

COHESIMED II Project  
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# BRIEF GUIDE TO DESIGN A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE



Elaborated by Col·lectiu Punt 6



*In the frame of the Project Cohesimed II, coordinated by MedCities and financed by the Barcelona City Council*

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This guide seeks to provide some concepts and tools to integrate community participation from a gender perspective in urban planning processes. It includes, first, a brief introduction to what is urban planning from a gender perspective. Second, it argues the need to integrate community participation from a gender perspective in urban planning. And third, it summarizes the phases of a participatory processes and tools that can be used in each phase.

The guide has been developed as a complementary material to the online training on urban planning from a gender perspective, organised by MedCities and animated by Col.lectiu Punt 6 in December 2021. The training sessions were attended by representatives of more than 20 Mediterranean municipalities, members of the Medicities network.

**The aforementioned online training cycle and this guide have been implemented in the frame of the Project Cohesimed II, which is coordinated by MedCities and financed by the Barcelona City Council.**

## Urban planning from a gender perspective

Urban planning from a gender perspective aims to place everyday people' life at the center of urban decisions, understanding people's diversity and analyzing how gender roles influence and have direct impact in the use and enjoyment of cities. Urban planning from a gender perspective has **four objectives**:

1. **Changing priorities to place people's life at the center of urban decisions**, by dehierarchizing and depatriarchalizing spaces and current urban planning. This means that urban planning is not a field of planners and architects, but a field where different social and technical disciplines converge. But also, it should be a discipline that breaks gender hierarches and increases women's participation in urban planning teams.
2. Making spaces and **cities safe for all, free from violence against women**, and other hate crimes, such as racism, homophobia and ableism.
3. Increasing **community participation** and people's diverse everyday life experiences, recognizing and making visible the experiences and knowledge of women and non-hegemonic subjects.
4. **Mainstreaming a gender perspective** in all the processes, by acknowledging that gender issues are a field of specialization and expertise.

Urban planning interventions in a community, neighborhood or territory have to be done through community participation, because the users of the space to be transformed have the greatest knowledge of the area due to their everyday life experience. In addition, participation increases the feeling of belonging and the level of satisfaction of residents and it is also an opportunity to give decision-making power to people and groups that have historically been excluded, particularly women.

## Community participation from a gender perspective

Community participation from a gender perspective must be done during the different stages of the elaboration of plans and projects. This will allow finding for solutions adaptable to the social, territorial, economic and urban particularities of the context, through the interaction of the technical team with organizations and neighbors of the territory.

Participation will be **integrated in the different parts of the project**:

- assessment,
- proposal of actions and recommendations,
- project design, and
- the evaluation after the interventions.

The development of the participatory process should be facilitated by experts and organizations specialized in this area and external to government institutions, in order to contribute to a transparent process that incorporates the diversity of experiences and recommendations.

Community participation can be applied to multiple projects and processes: the transformation of a square or public space, the pacification of an avenue, the development of a five-year urban plan, the evaluation of a urban planning transformation or project, the design of safer transportation infrastructures, among many others.

Community participation should integrate an **intersectional gender perspective**. This means that it should:

- **Focus on responding to the everyday life needs**, particularly women in their diversity, putting life and care at the center of the analysis and integrating the impact of gender-based violence on their everyday life, since women have a more complex understanding of the territory due to their double and triple working day that they continue to develop in our current society.
- Recognize the **impact of gender roles on the dynamics of people's participation**, eradicating sexist attitudes that undervalue the contributions of women and other groups that have been historically excluded from participatory and community processes (such as youth, people from different origins, people with disabilities, etc.). To this end, it is essential that the facilitating team has experience in gender mainstreaming and uses data collection and analysis tools adapted to the diverse groups and adapt to the experiences and participation needs of each group.
- Use **dynamics that are accessible to all types of people** with different levels of education, socioeconomic status, origin or age, avoiding formal or technical language that may be exclusive, and ensuring that all voices are incorporated. The activities' structure and methodologies must favor the participation of all people and be flexible and creative, but without losing a depth and integral analysis of the different spatial scales of everyday life (neighborhood, municipality, territory).
- Guarantee **adequate spaces and schedules that are compatible with care tasks**. Participatory activities should include the diversity of realities in different aspects such as location, temporality, schedule, accessibility, compatibility with other tasks, channels of dissemination.
- Applying an **ethics of care in the design and implementation of the process**, acknowledging that participation is no altruistic, but a type of everyday life activity, related to the community sphere. This means that people's time and dedication to the process should be compensated providing or covering the cost of transportation, accompanying the activities with food, or compensating through small tokens that recognize people's contributions.

## Phases of the participatory process

A community participation process usually is designed through different phases, to ensure that an intersectional gender perspective is integrated in all the cycle.

In the following pages we describe a process structured in 5 phases.



### Phase 1: Coordination and Communication

In this coordination phase, four activities are proposed: coordination of activities, a previous technical study of the documentation, the methodological design of the process and the accompaniment to the city council in the communication strategy.

#### 1.1 Coordination and follow up

Coordination meetings with the stakeholders involved in the project development. This coordination phase will help define, plan, review and coordinate the activities of the participatory process.

#### 1.2 Preliminary technical study

Study of the available information and documentation already elaborated in relation to the planning project. Demographic and socioeconomic information will also be analyzed, as well as reports, plans and documents related to urban planning, mobility, safety issues in the municipality, which may also serve to define the working groups of the participatory process.

#### 1.3 Methodological design of the participatory process

After developing the technical study, the different necessary and possible working groups will be designed and established. The groups that we propose before starting to work with the proposal are:

- Women
- Children (work with schools)
- Teenagers
- Elderly people
- People with disabilities
- Organized or unorganized organizations and neighbors

Depending on the previous study that will be developed, it is possible to evaluate the suitability of carrying out other work groups such as youth or migrant people or people with diversity of origin or others that are not currently contemplated.

In this phase the participatory methodology will also be adapted to the context of the community, to the working groups and to the format of the activities to be carried out.

#### 1.4 Accompanying the communication strategy

Make a joint review of all the materials with the team in charge of communication in order to guarantee that the contents of the different communication elements adjust to the needs of the participatory strategy of the process.

In order to design the working groups it is also necessary to carry out a fine-grained communication work with all the available contacts of potential participants in order to be able to present the process and invite

the groups to come directly and personally. This fine-grained communication includes participating in meetings or interventions in different groups to present and invite to the process, among other strategies.

**Phase 2: Information**

Creation of an advisory group

In order to contribute to greater transparency, it is recommended to create from the beginning of the process a mixed advisory group for the entire participatory process, with representation of neighbors and representation of the staff team. This advisory group should have gender parity, or have a majority of women. The group will participate in reviewing the participatory process, disseminating the activities, reviewing the analysis of results and proposals, as well as monitoring and following up on all phases subsequent to the assessment.

Opening Information session

We recommend to organize an information session as the first activity of the participatory process, to disseminate the process, share the goal and objectives of the project and the participatory process, present the people who will be facilitating the participatory process, and recruiting people to participate in the different assessment activities. This opening session can be developed in a public space or a community space where the transformation is going to happen. Doing the activity in a public space will give visibility to the activity and attract more people than the ones that enroll to the activity.



**Phase 3: Participatory Assessment**

These sessions will be used to collect information about the project and to work on the participatory assessment. During the work sessions two activities can be carried out: the first, to present the technical starting points of the project and explain the participatory process; and the second, in participatory workshop format with each of the working groups to qualitatively collect aspects that can describe and enrich the assessment of the conditions and needs of people.

The working groups from an intersectional gender perspective (taking into account: gender, age, origin, diverse abilities,...) show that people are used to live and relate in different ways and that they make a different use of space according to their needs, everyday life experience and preferences. People's diverse characteristics condition participation: what ways and channels to use to access different audiences, what challenges they have to speak in public, what ways to communicate or express an opinion, if they have time, etc.

For the development of the working groups we need accessible places where people can arrive easily and foresee dates and schedules that facilitate attendance. To "take care" of participation it will also be important to define the elements of support according to the demand of the participating groups: offering childcare, accompaniment to diversities, covering transport cost, etc.

The participatory workshops include different working methods to deepen on the everyday life, safety, mobility and other planning issues, both to cover the needs of people's everyday life, as well as in relation

to sustainability criteria. The methodologies will be adapted to each group according to their characteristics: mapping, exploratory walk, drawing, etc.).

These working groups will be held on the day, time and space that is most convenient for each working group. For example, the group with children could be held at the school; the group with elderly people at the senior center, etc. The advantage of this option is that it would guarantee a high volume of participation of the different groups and the collection of data that reflects the diversity of the population.



#### Phase 4: Participatory Proposals

After the analysis and systematization of the assessment results, phase 4 will focus on organizing a joint day with all the people who have participated in the previous phase to elaborate proposals linked to the assessment. With the scenario of the everyday life and in relation to the characteristics described in the assessment, different areas of work will be proposed.

A previous work will be done by the team of facilitators to summarize all the information obtained in each working group so that it can be explained to the people who participate in this proposal session.

This session will include different methodologies to suit the topics to be developed (mapping, elaboration of charts, etc.), therefore a place will be needed where classrooms and/or spaces (outside or inside) will be available for the different methodologies.



### Phase 5: Return to the community

After participatory proposals have been reviewed and assessed for their integration in the final project and plan, it is necessary to organize a session to return the results to the community who has participated in the process. The work includes the elaboration of the necessary material for the presentation of the results and the dynamization of the return session in the format proposed by the City Council.



### Further resources : methods and tools

For examples of methods and tools to use in the different phases of the project, please review ["Women Working. Urban Assessment Guide from a Gender Perspective"](#), elaborated by Col·lectiu Punt 6.