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## **Introducing Gender and Planning**

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This paper aims to introduce gender research's roots. Gender studies born in Anglo-Saxon countries during eighties after feminist movement. During Nineties planning and planners too start to be interested in gender issues and try to construct a new epistemology based on the idea of differences. This is a survey on gender definition and on interaction between gender and planning; to try to construct a new research way, useful to have a new knowledge construction. Until introduction of differences concept in planning theory no-one was interested in this question "to whom is the city?", today we use to reflect on inclusion and exclusion by the city, planners use to research and construct inclusion policies, trying to image a new city of inclusion. Feminist movement started to dream a new city during seventies and started to tell a new story about living and constructing public and private spaces.

## New planning ideas

The issue about gender and city is a part of “city differences” reflection and of Lefebvre’s ideas on city and citizen rights. Gender studies’ roots are in Feminist Movement, in patriarchal society critics made during the Seventies by women claiming a right to an independent rule (de Beauvoir, 1961; Fireston 1971; Friedan 1964; Millet 1971; Ribero 1999)

Gender differences have a strong influence on life experiences of individuals and groups, and in overall social relationship; city amplifies differences because it is place of a big number of relationships.

Despite of Modern ideas, city is not something neutral toward people: citizen and city have strong relationships, and urban space shape relationships and behaviors. Planners, that have a modern tradition approach, did not used to distinguish among persons or among groups affiliation of people that live the cities.

Research on gender differences started during the Sixties, with Radical Feminist Movement and post-colonial review. But only since Eighties and Nineties planners began to study gender and city interactions and to introduce a new planning epistemology. A lot of women fight to have a better city but their approach did not distinguish among issues of gender and general issues of unequal treatment. Some important women who used to change planners ideas and epistemology, like Jane Jacobs that with hers *The Death and Life of Greats Americans cities* (1961) transformed the outlook of city planning, did not introduced an explicit gender point of view (Fainstein, Servon, 2005).

As Sandercock say integration between feminist work on the city and planning theory is “still far in the future” (Sandercock, 2005, p. 67), still today in development countries planning theories remains the most male dominant.

“With planning, scholars only began to become concerned with biases and omission caused by the lack of a gender lens in the late1970s” (Fainstein, Servon, 2005, p. 2).

A new idea of planning, related to advocacy planning, was introduced. Planning stopped to be thought like a neutral action and showed its nature: an action that create power, and planners started to recognized that planning was operating in a field of power and inequality.

This new idea of planning needs a new epistemology and it takes its stand on the concept of difference. There is not only a kind of citizen (a man: withe, young, hard worker), but there are a lot of differences people to take in mind.

Until this cultural revolution, planning was based on 18th century concept: the power of reason, and the rationality; planners like Forester and Sandercock embraced grass-roots ideas and critics to declare that planning is a political act too, not only a technical one. Both of them assert that planning is first of all an interactive activity, communication, and a political act.

Sandercock argue that the first planning goal is not to create a supporting material, a cartography, but to have the capacity to generate a political process, made by plans, policy and programs, and the capability to imagine a future.

A new epistemology for planning go beyond Enlightenment ideas and bring to a new consideration on knowledge construction (Sandercock, 1998; Sandercock, Forsyth, 1992; Domosh, Seager, 2001; Spain 1992). First step to a different planning approach is a different way to generate knowledge, based on an interactive understanding, on participation, on interaction between top-down and bottom-up comprehension: “be political, to be rational” (Forester 1989, 25).

“Be aware of the systemic inequalities to work with the aim of remedying it. Pay attention to the imbalance of information, lack of representation. Make sure that all the important points of view are heard and not just more complex and powerful” (Sandercock 1998, 107)

Since 70ths a flurry of feminist thoughts and papers start to be related to city construction and urban way of life. They start to write a new story, different from the predominant modern narrative.

Industrial cities were planners in a rigid division of spaces, with a zoning approach. Zoning used to cre-



ate difference spaces to work, to live, to have leisure; and used to divided spaces between people's groups: women and men; poor and rich; worker and not employed. Space division create an hard contraposition between groups. Most works and theory to explain city planning and evolution assumed a male subject (white and employed) and used an universal tone; so almost everyone started to think that a male point of view is an universal one.

Using gender as a category of analysis provides new perspective in old questions.

### **A gender city is a city of care**

Cities were planned and constructed by men for other men. Women were not active subject into the public city: they were closed into the houses, in suburb and in off-center places. Women were not part of public life but only of private one.

Women start to tell their issues; planning never mind of them. There were no spaces for women issues in a capitalistic city: everything was take into account in its money value; people care, houses care, family and sons care does not give money, so it was not relevant; women invisible work allows to capitalistic system to exist, but no one recognize it.

Single women start to organize themselves in a movement, and try to say loud their issues: public transport, sons care public structures, community services, security, possibility of living a public life, possibility of staying in public spaces at any time in any way.

On one side planner made a keep out city, on the other side dominant culture had create a strong distinction between men and women and on which were the public rule and the public place for everyone. This culture had constructed a string idea of masculinity and femininity. Still today this distinction has not been jet deconstructed, there are a lot of cultural barrier. Often women have to be masculine to have a public life. Feminist movement still today is working on deconstruction of barriers, trying to introduce gender difference and gender mainstreaming.

American academics introduced gender word at the end of 70ths. Despite of a lot of gender studies, "gender" is not univocal definition; often people use to relate it only to a sexual difference. Gender is not related with sex but with social rules that society (all of us) gives to different sexes.

Gender is a policy framework of exclusion (of some subject and bodies): gender is a device for social order. Joan W. Scott define gender as:

"A constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived sexes differences, a primary way of signifying relationships power generating" and "gender means men and women, signify by social, psychological and cultural characteristic (femininity and masculinity construction as a historical-cultural act)" (in Ribero, 1999)

When we speak about gender relation we are speaking about a system in which women, men, gays, lesbian, trans-gender are implicated and entwined. Gender is related to behaviors, expectations, norms confronting each group in relation to others. A lot of book and studies use to speak only about women, of course it happen because women were underestimated in the past, but gender is not woman synonymous.

Gender became a new interpretative category to describe everyday life and to speak about groups and social norms complexity.

If we want to change relationship based on difference social force between men and women it is important first of all to change institution, family and culture.

Speaking about Italy, radical feminist books appear in 70ths. Kate Millett "Sexual politics" was published in 1971. This book express patriarchal theory.

"Sexual differences are first of all power differences; men used it for a long time to impose by religion, policy, law, education, culture, their power and repression on women procreation power"(Millett, 1971, p. 58)



Today we feel this idea far from us, by we have to contextualize them in 70ths.

Carla Lonzi was one of the most important exponents of radical feminist in Italy, she was the founding member of “rivolta femminile” group. Carla Lonzi group start to use “pratica dell’autocoscienza”: a story telling that help women to share single life experiences, in order to construct a new feminist story and a different reality description. They wanted to tell a different point of view about society and urban life.

They start from the question “who am I as a woman?” to connect single experiences to group experiences: you can speak of every women only speaking about each one (Boccia, 1990, 21).

Still some participatory process use “pratica dell’autocoscienza” to help people and community to describe themselves and to merge their issues, to create a self empowerment process.

Feminist movement can be considered the first self-empowerment process. Speaking about their lives women start do deconstruct the distinction between public and private (as one of the first goals reproductive rights and domestic violence crossed the line of private sphere and became public dialogue arguments). Women fought against dualisms and division: from production and reproduction, personal and political, household in opposition to workplace. This dualism obscure the connection and intersection between categories to the detriment of good public decision making (considering a systemic approach to decision making).

As Fainstein explain “Within the planning apparatus, the reality of geographical separation combine with perception of appropriate activities and intervention. Residential zoning exacerbates the division of home from work emblematic of large scale capitalism ... The focus on central business development, and the opposition, pose by progressive, as well as conservative planners, between downtown and neighborhoods reiterate and reinforce the familiar distinction between male and female sphere” (1992, 28)

Referring to Italian planning context, Salzano and Macchi (2009) underline the important rule of Feminist Movement defining a law on urban standards, one of the first social redistribution tools in our country that aims to consider care as a social work and not only a private question relegated to mother rules.

At the same time a reflection on care started: care was interpreted as a social value, and a new idea of public spaces care start to became suitable.

Children and old people care in that time was a family question; today is a civic question, thanks to feminist movement.

During 90ths the debate continues, and the new topic was time conciliation, as to think the city not only during working time, but also during free time and care time. It begins to be considered the complexity of different lifetimes.

Speaking about research field, gender is characterized by interdisciplinary. Geography, planning, policy intertwine in gender research. Through gender research planning find new instruments to explain and describe city: shadowing, observations, deep interviews.

Antonella Rondinone and Rachele Borghi book *Geografie di genere* (2009) shows new planning question in gender research especially referred to researcher rules and the relationships between researcher and research object. Planner and policies makers goal is to serve the public interest. Easy to say but difficult to do, because it’s first of all difficult to understand which is the public interest. First step to determined which is the interest is to understand that there is no single and unified public interest; there are a lot of interest, someone strong, someone feeble, someone powerful, some powerless. Different public have different influence of power in society and in public decision making processes. Planning and policy making were historically possession of with and middle class men. What kind of city to we have if we start to take decision through the lens of gender differences?

Gender research try to construct a new research way, during the first meeting of Paesaggi Abitati, Barbara Pizzo spooked about right to the city; gender is a new construction of right to the city because try to help a new vision to emerge, try to see the city as a field to answer to different needs, not a place of exclusion.

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