

NGO-UNESCO INTERNATIONAL FORUM IV

"THE ROLE OF WOMEN FIGHTING AGAINST POVERTY"

ISOCARP, URBANISM AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN FIGHTING AGAINST POVERTY

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This project of contribution for the International NGO-UNESCO Forum was born due to the "exceptional basic material" I could reach on the matter: the pertinence, and without any fail, of ISOCARP Presidents since the creation of the Society, just 50 years ago; the testimonies of the positive attention of NGOs when they are listening all persons victims of poverty they want to work with, particularly women who let us know their dreams and their wishes to reach a better quality of life for their families.

When ISOCARP was created, half a Century ago, it was in a view to implement a worldwide network gathering professionals with qualifications within the different specialized branches of urbanism, in order to share their knowledge to the service of an urbanization being in accordance with the conjuncture. And we can read, under ISOCARP Logo "*Knowledge for better cities*". In order to remain in accordance with the ideals that were present at the eve of the NGO in 1965, every President aimed to harmonizing ideals and objectives of the members coming from more than 80 countries.

However, four of those presidents of the first decades can particularly draw our attention since they conducted the Society towards very decisive steps in the framework of the ISOCARP vision at the moment to go from the 20th to the 21st Centuries.

Sam van Emden, Dutch, 1st ISOCARP President in 1965, thought that urbanism, all around the world, was more a vocation since urban population was increasing, and in addition, the testimony of an open mind allowing innovation that was more necessary and more useful than a simple working methodology consisting in linking spaces with buildings within an urban place.

But it is with President **Manuel da Costa Lobo**, Portuguese, elected in 1984, than the Society reached its complete dimension, going **from an international to a global level**; conscious of the worldwide dimension of all the aspects linked with urban planning to the service of a better quality of life for all, he decided to have ISOCARP registered in

the UN System and particularly UNESCO, thinking that UNESCO's priorities were in complete accordance with the global and societal vision of ISOCARP, connecting, by the way, a clever mind knowledge of the Past with a better understanding of issues concerning the Present.

During the presidency of **Halûk Alatan**, Turkish, ISOCARP was at a new turn: urbanism had as aim to being to the service of human condition, everywhere in the world and allowing to facing, also, the current issues of the Present times, such as, for instance, natural disasters that threaten the daily life of a great number of people. **So, ISOCARP fully joined the ideals and priorities of UNESCO, showing that urban planning is a part of daily life:** local conflicts, hunger, poverty, environment, racism, digital divide, gap between rich and poor ... in a word, the reality of an interdependent and obliged to solidarity world, which is concerning all the professions that are linked with urbanism. For ISOCARP, the only one way was to work on a long term vision, for which every member had to contribute.

The President **Max van den Berg**, Dutch, elected in 1999, really interested us when he told us how, when he was just PhD full of personal dreams, his father made him conscious that it should be better to set up his office in a popular neighborhood, where his services should be widely appreciated, in order to implement a better quality of life for the inhabitants, than in a rich neighborhood. In the framework of a global world, always changing, he realized that urban planning will have to systematically overpass the borders and imagine solutions for the social inclusion of more and more multicultural societies.

By the way, urbanism put into light its societal vocation that never failed during the beginning of the 21st Century, all along the terms of the following presidents.

In fact, cities as well as urban peripheries inhabitants, we all are concerned by urban planning which is part of our daily life. All NGOs official partners of UNESCO try to provide solutions to the preoccupations of women, first victims of any kind of poverty, everywhere in the world, in order to help them - taking into account their knowledge, their ideals, their hopes - to become "changing makers", but NGOs have also to facilitate their wishes to succeed in finding the good way to do so (cf joint JPC "Eradication of Poverty" joint Document 1).

We can wonder which are the dreams and hopes of women, victims of all kinds of poverty, to face in a positive way such kinds of various situations, and find the daily courage, so necessary to go forward.

Since urbanism is a system of relations, we can wonder about the role it plays, or should play, for the social inclusion of women and girls, as we said, first victims of any kinds of poverty; how could an urban planning in perpetual evolution due to the conjuncture (and in the framework of an unknown urbanization until now, increasing with obliged migrations due to local conflicts or climate change) succeed in helping women in their struggle for a better quality of life?

Of course, it is really difficult to think instead of the others whom we do not live the daily situation; however, from the story telling of NGOs listening women living in poverty, even in misery, we can try to put into light what urban planning could bring to them, helping them to facing some basic issues and, at the same time, to keeping hope in a better life, full of dignity.

BEING ABLE TO FIND A JOB AND BY THE WAY TO HAVE THE NECESSARY TRAINING

- **A meeting room for the associations**, allowing meetings and encounters (as it was used to do in new England), that also could be used as training workshops; near the City Hall or the primary school, such a room could also initiate to arts or lecture, or be used as a theatre space, or public lecture (talks for instance), or song... The Togolese branch of UMOFC shared with us the remarks of women, at the end of a workshop on climate change: they did appreciate sharing around an issue that was interesting for the poor as well as for the others, but also they could feel concerned by the same problems as the others. Such kinds of meetings (when a room is at disposal) allow them to feel better among the others. A good way to fight against solitude that is one of the dimensions of poverty.
- This meeting room could, by the way, allow education and training conducting to a financed job, but also fight against some other kinds of poverty: arts, literature, relationship, environment, linked with the daily issues to be faced at the moment (ecology, energy saving...); we could notice how protected cooking fires, in houses with a yard for cooking, in Africa, could save wood and forests, at the moment when forests, breath for the planet, are coming to disappear... or, as well useful, how training to climate change, is basic for populations who do not imagine it at the moment... and are coming to live it ...

Just a simple meeting room within a usual space and easy to be reached...

AVOIDING BASIC TASKS THAT TAKE TOO MANY HOURS A DAY:

- **Task for water that "eats" such a lot of time during the day**, by providing an access to fresh or safe water in every street for instance. We can remember the example of the members of Soroptimist Branch of Tunis, going to a small town around 25 Km from Tunis, to implement a workshop seminar on hygiene in a school, discovering that neither the school nor most of the inhabitants of the town had access to water; so, their mission was immediately reoriented in order for local urban planning and beyond could take in charge this basic lack...
- **Wondering how to be in time to catch children from kinder garden or school:** kinder gardens close to the working places of parents and secure ways for children to go to school and come back home (protected cross roads and

pavements , separated from the streets with trees or bushes, according to the climate) should provide less stress for women who have to prepare the meals for the family, but also to bring their children to school and take them home, generally walking; the UPAT ISOCARP/Zurich, in 2008, provided, to face the issue of such difficulties to face along the streets of the "poor" riverside of the Limmat Valley, a vision allowing a safety circulation of the children when they have to go by themselves: several specialists of different categories of urban planning, gathered into an international team, found available solutions to help mothers in their daily work.

- **Being able to go less far from home and with a smaller cost** in order to give that saved time and money to their family: the building of social settlements is a crucial problem when "popular settlements" are more one hour far from the job places of the mothers. Very often they are the only one responsible for household, spend a precious time that could be used to help their children in their school tasks; on another hand, with lower transportation cost to go working, that could be to the benefit of their families...

We could evoke here, for instance, the School bus transportation, very welcome when existing, in the framework of comprehensive high schools gathering youngsters coming from different villages or towns around and which is a precious help. It allows mothers, living in those villages or towns around, to be able to send their children to high school, particularly the girls, who can remain to study after the middle school, even when coming from modest families. Such a kind of link between towns or villages surrounding a city with a high school requests a kind of urbanism in consultation of all stakeholders, secure places for bus stops, particularly when arriving in front of the High school, since young are used to leave the bus running towards the entrance not to be late, or at the end of the school day ...

ALLOWING MY CHILDREN TO WORK WITHIN A NICE ENVIRONMENT

- It is also demonstrated **that a better feeling provides a better work**, thanks to a better mind concentration: all children like to designing or painting, but not only the children... When Brasilia was built, most of the new inhabitants decided to paint or decorate bow windows and terraces for them to be more alive: ideas that urban planners could explore for more alive and colored cities... On the same way, when settlements are built around a common courtyard, children can play in complete security and do their school duties or lean their lessons with a better mind, avoiding the wondering of their mothers to find them... Such kinds of social settlements were innovative urban planning in the 19th neighborhood of Paris; the swimming pool of Amiraux is still a testimony. In addition, we can say that an inside courtyard offers the opportunity of meetings between the inhabitants, dedicated to festivities or more serious issues.

- **Accompanying women living in great poverty in order to know the reasons that make them feeling sometimes poorer:** those who are part of the "fourth world" so called from Henri the 4th of France, give their testimonies: signing a contract for a copy of a painting to be on a wall of her home "gives the feeling to be recognized, to be somebody and gives such beauty for the daily life" that one of them spent the whole first night in contemplating this artistic window!
Such a feeling provides you courage to face the daily life difficulties and struggle with dignity. But for this, urban planners have to foresee a safety place for a bibliobus to be parked several days without any problem: a member of ATD Fourth World told us, during a NGOs workshop around 12 years ago, that the mothers of poor families were the latest members of their families daring to approaching until the entrance of the bus, several days after it was there, then some other days to go inside to seeing what was so interesting there!!! The first ones of the families to run inside were, of course, the children... A very good experience for the girls who had not access to libraries and could there meet contact, cultural richness and better self-confidence at school... **Without any adequate urban planning, such a kind of basic experience could not be possible...**

PROMOTING THE FEELING OF USEFULNESS WHEN BELONGING TO AN ASSOCIATION

- **Anybody always carries something to offer:** a personal richness, very often unknown from her/himself or from the others: how urban planning can provide encounter and exchange, but not only with other poor women or girls?
The Cultural Centre "Pyepoudre" (in French "feet covered with dust", because of very long way to walk and find a good place, easy to be reached and available...) in Haiti, fully plays this mobilizing and efficient role. Author and valuable story teller, Paula Clermont Pean looked for a place for cultural encounters or meetings between generations, but she also wished a place easy to be reached where visitors could be initiated to UNESCO's ideals: so, she set up a UNESCO Club... However, the earthquake not only destroyed the Centre, but the place was no more secure.
The vocation of this Centre was to organize spectacles, for what wide space is necessary and that is easy to be reached walking, particularly for the poor, but the Centre was also a place where everyone, even the children, could contribute in enriching the other... A strong energy and a comprehensive urban planning were really necessary for the new Centre could be born, and, in 2014, the Centre could welcome meetings, provide training seminars, prepare spectacles and, above all, the Children Carnival that can be attended thanks to good and safe places.
- **Organizing baby sitting** in a place belonging to the city, or anybody else, when kinder gardens do not exist, needs basic resources and facilitated access for mothers facing poverty: access roads, crossing roads, pavements for pedestrians. Women facing poverty do not carry their children by car. This issue

concerning facilities for pedestrians was also a matter of fact for the National Branch of FIEF located in Cameroon, when it was decided to set up training seminars in order to **ensure empowerment of young blinds**. Which utility to know reading, writing and have a diploma and a job, if it was impossible to go to work, to go for shopping, or just to go and move outside, if streets and paths to be crossed over were only safety ways for only non-blind people? Once again, urban planning (and all necessary partnerships), were the stakeholders for those young people to be included within the social life.

SUCCEEDING IN BEING LISTENED WHEN DECISIONS ARE TAKEN FOR THE CITY

- **A "House for Associations"** as existing sometimes, in order to sensitize to the right of women to participate in the public life, to take the floor in public and by the way being participating in decision-making. **Integrated within every neighborhood** and allowing the possibility to be reached walking, "houses for associations" should provide women with a good mean to go and meet the others, particularly as a way of fighting against solitude, another face of poverty, even when a mother has to take care of her own children... A positive example was given by a NGO concerning the "House for Women" implemented in Istalif, Afghanistan... nice house in a place surrounded by a garden, but place that gives women the opportunity to share the difficulties of their daily life. The House was slowly but regularly visited by men, firstly, just "to have a look", then to "debate" with them on the difficulties that women have to face every day. An agreement is necessary between architects, urban planners, municipalities ... and why not in accordance with the advices of poor women themselves? **Who better knows her own situation than the person living it day after day?**
- **The "tree to debating"** as it is sometimes existing in numerous neighborhoods, provides to poor women an opportunity for moments devoted to debate with the others, including men invited to attend or participate in total conviviality... that good and traditional practice in Africa, conducted a woman to tell us: "It is an opportunity for us to listen, but also to take the floor; even if we are not really listened at the beginning, we can give our advice and become more and more self-confident". A room or any other place, in the city, devoted to this use, should be a plus for women victims of poverty could feel that they are not alone and that other women share the same difficulties they have to face.
- **Using "official" places** for meetings, eventually consultation meetings if not decision making ones, could be an interesting solution: in some countries, several cities have implemented "municipal councils of children"; why not to foresee any polyvalent room where different kinds of municipal councils could be held allowing the "without voices" - what is very often a kind of poverty for marginalized women - to give their advices, particularly relating to the issues on their daily life? **The difference is sure between listen to them 'without taking into account their advices' and do not listen to them at all...**

During the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference of NGOs (ICNGO), on December 2014, the Representative of Photographers beyond borders, focused on the issues we have to face: the first of all (he said) is the issue of urbanization; we had to see that the proposal on behalf of ISOCARP, to integrating that main issue in the final Resolution of the ICNGO, was not accepted since being a request from a NGO particularly, and not as a request common for all NGOs, leaving ISOCARP, as a specialist NGO, face the sensitization on a major matter of our Century... However, 2 persons off 3 live urban planning in their daily life, in urban or suburban places... Numerous urban places are threatened by natural disasters; they are not the best secured, but those where a lot of poor are living, among those women are a majority...

All those reflections, all those examples, put into light a matter of fact increasing along our century: urban planning, as a full part of the daily life of more than 2 persons off 3 on Earth, is, by the way, part (or not) of the quality of life of those who, poor or marginalized people (and women are, we know it, the major part), try to face the different kinds of poverty to reach a life full of dignity.

We are now far from an Urban planning 'as for decoration' at the beginning of the 16th or 19th Century in the Occidental world, when urbanism vocation was to set up wide spaces - squares, wharfs, avenues, boulevards - in order for the beautiful buildings to be better put into evidence, to daily life urban planning of our 21st Century...

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NGO/UNESCO International Forum IV
"The role of women fighting against poverty"

Joint Document I of the JPC "Eradication of Poverty": "For a world that leave no one fall by the way side"

This document knew two very important steps:

- It was realized and edited in 2002 by the NGO-UNESCO Joint Program Commission, in the framework of "sustainable development", since the eradication of poverty is a basic aim towards a sustainable development and positive future for the coming generations. The document had to be provided to all participants in Johannesburg.

But, as soon as I had the first copy, a UNESCO Specialist of the Program invited me to present it during a meeting to be held the day after, in the framework of the Division of World Heritage. I was just president of the JPC and very honored to be invited! All the participants were leaders of a dozen of teams working at the grassroots level on building settlements or rehabilitating historic centres in Africa and in China. Every one of them told us what he was doing and the difficulties they had to face.

Then, the Director, Mrs Minja Yang, gave me the floor. I had just this document to be presented; but I soon as I began to explain our aims to work on the causes in order to find solutions, she jumped from her seat, took the paper from my hands and disappeared from the room. No one of us could understand her, but she soon came back with 50 copies for the participants and every one read it silently! After what, I could hear some of them telling "if I knew this before, we should not have such a lot of difficulties!"...

The Document (first one edited in color by a JPC), was published in French and in English for Johannesburg Conference...

- Following the advice of a colleague, we began to have some translations into International languages and realized that to be closer to the populations the NGOs worked with, we went on translating it into Regional, National, even local languages, any time we found someone able to do it (specialists, teachers, students). And, by the way, we had around 30 translations, such as for instance Arabic or Spanish as International languages, Greek (with the help of the National Commission for UNESCO), Hebrew (ISOCARP member) or Portuguese (Brazilian NGO), but also some translations into Regional languages such as, for Southern America: Quechan (with the help of the UNESCO Office of Equator), for Africa, around 6 translations into Regional languages: Kinyarwanda (student/ISOCARP), Lingala (NGO), Luganda (student/ISOCARP), More (NGO), Wolof (teacher); and one into a local language: Catalan (ISOCARP member).
- This document was followed by 5 others (only in English and French), always in a view to find solutions to eradicate poverty, from a better understanding of its causes all over the world, with the consideration that NGOs are the necessary bridge to overcome poverty in partnership with decision-makers.

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