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Sex and the City

On the Politics of Producing Identities through Space

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article explore le rôle du harcèlement sexuel en tant que centre de
discussion dans les débats sur le genre et les villes. En utilisant des techniques
ethnographiques à Barranquilla et Cali (Colombie), nous suggérons que la
protection de la sexualité est tangentielle aux préoccupations des femmes
lorsqu'elles pensent à la mobilité, à l'espace public et aux dimensions urbaines.
Cet article interroge la centralité du harcèlement sexuel de trois manières : (i)
en mettant en évidence qu'il existe, du point de vue des femmes, d'autres
préoccupations que le harcèlement sexuel liées à la répartition des ressources ;
(ii) posant les usages émancipateurs de la sexualité dans l'espace —y compris
l'agencement des femmes et leur instrumentalisation de la sexualité— et (iii)
déstabilisant le rôle de la femme traditionnelle promu par l'État à travers les
politiques publiques. Nous soutenons ici que mettre la sexualité des femmes au
centre des préoccupations publiques en utilisant des techniques de
gouvernance de l'espace permet de reproduire un schéma de pouvoir dans
lequel les femmes sont perdantes parce qu'elles sont considérées comme
enfantines, vulnérables et nécessitant une protection. En ce sens, nous
défendons l'idée qu'il faut penser spatialement, mais différemment. L'approche
du droit et de la géographie se trouve alors comme un nouvel outil pour affiner
les travaux sur les subjectivités vulnérables dans les espaces urbains. Cet
article révèle comment l'espace fonctionne comme un mécanisme pour
produire des identités associées aux expériences de mobilité de ses habitants et
liées aux axes de classe et de genre. Cet article fait progresser la géographie
juridique en proposant des moyens de comprendre le droit et son potentiel
important pour construire des dimensions spatiales, des imaginations et des
identités, ainsi que leurs résultats matériels.

Sex and the City: On the Politics of Producing Identities through Space

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of safety and sexual harassment risk as the pivotal element for the understandings in gender and city debates both in literature and in public policy in Colombia, which derives from understanding women's sexuality as either "kind mothers" or "chaste women" who must protect their sexuality in public spaces. Using ethnographic techniques in Barranquilla and Cali (Colombia), we suggest that the protection of sexuality is tangential to women's concerns when thinking about mobility, public space, and urban dimensions. We argue that putting women's sexuality at the center of public concerns by using space governance techniques helps reproduce a power scheme in which women lose because they are seen as childlike, vulnerable, and requiring protection. We defend the idea that we need to think spatially, but differently: using a legal geographies approach allows a novel tool to imagine refining policy approaches about vulnerable subjectivities in urban spaces. This paper reveals how space operates as a mechanism to produce identities associated with the mobility

experiences of its inhabitants and related with class and gender axes. We argue that the emphasis on sexual harassment as the organizing vector of the interventions related to gender and the city reproduces gendered stereotypes of women and men and reinforces and legitimizes the role of the nation-state as patriarchal protector. Further, the emphasis on safety fails to recognize different ways in which women use their sexuality in cities, their agency, and their strategies for negotiating with governance techniques.

Keywords

Feminism, city, gender studies, legal geography, sexuality, urban mobility

In 2012, the United Nations identified Latin America as the most urbanized region in the world, with 80% of the population living in cities. However, the same reports show that women are among the groups of urban inhabitants with least control of the power, well-being, and resources produced in the cities (UN-Habitat 2012). There is a historic and yet still current body of the literature and public policy that focus on safety, proposing sexual violence and sexual harassment as fundamental to understanding the relationship between women and cities (Caballero 2013; Capron and Sánchez Mejorada 2015; Dunckel-Graglia 2013; Graglia 2016; Kern 2021; Labrecque 2010; Ruiz and Milena 2013; Soto 2013; Soto Villagrán 2014; Villagrán 2012). The main characteristic of this focus on safety is said to be risk: we as women are threatened in the public space and this leads to inequities and asymmetries in the social game. Said asymmetries are argued to derive from the understanding of female sexuality as "kind mothers" or "chaste women" who must protect their sexuality as an essential factor in building a sense of inequality in public spaces: we call this curtailment of women's sexuality the "public policy take on sexuality."

Despite drawing from different contexts and with various scopes, these works investigate the relationship of gender prejudices and biases with physical places, the problem is that in doing so, they incur in two problems that cloud possible analyses and understandings in the Colombian context. These problems are the following: (i) the emphasis on sexual harassment as the organizing vector of the interventions related to gender and the city, reproduces gendered stereotypes of women and men, and reinforces and legitimizes the role of the State as patriarchal protector, and (ii) the emphasis on safety fails to recognize different ways in which women use their sexuality in the cities, their agency, and their strategies for negotiating with governance techniques.

This paper contributes both to academic literature and public policy that is trapped in the "safety" approach as the only one possible and desirable way forward. The research reported on here reveals that sexual harassment may not always or even regularly be an area of pressing concern for women occupying the city and navigating city spaces. In the use of female and women in this article, we target most of our arguments to the cisgender women we spoke to, but we expect much of our work would also be of use for trans women and masculine presenting butch women like Ana, one of our participants. This article also primarily

highlights the experiences of heterosexual women but brings in lesbian experiences when possible (Hunt, 2018; Borda 2010). Layers of additional experiences of the city by women emerge from our inquiry in two localities in Colombia. The strength of this intervention is the power of qualitative research to question, review, and refashion existing approaches to gender and the city.

This article therefore assumes that we need to rethink the relationship between law and space, and not take it for granted as a backdrop or container in which legal phenomena occur or cease to occur. To this end, in designing the fieldwork and analyzing the results, we closely followed both the literature of legal geography (Braverman et al. 2014; Hunt, 2012) and feminist geography (Lee 2017). We are interested in the view that the relationship between law and space is one of mutual dependence and influence. In this relational view, space is not only the physical environment we inhabit and in which law is "applied", but also intersubjective (socio-political) and subjective (mental). This view of space is useful for approaches to law in which the notion of the legal is not limited to the set of norms, but the way in which these norms are applied, interpreted, experienced, and performed by social actors. Spatialities are relational and contingent, experienced, and understood in different ways by different people; hence they are multiple, contested, fluid, and uncertain.

Establishing and examining this relationship is important because it takes us back to the analysis of material effects, while showing the non-neutrality of space. Thus, for instance, Graglia (2016) formulates this relationship by explaining how violence and sexual harassment against women are an impediment to mobility and a hindrance to women's confidence, sense of possibility, aspirations, and personal growth. Space is undoubtedly not a homogeneous and neutral *a-priori* entity that precedes the subjects; rather, it emerges as a result of a continuous process of production.

Considering the reality of cities and determining the implicit masculine character of certain spaces through the analysis of the daily experience of women in cities is assuredly fundamental. Nonetheless, we do not believe that the only—or the most productive—way of situating women's exclusion in cities as a problem of access to male spaces is to focus on public violence against women. A public violence defined as a form of discrimination that limits women's ability to exercise their rights and to access urban resources and opportunities.

We do not want to minimize the violent ways in which sexual harassment disciplines women's bodies and restricts their uses and productions of urban space. Instead, we argue here that the safety focus of the "public policy take on sexuality," which only reads and amplifies women's fear of falling victim to sexual harassment and violence, grossly overlooks that the production of male places and discrimination of women in cities. This dual effect is not exclusively a result of sexuality, sexual violence, and sexual harassment and the ways in which these relate to our cities. Hence, we argue that the literature on urban sexual harassment and sexual violence, as well as the public policy that is fueled by it, with its focus on protecting women's sexuality from male harm, fails to recognize the ways in which women agentically use their sexuality to navigate and negotiate the city.

The dominant link between female sexuality and cities, we argue, draws from three theoretical resources. The first theoretical precursor relates to the public/private dichotomy and the way in which feminist literature has documented the domestic as our quintessential space. Much has been written on Engels' (1997) insights about how the domestic encapsulated female existence, producing it as inferior and oppressed. If men had access to the market, to work, to the public, and to remuneration, female identity was built as its counterpart: the woman is a caretaker, reproductive and nurturing. This sexual division of labor also built the segmentation of space as we know it today, and that socialist feminism has consistently criticized. These criticisms mainly denounce the existence of a public, masculine space and a private and intimate, feminine space. As usual in feminist approaches, the principle states that the male construction subordinates the female one by imposing several vectors of power over it (in the case of the division of labor: profits, production, significance, among others).

The second theoretical precursor has to do with the way in which the public subordinated the private. The public such as city streets was thus associated with the political and economic (the right to work and the right to vote), and the private with the intimate, the secret, the familiar; we use "public" and "private" throughout this paper with an eye on these specific spaces. The family and the market were another way of addressing the dichotomy that explained the subordination of the female experience. Privacy became a threat: while the public had the scrutiny of the collective, the private extended as an assumed space for autonomy and freedom.

Furthermore, a number of studies based within the feminist tradition have shown the ways in which law and space combine to produce patriarchal cities (Rose 1993, 18). Accordingly, law and space at work normalize stereotypes that produce women socially as situated in the private domestic spaces, far from the public urban ones. These cities, in which it is mostly the women who inhabit the public urban spaces that are the victims of sexual harassment (Buchely and Castro 2019; Castro Cristancho and Buchely Ibarra 2016; Castro and Buchely 2018; Kash 2019; Montoya-Robledo et al. 2020; Villagrán 2017), ultimately limit women's movement and location in the Colombian public sphere. Unfortunately, neither of the two aspects has been central in the narration of the female experience, and the borders of the intimate have been used, instead, to reinforce the places of powerlessness: wages are not public to protect people's privacy (hiding their inequality), and hostility in relationships is always confined to the home (hiding their violence, because one "shouldn't air one's dirty laundry in public," as goes the popular saying).

The third theoretical precursor relates to female sexuality and its power to build meaning around the harms suffered by women. Radical feminism has served as the dominant perspective since its arrival in the legal field. This vision of feminism has successfully positioned sexuality as the fundamental matrix of female oppression: "Sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism," argued Catherine Mackinnon (1989, 515). This approach helped Mackinnon and supportive feminists to mobilize an anti-pornography discourse to achieve recognition by the international courts of the experience of rape as genocide. This is one of the most

important victories of legal feminism in the last twenty years. From this viewpoint, dominant discourses treat sex and desire as devices that turn oppression into a pleasant sensation, while hiding the multiple ways in which sexuality objectifies, reifies, and subordinates women. The sexual relationship is the matrix in which the asymmetry is built because it turns women (in it and in social relationships) into mere projections of male desire, at their service.

These three theoretical precursors are bound in the division of productive and reproductive work involves a particular reality that segments our presence into public and private spaces (each with its equivalent male and female values). These spaces also regulate the existence of sexuality as intimacy at the borders of the private, building the public as a fundamentally non-sexual scenario where, although it occurs through thousands of knowledge/power devices, sex is not practiced (Foucault 2006).

In Colombia, the representation of female identity in law has persistently reinforced this asymmetry, creating a spatiality that places us in the private world. The identity of women built through legal devices is mediated by the spatiality of the home and by the images of family and motherhood. Gradually, legal reforms of a feminist nature have tried to destabilize those borders. In Colombia, it wasn't until 1933 that women were allowed to manage our assets independently. Before that, it was our husbands who owned our property, contracted loans in our name, and testified for us in judicial proceedings. It was also in 1933, that we were able to graduate from high school, but were only allowed to work as normal schoolteachers, typists, or "business assistants," so that our work at home was not significantly altered. Before 1954, women could not legally be Colombian citizens, and it is only since then that we can vote. That is, it was not until the last century, that we were granted what is known as the modern manifestation of citizenship (agency of representation).

In 1970, women were granted the right to choose whether we wanted to continue bearing our maiden name once we married; until then, the whole family was considered a projection of male identity. Women were able to divorce after the constitutional reform of 1976. Before that, our will was not considered structural in the formation of the marriage contract. Also, until 1976, women who were not legally married but had a partner were considered "concubines," and had no social rights derived from being part of a family. It is only since 1950 that female labor has been legally protected. Before that, it was not acceptable for women to "go out and leave home." Contraceptives only recently became available for sale without prescription: only eleven years ago were women granted the right to decide whether or not we want to be mothers. Only 17 years ago, our purpose, legally speaking, was determined by the upbringing of children.

These theoretical precursors and their link to female identity and women's legal freedoms have played an important policy and legal role in discussing sexual harassment as the main vector of the relationship between women and the city in Colombia. Street and workplace sexual harassment, and rape have been established by a fair amount of literature as the violent way in which the feminine "escape" of the domestic world is repressed and the patriarchal order that places women at home is reinforced. Street harassment is a means by

which to make the public "hostile" for women (Cadavid 2016; Capron and Sánchez Mejorada 2015; Dunckel-Graglia 2013; Graglia 2016; Kern 2010; Ruiz and Milena 2013; Soto 2013; Soto Villagrán 2014; Villagrán 2012).

In line with the legal geographies of the country, the design of urban public policies and legal strategies in Latin America has exacerbated this relationship through "gender mainstreaming"[1] interventions in cities. In an attempt to recognize the importance of protecting female sexuality, different strategies have been implemented, including police campaigns with undercover agents against street harassment in public and mass transport (Wallace 2014); transit pathway lighting plans to prevent harassment (Alcaldía de Santiago de Cali 2015); campaigns against the sexualization of women in the streets, such as videos in which female and male roles are reversed to highlight the discomfort of street sexual harassment (KmkzFilms 2010); and chairs with penis silhouettes on public transport intended to discourage unwanted sexual behaviors on the subway (Perú21 2017).

Most of these public policies, alliances, and normative designs proposed are based on the argument that the perception of safety in the public space is an essential condition to guarantee equal access by all people.[2] In Colombia, for example, in a recent survey conducted in 2021 by the Presidential Council for Women's Equity, 82% of the programs and projects in the territorial entities dedicated to women's equity focus on the prevention and management of gender-based violence, disregarding issues related to economic autonomy, intervention in the sexual division of labor, or political participation.[3] The problem of the "public policy take on women's sexuality," we argue, is that by focusing exclusively on women's safety, understood as the absence of sexual harassment and public sexual violence against women, most of the initiatives suppress and overlook the other needs of women who inhabit cities,

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[1]The trend of including the gender approach in the design and implementation of public policies is the result of an initiative known as "gender mainstreaming," initially proposed in 1985 at the third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi, Kenya, and then formally established and agreed at the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. The objective of this initiative is to evaluate the different implications for women and men of any designed plan, project, or political action (including legislation and programs in all fields and levels). It is a global strategy to achieve gender equity and sustainable economic development, a strategy that sounds great but ultimately will depend on the way in which the leaders and bureaucrats "translate into actions" the objective of "assessing the different implications." Hence, several authors have questioned the limited transformative effect of gender mainstreaming-oriented policies, as well as their contradictory effects (Labrecque 2010).

[2] See, for example, (Caballero 2013; Centro Nacional de Consultoría 2012; Dunckel-Graglia 2013; Graglia 2016; Hernández 2012; National Academies of Sciences 2011; Presidencia de la República de Colombia and Alta Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer de Colombia 2012; Ruiz and Milena 2013; Villagrán 2012)

[3] Liza Rodríguez Galvis and Hugo Fernando Guerrero Sierra (2022). Avance en la reivindicación de los derechos de las mujeres: el impacto de la incidencia de los movimientos feministas en la generación de acciones de fortalecimiento institucional. Ediciones FLACSO—Icesi. In press.

promoting fragile female identities in which women need to be accompanied, supervised, and monitored in their interactions with the city.

An example of the above is the following citation taken from an extremely colonial—we believe—sourcebook for public policy makers in cities of developing countries, created by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) and used as study material in the transport policy advisory modules provided to our cities' local governments. When explaining what it means that "women need to be protected" in public spaces, the document states the following:

> Women are more vulnerable users of public space in general and this affects how they use public space, including transport. Women who tend to carry packages or carry children and have their hands full are targeted and are easy prey for petty theft. Because they can be overpowered by men, physical safety is threatened as well. Women will change their transport behavior and have their transport options constrained if they perceive urban transport systems or travel to be unsafe. Thus, women will make the decision not to travel at night, not to alight at a particular point, to take a longer route home if it is safer. (…) Links to public transport are important considerations for safety in urban areas —the journey from the door of the home to public transport, public transport itself, and the journey from public transport to the destination and back. This includes lighting both internally for stations and vehicles, and the station approach (Kunieda and Gauthier 2007, 17).

In this respect, Kunieda and Gauthier (2007) mention that the document was developed to help officials "look at where gender and urban transport intersect" and suggests that addressing gender in urban transport projects increases economic rates of return on investment, meets the demand for transportation services through a better understanding of needs, lowers transaction costs, and "enables women to better meet the needs of the household, for which they have primary responsibility and ultimately strengthens the base economic unit (the household)" (Kunieda and Gauthier 2007, 2)

This framework entails several spatial assumptions. In the literature that denounces women's need for protection by the nation-state, the public is perceived as a scenario in which to build community, establish dialogue, and exercise citizenship. Thus, it is important for women to participate in public life, even if we require "guardianship" (Capron and Sánchez Mejorada 2015; Dunckel-Graglia 2013; Soto Villagrán 2014; Villagrán 2012). From the liberal perspective, the public is a place of political action. Despite this, in its materiality, the public is also a physical space that is expressed in streets, bridges, parks, and railways. The public then has these two manifestations: it is politics, and it is space. It is idea and it is matter.

Building from feminist geographies, women have been excluded from the public in both of these manifestations: the political and the spatial. We have already discussed how the political has been elusive for us: we were not allowed to vote until not so long ago, we were

given freedom of association very recently, and the possibility of electing and being elected under equal conditions has not yet been regulated. As far as space exclusion is concerned, the street and public transport are dangerous mainly for women. According to ECLAC figures (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe 2015), women are the main victims of harassment in the public space: "In Lima, 9 out of 10 women between 18 and 29 have been victim of street harassment (2013), in Bogotá and Mexico City, 6 out of 10 women have experienced some type of sexual aggression in public transport (2014), and in the case of Chile, 5 out of 10 women between 20 and 29 state having experienced street sexual harassment" (2015). A particular current of feminism denounces the way in which women inhabit the city as follows:

> Inhabiting the city implies learning forms of action and incorporation of urban habitus; as Pierre Bourdieu would say, "savoir-vivre" the city. Women have learned to transit, negotiate, and walk around the city, but also to be silent, hide ourselves, and avoid dangers and other forms of exclusion linked to the cultural notions of gender and, consequently, to the social assessment of women (…) Our gender construction, from the very beginning of our lives, is related to what is expected of us in relation to "being a woman" or "being a man," and from there we are assigned spaces, roles, and characteristics that the gender perspective seeks to expose in order to denature, mainly those assignments that place us in inequality, limit the free construction of identity, and hamper equitable access to the public scene in cities. The perception about the city or the fear of being in it, for instance, has a different content if we observe it in a gender key. Thus, in Colombia over the last decade, the experience of an 18-year-old young man who, on his way home, meets an army truck in search of new "defenders of the homeland" differs from the experience of an 18-year-old young woman who goes out at night to meet her friends, who was taught not to leave her home alone, much less wearing low necklines or short skirts, so as not to expose herself to the possibility of sexual assault. In turn, these experiences differ from that of an 18-year-old, woman or man, who has been told that public demonstrations of affection between same-sex people are offensive and should be limited to private spaces to avoid aggressions (Cadavid 2016, 53).

From the perspective of public policy makers, but also from most of the literature that studies the situation of women and access to cities, the fear women experience in public spaces is an issue that needs to be addressed. We agree that it is a fear that we should acknowledge and remedy. However, one of the interesting aspects of this phenomenon of recognizing and understanding women's fear-based differential experience in public spaces is the effect it has on the reproduction of traditional stereotypes around women. The patriarchal nation-state—which supports the privileges and violence perpetrated by individual men—assumes a role in which it cares, protects, and supervises women, who, in turn, appear to be defenseless against the sexual damages that occur in "cement jungles."

In this respect, placing women's sexuality at the center of public concerns is reproducing a power scheme in which women lose: we are childlike, vulnerable, and need protection. Legal geographies are at work here to produce this masculine state through two types of legal technicalities: (i) the responses of policy makers and regulators in an attempt at creating 'safe' cities for women, and (ii) the manner in which the city itself has been created (through various forms of law, including property law, law regulating wealth etc.) to create other forms of constraint or opportunity for differently placed women.

This paper discusses this role of sexuality as the nucleus of debates on gender and city. Using ethnographic techniques[4] such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, social surveying exercises, and observations in transport settings critical to women in two Colombian cities (Barranquilla and Cali)[5], we suggest that protecting their sexuality is just one of women's concerns when thinking about mobility, public space, and the city. Our findings question the focus on sexuality in three ways:

(i)   Showing that women have "wider concerns" (particularly related to work and income distribution),

(ii)   Proposing what we refer to as the conscious/strategic uses of sexuality in space by women (the instrumentalization of sexuality or the use of erotic capital for personal benefit), and

(iii)   Challenging the role of traditional women promoted by the State through public policy. In our findings, women are not only kind mothers or chaste women who must protect their sexuality. On the contrary, they are women who defy traditional

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[4] This paper is part of a more extensive project which uses mixed techniques, combining descriptive statistics with various ethnographic techniques such as observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Despite this, the findings of this work focus solely on information obtained from ten focus groups (five in Barranquilla and five in Cali) and four interviews. These focus groups included diagnoses sessions with women from different social sectors in terms of socioeconomic resources, and men from the same sectors. The focus groups were divided by gender and economic status, and all were surveyed on the same topics: use of public transport and feelings of satisfaction/frustration in terms of the use/enjoyment of public space, services, and goods. To begin the fieldwork, we made five exploratory observations on critical public transport stations in the two cities and, based on this, identified key actors to further the ethnographic exercise with focus groups and interviews. This was how we contacted our informants. The dialogues with men were used as a control, and this work is feminist in the sense that it displays methodologies that place a concern for women's equality at the center of the discussion. In this sense, following the exercise with the focus groups, the relational logic and contrasts proved to be productive in terms of building the analysis before the dense description and singularity documented for each case. We did not use a program for data treatment but rather direct footage from the recordings to follow the codes of the focus groups. We have published results of the more extensive project in other journals (Buchely and Castro 2019; 2019; Castro Cristancho and Buchely Ibarra 2016; Castro and Buchely 2018)

[5] Cali and Barranquilla are both Colombian municipalities and capital cities of the Valle del Cauca and Atlántico Departments, respectively. Both are core cities of Metropolitan Areas (which group together a number of municipalities), and both have Bus Rapid Transit Systems.

stereotypes: lesbian women, breadwinners, agents of their own desire, or women not concerned about sexuality (and its risk) at all.

This work then assumes a critical stance towards the commonplaces of radical feminism regarding their vision of the city (in particular) and the public (in general) as a risk. Stepping away from that which is exclusively related to sexuality, reveals that Colombian women do not just learn and internalize the rules of the urban field that are adverse (threatening, hostile) to them. Colombian women also resist spatial codes, reconstruct them, and transform them. In their resistance, Colombian women reclaim their agency, resignify urban space, and build it in ways that depart from patriarchal architectures. Indeed, we build on a separate idea: for most women mobilizing sexuality as a strategy does not negate the ways in which sexual violence permeates the majority of women's experiences while inhabiting urban space.

This research too was conducted as part of this debate in scenarios of public policy design. We were and still are both academics in the Colombian legal academy and, through the Observatory for Women's Equity (OEM), and one of us participated in the design of the public gender policy for Valle del Cauca.[6] Throughout the research, we repeatedly felt, in our own bodies, the frustration of seeing the "public policy take on women's sexuality" agenda, focusing on safety as the absence of sexual harassment and public sexual violence as the limit and the goal of all feminist mobilization. Working on the agenda of care work or women's economic autonomy, as liberal feminism calls the possibilities of generating wealth for a sustainable life, was impossible before audiences that were only committed to issues related to physical and sexual violence against women.

Following the theories of the point of view, we consider it important to mention that, at the beginning of the research and given our life and work experiences, we both believed that women's safety should not be central or exclusive to public policy.[7] This perception was reinforced by the women's voices, which also helped us to better understand our own perceptions. Of course, we are concerned about the possibility of rape. But we are more preoccupied with being able to live with dignity, to be able to sleep, to be there on time for our children. In the focus groups we conducted in both cities, the reference that emerged repeatedly in the women's stories about the city had to do with care work, rather than fear about sexual harassment, and they described the city not as a danger to their physical safety, but as an obstacle to their material existence. An obstacle to being able to work, to enjoy life, to provide care.

We applied ethnographic methods in two ways. The first was to dimension the great complexity of the object of study through a long process of participant exploration of other

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[6] See: https://oemcolombia.com/

[7] Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

people's worlds and their intersections with our own. Here observation of the women's lives, smelling the sweat and exhaustion of moving around the city on their bodies and connecting them with our own exhaustion, with our own difficulties, was fundamental. For us, to think of the city in terms of mobility was to think about our own lives, making the insignificance of the work agendas on safety and security highly visible.

The second exercise involved the opposite path: one intended to reduce complexity. This consisted in finding a simple description to fit women's sometimes diffuse and sometimes dense experience and in finding what exactly unites all the parts of the ethnographic experience, of our own lives, that would allow us to make an accurate contribution to the field. It is for this reason that we built three typical type women that, using the information from our fieldwork, call into question how specialized literature and urban technocracy discourses have portrayed the relationships between women and the city. Each "typical" type woman represented here encompasses information on several women documented in the empirical phase, developed in the two cities under study: Barranquilla and Cali. All names, surnames, and direct evidence to the existence of the participants have been altered or removed from the text.

In ethnographic exercises, the construction of typical types can be controversial and counter intuitive. We decided to take the risk, especially using this kind of methodology, because it allowed us to synthesize and concretize our finding and message: the "public policy take on women's sexuality" prevents us from seeing the full picture. If we focus on addressing the possibility of harassment on the street, this only portrays a small part of women's problems in the city. To do so, we made important methodological choices, such as selecting the three women's stories that stood out the most and overlapping them with the experiences and narratives that recurred most strongly in the data. We selected the stories of Ana, Deborah, and Teresa because their stories share threads with so many other participants' stories as well. These stories were striking because, while seemingly showing exceptional trajectories, they portrayed with impressive clarity the systematic dramas narrated by women in the city. Thus, it was by making the three of them speak for all of them that we constructed the typical types.

Of course, the description you will find here smooths out differences, complexities, contradictions, tensions. It reconstructs narratives of different textures in the urban life of the women of Cali and Barranquilla and it can make the stories we tell, using women's precise names, seem fanciful and fictitious. Nevertheless, the typical types we design here prove to be very fertile narrative and methodological tools when it comes to doing what we set out to do. To stress the inordinate emphasis on sexual harassment as the organizing vector of most interventions related to gender and the city.

In the following sections, Ana, Deborah, and Teresa will allow us to tell the story of invisible women in relation to the *dominant* literature on the gender approach in cities. Ana will narrate the story of women heads of household who are diverse in their sexuality. Deborah will show us the life experiences of women who "use" their sexuality as a tool to succeed in social interactions (paying less, avoiding fines, cutting lines, among others). Finally, Teresa will

recreate the story of women for whom the risk of violated sexuality is almost a fantasy, illustrating the experience of domestic workers in our survey who take care of the elderly and who have built their lives to be "distant" from what stereotypes consider markers of femininity: motherhood, desire, a family of their own. We use this categorization of women to organize the findings of the fieldwork and conclude with an analysis of the ways in which we believe these elements destabilize the commonplaces of the literature on women and the city.

Advancing the methodological risk, legal framings of such "typical" types of women's sexuality are also suggestive in gender debates. For masculine or self-recognized butch women, masculinity is a tool for protection as well as a threat. This tension is evident in Ana's story. For middle-class ciswomen, the pursuit of sex is a leisure activity, but also a tool for social mobility. This debate and its interpretation are latent in Deborah's life. Finally, Teresa's experience confronts us with stark realities in which we can identify the intersectional amputation of women's autonomy and agency. Another thing we like about the typical types is that, within these micro-debates, they open up contradictory interpretations. This complexity is what connects the exercise of simplification with ethnographic disruption.

Ana: Bread-Winning and Non-Heteronormative Sexualities in the Streets

Ana is a motorcycle taxi driver from Barranquilla. She has worked as a driver for five years as a way to escape what seemed to be her unavoidable fate: being a domestic worker of a high-class family in Barranquilla. She is 29 years old and has two small children, aged five and seven.

Ana tells us that in her work, she faces many obstacles every day. Her fellow motorcycle taxi drivers and her neighbors accuse her —violently— of being a lesbian, as they do with several of her female colleagues, who are expelled from pickup points or beaten while doing their journeys. Despite this, Ana says that the independence she achieves by working as a motorcycle taxi driver is worth the risks: she can pick up her children, have flexible schedules, go home in case of an emergency, and provide for her family. Ana transports her sisters, her cousins' children, takes her mother to the doctor, and helps her neighbors when they need urgent transport services. Ana has also earned the trust of many people who prefer her services because she is a woman: she has long-term agreements to pick several children up from school and several of her friends hire her services, to whom she offers convenient payment options (installment payment, deferred payment, payment in kind). These advantages have made her successful as a motorcycle taxi driver.

Ana is a lesbian. She uses her motorcycle to visit her partner regularly. Her children learned about her sexual orientation recently and are in the process of accepting it, so Ana and her partner live apart for now. Facing the possibility of rejection and handling her work has been a challenge. As mentioned earlier, Ana asserts that her sexual orientation is the main cause of the violence she experiences in the streets, as if the stones and insults were intended to put her in her place, pulling her back to a private space from where she dares to emerge to be a breadwinner, enjoy her agency, and build herself as a non-heteronormative identity.

Sexuality is not a risk for her, she does not perceive her identity as a woman as a risk factor; it is her lesbian identity that puts her at risk (Robles Laguna 2017; Sandoval 2013). In her stories, she does not mention the danger of being raped. She faces the fears that come with her otherness because the benefits are worth it: being independent, earning money, and being empowered by her motorcycle.

In contrast, Ana's apparent masculinity has been constructed to control what she previously perceived as a risk. Being a traditional woman condemned her to being vulnerable, while her actual identity helps her deal with what seemed to make her weak: the streets, the motorcycles, the drivers. Ana has built herself, her identity, as a "male woman" precisely to resist the common role assigned to women, which involves an absence of power, and victimization. This subversive identity allows her to threaten rather than be threatened, allows her to build spaces of power and action where she resignifies feminine features and navigates identities as she drives through the streets: masculine power and feminine care.

Deborah: Erotic Capital and the Pragmatic Use of Sexuality

Debora is a bank clerk from Cali. She has been working in one of the city's well-known banks for five years, under a strict schedule and non-negotiable uniform regime: short skirts and fitted blouses. Deborah is the mother of two children: Pablo and Santiago, aged nine and twelve, whom she leaves in the care of her mother when they get home from school while she is at work. Her motorcycle —once again a tool of emancipation— is the means of transport that allows her to save time and money when moving around the city. She has owned a motorcycle and used it in her journeys for fifteen years, almost half of her life. She believes the risks that come with the motorcycle (accidents, safety issues) are offset by the benefits she gets from that means of transport (independence, saving money, and fast travel).

Deborah sees herself as a beautiful woman. Using miniskirts and sensual outfits does not bother her. She is happy to use the uniform because it allows her to save time and money: she always knows what to wear and she does not have to spend money on clothes. She also happily tells stories in which the miniskirt has been very "useful." Debora uses her sexuality strategically, gaining benefits by doing so: she has avoided traffic fines because —in her own words— police officers cannot resist long legs, she has been exonerated from paying traffic tolls, she has been given free bus tickets, and she has been forgiven for accidentally scratching cars with her motorcycle. Debora "negotiates" on those terms and wins. She wins in terms of time, of efforts, of comfort. She benefits personally, although her strategic use of her sexuality reinforces patriarchy.

Debora is single. A few months ago, she downloaded the Tinder dating app to look for casual sex encounters. She states that the application can be tricky because it does not "use the right filters," referring to social class and its relationship with space. With this in mind,

Deborah never activates *Tinder* in her neighborhood (located in the southeast of Cali[8]) but from her place of work, the bank, where the selection of matches "improves" (the bank is located in a shopping center in the north of Cali, close to several exclusive parts of the city). Since *Tinder* makes matches according to the users' geographical location when they log onto the application, Deborah believes it is important to start the session in a good neighborhood to improve the selection and find worthy candidates. This use of Tinder illustrates that Deborah is far from being a victim of the city and uses her socio-geographical knowledge to optimize her romantic and erotic relationships. It is not only the city that uses Deborah, she clearly uses the city to her own advantage too.

Teresa: The Story of "Non-Women"

Teresa is a live-in domestic service employee who works in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods in Barranquilla. Her children are now adults, aged 30 and 34, and both have made her a grandmother. Teresa has worked at the Rodríguez family house for 21 years and leaves only two Sundays a month to see her family. Her children grew up in this regime. She decided that it was better to work hard and earn enough money for them to study while they lived with her sister. She tells us that, paradoxically, she has become the aunt of her own children and neither of them completed a university degree. They stayed condemned to their neighborhood and to having informal, temporary jobs. They both work as public transport drivers. Despite this, Teresa does not have any regrets. She firmly states she did the best she could do.

Teresa does not usually go out, not even on her days off. She does not like going out. It irritates her, makes her tired, makes her feel frustrated. She believes she wastes a lot of time outside, when she could stay in the house of her employers, as she calls it. When we asked about the risk of sexual harassment on public transportation, she said: "It has never happened to me," and giggled.

Her routines are full of monotony. Public space is elusive, strange, and alien to her. She openly admits she does not like the street, she does not like public space for reasons other than the threat of sexual harassment. Her life is marked by observing and rigorously caring for the lives of others: that of her employers. She knows more about their lives than she does her own and this is something she feels proud of and grateful for.

The Perspective of Men who Make Public Policy and their Understanding of Gender Mainstreaming

No. 6054
Title: Epitaph
Had it not been for the traffic jams, I would have lived

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[8] Deborah lives in one of Cali's working-class neighborhoods, located facing the Panamericana Road, behind the police station known as "Puerto Resistencia".

fifteen more years.
Doris León Valdez, 63 years old, Suba (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2017, 68)

The book *Bogotá en 100 palabras* was the result of a public call by the Mayor's Office, encouraging Bogota's inhabitants to write stories inspired by the city using100 words or less. Here we quote the short story by Doris León Valdez, one of the many stories written by women in which transportation and its difficulties are at the core of the narrative. This story illustrates the fact that traffic jams (and the correlative temporary restrictions for her everyday live) have taken away fifteen years of the author's life. This, along with those presented in the previous section, draws attention once again to the need to better analyze and understand how sexuality, the way in which we use it, and how we are sexually perceived by others in cities materially determine our access to space, work, leisure venues, etc., mainly by homogenizing and standardizing our needs and aspirations to make them readable from the perspective of the gender-conscious policymaker.

The following happened in an interview with a public transport policymaker in a Colombian city. We wanted to know what it meant to him to be working for a "feminist" institution, an affirmation we had heard in other contexts and the opening statement of our interviewee. Despite our initial disbelief in the promises of public policy with a gender focus, we attended the interview expectantly. While listening to him talk, we were reminded of several documents written by cooperation agencies promoting the inclusion of the gender approach in all public policies. Progressive public officials —the very few there are— have adopted "gender mainstreaming" language as their own.

Q: What does it mean that this is a feminist institution deeply committed to the gender approach?

A: Well, it means we take women seriously in our work. For example, this afternoon we are inaugurating a maternity ward that we have set up next to the traffic control center[9]. We want to make the lives of the women who work here easier …

Q: And why is that an example of taking women seriously? —We further inquired without really understanding what he meant—.

A: The office job (sitting all day watching the monitors) is better than being in the street controlling security. That is why all the posts in the control center have been reassigned to female officials. So, in addition to assigning them a better job, without the constant risks posed by the street, we have arranged a maternity ward next door, which is comfortable and private for women to breastfeed, exact milk, and anything else they need if they are pregnant. And, to add to that, and that is why I tell you that we are feminists here — he insists with a cheery tone

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[9] An office in which a number of employees monitor the city's security and infractions control cameras.

of voice—, we have hired a private bus, paid by the institution, which picks them up at night after work and takes them all home. It is like a school bus, so women are not exposed to risks by getting on buses that don't take them all the way home at night.

Q: But what about other women? Those who live in the city but do not work here? How does this feminist institution, in charge of managing mobility and transport in the city, address the issues of those women?

A: [Confidently:] Well, the mobility and transport policy is the same for everyone. We all have the same needs in the end, don't you think?

This conversation illustrates the presence and dangers of gender mainstream perspectives regarding women in Colombian cities: it draws attention to the visibility/invisibility of women's spatial needs, that far exceed the fear of sexual harassment. It refers to the technical differences of governmental work with the visibility/invisibility of space for people who have differential mobility experiences. Space here is read as a constant that is not perceived as a resource, as a privilege, or as a right.

Women's Experiences in the City: We are More Than Sexed Bodies that Need to Protect Themselves from Sexual Violence

What stands out from the stories of our informants is how they challenge the commonplaces of female identities built by urban planning literature and public gender policies. Ana, Deborah, and Teresa are all highly unconcerned about the protection that the city government can provide to their sexuality, but very concerned about their work, their livelihood, and that of their family. When thinking about space, these women have further —often conflicting— burdens that have nothing to do with a fear of exploited sexuality that radical feminism has proposed. To them, the risks, threats, and the hostility related to their sexuality are invisible, almost fictional.

These experiences and the way in which they differ from those reported by the literature broadly call into question how public policy is thought, designed, and implemented as part of the goal of making cities fairer for women. Remember the public official saying "*the mobility and transport policy is the same for everyone. We all have the same needs.*" Even public officials that want a more equitable city can only think as parents that need to protect their virgin, pregnant, and nursing daughters: women, us.

We need to better understand the women for whom public policy is made, their real needs, and how public policy produces new tensions and role identities. That said, no policy can benefit all women and with each policy some women will win, and some women will lose. It is time to stop assessing law for what we wish it were instead of what it really is.

In Colombia, for instance, women face great disadvantages in the work environment directly related to our access to mobility: we get hired less than men in formal jobs—in many cases because we cannot meet strict work schedules and carry out burdensome care tasks with

highly precarious transportation systems, we are paid less than the men who do the same job —our job is not perceived as professional enough, and we are expected to take on most of the care responsibilities involving households and families. None of this occurs because we are less educated, less productive, or put less effort into our work. Women deal with discriminatory practices, norms, behaviors, laws, public policies, and customs that generally lead us to lower-paying jobs, higher workloads, less time available, and less general well-being.

Thus, access barriers to the city and its services and the excessive time women have to spend commuting occur in parallel with labor precaritization and the feminization of poverty. These effects —which have a greater impact for women that perform unskilled, informal, and unprotected jobs— increase the risks of many women, mainly poor women, of being excluded from the labor market, thus reducing their ability to be independent and adversely affecting their general well-being.

This type of analysis is in line with feminist legal geography research that has attempted to explain that cities are not neutral spaces; that power relations determine spaces, that public spaces —including transportation spaces— have not been adapted to women's experiences and daily needs; that most urban configurations are based on the sexual division of labor; and, more importantly, that the way in which public policy views cities and women (or makes them invisible) based on their sexualization, affects the construction of our identity and the balance of priorities, choices, compromises, power, and resources that women manage and negotiate in our daily lives.

Therefore, questioning the relationship between sexuality and the city, when looking for mobility and gender politics is also questioning the ways in which space, law, and identity are related and produce our sexualized identities. In this context, public policy and the language of gender mainstreaming invite us to protect ourselves from rape: women are promised actions that will keep us safe and protect our virginity, as if women are merely sexed bodies needing protection from being hunted. The reality, our reality, is that our transport and mobility concerns are much more extensive and our needs, much more tangible. Women do not have the same needs, as mentioned by the public official women interviewed, but the difference is not based only on sexuality. Rather, it has to do with the unique characteristics women have as people who work and move in specific contexts, as we have shown.

Thus, building public policy based on the premise that women have the same needs unquestionably ignores women's diversity, their interests, resources, and contexts. The power that is negotiated, the priorities that are established, and the privileges that women enjoy in labor, family, and personal matters have a lot to do with the type of mobility women have, with access to the city and its services, and with gender. Being a woman in Colombia implies the construction of different spatialities, and the negotiating of resources and privileges according to different incentives. This reality has significant impacts on our lives.

In contrast, policymakers, even when they intend to mainstream gender, seem particularly concerned with safety and access when it comes to mobility. There is an abundance of analyses and programs on women's safety on various means of transport and strategies to eradicate sexual harassment in these spaces. Consequently, our view is useful in questioning and analyzing who wins and who loses with the ways in which the gender mainstreaming approach has been materialized in our cities, an approach that renders visible or invisible the needs and resources at stake by reifying a unique and stable view of women heavily based on sexuality and safety. This, in turn, has a particular impact on efforts to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants in general and of women in particular.

The clashes between the policymakers' view of women —as having stable identities that only need protection and safety— and the instability and precariousness of women's day-to-day lives highlight the need for the governments of these cities to acknowledge, evaluate, and consider the unequal experience of identities and sexualities in different places and scales. Urban public policy also needs to seriously consider the questions around power, privileges, and priorities that in terms of transport and mobility have an impact on access to the city and its services and, and as a result, on the lives of Colombian women.

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