 2006, a set of gender equality objectives outlined in a governmental bill titled "The Power to Shape Society and Your Own Life: Towards New Gender Equality Policy Objectives"[234] received wide political consensus. Subsequently, in November 2016, the cabinet presented a document titled "Power, Aims and Authority – Feminist Policy for a Gender-Equal Future"[235] to the national parliament, delineating the future trajectory of Swedish gender equality policy. This document outlined an organizational framework for policy implementation, a monitoring system, a ten-year national strategy to combat and eradicate men's violence against women and introduced two new policy sub-goals. Additionally, through amendments to the Marriage Code in 2009[236], Sweden legalized same-sex marriage. In 2014, the Nordic Forum on Women's Rights and Equality was convened in Malmö, featuring discussions on the demands outlined in the final document. Subsequently, two new equality policy sub-goals were introduced: ensuring equal opportunities and conditions for education, study choices, and personal development for women, men, girls, and boys; and ensuring equal access to healthcare and caregiving services for all genders. In the autumn of 2016, the government decided to establish a new Swedish Gender Equality Agency in Gothenburg, with operations commencing in January 2018. This government agency engages in policy analysis and monitoring of advancements toward gender equality objectives. It also provides coordination and assistance to government entities and universities in implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives, alongside facilitating international exchange and collaboration. Thanks to its efforts, the overarching objective of the gender equality

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[233] SFS 1979:1118. (1979). Lag om jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män i arbetslivet.

[234] Prop. (2005/06:155). The power to shape society and one's own life – new goals in gender equality politics. [Makt attforma samhallet och sitt eget liv - nya mål i jamstalldhetspolitiken]. Governmental Bill.

[235] Skr (2016/17:10). Makt, mål och myndighet - feministisk politik för en jämställd framtid [Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy]. Stockholm: Riksdagen.
https://www.regeringen.se/4ace09/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/socialdepartementet/jamstalldhet/makt-mal-och-myndighet---feministisk-politik-for-ett-jamstallt-samhalle-skr.-2016_17-10.pdf

[236] SFS 2003:307. (2003). Lag om förbud mot diskriminering t.o.m. SFS 2006:69

policy framework is to ensure that women and men possess equal agency in shaping both society and their individual lives.[237] To achieve this aim, the national policy outlines six key sub-goals:

- Equitable distribution of power and influence: women and men should enjoy identical rights and opportunities to participate as active citizens and influence decision-making processes.

- Economic parity: women and men should have equal opportunities and conditions in paid employment, leading to economic autonomy throughout their lives.

- Equality in education: women and men, along with girls and boys, should have equivalent opportunities and conditions in education, including access to diverse study options and avenues for personal development.

- Fair division of unpaid domestic work and caregiving responsibilities: women and men should share responsibility for domestic tasks, and they should have equal opportunities to provide and receive care.

- Comparable health outcomes: women and men, as well as girls and boys, should have equal access to resources and conditions that promote good health, along with equitable access to healthcare services.

- Eradication of violence against women: women and men, along with girls and boys, should have equal rights to physical integrity, and measures must be taken to end violence perpetrated by men against women.

Despite research conducted in 2000s finding that "the Nordic welfare state has been described on the one hand as promoting women's rights as workers and mothers, while on the other hand being slow to react to rights and violations that concern women's human dignity and personal and bodily integrity"[238], currently addressing gender-based violence stands as a key priority within Sweden's gender equality policy. Since the criminalization of wife battering in 1864, Sweden's legal framework concerning IPVAW has evolved significantly, notably with the enactment of the Women's Integrity legislation[239] (namely

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[237] Swedish Gender Equality Agency, Gender Equality Policy in Sweden, Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2024. https://swedishgenderequalityagency.se/gender-equality-in-sweden/

[238] Lister, Ruth (2009), A Nordic Nirvana? Gender, Citizenship, and Social Justice in the Nordic Welfare State, Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society Online, Vol. 16, p. 242-278.

[239] SOU. (1995:60). Women's integrity [Kvinnofrid]. Official Report of the Swedish Government.

Kvinnofridsreformen) in 1998 (Prop 1997/98:55)[240]. Eradicating men's violence against women is a primary objective of Sweden's national gender equality policy, accompanied by the establishment of a national strategy to combat IPVAW. However, the effectiveness of IPVAW laws and policies in Sweden has also faced criticism by the Council of Europe.[241] To enhance the efficacy, quality, and sustainability of these efforts, the government initiated a national strategy and targeted action program in 2016, namely the "Action Plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honor, and violence in same-sex relationships"[242]. The 10-year strategy, implemented on January 1, 2017, underscores two key factors: the significance of preventive measures and the involvement and accountability of men in combating violence. It also emphasizes the necessity for bolstered protection for victims, enhanced law enforcement, and improved knowledge, approaches, and methodologies. Moreover, the strategy outlines initiatives to tackle violence within same-sex relationships, prostitution, sex trafficking, honor-related offenses, and harmful masculinities. Achieving favorable outcomes requires enhanced coordination among various societal stakeholders, meaning that "the responsibility for addressing and preventing IPVAW in Sweden is distributed amongst several governmental and non-governmental organizations"[243]. In this regard, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency is tasked with disseminating awareness about the strategy, fostering coordination, and offering expertise, methodologies, and support for its implementation. In addition, the advocacy efforts of the women's shelter movement have been instrumental in aiding victims and promoting awareness of intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW).[244] Moreover, recent adjustments to the Social

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[240] Prop. (1997/98:55). Women's integrity [Kvinnofrid]. Governmental Bill.

[241] GREVIO. (2019). Baseline evaluation report, Sweden. Council of Europe.

[242] Skr (2007/08:39). Handlingsplan för att bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt våld i samkönade relationer [Action Plan for Combating Men's Violence against Women, Violence and Oppression in the Name of Honour and Violence in Same-sex Relationships].Stockholm: Riksdagen. http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/skrivelse/2007/11/skr.-20070839/

[243] Maria Wemrell, Sara Stjernlöf, Marisol Lila, Enrique Gracia & Anna-Karin Ivert (2022) The Nordic Paradox. Professionals' Discussions about Gender Equality and Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Sweden, Women & Criminal Justice, 32:5, 431-453, DOI: 10.1080/08974454.2021.1905588 https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1905588

[244] Helmersson, S. (2017). Between sisterhood and treatment. Renegotiations in a changed support field for abused women [Mellan systerskap och behandling. Omforhandlingar inom ett forandrat stodfalt for våldsutsatta kvin-nor]. [Doctoral dissertation]. Lund University.

Services Act[245] have resulted in heightened obligations for municipalities in overseeing instances of IPVAW and furnishing support to victims. The Social Services Act in Sweden, formally known as "Socialtjänstlagen", is legislation that governs social welfare services in the country. It outlines the responsibilities of municipalities in providing various forms of support to individuals and families in need, including assistance for vulnerable groups, such as victims of domestic violence. Regarding its connection to the fight against violence against women, the Social Services Act plays a crucial role in addressing and preventing such violence. It mandates that municipalities take measures to support victims of IPVAW and to work towards its eradication through the provision of shelters, counseling services, legal assistance, and other forms of support to help victims escape abusive situations and rebuild their lives. Additionally, the act may include provisions for monitoring and intervention to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals at risk of or experiencing IPVAW. Amendments to the act may enhance these provisions and expand the responsibilities of municipalities in combating violence against women. In the autumn of 2017, Sweden experienced the widespread influence of the global #MeToo movement, despite its reputation for progressive politics and steadfast dedication to gender equality. Like other nations, women came forward publicly to share their encounters with sexual harassment and violence.[246] These disclosures of widespread sexual violence were regarded as a stark revelation for Swedish society, contradicting the country's international image as a champion of gender equality. The #MeToo movement challenged the prevailing notion of Swedish gender exceptionalism, shedding light on the reality that "yes, it happens in Sweden, #too"[247]. Furthermore, in 2018, Sweden introduced new sexual crime legislation centered on consent with the aim to underscore every individual's unconditional right to autonomy in their sexual lives. Unlike the previous legal framework, which deemed sex without consent as rape only under specific circumstances such as threats, violence, or vulnerability, the new law criminalizes any

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[245] SOSFS. (2014:4). Violence in intimate relationships [Våld i nara relationer]. National Board of Health and Welfare.

[246] Martinsson, L. and Griffin, G. eds., 2016. Challenging the myth of gender equality in Sweden. Policy Press. https://books.google.it/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2QVpDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=Martinsson+et+al.+2016&ots=uCjiSoKPG0&sig=8y73ssfHo1vTflPjtgWkWZW7tKk#v=onepage&q=Martinsson%20et%20al.%202016&f=false

[247] Carroll, Caitlin P. "The #MeToo Movement, Sexual Violence, and the Law in Sweden." Feminist Formations33, no. 3 (2021): 281-290. https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2021.0050.

instance where consent is absent. In addition, Swedish law prohibits sexual harassment and victimization, with employers and educational institutions bearing the responsibility to investigate any reported incidents and implement necessary actions if such instances arise.[248] This obligation entails fostering a work or educational environment devoid of sexual harassment while actively combating discrimination and advocating for equal rights. Sexual harassment is governed by both the Discrimination Act and the Swedish Work Environment Act[249], as well as the Swedish Criminal Code[250]. Legally, for behavior to qualify as sexual harassment, it must be explicitly communicated as unwanted and unacceptable by the victim to the perpetrator, unless such understanding is already evident. It is important to note that the operations of local government are governed by the Municipal Act[251], which delineates the obligations of municipalities. Notably, this legislation does not include provisions mandating municipal involvement in gender equality matters, nor does it specify guidelines for implementing gender equality initiatives in practice. Consequently, there are no stipulations dictating the degree to which municipalities must adhere to national gender equality policies. Instead, the Municipal Act grants municipalities the authority to formulate and implement policies in accordance with their own discretion and within the scope of their local governance powers. This latitude allows municipalities to adapt their actions to suit their unique circumstances, resulting in considerable variation across different locales.[252] Local governments in Sweden exercise authority over matters such as taxation, urban planning, and housing, and following the decentralization reforms of the 1980s, they have assumed increased and extensive responsibilities in social welfare, education, and health.[253] In comparison to other countries, the local government in Sweden enjoys significant autonomy. Municipalities serve as the frontline institutions for implementing both

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[248] AFS 2015:4 Swedish Work Environment Authority provisions on the organizational and social work environment.

[249] Swedish Work Environment Act, SFS 1977:1160

[250] Swedish Criminal Code. SFS 1962:700

[251] Sweden. (1991). Kommunallag 1991:900 [Municipal Act 1991:900]. Retrieved from https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/kommittedirektiv/kommunallag-1991900_gfb1900/

[252] Hall Maycraft W. Same law–same rights? Analyzing why Sweden's disability legislation failed to create equal rights in mental health. International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, Volume 37, Issue 6, November–December 2014, Pages 609-618. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2014.02.035

[253] Lane, L., & Jordansson, B. (2020). How Gender Equal Is Sweden? An Analysis of the Shift in Focus under Neoliberalism. Social Change, 50(1), 28-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049085719901067

national and global policies, initiatives, and ideologies. As found by feminist research, their impact on people's lives varies significantly based on factors such as gender.[254] In Sweden, local governments oversee essential services including childcare, eldercare, education, and urban planning, while also serving as significant employers. A literary overview[255] by the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg identifies four key critiques regarding gender mainstreaming. Firstly, it is argued that gender mainstreaming inadvertently reinforces gender stereotypes by emphasizing differences between men and women. Secondly, critics suggest that gender mainstreaming often relies on established methodologies rather than innovative approaches, though the implications of this lack of innovation remain unclear. Thirdly, the complexity of gender mainstreaming is criticized for potentially undermining other avenues of gender equality work, perceived as creating opportunities primarily for designated experts. Finally, there is concern that the focus on gender mainstreaming as a policy objective may overshadow the goal of achieving genuine gender equality, becoming an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Furthermore, the involvement of the women's movement in the integration of gender mainstreaming within public administration is notably lacking in Sweden.[256] Simultaneously, gender mainstreaming has been heralded as the primary strategy for advancing gender equality within Swedish municipalities, championed particularly through PSGE, a nationwide initiative funded by SALAR aimed at promoting gender equality in social services provision. Notably, both PSGE and HJÄMT, another initiative, have been critiqued for their apparent oversight of addressing gender-based violence. However, as well as the Action Plan for Eliminating Men's Violence[257], there has also been the Action Plan for Eliminating Prostitution and Trafficking for Sexual Purposes[258], with the latter having a very distinct focus on

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[254] Hedlund, Gun (1996) "Det handlar om prioriteringar": kuinnors villkor och intressen i lokal politik. Diss. Göteborg: University press.

[255] Norrbin, Camilla and Olsson, Annika (2010) Forskning saknas: en kun-skapsöversikt över forskningsfältet jämställdhetsintegrering: program Jämi. Göteborg: Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, Göteborgs universitet.

[256] Anderson, Renée and Hedlund, Gun (2012) Gender mainstreaming and local democracy. In (ed.) Lindholm, Kristina. Gender mainstreaming in public sector organisations: Policy implications and practical applica-tions. Lund: Studentlitteratur.: 189-216.

[257] Sweden. Government. Regeringens skrivelse 2007/08:39. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, 2007.

[258] Sweden. Government. Action Plan for Eliminating Prostitution and Trafficking for Sexual Purposes. Skr. 2007/08:167. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, 2007.

individuals involved in prostitution and trafficking. In the Swedish approach to sex-work, the question of free will and the distinction between forced prostitution and non-forced prostitution have no relevance to the criminalization of the purchase due to the focus being on the demand and the view that it is unacceptable to both society and individuals that men can buy sexual services from women and children.[259] Furthermore, in order to promote gender equality in labor opportunities and careers - therefore removing obstacles to women's employment and economic independence - and the inception of Sweden's parental leave policy in 1974 marked a pivotal moment in the country's socio-political landscape, transitioning it from a traditional male-breadwinner model to a more equitable dual-earner framework. Presently, there is nearly equal participation of women and men in the labor force, reflecting the profound impact of this policy on Swedish society. Initially, parental leave spanned six months, gradually extending throughout the 1980s until it reached 12 months in 1989. While parents can utilize the leave until their child's 8th birthday, it is typically availed predominantly during the child's early years. Subsequently, in 2002, an additional month was added to the leave, resulting in its current duration of 13 months. During an additional three months of parental leave, earnings are replaced at a reduced, flat rate. Presently, the 13-month parental leave period provides coverage for 80 percent of previous income, up to a relatively high threshold, "thus Swedish fathers may be seen as involved in childcare from an early stage"[260]. Local norm systems played a significant role in influencing fathers' decisions regarding parental leave. Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency actively promoted fathers' uptake of parental leave through nationwide campaigns coordinated at regional and local levels. These campaigns involved various stakeholders, including county councils with midwives leading the efforts, municipalities, and both small and large enterprises with predominantly male employees. Information sessions and support groups for fathers were organized to encourage their utilization of parental leave. In regard to gender-sensitive and just transition to a more sustainable system, Sweden has positioned itself favorably in advancing the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda. With a backdrop of peace, democracy, and robust national objectives for

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[259] SOU 2010:49 Förbud mot köp av sexuell tjänst. En utvärdering 1999-2008 (Prohibition of the purchase of sexual services – An inquiry 1999-2008).
[260] Duvander, Ann-Zofie, and Ann-Christin Jans. "Consequences of father's parental leave use: Evidence from Sweden." Finnish yearbook of population research (2009): 49-62.

sustainability, Sweden demonstrates openness to partnerships both domestically and internationally. Its vibrant business environment further bolsters its foundation for sustainable growth and societal well-being. Recognized in numerous global assessments for its strides in implementing SDGs, Sweden faces setbacks amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which magnify pre-existing challenges. Socioeconomic disparities are widening, with youth confronting heightened mental health issues, violence, and bullying. Additionally, Sweden grapples with issues surrounding sustainable consumption, production, and the transition to a circular economy. In December 2020, the Swedish Riksdag (Parliament) passed a government bill outlining a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Sweden's objective is to achieve sustainable development across economic, social, and environmental domains through coherent policies, both domestically and internationally. Central to this approach is the adherence to the principle of 'leave no one behind', encompassing the realization of human rights, promotion of gender equality, reduction of inequalities within and among nations, provision of universal social protection, empowerment and participation enhancement, and the transition towards resource-efficient, resilient, and climate-neutral economies. Additionally, Sweden emphasizes the importance of promoting multidimensional poverty reduction, fostering social dialogue, ensuring decent work opportunities, and enhancing data collection to effectively monitor progress in adhering to this principle. To face these complex and multi-layered challenges, national strategy entails that several stakeholders in Sweden are engaged in the execution of the 2030 Agenda. Collaboratively, government agencies and municipalities are partnering to implement its objectives, and in parallel the research community is actively contributing through pioneering research and innovative approaches to sustainable development. Civil society maintains an active role both spearheading initiatives and advocating for action from policymakers. Within the business sector, companies are leading the charge in incorporating the 2030 Agenda into their operational frameworks and fostering innovative solutions. Concurrently, trade unions are advocating for social dialogue and the promotion of decent working conditions. Furthermore, "the SDGs are put in practice and innovations are developed and tested at the local level, which in turn contributes to implementation nationally and globally; Sweden will work to build back better and greener in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. […] Sweden will continue to focus on global health, including the fair

distribution of vaccines. Sweden will always stand up for democracy, the rule of law and equality, including gender equality"[261]. However, as found by a report in 2017 on the progress of local implementation of SDGs and the NUA, in Sweden, the approach to national policy appears limited.[262] A comprehensive national policy is notably absent, with the exception of the National Platform for Sustainable Urban Development, which operates solely within the central government structure, although it lacks any inclusive participatory processes or parliamentary acts. Established in 2014, the National Platform for Sustainable Urban Development is overseen by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket), in collaboration with several key agencies including the Swedish Energy Agency (Energimyndigheten), Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket), and Swedish Transport Administration (Trafikverket). Its primary objectives include enhancing cooperation, coordination, and knowledge sharing across various sectors and administrative levels to advance sustainable urban development initiatives. While both the regional policy and national strategy for sustainable regional growth and attractiveness were ratified in 2015 to guide investments, they principally serve as frameworks for directing resources. The regional strategy furnishes a policy framework for the holistic development of all Swedish regions, emphasizing a localized approach. Concurrently, the national strategy for regional growth outlines investment guidelines encompassing urban areas. The overarching aim of the national policy for regional development is to foster a geographically balanced progression while fortifying local and regional competitiveness. In this regard, a National Urban Policy should be modeled according to the 2030 Agenda in order to be implemented and delivered on by 2030. SDG11 and its targets should be the key goals, outlining the focus of the policy:

• affordable housing and basic services (SDG 11.1)

• safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all (SDG 11.2)

[261] Sustainable Development Goals, Knowledge Platform. Voluntary National Review 2021: Sweden. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/sweden

[262] Faber Andersdotter E. Local implementation of the SDGs & the New Urban Agenda: towards a Swedish National Policy. Global Utmaning, October 2017. https://www.local2030.org/library/384/Local-implementation-of-the-SDGs-the-New-Urban-Agenda-towards-a-Swedish-national-urban-policy.pdf

• inclusive and participatory planning and management (SDG 11.3)

• safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (SDG 11.4)

• reduce the number of people affected and economic losses caused by disasters (SDG 11.5)

• reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities (SDG 11.6)

• universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces (SDG 11.7)

• economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas (SDG11.a)

• adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans (SDG11.b)

• support least developed through financial and technical assistance (SDG11.c)

The rise in societal segregation transcends mere issues of social housing, extending its presence into public domains. Diverse populations, varying in background, income, and ethnicity, increasingly find limited opportunities for interaction in city squares, parks, and streets, with many individuals, especially women, expressing unease and insecurity in public spaces, particularly during evening and nighttime hours. Similar patterns emerge in service provision, both in commercial enterprises and publicly funded services. A growing portion of childcare, education, and elderly care is outsourced to private entities, subsidized by tax revenue. However, few of these private ventures establish themselves in low-income neighborhoods, contributing to educational disparities among children from different urban districts, as noted by the OECD.[263] Ensuring accessibility for all, both physically and mentally, to urban public spaces and services remains vital for public health, safety, community cohesion, civic identity, and empowerment. Prioritizing public spaces is paramount, as cities inherently bear a democratic responsibility to be accessible to all. Through robust provision of quality public spaces, institutions, and services, local governments can safeguard the socio-economic well-being of their entire populace.

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[263] OECD (2016). Implementing the New Urban Agenda through National Urban Policy: Ministerial Perspectives. http://www.oecd.org/fr/regional/implementing-the-new-urban-agenda-through-national-urban-policy-ministerial-perspectives.html

However, challenges persist for other marginalized groups in attaining full access to public spaces, services, culture, and commerce. Despite stringent legislation, accessibility for individuals with reduced mobility, impaired vision, and hearing remains limited. In other words, it is most important to emphasize that a Swedish National Urban Policy should be inclusive and participatory in order to be sustainable. In summary, in Sweden, the government at both state and local levels offers comprehensive and adaptable leave programs, while also ensuring ample access to childcare services and extended public care provisions have been established to cater to the needs of the elderly.[264] Women exhibit a significant presence in the labor market, with a notable proportion opting for part-time employment. The Nordic welfare states, in particular, have been portrayed as embodying a "dual breadwinner model", wherein both genders are encouraged to fulfill roles as caregivers and breadwinners, with the objective of facilitating women's participation in the workforce and men's involvement in caregiving responsibilities. A notable aspect of the Nordic welfare state model is its extensive social policies targeting a broad spectrum of the population, grounded in principles of citizenship and universal entitlements. Sweden's tradition of comprehensive public care services has historically led to domestic services being primarily associated with household chores rather than caregiving duties. Nevertheless, domestic services have also been viewed as a means of addressing deficiencies in the public care system. The Nordic states have been defined as "potentially women-friendly, due to the fact that women's political and social empowerment has been made possible through the state and with the support of social policy"[265]. As noted by feminist research, the concept of gender equality has become a fundamental pillar to Swedish national identity, also with the purpose to serve as a model for other nations and the EU.[266] However, the portrayal of Sweden as a women-friendly welfare state has faced criticism for its failure to acknowledge the diverse experiences of women, often omitting an intersectional perspective. Critics argue that this characterization is grounded in a normative view of women, wherein gender equality

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[264] Boje, Thomas & Arnlaug, Leira (2000) Gender, Welfare State and the Market: Towards a New Division Of Labour (London: Routledge).

[265] Hernes, Helga Maria (1987) Welfare State and Woman Power: Essays in State Feminism (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press).

[266] Hobson, Barbara, Lewis, Jane & Siim, Birte (2002) Contested Concepts in Gender and Social Politics (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing).

primarily focuses on achieving parity for white, heterosexual, working mothers.[267] Conversely, Sweden is now recognized as participating in global care chains, wherein there is a demand for inexpensive migrant labor by middle- and high-income households seeking to balance employment and family commitments; "more and more studies underline the increasing role of female migrant domestic workers in child and elderly care work"[268]. A law against discrimination was introduced in 2003, and all earlier legislation regulating GE and discrimination was merged into the Discrimination Act[269] in 2009 with the purpose of "combating discrimination and in other ways promoting equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age". In its scope it entails several forms of discrimination, including both direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and instruction to discriminate. Moreover, concerning the perception of a favorable refugee policy has been portrayed as an outward expression of the Swedish welfare system, alongside foreign aid and development policies. Both the portrayal of Sweden as exceptionally gender equal and exceptionally receptive to refugees have faced criticism from feminists and other observers, who argue that such depictions overlook realities that contradict Sweden's progressive image.[270] Alternative perspectives challenge the notion of refugee reception as an integral facet of the Swedish welfare model, with some advocating 'welfare chauvinist'[271] ideologies, contending that immigration undermines social protections for Swedish citizens. Feminist research on hate speech found that "the theme of migrants' sexual violence in public spaces functioned as an explicit or implicit point of reference supporting the idea that "Swedish values of gender equality were endangered by immigration; this form of securitization, depicting immigration as an existential threat to welfare and particularly the 'national'

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[267] Staunaes, Dorthe (2003) Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification, NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 11(2), pp. 101–110.

[268] Gavanas, Anna (2006) De ona̎mnbara—ja mlikhet, "svenskhet" och privata hushå llstja nster i pigdebattens. Sverige, in: Arbetslivets (o)synliga murar, SOU 2006:59 (Stockholm: Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU)).

[269] Swedish Code of Statutes (2008:267), Discrimination Act, Stockholm: Riksdagen, 25 June 2008. https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/SWEDEN_Swedish%20Discrimination%20Act.pdf

[270] Martinsson, L., Griffin, G., & Giritli Nygren, K. (2016). Challenging the myth of gender equality in Sweden. Bristol: Policy Press.

[271] Norocel, O. C. (2016). Populist radical right protectors of the Folkhem: Welfare chauvinism in Sweden. Critical Social Policy, 36(3), 371–390.

gender order, is not just a rhetorical figure, but a bordering practice with real world effects"[272].

4.2. Historical background and development of gender mainstreaming in Umeå

Umeå, the largest city in northern Sweden, boasted a municipal population of 130,224 residents in 2020. Like many urban areas, its development historically reflected the perspectives and priorities of male planners, designers, and developers. However, over the past four decades, the City of Umeå has undertaken significant efforts to reshape its urban landscape with a focus on promoting gender equality. These initiatives aim to ensure that individuals of all genders have equitable opportunities and influence in both public and private spheres. In 1989, a dedicated governing body was established to oversee and drive these inclusive initiatives and projects. Umeå Municipality has worked to implement and foster gender equality in a strategic and pioneering way for several decades, becoming a leading model in inclusive practices as the city celebrated a milestone of 30 years of work for a gender equal city in 2019. The efforts have been conducted using a combination of gender mainstreaming and targeted initiatives aimed at highlighting and examining problem definitions, as well as expanding the scope of analysis. The beginning of these efforts can be traced back to 1989 when Umeå was chosen, along with two other municipalities, to partake in a governmental program focusing on local gender equality initiatives.[273] After the completion of the five-year trial program, efforts to promote gender equality were integrated into the municipality's structure, leading to the creation of a specialized position for overseeing gender equality initiatives. In 2008, Umeå Municipality officially embraced the Council of European Municipalities and Regions' (CEMR) Charter on Equality between Women and Men in

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[272] Edenborg, Emil. "Endangered Swedish Values: Immigration, Gender Equality, and "Migrants' Sexual Violence"." Nostalgia and hope: Intersections between politics of culture, welfare, and migration in Europe (2020): 101-117.
https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/39537/2020_Book_NostalgiaAndHopeIntersecti onsB.pdf?sequence=1#page=111

[273] Dahlqvist A. et al. Gender, power and politics! Thirty years of gender equality work in Umeå Municipality 1989–2019. Umeå Kommun, Umeå, 2019.
https://www.umea.se/download/18.1e902c491847930967530bc/1669206644284/Gender%20power%20a nd%20politics.pdf

Local Life[274]. By endorsing this charter, the municipality actively supports gender equality and pledges to work toward achieving a society where gender equality is realized. The CEMR charter serves as a framework for integrating gender equality principles into decision-making processes and practical endeavors. Signatories are required to develop and adopt an action plan outlining strategies for achieving gender equality, which must encompass all facets of the organization: interactions with residents, internal operations involving employees, and political endeavors. Currently, 108 out of Sweden's 290 municipalities have ratified this declaration. Subsequently, in 2011, Umeå Municipality formulated a gender equality strategy, aligned with the principles of the CEMR charter, which was further updated in 2017. This strategy serves as Umeå Municipality's roadmap for advancing gender equality initiatives. Throughout the years, opportunity for progress came also due a vibrant political feminist movement in the city, which has been a trove since the foundation of the Umeå University, known for ushering radicalism and innovation in opposition to the historical traditions and conservative intellectual heritage of the old universities. For instance, it was the first University to establish new knowledge areas such as women's studies already in 1976, which was firstly called "Könsrollsfrågor" (translated in gender role issues). In June 1982, Sweden witnessed the inception of its first significant academic gathering focusing on women's research, known as "Kvinno-universitetet" (Women's University), held at Umeå University. Preceding this event, Swedish Radio in Umeå launched a radio program named Radio Ellen in 1981, paying homage to the feminist trailblazer Ellen Key. This program aired until 1995, subsequently succeeded by the feminist themed Freja, which continued broadcasting until 2003. Notably, the editorial team of these programs broke ground by being exclusively composed of women and embracing an explicitly feminist stance, often featuring contentious topics. Their coverage extended to visiting workplaces, including those of waitresses, contentious industries, and women's conferences. In 1983, an occupied house in the city center, known as Gula villan (Yellow Villa), became the focal point of a three-month effort to establish a women's shelter, although the final establishment didn't occur in Gula villan. The occupation and subsequent activism of the Women's Shelter served to highlight the issue of men's violence against women, prompting significant shifts in

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[274] CEMR, Charter 2022 (EN) Easy Read Light." CCRE, 2022.
https://ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/Charter_2022_EN_easy_read_light.pdf.

societal perceptions and political priorities. Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, various networks and advocacy groups emerged, operating with varying degrees of formal structure. Among these, the feminist network Aniara stood out as particularly influential. Noteworthy feminist fanzines of the late 1990s, such as Amazon (founded in 1997) and Radarka (debuting the following year), hailed from Umeå. Kravallkören (The Riot Choir) showcased their performances at festivals and demonstrations, while the music association She's Got the Beat, established in 1999, has been dedicated to organizing events like gigs, music festivals, and pop music camps, fostering an inclusive space for young girls and transgender individuals to engage with music and cultivate a gender-equal and critical music scene. Over the years, Umeå's feminist movement, academia, and public sector have shared strong collaborative ties, with cooperation being fundamental to feminist endeavors within the city. As noted in the 2004 government report titled "New Ways of Women's Organization," Umeå's feminist movements are characterized by their resilience and interconnectedness, with a tendency to catalyze broader social change. In addition, at institutional level, as far back as 1977, members of the Social Democratic councilors presented a proposal to the Municipal Council advocating for the creation of a committee dedicated to addressing gender equality within Umeå Municipality. Following the conclusion of the initiative, the Municipal Council determined that the Committee on Gender Equality would be succeeded by a Gender Equality Commission directly accountable to the Municipal Council. This committee would be tasked with monitoring the progress of gender equality in the urban area and advancing proposals for policies and initiatives. In 1980, the initial action plan proposed integrating the concept of gender equality into various aspects of municipal services, including childcare, public transport, housing planning, employment, and the municipality's personnel policies. These remain central concerns in local gender equality initiatives today. Furthermore, Umea came to be known as a "gender-equal city", a concept which is frequently intertwined with the notion of safety within urban environments. Consequently, significant research efforts have been directed towards understanding the ways in which women navigate public spaces under the shadow of apprehension about violence, and how power dynamics between genders shape the utilization and perception of urban landscapes.[275] Umeå has been steadfast in its

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[275] Valentine, G. 1989. "The Geography of Women's Fear." Area 21 (4): 385–390.

endeavors to cultivate a safe urban environment, primarily as an integral component of its broader mission to foster gender equality within the city. For instance, architectural choices reflected efforts to introduce gender mainstreaming in urban planning. The urban thoroughfare known as Lev (Live), inaugurated in 2012, spans nearly 80 meters, traversing beneath a road and several railway tracks. It serves as a testament to Umeå's commitment to advancing gender equality, embodying the city's progressive ethos. Functionality and aesthetics converge within this well-conceived passageway, marrying art and design to cultivate both utility and beauty. By transforming what might be perceived as an unsafe environment into a secure and inviting space, Lev contributes to a sense of safety for all. Planned with a gender-sensitive approach, the passage ensures accessibility for individuals of all genders around the clock, exemplifying gender-conscious planning practices. The process of incorporating gender mainstreaming into the project facilitated a deeper understanding of issues such as safety, fear, violence, and power dynamics within public spaces. Consequently, the design of Lev prioritizes features aimed at enhancing safety, including ample natural lighting, spacious openings, an elevated midpoint, and curved corners to optimize visibility throughout the tunnel. Thus, urban planning transcends mere infrastructure development to encompass the creation of a secure and inclusive urban environment. The tunnel project aimed to cultivate a welcoming and secure environment for its users, prioritizing inclusivity and comfort. Emphasizing the importance of public space perception, the project took into account how certain groups might feel marginalized or unsafe in these areas. To address this, a gender-aware approach was adopted in selecting personnel for the construction process. Workshops on gender equality and urban planning, led by the municipality's gender equality officer, were conducted with project participants. The resulting tunnel not only provided a physical space but also fostered gender equality through its inclusive development process. Design considerations included acknowledging and addressing concerns about safety, ensuring accessibility for all individuals. According to feminist research, "the action of increasing women's safety is of course intended to alleviate women's fear of violence in public space, but it also becomes a way of safeguarding the image of a safe and gender equal Umeå; procedures for increasing safety thus become procedures for branding the city and the imaginary produced thus includes a branding

dimension"[276]. Furthermore, the Commission on Gender Equality advocated for the creation of a dedicated women's history museum instead of incorporating gender equality within existing structures that primarily reflect male perspectives. Despite widespread endorsement for the museum's establishment, its presence has sparked ongoing debate since its inception. Launched in November 2014 as a component of the Culture House Väven, constructed for the 2014 European Capital of Culture, the Women's History Museum aims to serve as a catalyst for equitable power distribution and challenge societal norms that constrain both women and men from fully participating in society on an equal footing. Another example of a gender-sensitive approach to urban planning comes from development of the Sparken skate park in which the municipality engaged various stakeholders, including youth associations, in discussions and participation in the project. Despite collaboration with groups like You Skate Girl, it was observed that the park is predominantly utilized by boys, highlighting the underrepresentation of young girls in spontaneous sports and recreational areas. In partnership with the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket), the municipality focused on engaging different groups of girls aged 15-20 to explore their experiences in public spaces, addressing topics such as safety, accessibility, and inclusivity. In the fall of 2016, Frizon was inaugurated as a social gathering spot featuring amenities like seating areas, electrical outlets, WiFi, and speaker systems for music playback. Beneath the steel roof, a series of symbols created by participants form a symbolic boundary, representing the girls' influence on the space. In addition, as the pioneer, and perhaps the sole, city globally, Umeå Municipality installed an artwork in autumn 2019 to commemorate the ongoing significance of the Metoo movement as a reminder of the imperative for an active pursuit of gender equality and opposition to oppression and violations. Artist Camilla Akraka was commissioned to create the Metoo monument at the central square Rådhustorget, titled "Listen," featuring a puma positioned on a pedestal; its design draws inspiration from the power of voice and its transformative potential. Positioned in the heart of the city at Rådhustorget, the monument serves as a tribute to those who collectively shattered the silence. The vibrant red puma signifies both forward momentum and a call to action, urging listeners to engage, respond, and effect change, mirroring the

[276] Linda Sandberg & Malin Rönnblom (2016) Imagining the ideal city, planning the gender-equal city in Umeå, Sweden, Gender, Place & Culture, 23:12, 1750-1762, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2016.1249346
https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2016.1249346

collective narratives of the Metoo movement. It stands as a perpetual reminder of these stories and underscores the ongoing necessity of advocating for a society founded on gender equality. In regards to the SDGs and the NUA, "in order to limit CO2 emissions, Swedish urban areas are designed to respect the principles of sustainable development; indeed transit networks are intensified, pedestrian and bicycle tracks are highly developed and mostly separated from car traffic systems, while green spaces in urban areas are preserved and taxes are imposed on motorists"[277]. Umeå municipality has been committed to sustainable development both locally and globally for several decades. The municipal council's overarching objective is to ensure that Umeå's growth is managed in a socially, ecologically, culturally, and economically sustainable manner, with the vision of reaching a population of 200,000 by 2050. This vision is enshrined in various strategic documents, including Umeå municipality's comprehensive plan, the Strategic Plan for 2016–2028[278], and the gender equality strategy, among others. In Umeå, Sweden, the concept of the circular economy signifies a fresh socioeconomic model aimed at fostering businesses while concurrently working towards the environmental target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2040. As the most rapidly expanding urban hub in Northern Sweden, Umeå is poised to accommodate 200,000 residents by 2050, necessitating the development of infrastructure, including housing, educational facilities, roads, and green spaces, as well as a heightened demand for natural resources, energy, and food. This anticipated growth presents an opportunity to transition from conventional practices to a more circular approach, where materials in construction can be utilized and repurposed, buildings can enhance energy and water efficiency, food waste can be minimized, and innovation can be encouraged to close loops within value chains. The Strategic Plan 2016-28 outlines Umeå's ambition to emerge as a trailblazer in the realm of the circular economy.[279] Additionally, Umeå municipality aligns with several international commitments for sustainable urban development, such as:

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[277] Umea Kommun, Kartläggning av arbetet med Agenda 2030: En nulägesbeskrivning av implementeringen av FN:s 17 globala mål, Umeå Municipality, Umeå, 18 December 2018. https://www.umea.se/kommun

[278] Umeå kommun (2016) Strategisk plan 2016-2028. Available at: https://www.umea.se/download/18.2bd9ced91726ea4d7b4478/1592479769586/Strategisk%20plan%202016-2028.pdf

[279] OECD (2020), The Circular Economy in Umeå, Sweden, OECD Urban Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/4ec5dbcd-en.

- The Ålborg commitments for sustainable urban development.
- The CEMR declaration, focusing on equality between women and men at the local and regional levels.
- The mayor's agreement for climate and energy.

Furthermore, Umeå is actively engaged in the Global Sweden project, a collaboration between the Swedish UN Federation, Sweden's Municipalities and Regions (SKR), and the International Center for Local Democracy (ICLD). This initiative aims to enhance understanding and commitment to Agenda 2030 within municipalities and regions.[280] In this regard, on December 11, 2020, Umeå Municipality joined eight other cities in a common agreement, the Climate Contract 2030[281], aimed at expediting progress towards attaining climate-neutral urban centers. A key target set by Umeå Municipality is for 65 percent of trips within the urban area to utilize sustainable modes of transportation by 2025. Promoting increased sustainable travel among Umeå residents is pivotal for realizing carbon neutrality not only locally but also serving as a model for similar objectives in other municipalities. Umeå, in partnership with RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden), launched a project focusing on power dynamics, gender perspectives, and identity, as stated by the Municipality itself: "we have a long tradition of incorporating gender equality into urban planning as a part of our commitment to social sustainability"[282]. The primary aim of the project was to identify areas with high private car usage and to explore solutions utilizing service design methodology and norm-critical innovation. Initially, the project concentrated on physical and structural enhancements, such as enhancing public transportation options and bolstering safety in the local environment. However, through ongoing dialogues and external collaborations, the emphasis shifted towards promoting new behaviors and the values they embody. RISE facilitated dialogues, conducted field studies alongside the municipality, and held

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[280] Vanhuyse F, Rezaie S, Englund M, Jokiaho J, Henrysson M, André K, Including the social in the circular: A mapping of the consequences of a circular economy transition in the city of Umeå, Sweden, Journal of Cleaner Production (2022), doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.134893

[281] Little Marina et Allison Wildman (ICLEI). "Climate-neutral city contract concept". Net Zero Cities, D1.3. 29 July 2022. Accessed [16 February 2024]. https://netzerocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/D1.3-Climate-neutral-city-contract-concept.pdf.

[282] Umeå Kommun, Sustainable and Equal Commuting to Work." Umeå Municipality. Accessed 15 February 2024. https://www.umea.se/trafikochgator/gator/hallbartresande/hallbaraochjamstalldaarbetsresor/sustainableandequalcommutingtowork.4.29fcd18218c0eabc4ad88f1.html

workshops with local companies. This collaboration yielded a variety of initiatives, with both the municipality and companies assuming distinct responsibilities. Companies took charge of initiatives like fostering attitudinal shifts among their employees, enhancing cycling infrastructure, and adjusting work schedules to align with public transportation. Meanwhile, the municipality focused on enhancing the built environment, establishing new bus stops, and implementing related measures. This collaboration among RISE, Umeå Municipality, and companies within the Västerslätt area signifies the commencement of a long-term partnership aimed at achieving sustainable commuting objectives and fostering positive societal change. Moreover, the ongoing Västerbotten Experience initiative has been underway since 2015, representing an investment in sustainable practices within the hospitality industry. Nearly 40 businesses in the northern region have undergone auditing and have been awarded the VX-seal. These establishments have all completed a sustainability assessment based on criteria endorsed by the United Nations, developed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. In addition, key sustainable initiatives promoted entail:

- Green Umeå, a network of businesses and organizations dedicated to sustainability as their guiding principle.
- As a Sharing City, Umeå pioneers the development of new solutions and collaborations, challenging existing structures to address complex issues present in smart cities.
- As part of the EU cooperation project RUGGEDISED from 2017 to 2021, Umeå is testing approximately ten innovative climate-smart solutions while concurrently developing new business models tailored to the sharing economy.
- Awarded "Sweden's Best Sports City" in 2018 and 2020, Umeå boasts a diverse sports scene, with the highest number of sports associations per capita in Sweden, spanning both grassroots and elite levels.
- Nominated three times for European Green Capital, with its latest bid in 2018, Umeå's applications serve as powerful drivers for the city's sustainability efforts.
- Proudly bearing the title of Fairtrade City since 2013, Umeå actively promotes fair trade and ethical consumption to enhance living and working conditions in impoverished regions.

- Participating in Viable Cities, a strategic innovation program focused on smart, sustainable urban development, Umeå Municipality collaborates widely to chart a course toward carbon neutrality by 2030.
- The ongoing project "The Low Carbon Place" (2016-2022), spearheaded by Umeå Municipality, aims to empower citizens to make sustainable choices and reduce their climate footprint in transportation, accommodation, and consumption.
- "Climate Neutral Umeå 2030" is a collaborative project to develop a roadmap and implement actions aligned with the Paris Agreement, ensuring Umeå's commitment to carbon neutrality.

Umeå takes a leading role in the Gendered Landscape Action Planning Network, dedicated to formulating and implementing gender-sensitive urban planning strategies across European cities. Supported by funding from the European Commission's Horizon 2020 program, this initiative serves as a platform for sharing Sweden's experiences, thus influencing urban planning endeavors in other European nations. Umeå's contributions extend to collaborative efforts involving municipalities like Trikala in Greece, Barcelona in Spain, La Rochelle in France, Panevėžys in Lithuania, and Celje in Slovenia. The innovative approach adopted by Umeå focuses on understanding the diverse impacts of sustainable mobility initiatives on individuals of all genders through an intersectional perspective.[283] By leveraging this understanding, the objective is not only to enhance the city's attractiveness and safety but also to mitigate carbon emissions and enhance overall livability for its residents. Implementing such an approach necessitates the collection of gender-disaggregated data, sustained commitment, and integration into long-term planning strategies guided by the principles of gender equality. The city council incorporates ex-ante gender analysis into every decision-making process, ensuring that each choice aligns with the overarching goal of gender equality, with follow-up mechanisms to ensure adherence. This gender-sensitive approach extends to public transportation, as part of Umeå's broader efforts to reduce CO2 emissions and enhance

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[283] Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, GenderedLandscape: Action Planning Network Baseline Study. Gendered Landscape, URBACT, 2020. https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/2023-01/baseline_study_genderedlandscape_final_compressed.pdf

air quality through its gendered landscape strategy.[284] By considering gender differences in the design of urban infrastructure and services, Umeå aims to foster behavioral changes effectively. Central to this approach is an understanding of how gendered power dynamics influence individuals' perceptions of, utilization of, and access to urban spaces. Furthermore, this methodology is applied to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of existing projects. Officers dedicated to promoting gender equality collaborate extensively with various city departments, particularly focusing on initiatives related to smart city development and sustainable practices. Through active engagement with residents and collaborative problem-solving, efforts are made to ensure inclusivity in decision-making processes aimed at fostering sustainable urban environments.[285] Umeå serves as a prime example, demonstrating how prioritizing gender equality contributes not only to sustainability but also to the overall well-being of the community.

4.3. First area of research: labor and work-life balance

Umeå boasts the most extensive labor market in its region, witnessing the establishment of approximately 700-800 new businesses annually, as per official records. Over the past decade, employment in the private trade and industry sector has surged by over 30%, surpassing the public sector in workforce size.[286] Major public employers include the municipality, the regional authority, and the university, thereby making the education sector more prominent compared to other Swedish cities. Volvo stands as the largest private employer in the area. Umeå nurtures numerous burgeoning enterprises, particularly in biotechnology, medicine, IT, environmental sciences, energy, and modern forestry and engineering sectors. Notably, six of Umeå's export-oriented companies achieve an annual turnover exceeding one billion Swedish kronor. While labor force participation rates between men and women in Umeå are nearly equal, standing at 79% and 78% respectively, challenges persist in labor market segregation and resultant wage

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[284] URBACT. Final Integrated Action Plan Umeå, Sweden, Gendered Landscape, May 2022. https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/2023-01/GenderedLandscape%20Final%20IAP%20Umeå%2C%20English.pdf

[285] Portico, "Making transitions affordable for all - Umeå." Urban Innovative Actions, accessed 16 February 2024, https://portico.urban-initiative.eu/uia/making-transitions-affordable-all/umea.

[286] Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, GenderedLandscape: Action Planning Network Baseline Study. Gendered Landscape, URBACT, 2020. P.54

disparities. A significant majority of employed women, 57%, are engaged in the public sector, such as healthcare or education, compared to only 21% of men. Moreover, women's average annual income trails behind men's, with figures at 276,000kr and 334,000kr respectively. Despite these challenges, Umeå has undertaken concerted efforts to address labor market disparities, yielding moderate success, though continued efforts are essential. Furthermore, the pursuit of the right to full-time employment has been a longstanding political agenda spanning several decades and despite efforts, the labor market remains heavily gender-segregated even in Sweden, with a significant portion of female-dominated roles, particularly within the public sector, structured as part-time positions. As far back as 1980, the Committee on Gender Equality underscored in its action plan the prevalence of women occupying part-time roles.[287] The committee attributed this trend to the inherent conflict between household responsibilities and paid employment, resulting in women often juggling dual roles. Additionally, it found that societal norms and traditional gender stereotypes pose barriers to women's full integration into the workforce. In 1992, with the adoption of its inaugural gender equality plan, the Municipal Council outlined objectives aimed at reducing the prevalence of part-time employment in favor of promoting full-time positions. Moreover, in 2015, Umeå Municipality took a significant step toward enhancing job security and promoting self-sufficiency by introducing the right to full-time employment within municipal healthcare and social care sectors, marking 23 years since the initial decision. Presently, full-time and permanent employment has become the norm within the municipality, with a commitment to transitioning all employees to full-time positions by May 2021. To tackle ongoing discrimination in gender-segregated labor, in 2005, an initiative was launched to improve the working conditions, elevate the status, and diversify the workforce within the traditionally female-dominated field of meal service. Research indicates that workplaces with gender equality tend to be more financially viable, while those segregated by gender often experience higher rates of absenteeism. Discussions ensued regarding the implications of part-time employment and the importance of employing gender analysis to comprehend the lower male participation in meal service roles. The project aimed to enhance the profession's status by fostering employee growth and skill

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[287] Dahlqvist A. et al. Gender, power and politics! Thirty years of gender equality work in Umeå Municipality 1989–2019. Umeå kommun, Umeå, 2019. Pp.8-10

enhancement, with a focus on creating a healthier work environment to address prevalent sick leave issues. Job rotation was implemented as a strategy to both improve workplace health and increase the availability of full-time positions. Although the "Attractive workplace on equal terms" project concluded in 2007, its initiatives have since evolved. At its inception, male representation in the workforce stood at seven percent, rising to 21 percent by 2018. While sick leave rates have progressively declined, efforts to further improve organizational health remain ongoing. On the other hand, in 1974, parental insurance was implemented in Sweden's legislation, marking a significant milestone as both parents became eligible for financial support while caring for their children at home. Initially, men utilized only about 0.5% of parental benefits during the first year of its inception. In the subsequent decades, data available at the municipal level, particularly throughout the 2000s, revealed that Umeå Municipality exhibited a more balanced distribution of parental leave days between genders compared to the national average. Moreover, the municipality of Umeå articulated its commitment to becoming a leader in Circular Economy (CE) within its Strategic Plan for 2016–2028[288]. Joining the OECD program on circular cities from 2019 to 2021[289] and endorsing the European Circular Cities Declaration[290] in 2020, Umeå has actively pursued circular initiatives. Implementing principles of CE in urban design presents significant opportunities for reducing resource consumption and environmental impact, for instance initiatives such as resource sharing programs, circular events, second-hand stores operated by the municipality, sports equipment sharing platforms, and bike-sharing schemes, as highlighted on the municipality's website.[291] Feedback from surveys indicated a positive reception towards CE initiatives, particularly regarding the potential for job creation. However, concerns were raised about the impact on traditionally male-dominated industries, which could pose social challenges due to the existing gender segregation in

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[288] Umeå kommun, 2018. O ̈versiktsplan Umeå kommun. Available at: https://www.umea.se/download/18.250f9659174ae4b97941187/1601371952404/%C3%96versiktsplan%20Ume%C3%A5%20kommun.pdf

[289] OECD, 2020b. The Circular Economy in Umeå, Sweden. OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/sweden/the-circular-economy-in-umea-sweden-4ec5dbcd-en.htm

[290] ICLEI, 2020. Circular cities declaration. Available at: https://circularcitiesdeclaration.eu/cities/umeaa.

[291] Umeå municipality, 2022b. Sharing city Umeå, Umeå kommun. Available at: https://www.umea.se/byggaboochmiljo/samhallsutvecklingochhallbarhet/klimatmiljoochhallbarhet/sharingcityumea.4.1c16b00a1742340e02e929.html.

the labor market. Statistical data from the Swedish Statistics Agency[292] illustrates this gender disparity, showing that industries such as extractive, manufacturing, and warehouse/logistics in the Norrbotten and Västerbotten regions, where Umeå is situated, remain heavily skewed towards male employment. Furthermore, survey participants expressed that various societal groups had favorable access to services and CE initiatives within the city. Notably, individuals with lower educational attainment, people with disabilities, and those with limited social networks faced challenges, along with individuals dealing with travel constraints such as residents in rural areas or those without access to a car.[293] Access to these initiatives was reported as generally positive across gender, property ownership status, and occupation. However, the need for information access, including digital services, emerged as a critical factor for participation in many CE initiatives operating online. Foreign-born individuals, particularly those not fluent in Swedish, encountered language barriers, while a lack of social networks linked to municipal government and CE initiatives further restricted their information access. Similarly, individuals relocating to Umeå from other parts of Sweden faced limitations in accessing information due to a lack of established networks. Social integration efforts are primarily delegated to civil society organizations like the Red Cross local branch, Studieförbundet, and Vän i Umeå. These organizations implement circular initiatives such as cooking classes utilizing food surplus, clothing exchange events, and communal bike-sharing. Participants also touched upon cultural norms, noting that certain foreign-born communities excelled in specific CE practices, like repair, while cultural values sometimes inclined them towards favoring new products. Individuals with lower incomes might associate shame with purchasing from second-hand stores, and for children, access through school initiatives was acknowledged, though parental influence played a significant role in accessing services beyond school hours. However, the survey participants observed limited citizen and civil society engagement in CE decisions, contrasting with active participation from companies and the municipal government. It

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[292] SCB, 2022. Number of employed persons in the circular sector in the business sector, Statistiska Centralbyrån. Available at: https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/miljo/miljoekonomi-och-hallbar-utveckling/cirkular-ekonomi/pong/tabell-och-diagram/konkurrens-och-innovation2/antal-sysselsatta-i-naringslivet-i-den-cirkulara-sektorn/

[293] Vanhuyse, Fedra, Shogofa Rezaie, Mathilda Englund, Julia Jokiaho, Maryna Henrysson, and Karin André. "Including the social in the circular: A mapping of the consequences of a circular economy transition in the city of Umeå, Sweden." Journal of Cleaner Production 380 (2022): 134893.

might be attributed to the voluntary nature of many individuals' commitments to civil society organizations, suggesting that participation in government consultations might not be a priority during their leisure time. Additionally, participants remarked on the diverse perspectives within the civil society sector, stating that it was not the municipal government's responsibility to ensure widespread participation in CE consultations. Umeå, in particular, boasts 415 registered civil society associations across various domains such as sports, religion, climate, and integration. This diversity poses a challenge in inviting a representative sample of organizations to participate in consultations.[294] Despite difficulties arising CE presents as the new sustainable economic system to pursue in order to foster resilience and growth after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In comparison to other countries such as Finland and Norway, Sweden pursued a distinct approach, particularly at the onset of the pandemic, in efforts to contain and manage its impact. Throughout the pandemic's early stages, Sweden maintained a relatively open society, opting for a strategy centered on individual responsibility rather than government mandates and prohibitions. This approach allowed the economy, encompassing various establishments like shops, bars, and cafes, to operate without enforced closures or travel constraints, in contrast to many other nations.[295] Additionally, Sweden predominantly kept schools open to mitigate the pandemic's adverse effects on human capital development. However, as of 2021, Sweden introduced stricter measures compared to other Nordic countries, particularly concerning the organization of even minor public gatherings.[296] According to research on the pandemic's impact, "by comparing the impact of the COVID-19 shock with the effects of the financial crisis in 2008–2009, the unemployment level in Luleå and Umeå rose slightly less"[297]. Conversely, the COVID-

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[294] Umeå kommun, 2022. Umeå kommun. Available at: https://xn–ume-wla.se/2.6fa619ad16f3087d4d517b2c.html

[295] Irfan, F.B., Minetti, R., Telford, B., Ahmed, F.S., Syed, A.Y., Hollon, N., Brauman, S.C., Cunningham, W., Awad, M.E., Saled, K.J., Waljee, A.K. & Brusselaers, N. (2022). Coronavirus pandemic in the Nordic countries: Health policy and economy trade-off. Journal of Global Health, 12: 05017. DOI: 10.7189/jogh.12.05017

[296] Hale, T., Angrist, N., Goldszmidt, R., Kira, B., Petherick, A., Phillips, T., Webster, S., Cameron- Blake, E., Hallas, L., Majumdar, S., and Tatlow, H. (2021). A global panel database of pandemic policies (Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker). Nature Human Behaviour. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01079-8

[297] Simonen, Jaakko, Mikko Moilanen, Jemina Kotila, Joona Lohtander, Lars Westin, Anders Hersinger, Stein Østbye, Tapio Riepponen, and Rauli Svento. "The COVID-19 pandemic and regional economic resilience in Northern Finland, Norway, and Sweden–bouncing back or not?." Arctic Pandemics: COVID-19 and Other Pandemic Experiences and Lessons Learned (2023).

19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted service sectors predominantly staffed by women, as government regulations mandated the temporary closure of service-based businesses. Concurrently, there has been a surge in demand for labor in female-dominated healthcare professions due to the pandemic's demands. It appears that initially, women bore the brunt of employment setbacks at the pandemic's onset, yet their recovery outpaced that of men. In Umeå, this gender disparity seems more pronounced, with male unemployment spiking more sharply than that of women. The abrupt onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a societal crisis marked by numerous challenges, including fear, social insecurity, and isolation. The imposed stay-at-home measures during the pandemic crisis have accentuated the significance of immediate neighborhoods. data collection occurred during the initial wave of the pandemic, providing an opportunity to examine how such a crisis could potentially impact social interactions and support within neighborhoods. Academic research at the University of Umea conducted reveals that prior to the pandemic, individuals residing in neighborhoods with robust social capital reported higher levels across all three dimensions of social capital - networks of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity, and social trust - compared to those in low/medium social capital neighborhoods.[298] Furthermore, the findings indicate that amid government restrictions promoting social isolation and the contraction of social networks, many respondents noted an increase in social capital in both high and low/medium social capital neighborhoods. Numerous participants perceived heightened care and willingness to assist among neighbors compared to pre-crisis levels, with the latter experiencing the most substantial increase. These trends were consistent across both high and low/medium social capital neighborhoods, although the rise was more pronounced in neighborhoods that already possessed high social capital before the crisis. These results suggest that during times of societal crisis and social restrictions, when access to and utilization of public social support services may decline, the importance of neighborhood relations is amplified.

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[298] Zetterberg, Liv, Ailiana Santosa, Nawi Ng, Matilda Karlsson, and Malin Eriksson. "Impact of COVID-19 on neighborhood social support and social interactions in Umeå Municipality, Sweden." Frontiers in Sustainable Cities 3 (2021): 685737.

4.4.   Second area of research: mobility and walkability

The city's transportation strategy is outlined in the Comprehensive Plan for Umeå Municipality[299], which integrates seamlessly with the city's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP). This strategy aims to transform Umeå into a "five-kilometer city and high-density city," equipped with sustainable mobility infrastructure. In pursuit of this goal, various city departments, including those responsible for public transport, smart solutions, and climate neutrality, collaborate with gender equality officers to implement the gendered landscape approach effectively. For each new initiative, dedicated working groups are established to ensure comprehensive planning and execution. This inclusive approach also involves extensive consultation with residents and fosters co-creation of solutions. Umeå's "Climate-Smart Choices for Sustainable Lifestyles"[300] report underscores the importance of challenging established travel patterns by promoting alternative forms of transportation. The incorporation of a gender-sensitive perspective aims to make these alternative options more appealing to residents, facilitating a smoother transition towards sustainable mobility practices. In mid-sized Swedish cities like Umeå, the primary mode of public transportation readily available to residents is the bus. Buses have ample capacity to accommodate both seated and standing passengers, as well as provisions for strollers and wheelchair accessibility. They offer an affordable means for individuals to access various amenities and services within the city. Umeå's municipal authorities have outlined plans to repurpose sections of the European motorways E4 and E12, which traverse the urban landscape, into green spaces and additional routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Presently, the urban area boasts 224 kilometers of pedestrian and bicycle paths, alongside a well-developed bus network servicing 165 stops.[301] Examining families, communities, towns, cities, and regions through a gender lens demands a fundamental shift in mindset and actions. Since 2009, Umeå has pioneered guided bus

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[299] Umeå Kommun, Comprehensive Plan for Umeå Municipality – Guide to the parts of the plan, its themes and relevance. Umea. Adopted on 27 August 2018 www.umea.se/oversiktsplan

[300] Umeå kommun, Climate-smart choices for sustainable lifestyles: Summary and highlights from the climate uproject The low-carbon place 2016–2019. Umeå, 2016. https://www.umea.se/download/18.19a41f3a17567e789ef2d0d/1605174970087/Climat-smart%20choices%20for%20sustainable%20lifestyles%20-

[301] Umeå kommun, Local Transport: EGCA 2018, Umeå, 2018. https://www.umea.se/download/18.19a41f3a17567e789ef21dc/1604918343339/02.%20Local%20Transport.pdf

tours showcasing the gendered landscape of Umeå. This innovative approach illustrates the tangible manifestations of gender equality efforts within the city, highlighting successes while also drawing attention to lingering challenges. The initiative aligns with Umeå's ambitious goals of sustainability and gender equality, representing a pioneering effort in Europe. Moreover, its methodology serves as a tool for education and awareness, emphasizing the importance of considering gendered power dynamics in all urban planning endeavors. It prompts critical questions about the city's development and identity, challenging conventional norms and fostering dynamic discourse. Through the gendered city bus tour, statistical data, as presented in the "Gendered Landscape"[302] report, is brought to life, showcasing 25 integrated practices and the concrete outcomes of gender equality initiatives. While spearheaded by the municipality, this work has also engaged various organizations and individuals in Umeå's community. The tour aims to underscore the unity of the city and, consequently, the imperative of cooperation and collaboration in fostering inclusivity. One noteworthy example is the creation of Frizon park, a joint endeavor involving various municipal entities, architectural firms, and local groups of young women.[303] This collaboration facilitated a deeper comprehension of the daily challenges faced by young women and the necessity for public spaces free from societal expectations. Armed with this insight, a park was established in the city center. For the architectural firms involved, the process instilled a heightened awareness of the need for inclusive public spaces, diverging from traditional norms. Moreover, it influenced the practices of Umeå's Street and Parks department, prompting a shift towards more inclusive dialogues with citizens and the integration of gender considerations into policy documents. Another instance of collaboration unfolded between the municipality, Umeå University, and the Swedish for Immigrants school, fostering an appreciation for the distinction between being acknowledged and feeling objectified or empowered in public spaces. This realization prompted adjustments in how public forums are organized to ensure broader citizen engagement. These examples are integral components of the Gendered Landscape tour, which also features sites showcasing the work of NGOs, public

[302] URBACT, Gendered Landscape URBACT action planning network: Final Integrated Action Plan. Umeå, Sweden May, 2022 https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/2023-01/GenderedLandscape%20Final%20IAP%20Umeå%2C%20English.pdf

[303] Make Space for Girls, "Umeå," accessed February 24, 2024, https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/case-studies/umea.

artwork, and the dynamic interplay between public and private spheres within the city. The Gendered Landscape city bus tour stands as a remarkably cost-effective initiative, overseen by the city's gender equality officer with an annual budget of 40,000 SEK (approximately €4,000) sourced from Umeå's Gender Equality Committee (JUSK). This sustainable funding mechanism ensures the longevity of the initiative, grounded in local democratic processes. Launched in 2009, the tour undergoes continuous refinement and expansion; in 2016, a virtual reality component was introduced, broadening its reach to new audiences such as primary and secondary schools, seamlessly integrating the gendered landscape approach into educational curricula. Furthermore, Umeå's analysis reveals that if men utilized public transportation as frequently as women, the resulting CO_2 reductions would surpass those achieved by transitioning the entire bus fleet to electric vehicles. Caroline Criado Perez's book begins the discourse with the thought-provoking question "Can snow-clearing be sexist?"[304] with the intention of showcasing systemic biases in data collection, where the male perspective is often considered the default, leading to a lack of data on women. Even seemingly mundane services like snow clearing exhibit gendered dimensions. For instance, Umeå's administration recognized through transportation and employment data collection that women are typically the first to utilize roads in the morning for caregiving duties, often commuting by bicycle. Consequently, the city council instructed the roads department to prioritize snow clearance from bike lanes. This targeted approach includes campaigns aimed at altering transit behaviors among men, thus effectively reaching the intended audience and promoting significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Initiatives exploring innovative technologies, such as autonomous buses, take into account variations in transit attitudes by acknowledging the importance of bus drivers in women's perceptions of safety. This inclusive perspective fosters the acceptance and adoption of new technologies by all residents. Umeå remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that its sustainable evolution is equitable and just for all residents, striving to distribute both burdens and benefits equally. Umeå municipality participates in the RUGGEDISED smart city project, aiming to establish an integrated "smart district" through the implementation of various

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[304] Caroline Criado Perez. Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men. New York, NY: Abrams Press, 2019. ISBN 978-1-4197-2907-2

Smart Solutions.[305] This initiative combines planned urban regeneration, new developments, existing smart city infrastructure, and investments from both public and private sectors. The primary objective of the "Energy-Optimized Electric BRT Station" Smart Solution, detailed in this report, is to minimize heat and energy loss during boarding processes, thereby conserving energy and reducing CO_2 emissions in Umeå by enhancing the efficiency and appeal of public transportation. This innovative bus station design, developed and situated within Umeå's smart city framework, is tailored to encourage increased usage of public transit, aligning with the city's goal of CO_2 emission reduction. The station's layout is designed to streamline boarding procedures, thereby minimizing energy loss from open doors on electric buses, while also providing a pleasant waiting environment for travelers. With its forward-thinking design, which emphasizes the synergy between technology, people, and the environment to mitigate the city's environmental footprint and carbon dioxide emissions, this climate-smart bus station is envisioned as a hallmark of the Smart University District. In addition, it was identified as a best practice in accordance with both the achievement of Goal 5 and Goal 11 of the SDGs Agenda 2030 and the commitments delineated by the NUA.[306] The ultimate goal is to capitalize on the current level of interest and introduce additional enhancements in Umeå as well as throughout Europe. Umeå aspires to collaborate with various entities in advancing this approach, not only within the city but also in other locations, as demonstrated by the city's commitment to engage in best practices exchange with fellow municipalities within transnational networks.

4.5. Third area of research: violence within domestic and public spaces

A 2012 survey commissioned by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights revealed that despite their exemplary rankings in gender equality, the Nordic countries exhibited some of the highest reported lifetime prevalence levels of physical or sexual IPVAW within the

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[305] Umeå Municipality, Umeå Energi, Umeå University. Ruggedised - Designing smart, resilient cities for all: Implementation report Umeå, Vol. 3. 10 / 2022. https://ruggedised.eu/fileadmin/repository/Publications/D3.12_-_Final_Implementation_Report_Umeå.pdf

[306] Urban Agenda Platform, The Gendered City Tour: Challenging power in cities, Urban Agenda Platform, https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/print/pdf/node/1955

EU.[307] In Sweden, 28% of participants reported exposure, exceeding the EU average of 22%. This apparent paradoxical relationship between high levels of gender equality and IPVAW prevalence in Sweden and other Nordic nations has been termed the "Nordic Paradox"[308]. Responsibility for addressing and preventing IPVAW in Sweden is shared among various governmental and non-governmental entities. While the women's shelter movement has been instrumental in supporting victims and raising awareness about IPVAW, recent amendments to the Social Services Act[309] have expanded municipalities' roles in monitoring IPVAW and providing victim support. The County Administrative Boards (Lansstyrelser) have been tasked with facilitating the implementation of the national strategy for combating IPVAW, while the police and judicial system focus on enforcing IPVAW laws and the Swedish Prison and Probation Services offer rehabilitation programs for perpetrators.[310] Instead, detecting IPVAW and providing appropriate treatment fall under the responsibility of the healthcare system.[311] However, several scholars have highlighted a relative lack of visibility regarding IPVAW in Sweden. Notably, alongside a movement toward gender-neutral IPVAW policies and practices, there's been an observed shift in Sweden towards a more individualistic understanding of IPVAW, focusing on power dynamics and specific vulnerable groups.[312] Since the 1970s, the feminist movement has been actively engaged in combating gender-based violence, advocating slogans such as 'the personal is political', by collaborating recurrently with Umeå University in order to raise awareness about IPVAW and bring the phenomenon to the knowledge of all residents in Umeå. Many activists have indeed participated in courses like "Power and Gender" and volunteered at the women's shelter. However, it wasn't until the late 1990s that men's violence against women began to be

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[307] FRA (2014). Violence against women: An EU-wide survey. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. https://doi.org/10.2811/981927

[308] Gracia, E., & Merlo, J. (2016). Intimate partner violence against women and the Nordic paradox. Social Science & Medicine, 157, 27–30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.1003.1040

[309] SOSFS. (2014:4). Violence in intimate relationships [Va ̈ld i nara relationer]. National Board of Health and Welfare.

[310] SOU. (2018:37). Breaking a violent behavior: Recidivism preventive interventions for men who subject intimately related persons to violence [Att bryta ett våldsamt beteende: återfallsförebyggande insatser för man som utsatt närstående for våld]. Official Report of the Swedish Government.

[311] SOSFS. (2014:4). Violence in intimate relationships [Va ̈ld i nara relationer]. National Board of Health and Welfare.

[312] Holmberg, C., Enander, V., & Lindgren, A.-L. (2015). Ett litet ord betyder så mycket: Alliansregeringen, Handlingsplanen och betydelseforskjutningar av begreppet mans våld mot kvinnor. Sociologisk Forskning, 52(3), 257–278.

recognized more explicitly as a focal point for local gender equality policies. The inception of the women's shelter in Umeå marked one of the pioneering initiatives in the country as it attracted women who had been actively engaged in combating men's violence against women and children. Established in 1979, the Umeå Women's Shelter faced significant challenges in securing financial backing and premises from the municipality, necessitating relentless efforts.[313] However, in 1980, the Women's House Association emerged in Umeå, advocating for a dedicated space for both the women's refuge and other women's political endeavors. Following numerous lectures, public debates, and petitions, activists staged an occupation of a municipally owned villa in a central location in 1983. Lasting three months, this occupation garnered substantial local and national attention, although the villa was eventually demolished. However, this action led to the relocation of the women's shelter to another yellow villa, which became a new hub for women's activities. Gudrun Nordborg, a lawyer and feminist, has been a prominent figure in the anti-violence movement since the 1970s. She currently serves as a member of the Municipal Council for the Left Party and the Commission on Gender Equality. The primary objective was to provide support and assistance to women experiencing violence while also offering counseling to men prone to using violence. Additionally, the Centre Against Violence - first opened by the municipality as the Barnahus in 2006 - offers aid to individuals affected by prostitution and those purchasing sexual services. The Centre and the Women's Shelter now operate in tandem, supported by a three-year cooperation agreement between the municipality and the shelter. According to a recent evaluation in 2019, the Women's and Girls' Shelter in Umeå aided 340 women and 90 children seeking support. Concurrently, the Centre Against Violence offered counseling to 152 adult women who had experienced violence, while 63 children received assistance at the Children's Shelter during the same period. Additionally, the Centre engaged with 60 perpetrators of violence. Operated by the municipality in collaboration with Region Västerbotten, the Police Authority, the Prosecutor's Office, and the National Board of Forensic Medicine, the Centre Against Violence serves as a knowledge hub on gender-based violence. It undertakes the responsibility of educating and advising other organizations on the matter. Moreover, the Centre has developed

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[313] Öster M. Community can cure: community center for domestic violence support and prevention [Internet] [Dissertation]. 2022. https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-195498

specialized knowledge on honor-based violence, acting as a resource for institutions such as schools, healthcare facilities, and social services. The Centre has organized numerous training sessions, conferences, campaigns, and other initiatives over the years. In parallel, the municipality established concurrent initiatives to tackle gender-based violence on multiple fronts, starting in 2005 with the introduction of feminist self-defense in schools in Umeå. In 2006, a significant seminar addressing security concerns was convened following a series of violent assaults on women that instilled fear in Umeå from 1998 to 2006, until the apprehension of the so-called "Haga Man," a serial rapist. This series of assaults deeply affected residents, urban life and the image of the city itself, as fear among women regarding the Haga Man extended beyond individual concern to encompass the entire community of Umeå.[314] Numerous newspaper accounts from that time highlight a city-wide initiative to address and enhance women's safety, illustrating a collective effort that involved the broader population.

"One of the strongest distinguishing features of people living in Umeå is their commitment. Self-defense courses are arranged, young men escort their female friends, and students have full control over how they get from the pub, and there are discussions of how the male role is perceived. Umeå's way of uniting to face the external threat is unique". (VK 27 January 2006, news article)

"After two brutal rapes and four female assaults, the men of Umeå have had enough. Yesterday a group of friends got together at the Town Hall Square and offered free rides or escorts to all women who did not dare go out alone at night". (Expressen 25 March 2000, news article)

"On Friday evening, Umeå's residents marched against violence against women. A torchlight procession went from Teg through some of the places where the Haga Man and other perpetrators have violated women in Umeå. At the same time, the city's church bells rang". (DN 21 January 2006, news article)

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[314] Sandberg L. Fear of violence and gendered power relations : Responses to threat in public space in Sweden [Internet] [PhD dissertation]. [Umeå]: Kulturgeografiska Institutionen, Umeå Universitet, 2011. (GERUM). Available from: https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-48591

In Umeå, safeguarding women emerged as a manifestation of collective concern for their well-being and safety. The apprehension shifted to collective relief upon the apprehension of the Haga Man, "the arrest was followed by discussion about reclaiming space, manifested in both the media's reports and the respondents' attitudes and talk about fear and safety"[315]. Furthermore, in 2007, Umeå was among the municipalities participating in a campaign targeting human trafficking across the Baltic Sea. This collaborative initiative involves Umeå Municipality, Västerbotten County Administrative Board, Region Västerbotten, and Skellefteå Municipality, undergoing several updates and enhancements since its inception, including the production of multiple campaign videos. The campaign, showcased in cinemas, hockey matches in Umeå and Skellefteå, as well as on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, along with posters distributed throughout Västerbotten, seeks to raise awareness about men's violence against women and prompt community responses to warning signs.[316] The Bry dig campaign aims to identify early indicators of exposure to and perpetration of violence, targeting individuals in the vicinity of both victims and perpetrators. Recognizing early signs of controlling behavior in relationships can help prevent escalation into more severe threats and physical violence. Since 2015, the campaign has undergone nearly annual updates and has expanded with the production of additional campaign videos. In addition, the Umeå University conducted a survey among students and personnel and consequently published a report on sexual harassment in academia in 2022,[317] with the objective to delineate the occurrences and explore the relationship between instances of sexual harassment, along with other manifestations of gender-based violence, within the academic setting of Umeå University. Drawing upon findings from a nationwide investigation into the prevalence of sexual harassment in academia, conducted as part of the "Research and collaboration program on gender-based violence"[318], this report seeks to contribute updated knowledge

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[315] see above, p.21

[316] Dahlqvist A. et al. Gender, power and politics! Thirty years of gender equality work in Umeå Municipality 1989–2019. Umeå Kommun, Umeå, 2019. https://www.umea.se/download/18.1e902c491847930967530bc/1669206644284/Gender%20power%20and%20politics.pdf

[317] Keisu, B.I., Lauri, J. and Eriksson, N., 2022. Sexual Harassment and Gender-based Violence: A Study of Staff and Students at Umeå University. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1677691&dswid=-5701

[318] Rudolfsson L. et al, Survey on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment in the Swedish Higher Education Sector. Karolinska Institutet, May 2022, https://ki.se/media/247264/download

and resources for fostering inclusive work and educational atmospheres. The overarching goal is to eradicate sexual harassment and gender-based violence from academic institutions.

4.6. Fourth area of research: healthcare and reproductive rights

Since the 1990s, Sweden has faced challenges such as diminishing welfare provisions, growing socioeconomic disparities, and an uptick in poverty rates.[319] Nevertheless, in Umeå, a distinct local welfare system remains resilient. The accessibility of welfare services surpasses the national average, with 4.7 physicians per 1000 individuals (compared to the national average of 2.7), and 84% of residents residing within a 5-minute radius of a healthcare facility, contrasting with the national average of 66%.[320] Remarkably, despite nationwide trends, Umeå stands out as Sweden's largest city without any designated vulnerable areas as defined by the Swedish Police Authority in their 2021 surveys, indicating low levels of social exclusion and crime.[321] In Sweden, since 2003, a comprehensive national public health policy ratified by the Riksdag has been in effect, encompassing eleven key focus areas. The primary objective of this policy is to "foster social circumstances conducive to good health, ensuring equity for all citizens"[322]. This legislation also establishes a cross-sectoral framework for public health initiatives across various domains, emphasizing the integration of public health considerations into all policy spheres. Subsequently, in June 2008, the parliament endorsed the legislation titled "A renewed public health policy"[323] which included revisions such as refining the focus areas while maintaining many of the foundational principles. The overarching aim remains centered on fostering societal conditions that promote good health, ensuring

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[319] Elander, I., Granberg, M., Montin, S., 2021. Governance and planning in a "perfect storm": securitising climate change, migration and Covid-19 in Sweden. Prog. Plann., 100634 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2021.100634

[320] Regionfakta, 2022b. Kultur och fritid, Regionfakta. https://www.regionfakta.com/vasterbottens-lan/kultur-och-fritid/.

[321] Swedish Police Authority, 2021. Lägesbild Över Utsatta Områden. Dnr: A028.504/2021. Stockholm: Swedish Police Authority. https://polisen.se/om-polisen/polisens-arbete/utsatta-omraden/

[322] Swedish National Institute of Public Health. Ten years of Swedish public health policy. Summary report. Stockholm: The Institute, 2013.

[323] Government of Sweden, "A Renewed Public Health Policy." Stockholm, 2008.

equity across the entire population. Moreover, the Health and Medical Services Act[324] mandates that healthcare delivery must uphold the equal worth and dignity of all individuals, with priority given to those with the most pressing health needs. As of 2015, the average life expectancy was 84 years for women and 80.4 years for men, with a slight upward trend observed in recent years. Disparities in life expectancy based on educational attainment have widened over the past decade, with those with post-secondary education enjoying several more years of life expectancy compared to those with pre-secondary education, regardless of gender. The government has undertaken significant initiatives to enhance the quality of elderly care, ensure elder safety, and promote gender equality and equitable healthcare nationwide, including expanded protections against age discrimination since 2013. Challenges persist in achieving health equity, particularly in reducing disparities in health outcomes and ensuring equitable access to healthcare. Unhealthy dietary habits pose significant health risks, contributing to premature mortality. Additionally, variations in both mental and physical health exist across different demographic groups, notably among individuals with varying levels of education and gender. Disparities extend to marginalized communities such as LGBT individuals, people with disabilities, foreign-born residents, national minorities, and indigenous peoples, warranting targeted interventions to address these health inequities. For instance, based on research conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare in 2013, "women with disabilities and breast cancer are twice as likely to die as other patients with breast cancer, partly because they are diagnosed at a later stage"[325]. The government aims to eradicate preventable health disparities within a single generation. In pursuit of this objective, the Commission for Equity in Health was established in 2015, tasked with formulating recommendations to mitigate societal health inequalities. The Commission operates with a gender equality lens and employs an intersectional framework to analyze how varying social positions intersect with disparities in access to resources across key life domains. Recognizing that resource allocation in these domains significantly impacts health outcomes, disparities in resource distribution inevitably

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[324] Health and Medical Services Act 2017:30. Sweden.

[325] The Swedish Society of Nursing, A strategy for the Swedish Society of Nursing: Equity in care and health, The Swedish Society of Nursing. Umeå, 2015.
https://swenurse.se/download/18.d1553201775ab8a0a5a16f/1612266658311/Equity%20in%20care%20and%20health.pdf

translate into health inequalities.[326] As highlighted in several reports, key life areas include:

• Early life development.

• Knowledge, skills and education.

• Work, working conditions and work environment.

• Incomes and economic resources.

• Housing and neighborhood conditions.

• Health behaviors.

• Control, influence and participation.

However, the significance lies not only in the disparities of resources accounting for conditions and opportunities within each specific area, but rather in the dynamic interconnectedness of resources across all domains collectively. Various types of resources are often interconnected, mutually reinforcing, and interacting throughout life's stages. These dynamic interactions can lead to both positive and negative feedback loops, wherein inequalities in one area contribute to disparities in others. Ultimately, health status is likely influenced by and influences all these conditions and trajectories. Three primary processes through which this impact on health occurs: inequalities in the risks of illness and disease; inequalities in vulnerability to these health risks; and inequalities in the consequences of poor health. The objective was to raise awareness about health disparities within society and among relevant stakeholders. The commission's mandate concluded in 2017, presenting an evaluation of how public health policies operate in practice relative to their intended framework. The report identifies several areas requiring attention or development. Autonomy, interpersonal trust, societal influence, and participation significantly impact health outcomes for individuals and communities. To foster greater health equity, initiatives should be implemented to enhance everyone's

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[326] N Lindqvist, The Swedish national public health policy and its achievements after ten years, European Journal of Public Health, Volume 29, Issue Supplement_4, November 2019, ckz185.710, https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckz185.710

ability to control, influence, and participate in society and daily life.[327] Numerous recommendations across various domains aim to bolster individuals' agency, particularly focusing on equitable democratic engagement, civil society participation, human rights advocacy, discrimination prevention, violence mitigation, and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights. In April 2018, the Government introduced a proposal titled "Enhancing health equity: a comprehensive public health policy"[328] to the Parliament. The proposal underscored the following key points:

- Health disparities represent a societal challenge and block sustainable development.
- Public health is a collective responsibility spanning all sectors and levels, necessitating engagement from both public and private entities, civil society, and individuals. Every sector should strive to advance good health and equitable outcomes.
- Adopting a "Health in All Policies" approach is essential for guiding actions across all sectors, locally, regionally, and nationally.
- National-level collaboration can facilitate public health initiatives at regional and local levels.

Furthermore, the proposal stressed the importance of robust monitoring of public health and social determinants, along with evaluating public health efforts with a keen focus on addressing disparities among different demographic groups. The Government entrusted the Public Health Agency of Sweden with developing a framework to enable systematic and coordinated endeavors aimed at realizing the reformulated public health objectives, which involved examining various policy domains and organizations, along with assessing health indicators and factors influencing health outcomes.[329] Equitable healthcare and public medical services entail providing care based on individual needs, without discrimination based on factors such as sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity,

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[327] Lundberg Olle, The next step towards more equity in health in Sweden: how can we close the gap in a generation?, Scandinavian Journal of Public Health 2018 46:22_suppl, 19-27

[328] Swedish Government, Enhancing Health Equity: A Comprehensive Public Health Policy" (prop. 2017/18:249), Stockholm, 2017.

[329] Public Health Agency of Sweden, Towards a good and equitable health: A framework for implementing and monitoring the national public health policy, Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2021, www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publications.

religion, disability, age, location, education, or economic status. It emphasizes equal access to quality treatment and services for all individuals, regardless of their background or characteristics. While equality focuses on the balance between genders, equity extends to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for both individuals and groups. In this regard, the Salut Child Health Intervention Program[330] is a comprehensive health promotion initiative aimed at expectant parents and children throughout the Västerbotten region in northern Sweden. Recent findings from research indicate that the program effectively enhances overall health outcomes during childbirth while maintaining lower costs compared to standard care practices, hence "an increasing body of evidence suggests that an equal distribution of health benefits the population as a whole"[331]. Furthermore, another instance showcasing the importance of adopting gender-sensitive and inclusive perspectives into policies was the acknowledgment by the University of Umea that limited research exists on the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of young migrants in Sweden, despite both young people and migrants being identified as priority groups for SRHR. Young migrants in Sweden perceive SRHR as both essential and a fundamental right. However, compared to other young individuals in Sweden, the sexual rights of young migrants are less satisfied, with variations observed among different migrant groups.[332] Specifically, the rights of men, individuals identifying as non-binary, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual, individuals born in South Asia, those lacking a residence permit, and individuals with low economic status are fulfilled to a lesser degree than their counterparts. Migrant youths, compared to Swedish/Scandinavian youths, indicated poorer experiences across various aspects such as respect, fairness, and consultation quality in the youth clinic survey. While their legal right to access most SRHR services, along with the presence of high-quality services and an "open environment", facilitates young migrants' access to SRHR services, they still encounter significant barriers. These barriers include limited access to sexual education and information about the healthcare system, as well as instances of cultural insensitivity

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[330] Salut-satsningen: för barn och ungas hälsa [Salut Programme - for the health of children and adolescents] [Internet]. Umeå, Sweden: Region Västerbotten, 2019. Available from: www.regionvasterbotten.se/salut.

[331] Pulkki-Brännström A, Lindkvist M, Eurenius E, et alThe equity impact of a universal child health promotion programme J Epidemiol Community Health 2020;74:605-611.

[332] Baroudi, Mazen. (2022). Leaving the door ajar; Young migrants' sexual and reproductive health in Sweden. May 2022, Department of Epidemiology and Global Health, Umeå University. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360539950

and racism when seeking information and services, which significantly hinder young migrants' access to SRHR services. The priority should lie in tackling the underlying structural factors that impact the environments, vulnerabilities, and health outcomes of migrants. This effort entails ensuring equitable social conditions and implementing policies that address power imbalances. By addressing these structural issues, the disparities in SRHR can be reduced, ultimately lessening the demand for SRH services. Promoting equity in health outcomes enhances the ability of both women and men, girls and boys, to actively participate in society. The government's fifth gender equality goal encompasses physical, mental, reproductive, and sexual health. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency identifies several areas for improvement:[333]

- Increasing understanding of factors influencing the health of women and men, including disability, societal norms around masculinity, genital mutilation, violence against women perpetrated by men, stress in educational and occupational settings, and the impact of unpaid caregiving and household responsibilities.

- Enhancing understanding of how digital media impacts the mental health of girls and boys.

- Examining mental health issues through a gender lens.

- Incorporating clearer discussions of gender equality, gender differences, and gender-related topics into nursing education.

- Considering gender-specific health conditions and illnesses that disproportionately affect women, such as endometriosis, vestibulitis, thyroid disorders, menopause, and birth complications.

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[333] Swedish Gender Equality Agency. "Sub-goal 5: Equal Health." Accessed February 21, 2024. URL: https://swedishgenderequalityagency.se/gender-equality-in-sweden/sub-goal-5-equal-health/

4.7. Fifth area of research: migration, diversity and inclusion

In 1997 the Swedish Parliament established a new policy regarding migrants for the purpose that "all people living in Sweden, irrespective of ethnic or cultural origin, should have the same rights and opportunities, a mutual society with the diversity of society as a basis"[334]. Moreover, there was a determination for Swedish society to embody principles of mutual respect and tolerance, advocating for the participation and shared responsibility of all individuals, regardless of their background, in societal progress. This commitment to equity started from raising awareness on discrimination and inequality experienced by migrants and refugees. Research demonstrated that foreign-born individuals encounter challenges in securing employment, and this extends to their descendants, particularly second-generation individuals with two foreign-born parents, who exhibit lower employment rates compared to those with Swedish-born parents.[335] This trend becomes more pronounced among individuals lacking higher education after completing the mandatory nine-year schooling period. A distinct subset of unemployed migrants, referred to as "long-time unemployed", face unique obstacles.[336] Disparities in labor market integration exist among individuals born in various countries; for instance, migrants from African and Asian countries experience higher unemployment rates compared to other migrant groups. Furthermore, the Swedish labor market displays significant segregation, not only along gender lines but also between native-born and foreign-born individuals, while increasing observable trends towards segregation between different ethnic groups are evident. In 2001, the Afro-Swedes' National Association commenced a year-long campaign focused on the employment situation of Africans in the Swedish labor market, as this ethics group experienced more discrimination. The primary objective was to conduct a survey aimed at identifying potential long-term strategies to overcome barriers and enhance the overall situation for

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[334] Swedish Government, ■ Written Government Communication 2001/02:129, p. 6-7

[335] Englund, C., 2003. MIGRANTS, minorities and employment in Sweden exclusion, discrimination and ANTI-DISCRIMINATION. RAXEN focal point for Sweden. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/239-SW.pdf.

[336] Ana Maria Narti, ...Integrerad, lille vän? (■ Are you integrated my little friend?), Svartvitts fˈrlag, Stockholm, 2002

this demographic within the labor market. Another initiative aimed at supporting and empowering migrants in the labor market is the campaign "Migrant Women - A Potential Resource"[337], launched by the Kvinnor Kan Foundation (Women Can Do) in 2001. Firstly, it aims to provide educational opportunities, such as mentorship programs, to girls from immigrant backgrounds to facilitate their access to higher education. Secondly, the campaign seeks to offer migrant women qualified guidance to enhance their prospects of finding suitable roles in the labor market. In January 2002, the Swedish Integration Board initiated the creation of a web platform titled "Sverige mot rasism" (Sweden against racism)[338]. This platform serves as a comprehensive resource center, offering information on initiatives, data, and organizations dedicated to combating racism and xenophobia. Users can access details on the efforts undertaken by various governmental bodies to address racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. The platform also provides statistical data, primarily focusing on instances of discrimination and racist offenses. Furthermore, it includes a directory listing all relevant organizations, researchers, and academic institutions actively engaged in this field across Sweden. Until 2016, Sweden maintained relatively lenient asylum laws compared to other European Union nations, leading to a notable surge in immigration, peaking at 163,000 arrivals in that year. However, subsequent changes to Sweden's asylum policies resulted in a decline in immigration figures according to Statista. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further contributed to a decrease, with immigrant numbers dropping to 82,500 in 2020 before experiencing a slight uptick in 2021 and 2022.[339] Concurrently, there has been a consistent decrease in the granting of asylum in Sweden over the past decade. Gender-wise, there has been a historical trend of more men than women immigrating to Sweden, with numbers peaking in 2016 following the influx of refugees into Europe in 2015. Subsequently, both male and female immigration decreased, reaching a nadir in 2020 due to the pandemic.[340] In 2022, approximately 55,000 men and 49,000 women immigrated to Sweden, with a significant portion being Swedish citizens returning to their homeland, totaling nearly 9,900 individuals. Other top countries of origin included India, Poland, Germany, and

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[337] Kvinnor Kan, "Empowerment Through Action," accessed February 24, 2024, https://kvinnorkan.se/.

[338] "Sverige mot rasism." Accessed [22 February 2024]. https://sverigemotrasism.nu/rasism/.

[339] Statista. 2022. "Number of Immigrants to Sweden from 2000 to 2021." Accessed February 22, 2024. https://www.statista.com/statistics/523293/immigration-to-sweden/.

[340] Statista. 2022. "Immigration to Sweden in 2020, by Gender." Accessed February 22, 2024. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1300116/immigration-sweden-gender/#statisticContainer.

Syria, contributing to a total of 102,400 people immigrating to Sweden in 2022. In the 2015 refugee crisis, 247 unaccompanied refugee minors settled in Umeå. Poverty is twice as common among immigrant populations.[341] To combat income segregation, most neighborhoods consist of a mix of rental apartments and tenant-owned accommodations. Furthermore, considering the city's commitment towards a circular economy system, previous studies on CE in urban settings have highlighted the significance of civil society and citizen involvement.[342] There exists a concern that certain demographic groups, such as migrants and informal sector workers, may be marginalized or overlooked, potentially leading to an overrepresentation of perspectives from predominantly white and/or highly educated individuals.[343] Municipal spatial planning emerges as a crucial mechanism for fostering community engagement with CE objectives and a more transformative dialogue on circular economy; discussions must extend beyond technological and economic considerations and also include civil society.[344] For instance, through an examination of three resource recovery sectors (including 'dry recyclables', textiles, and ships) in Northern EU member states, it was discovered that resource recovery constitutes a novel form of labor often associated with undesirable conditions.[345] Situated within secondary labor markets, this type of work relies heavily on itinerant and migrant labor, frequently sourced from accession states. This suggests that as waste remains within the EU, labor migrates to handle its processing. On a local and workplace level, the reluctance of local workers to engage in this emerging sector is attributed to their ingrained familiarity with traditional manufacturing industries and a perception of spatial injustice. Additionally, the placement of migrant workers is influenced by stereotypical assumptions, leading to the creation of a hierarchy that links perceived reputational qualities of labor with the

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[341] Antemar, G., 2017. Att Ta Emot Ma¨nniskor På Flykt: Sverige Ho¨sten 2015. SOU 2017:12. Stockholm: Swedish Government Official Reports. Available at: https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/e8c195d35dea4c05a1c952f9b0b45f38/hela-sou-2017_12_webb_2.pdf.

[342] Kębłowski, W., Lambert, D., Bassens, D., 2020. Circular economy and the city: an urban political economy agenda. Cult. Organ. 26 (2), 142–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2020.1718148.

[343] Wuyts, W., Marin, J., 2022. Nobody" matters in circular landscapes, 0(0). Local Environ. 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2022.2040465.

[344] Calisto Friant, M., Salome, R., Vermeulen, W.J.V., 2020. A typology of circular economy discourses: navigating the diverse visions of a contested paradigm. Resour. Conserv. Recycl. 161, 104917 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.104917.

[345] Gregson, N., Crang, M., Botticello, J., Calestani, M., & Krzywoszynska, A. (2016). Doing the 'dirty work' of the green economy: Resource recovery and migrant labour in the EU. European Urban and Regional Studies, 23(4), 541-555. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776414554489

stigma attached to different forms of 'dirty' jobs. This hierarchy enables those at the top to capitalize on their position; as a response, major attention has gone to the promotion of education as a means of erasing inequalities and improving life conditions. However, another challenge to equity and inclusion comes from the fact that "in the Scandinavian countries, cities are not generally seen as places with or for Indigenous peoples"[346]. Nevertheless, increased mobility from rural to urban settings means that Indigenous peoples are increasingly residing in urban centers. This trend is prompting the reassertion of Indigenous identity within an urban context, potentially resulting in a contested relationship between the dominant identity of a city's population and its Indigenous identity.[347] In Scandinavia, the Saami, the sole Indigenous people in Northern Europe recognized and safeguarded by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, have always had a presence in urban areas. Unlike many settler states, they have not experienced dispossession or been relegated to reserves outside cities; instead, they constitute a less visible minority deeply integrated into Norwegian/Swedish society.[348] The urbanization of the Saami population, with a growing number residing in cities, coupled with a resurgence of Saami identities, has led to a more prominent Saami presence in urban settings, reshaping discussions about Saami rights. Cities have now become integral to the Saami political movement, which historically centered on rural regions and focused on land and water rights claims.[349] In 2010, Umeå achieved membership in the Swedish Saami Language Administration Area, followed by its hosting of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2014, with a significant emphasis on Saami heritage evident in the application process and wide local agreement. During the European Capital of Culture Year (ECOC), Umeå faced initial opposition to its bid for ECOC 2014, particularly from Saami organizations. The discontent stemmed from the municipality's failure to engage with Saami organizations and the absence of Saami representatives in the group responsible for the ECOC application. A representative from

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[346] Christine Hudson, Torill Nyseth & Paul Pedersen (2019) Dealing with difference, City, 23:4-5, 564-579, https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2019.1684076

[347] Nyseth, T., and P. Pedersen. 2014. "Urban Saʹmi Identities in Scandinavia: Hybridities, Ambivalences and Cultural Innovation." Acta Borealia 31 (2): 131–151.

[348] Zhang, J., and D. Muˈller. 2018. "Tourism and the Saʹmi in Transition: A Discourse Analysis of Swedish News- papers, 1982–2015." Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism 18 (2): 163–182.

[349] Nyseth, T., and P. Pedersen. 2014. "Urban Saʹmi Identities in Scandinavia: Hybridities, Ambivalences and Cultural Innovation." Acta Borealia 31 (2): 131–151.

the Swedish Saami Association (SSR) in Umeå was integrated into the planning group for Umeå 2014 and assumed the role of coordinating the Saami segment of the program. This inclusion fostered a more robust dialogue, leading to the Saami parliament in Sweden expressing its support for Umeå's bid in May 2009. Subsequently, in 2011, a Saami Artistic Advisory Committee was established with the objective of "encouraging, stimulating, and ensuring the quality of Saami presence and participation in Umeå 2014"[350]. Chaired by the head of the local Saami association, Såhkie, the committee aimed to guarantee Saami involvement and influence in the planning and execution of Umeå 2014, ensuring that the ECOC year would be inclusive of the Saami community rather than merely focused on them. Concerns emerged regarding the potential for enduring impacts in terms of enhanced comprehension of Saami culture and increased tolerance towards the Saami community. Despite the mixed reception to the opening ceremony and the apprehension of being utilized for the promotion of Umeå 2014, certain representatives from Saami organizations viewed it as an opportunity to assert their presence. By expressing a range of interpretations regarding a city's Indigenous history, it opens up the potential for the city of Umea's future identity to be accessible for interaction, debate, and negotiation.

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[350] Samiska konstnärligara ̊det. 2012. Deklaration med ma ̊l Samiska konstnären ̊det i Umea 2014, 14 -05-2012. [Declaration with goals Sa ́mi Artistic Advisory Committee for Umea ̊2014].

Conclusion: towards a gender-sensitive and inclusive urban planning

The idea of establishing a liberated space for women in urban settlements, whether real or imagined, has its roots in the Middle Ages and gained prominence with the advent of industrialization and the rapid growth of urban centers, becoming central to feminist thought and activism in Western societies. Additionally, feminists conducted inquiries, devised innovative constructive methods, and put forth proposals for the socialization of domestic labor, aiming to transcend urban spatial planning models that marginalized women and made their work increasingly difficult and invisible. As showcased by extensive literature, "alternative cities envisioned by women's imagination are conceived as places without waste, in harmony with nature, devoid of commerce, competition, and exploitation; these are places where the necessary food for life is produced, where communal living is practiced, in respect of all living beings, founded on the values of care and sharing"[351]. The city reflects the status of women; similar to society where women often lack the agency to choose their living environments, urban spaces remain largely unclaimed by women. As exemplified by Kern's work, Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World (2020), feminist discourse has consistently examined strategies for women's inclusion in urban areas, emphasizing the importance of democratic urban management, planning, and restructuring tailored to meet women's needs: "safe streets, a network of services to combat violence against women and children; a wide range of assistance and care services; a comprehensive and secure transportation network; diversified use of spaces in neighborhoods; increased pedestrian areas; new housing arrangements for single women or those with disabilities; new employment opportunities coordinated with care services, implementing strategies to reintegrate home and work, redefining public open spaces, etc."[352]. Designing a city to cater to women's needs involves not only addressing their concerns but also creating a fairer and more livable urban environment for all inhabitants. This approach emphasizes the importance of

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[351] Palusci, Oriana 1990, Terra di lei. L'immaginario femminile tra utopia e fantascienza, Tracce, Pescara.

[352] Kern, Leslie 2020, Feminist City. Claiming Space in a Man-Made World, Verso, London-New York.

fostering relationships that can give rise to resistance practices, new design concepts, and objectives for societal change. While urban planning alone cannot rectify gender disparities, it should be integrated with broader policies related to employment, housing, welfare, and other areas. Moreover, adopting a feminist perspective can encourage a different, more inclusive, and critical approach toward challenging patriarchal and neoliberal models. The recent pandemic has not only underscored existing social inequalities but also shed light on the diverse ways in which women experience urban life. Hence, it becomes imperative to refocus attention on the city not solely as a common asset but also as a "relational asset" – a city attuned and responsive to the needs of women, spanning from safety to services, embracing solidarity and interpersonal connections.[353] The renewed call for enhancing urban spaces must coincide with a reinvigoration of the city's political discourse, starting with women. From this standpoint, an intersectional feminist approach offers not only a framework for analysis but also a platform for mobilization to address urban social challenges and counter the neoliberal policies governing lifestyles and employment models. Understanding the gendered aspects of urban life requires recognizing and analyzing tangible disparities, such as disparities in wages, household incomes, family dynamics, business ownership, housing arrangements, healthcare, education, and access to services like public transportation.[354] Cities equipped with effective data collection systems that draw from various sources, including statistics, consultations, and observations, are better positioned to advance gender equality. By integrating these insights into their gender mainstreaming strategies, such cities can make significant progress. Yet, there remain gaps in data and knowledge, particularly regarding the experiences and needs of marginalized groups that are often overlooked or invisible in conventional data collection methods. Little is known, for instance, about the experiences of transgender women, sex workers, or undocumented migrants in navigating urban spaces. Addressing these gaps and incorporating their perspectives into policymaking processes is essential for fostering a more equitable cityscape. For this

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[353] Ermacora M., Resoconto del seminario L'abitare delle donne. Riflessioni, strategie e nuovi approcci, Università Ca'Foscari di Venezia, DEP, Issue 51 - Feminism and urban spaces, June 2023. https://www.unive.it/pag/fileadmin/user_upload/dipartimenti/DSLCC/documenti/DEP/numeri/n51/14_L_abitare_delle_donne.pdf

[354] Weisman, Leslie 1992, Discrimination by Design. A Feminist Critique of the Man-Made Environment, University of Illinois Press, Urbana-Chicago.

purpose, Barcelona and Umea were identified as case studies to analyze the implementation and progress of gender-sensitive policies and initiatives to incorporate gender-mainstreaming in urban development and also cultural advancement. Each city has a long tradition of gender-mainstreaming since its institutionalization at the Beijing Conference, while they both evolved according to context and tailor-made approaches to foster gender equality, combined with both international and national frameworks. Barcelona emphasizes grassroots, community-driven approach, integrating gender perspectives into diverse policy domains through active citizen participation. One of the strongest points of gender mainstreaming in Barcelona is its comprehensive and integrated approach within urban policy frameworks. The city has demonstrated a commitment to embedding gender perspectives across various sectors, including urban planning, transportation, education, and employment. Barcelona's emphasis on intersectionality and addressing multiple forms of discrimination has also been noteworthy, ensuring that policies consider the diverse experiences of women across different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Conversely, Umea adopts a more top-down, institutionalized strategy, with a focus on gender analysis tools and comprehensive gender impact assessments within bureaucratic structures. The local administration has implemented targeted initiatives and policies specifically designed to promote gender equality across various domains such as education, employment, and social services. These initiatives often involve collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector, fostering a comprehensive and coordinated effort to tackle gender inequalities. Additionally, Umea's commitment to gender mainstreaming is evident in its allocation of resources and the establishment of dedicated mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of gender-sensitive policies, ensuring accountability and progress towards achieving gender equality goals. Despite differing approaches, both cities demonstrate a commitment to advancing gender equality through tailored, context-specific methods that reflect their respective social and political landscapes. Local administrations might rely on knowledge and practices built from these experiences, not limiting their actions to adding a gender dimension to policies and urban strategies, but adjusting to an inclusive and intersectional perspective that includes all inhabitants of cities and makes them active participants to local democracy and sustainable transformation, alas fulfilling human rights in all urban settlements and cities.

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