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Feminism and planning : influences and ambiguities.

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Engendering cities abstract

Track 5. Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Gendered Research Methodologies:
Process, Tools and Techniques

Track 1. What Would Gender Sensitive Urban Design & Architecture Be Like?

Key words: feminist planning; gender approach; policy models circulation; transnational networks; women's empowerment.

**Feminism and planning : influences and ambiguities.
Worldwide emergence and spread of urbanism initiatives
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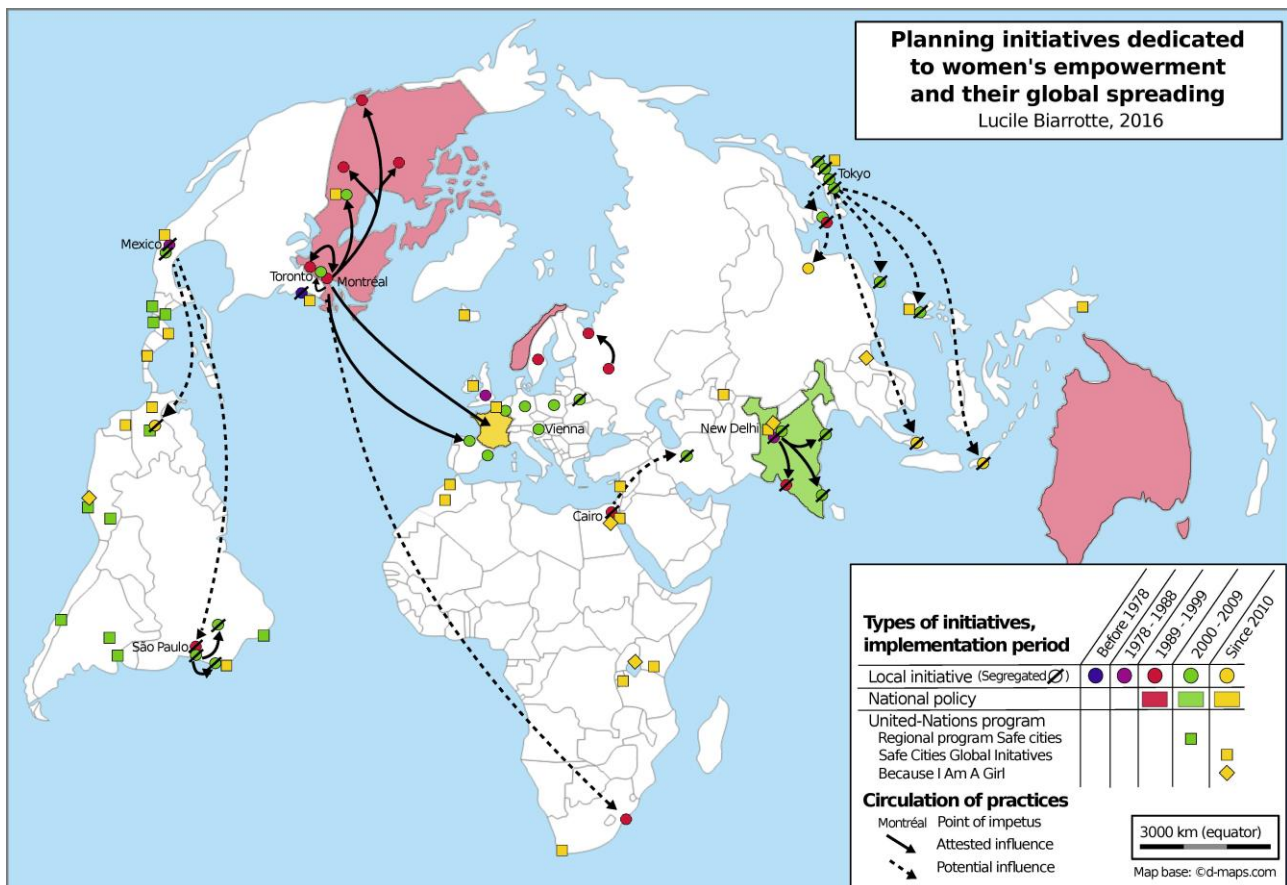
In order to understand more systematically the factors of emergence of urban initiatives dedicated to women's empowerment, we need to link the acute monographic knowledge of municipal programs to the understanding of transnational feminist networks and of the circulation of urban "good practices". Indeed, those programs can be explained by multi-scalar feminist and planning exchanges. Crosscut by recurring debates and paradoxes, they perfectly illustrate the tension between standardization and reappropriation of global urban models, resulting in a wild variety of principles, means and spatial productions that I am discussing in a critical feminist perspective, adapted to urban studies.

My main objective in this presentation is to show how and why such urbanism initiatives happen in various contexts, and what are their common denominators at different scales. Indeed, I argue that in order to appear, such policies need a convergence of enabling factors (the following order doesn't reflect a hierarchy):

- The influence of feminism on urban studies and urban practices at a global level;
- the existence of transnational feminist networks of researchers, NGOs, and local authorities (such as metropolitan networks);
- compelling or legal texts at the transnational, national or local levels;
- at the local level, an alliance of the citizen ground basis, a few political and/or senior position administrative actors, and sensibilized and active urban professionals.

This demonstration is based on various personal sources: a fieldwork in Montreal, to study the program "Femmes et villes" from the 1990s, journalistic and web survey about urban initiatives dedicated to women's empowerment, that permitted creating a map of chronological apparitions and plausible influences of urban policies around the world (see the map attached below). This research was also based on interviews and observations of UN-Women and UN-Habitat specialists and events. Additionally, I use my observations of Paris and other french municipalities as part of a collective research coordinated by my PhD advisor Claire Hancock, called the "Pari(s) du genre". Of course, I attach a very special importance to the reflexive approach of those phenomena, as my French colleagues and myself are a part of the current process of gender mainstreaming in French urban planning practices.

Presenting this theory at the conference Engendering cities should give me a lot of insight by confronting it to other case studies better known by discussants. I hope it will help us as researchers and citizens to understand and reinforce the way gender equality is taken into account in urban planning practices.



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