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**What is the room for gender-sensitive policies in African
urban development?**

Training and professional insertion of women in Abidjan

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To the woman who made me become a woman, my mother

To the man who made me become a woman, my father

To all the women who I do not see, but who are never invisible to me

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment, urban development, informality, training, professional insertion, corporate philanthropy, "Maisons Digitales", Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

For a long time, urban sociology discussed the process of "development" with little or no concern to gender. However, the experience and the practice of women and men within and towards the urban realm are not interchangeable. Gender matters for both with consequences to the constitution of the "cityness" and to development itself. The important scholarship of Gender and Development awakened this debate, with consequences to policy-making, while reaching international organizations - which, to a large extent, inform policy design, and introducing the strategy of "gender mainstreaming" in their discourse. Still, an incapacity of these stakeholders to communicate with the urban level associated with an astonishing blindness of local authorities themselves to recognize the primordial and strategic role of gender policies lead to deficient urban development plans. In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, a city whose development is largely dependent on the action of women informal workers, gender awareness is imperative. Before an existing demand and a vacuum of governance of this issue, Fondation Orange's corporate philanthropy program "Maisons Digitales" might bridge some gaps.

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Introduction

It is indeed not surprising that a region that has been submitted to the devastating effects of slavery, colonization as well as continuing predatory globalization is presented as a challenge for institutions, authorities, organizations and academics engaged with the causes of human well-being. The reasoning that leads to acknowledge the responsibility of these same actors in the unfolding of such “challenge” - which is certainly way more demanding for those living with and within such effects – does not minimize the need to reflect upon Africa nor the concern with its social transformation.

Even if Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international goals for improving living standards valid until 2015, are supported by indicators constructed under the orientation of an occidental perspective and, therefore, are limited to evaluate other social configurations, yet, they are tools that inform worldwide political agendas, once enjoying of a valuable homogeneity to build comparisons, to set priorities and, hence, to attenuate the most devastating effects of poverty¹. Besides, MDGs also support the mobilization of global resources towards shared objectives, what contributes to a higher efficiency on the allocation of these resources and, at the same time, assures a higher degree of efficacy, while endorsing a common vision of development (**Gaiha, 2003**) that enhances accountability locally, because having clear stated goals make governments more transparent. Despite general improvements along these last years, African countries continuously lag behind on regards to these different goals (**UNECA, 2014**).

Once the so-called developed countries achieved such status through a socio-economic restructuring process towards urbanity headed by industrialization, this model (**Lewis, 1954**), understood as successful, constituted, to a large extent, the guidelines to be followed all throughout “the late developing areas”. Low paying, often unproductive jobs were identified with the countryside where agriculture prevailed, while the city, the industrial realm, would offer more productive and better paying jobs, so that development was equated to this transfer, consequently encouraging rural-urban migration. However, sub-Saharan economies - as well as their corresponding social arrangements - were, overall, based on the production resulted from the primary sector and were not capable to generate enough employment in the industry nor to keep up with the expectations to expand its productivity, what engendered a “backwash” urbanization process that did not come in the wake of economic development but, on the

¹ Rist, Gilbert (2007). *Le développement. Histoire d'une croissance occidentale*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, séries: “Monde et société”, 2013. It is interesting to note that Rist considers the **ideology of development** coined after the II World War as a **global phenomenon**. He refuses to separate in his analysis “developed” and “developing” countries, understanding that all of them are carriers of the same political ideology. Poverty is, therefore, assumed to be just the evidence of the well functioning of the capitalist system that depends on the exploitation of some for the well being of others. Under this logic, Rist does not identify any revolutionary potential in international organizations carriers of the causes of the poorest, once such institutions, also oriented by the same development ideology, would be most **attenuating** the perverse effects of poverty instead of fighting against the system that generates it.

contrary, of the failure of national economic development strategies. This failure resulted in massive rural migrations to cities that were not in any manner planned to receive and include these people, neither in terms of physical structure nor of social or employment capacity (**Mabogunje 1986**). Thus, African urbanization processes have come in the aftermath of an inadequate approach to development that culminated in both the destabilization of rural and urban socioeconomic structures.

Although this twofold failure is much attributable to prolonged relationships established through colonization that embedded the influence of “Northern countries” – and their own interests – in the design of policies in the “global South”, still, it is also important to address the issue from a more internal point of view, as have been done along the “urban bias” debate (**Corbridge and Jones, 2010**). Local economic and political dynamics and power disputes and distribution nourish the strategies and projections of development as well.

According to **Streeten and Lipton (1968)**, the fiasco of development strategies was the consequence of a systematic policy discrimination against the countryside that prevented rural inhabitants to secure a fair return for their work. A certain disposition of power concentrated in cities’ elites would have encrusted an “urban bias” in policy-making, which resulted in an over-allocation of resources to the urban population and organizations in an inefficient and inequitable way with pervasive outcomes in developing countries. The mechanism behind the “bias” was a “price twist” against the interests of people in the countryside, enabled by two main methods. One method would be the design of economic policies that overvalued the country’s exchange rate, lowering the price of foreign imports and, at the same time, the price of crops that farmers could sell abroad, introducing more competition into domestic market and, therefore, restricting farmers’ share in it. Another method would be the use of State’s power to buy up most of a country’s food crops, so that urban dwellers could have access to supplements at a lower price. The consequence was that, acting as the single purchaser, the State was able to, more or less, sterilize demand competition and force farmers to sell at prices “twisted” against them. Given higher rates of poverty in the countryside than in the city, urban biased policies would have transferred resources from the poor to the less poor, leading to a slow and unfair development process (**Lipton, 1977**). In this sense, the “urban bias” theory was very critical of spatial inequalities rooted in local social and economic power distribution that could explain the absurdly high African poverty rates (**Bates, 1988**).

However, this explanatory model for the failures in development has also been largely criticized. Although it pretended to have the status of theory while promoting a general argument for “why poor people stay poor” in developing countries, its value lay much more in highlighting specific examples, such as subsidies to urban land development or the “urban bias” in some non-democratic policies (**Corbridge and Jones, 2010**). It is weaker as a theory as it misses, for instance, an explanation to urban poverty, despite its acknowledged growing pattern, especially in developing and transitional economies (**Haddad, Ruel and Gaett, 1999**). Besides, loose and unstable definitions of “rural” and “urban” spatialities distorted the model, while their significant

variation could imply very different results in terms of development priorities (**Corbridge and Jones, 2010**). Moreover, even the matter of urban poverty and its measurement corroborated to misstatements. The adoption of uniform poverty thresholds based on \$1 per day could undercount urban poverty because costs – of land, housing and services – are not taken into account (**Mitlin, 2004**). Hence, policy-makers should overcome narrow urban-rural comparisons and the reductionist conception of politics that could be suggested by the “urban bias” (**Corbridge and Jones, 2010**).

Beyond the conclusions come up with the “urban bias” debate, the fact is that African development models did add strength to the evolvement of urbanization, what decisively changed the pace of such process, shedding lights on the relevance of comprehending the “local” dimension to implement any measure or project in Africa today. This is because a potent and greatly concentrated urbanization such as the African one – usually towards the very few old colonial cities – requires a focus that is beyond a broad and disperse scope of action. In the 1980s, the over centralization resulted in the enhancement of the problems, while central institutions assumed and claimed more responsibilities than they could actually handle and local authorities atrophied (**Renaud, 1987**).

In this sense, if it is still more common to raise African development issues under the shadow of continental and national approaches, each day more it is revealed the need to come closer to the local to address the complex African reality. This movement invites a reflection on why in this “world of cities”² and, more intensely, in an era of “globalization”³ when diverse flows network and bound localities, the experiences of many of them continue being stigmatized and drowned in homogenizing concepts, as if they were not singular enough to generate further and particular interest, as in the case of African cities. Besides, this consideration also questions unidirectional comparative approaches that equate development to urban forms found in Northern cities, framed as models to be reached by the un-modern configurations of the South. Finally, it encourages the decolonization of knowledge production, putting forward the urgency of “recognizing the locatedness of much of what passes for universal theory” (**Robinson, 2011:4**) and, therefore, the need to ponder the scale of analysis according to objects of study.

Considering this remark, this dissertation intends to promote a debate on development with a focus on the “local”. This is also due to the more general trend of structuring development policies in the local arenas, betting that local authorities could have better means to deal with their handling than higher political instances who are far from identifying specific needs, a crucial capacity to the success of outcomes.

² Robinson, Jennifer (2011). Cities in a World of Cities: The Comparative Gesture. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. Volume 35.1, January 2011.

³ Giddens, Anthony (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990, pp.64. Giddens has described globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”.

In fact, changes in local governments and other local organizations are the base for the meet of needs put forward by international development goals, such as the MDGs, and if there is still not much improvements for low-income groups in many African locations, somehow it points to limits on the process of decentralization that has been taking place there since the 1990s. While local government agencies determine through their rules and procedures whether or not and to what extent citizen's rights are protected and citizen entitlements met and while local organizations determine whether or not many of the targets are met, still the acknowledgement by local actors of such central position in development strategies has not always translated into the agenda-setting the same priorities decided internationally, or, at least, has not mobilized the expected means. Local authorities evaluate multiple variables within the decision-making process and have, in many cases, designed urban development policies that accommodated interests of elite groups and that, ironically, stigmatized the poorest, the core public to which the measures willing to achieve the MDGs are supposed to be addressed. Hence, the accomplishment of such goals is both a matter of means and capacity but also of political will and priorities (**Satterthwaite, 2005**). Unfortunately, a considerable amount of African policy-making has been targeting the elimination of the poor and not of poverty.

Yet, the primacy of international homogeneous indicators on measuring and shaping local policies and the importance that the Millennium Development Goals have in local agendas – which pushes for a similar expectation over the influence power of the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)– cannot be denied. In 2014, for instance, the seventh Urban World Forum⁴ was centered in discussions on urban equity in development and was oriented by the indicators' blueprints stressed by the MDGs. Hence, this dissertation still refers to debates and priorities framed in these international arenas. What are the key issues for development? What are the key issues for development in African cities?

Apart from forming this diverse continent, African realities still share a similar set of development challenges, which allows a study to raise the interest of further comparative elucidation in different areas, regions, countries, cities. Furthermore, in many occasions, speaking in the name of “Africa” gives more visibility and force to the issues presented. The intense and unplanned process of urbanization and urban growth that Africa is passing through triggers serious dysfunctions that affect especially the vulnerable populations, and are also aggravated by the inexperience and incapacity of local governments in dealing with and, above that, governing them. So, if, on the one hand, the vigorous involvement of local authorities is crucial to urban development, on the other hand, these cities must also be included in the priorities of global agenda for Africa, after all, the above mentioned international stakeholders for making part of the problems should be part of the solutions likewise. Beyond their already significant participation on the design of policies, there is a need for a more engaged

⁴ A global forum convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) for cities to debate the most pressing issues they face and to share lessons learned and best practices that could inform good policies.

participation on their side, willing to recognize and overcome the obstacles rose along policy implementation in the interaction with local actors.

1. From research to policy

1.1 Research question and justification of the study

African urban development policies have been particularly blind to gender, with fastidious consequences for the achievement of the MDGs, in which such dimension is objectively emphasized, notably in the third goal: “promote gender equality and empower women” (**United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000**).

Despite the importance of the gender dimension in the discourse of the chief international agencies enlightened by the MDGs, in practical terms, it did not have a comparable impact, in a large extent due to the limit capacity of this discourse to penetrate concretely policy implementation taking place at the local level. This is not to say that these goals do not have the potential to support and take forward local existent struggles (**Chant, 2007**), but to stress the missing affirmation of such potential and its consequences.

More specifically, while a significant concentration of gender issues is located in urban areas, the MDGs did not expressively emphasized this focus, even though their pretention to social transformation depends largely on the capacity of the policies they inform to account for specificities in their deployment, notably differences between more rural and more urbanized spatialities. It is striking that even the partial evaluation reports on the international progress towards the MDGs (**UNECA, 2014**) have not dedicated their attention – as it is deserved – to the crucial intersection between gender and African urbanization. Meeting the MDGs in urban areas should be understood in a broader sense than the fixed in target 11, which calls for significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 (**Hasan, Patel and Satterthwaite, 2005**).

Although the MDGs fail as gender-sensitive blueprints for urban development policies, gender still matter for such policies. The processes of urbanization as well as rural-urban migration, a boost-urbanizing factor together with natural population growth, are directly related to gender roles and relations (**Masika, de Haan and Baden, 1997**). Men and women experience this phenomenon in different ways, exposed to different constraints and opportunities, in terms of access to income, resources and services. Hence, gender matters for such policies especially within a “development challenge”. And this development is a “challenge” not in a normative Western sense, but because development denotes growth - the growth these cities are undergoing, and growth is challenging at least for implying change.

Because African cityness⁵ might be being conceived with limited gender concern, the objective of this dissertation is to urge the need to investigate **what is the room for gender-sensitive urban development policies in Africa**. People weave the urban tissue and, concomitantly, it shapes their experience in the city. While policy-makers and society as a whole do not commit to a gender-engaged mindset, African cityness would perpetuate an unequal social world.

1.2 Methodology and theoretical foundation

When dealing with gender in policy research, one of the most relevant aspects is to dedicate an appropriate care for concepts. This is because, overall, political science has disregarded its intrinsic gender component, compromising the accuracy and the scientific meaning of any study, but particularly of those aiming to address development policy implementation, once any possible development progress, without this consideration, is definitely narrowing the significance of such large goal. Therefore, there is a need for “gendering” development policy research, pointing the limits implied in gender-blind concepts (**Goertz and Mazur, 2008**).

However, “gendering” does not mean exactly adding sex as an additional variable in mainstream research or analyzing women as an afterthought, because, in fact, adding gender can have effects that transform completely the original intentions of the analysis. The concept of gender used in this dissertation reflects current scholarship (**Beckwith, 2005**), in which the authors understand gender as a complex social construction process within which men and women, within power relationships, define their identities in relation to each other. These power relationships and its consequential redistributive effects are of crucial importance to the design of policies concerned with a just development.

In this sense, a large section of this dissertation is dedicated to understand how the gender debate permeated the development debate, guided by the revision of the literature that dates back to the Women in Development approach until the Gender and Development approach, which seems to be still the most consistent framework to “gender” policy debate, therefore being the lens for the analysis that follows. This exercise of reviewing is coherent with the intention of this dissertation, which is, above all, to sensitize scholars, policy makers and change makers to an intersectional issue that lacks consideration as much as comprehension. The conceptual and theoretical evolvments are essential to this aim while it feeds political discourses, which are directly translated into policies. Besides, concepts and theories also affect policies by their typical imbrication in data collection, guiding what is collected, the units and the scope of data, with obvious consequences for the definition of policy targets (**Goertz and Mazur, 2008**).

⁵ I use the word “cityness” in opposition to “urbanity”, an appropriate remark of Saskia Sassen (2010) Cityness. Roaming thoughts about making and experiencing cityness. Columbia University. “(...) Urbanity is perhaps too charged a term, charged with a Western sense of cosmopolitanism and of what public space is or should be. (...) The term cityness suggests the possibility that there are kinds of urbanity that do not fit into the definition developed in the West. (...) The concept of cityness must accommodate these intersections which begin to constitute a form of subjectivity and may or may not be translatable into an immediate tangible outcome.”

As soon as the conceptual and theoretical debate is introduced, the question of identifying the space in African urban development policies for gender gains concreteness, based in the study of a case: training and professional insertion of women in Abidjan. Considering that a case study research means conducting an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence (**Yin, 2003**), this methodology seemed to match the objectives of this dissertation.

First of all, it aims to investigate a phenomenon, or in other words, a situation: to what extent African urban development policies integrate the gender dimension. Second, the phenomenon is studied in its natural context, bounded by space –Abidjan- and time – the post-independence decades. Third, it intends to be richly descriptive and relies on different sources of information – academic literature, official documents, press – that reveal the complexity of the phenomenon and its many variables (**Hancock and Algozzine, 2006**).

As literature outlines (**Moser, 1995**), traditionally, most government planners and donors used to identify the “urban” dimension as a “spatial” concern, therefore thinking development policies as tools to solve “physical infrastructure”, for example, problems of housing, sanitation, water, land use and transportation. So, generally, the “social infrastructure” lagged behind, with issues such as employment, health, education and community services. From the point of view of society, though, the boundaries between “physical” and “social” are almost non-existent. The way people experience the physical infrastructure is, in essence, not only in its material reality but as a “means of divination” (**Trovalla and Trovalla, 2015**), in the sense that the way infrastructure is conceived and all that it seems to lack impact and transform their daily lives and, therefore, the social world. Anytime, the infrastructure that the State was not capable (or decided not to) produce was being culturally produced: the society was mobilizing, inventing and re-experimenting strategies to “patch up broken circuits, with the help of back-ups, add-ons and substitutes” (**Trovalla and Trovalla, 2015**). Hence, underlying the technical infrastructure there is already a social infrastructure of beliefs, experiences and ideas (**Trovalla and Trovalla, 2015**).

Now, if in the side of policy-making this section between the two types of concerns seemed to be little by little overcome, the fact that governments have so far limitedly introduced crosscutting dimensions (such as gender) into the urban agenda emphasizes their difficulty in thinking development strategies beyond the traditional paradigm.

Among all structural development policies, formation and professional insertion are especially conditional for achieving gender equality and empowering women, but these policies remain, overall, disassociated from urban development plans. This is not to say that access to basic services, such as water and sanitation facilities, as well as housing, transportation, health, security and others are irrelevant, but to emphasize that education and training, combined with opportunities to enter and succeed in job markets, are essential to politicize women – or to

enhance and to express their political conscience - and to provide them the necessary structure to generate income, two critical sources for them to negotiate their social positions within and out the households. Because measuring the impact of these policies is considerably difficult, policy analysis research has mostly overlooked them and there is very little work in the field, especially when introduced the gender dimension. Hence, those are the policies that will be more deeply examined in this dissertation in order to evaluate the weight of the gender aspect in African urban development strategies, giving a significant contribution to policy-makers and to the academia that claim the capacity to inform them.

Moreover, the choice of Abidjan as the African case was not random. At first, it is supported by the unique historical framework that made Côte d'Ivoire if not the, one of the first countries to initiate an urbanization process- still during colonial times - and, above that, an urbanization process that very early counted with feminine rural-urban migration to increment it. The presence of women in the city of Abidjan had large implications for the development of the city, even though this fact needs to be further analyzed in order to evaluate if it has been translated into gender-sensitive concerns or policies.

Secondly, this choice is also a consequence of a more practical objective of this study: to investigate the potentialities and the limits of a program implementation in Côte d'Ivoire. As an intern in Fondation Orange (FO), I have been exposed to the elaboration of a new strategic development program to be implemented in 2015 named "Maisons Digitales", a program targeting women, training and employability, which will be detailed later. First putting aside the specific characteristics of the program, what instigated me to choose Côte d'Ivoire was the local foundation (Fondation Orange Côte d'Ivoire Telecom- FOCIT) rapidity in applying for being one of the pilot sites for the deployment of the program. Considering the similarities usually put forward by the academia when comparing West African cities (**Beauchemin et Boucquier, 2003**), I was intrigued to understand why the affiliates in Cameroun, Mali, Senegal, Niger, Guinea or Mali did not present themselves as quickly or with such impetus. Of course this situation could have multiple reasons that are not on the reach of this research (with the political situation imposing more urgent priorities or limited resources to follow up the program, etc.), but still it raised my curiosity to investigate which conditions made FOCIT able to and interested in betting on women training projects as one of the pillars of its 2015 actions. Somehow understanding Abidjan's case could contribute to elucidate some limits that FO is facing on promoting the program among its affiliates, pointing to strategic solutions to overcome them based, perhaps, on a different communication plan that could be informed by the appeal it had to FOCIT. At the same time, it would be an opportunity to help FOCIT itself, anticipating constraints and identifying potentialities that could be explored in a more efficient manner along the deployment of the program. Considering that the absence of detailed baseline researches have already presented drawbacks for projects focused on women entrepreneurs by development organizations offering them credit and other inputs, this dissertation gains even an empirical

support, after all, “every business, and every business operator, exists within a wider context” (Sweetman, 2009: 184) that deserves special attention.

Therefore, the rationale for the choice of Abidjan as a case study is twofold. On the one hand, it intends to answer the research question in its present tense, by evaluating the gender sensitiveness of the current policy layout in the city. On the other hand, it also expects to point to answers to another possible reading of the question, in its future tense: what is the room **for implementing** gender sensitive urban development policies? This is where FO’s program comes into play, requiring the comprehension of how and to what extent it interacts with the existing context and, at the same time, of its potential to set a more sensitive framework to gender in Abidjan.

Still, both the present situation and the prospective evaluation would not be possible without having a paradigm, this that serves as the “ideal” and to which the existing policies are compared in order to find what is missing and what could be possibly completed. In this study, the paradigm is the empowerment of women, recalled by the international agenda in the form of the third MDG. Although it was already pointed that the third goal was not conceived with the specific urban concern, it was also said that there is a need to understand this negligence as equally responsible for local gender sensitiveness, once it was stressed that the goal carries potential, and this is mostly due to its reliance on empowerment.

With these considerations in mind, it is possible to classify this case study as an instrumental one (Stake, 1995), which is used to understand the urban African development policies and their relation to gender beyond the specific case of Abidjan. It is, therefore, instrumental because it is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. Nevertheless, it is looked in depth, its context scrutinized, its ordinary patterns detailed (Stake, 1995), because all those aspects could be further used to inform matching political agendas and to encourage future research.

1.3 Literature Review

In order to investigate the room gender has in urban development policies, first of all, it is important to understand how gender was and is associated to development at all, otherwise one cannot comprehend why not having such policies specifically addressed in the agenda is a pitfall for urban development itself. The concept of “development” erupted in the years following the World War II, when many countries were undergoing a decolonization process at the same time that the United States and the Soviet Union disputed their global influence, bipolarizing into capitalist and socialist many nation’s political and economic orientations.

For being an ideology (Goertz and Mazur, 2008), development was understood accordingly to the political, socio-economic and cultural configurations in which it originally emerged, and so,

within Cold War, development projects were also disputed, as they embodied the belief systems and socio-economic organizations brought up by each side. For the “winner” “West”, development was a process that allowed the transposition of the limits characteristic from “traditional” economies, allowing the establishment of “modern” economies.

In this framework, there was no space for gender reflection. Development studies were centered in men – as if it would be a neutral synonym to “human kind” – ignoring a large extent of women’s well-being as well as of their activities, interests and voices, an approach that generated equally blind-policies to target their needs. Except for the consideration of women’s primacy in food provision, primary education and health, rooted in their attributed gender role as “mothers” and “house-wives”, overall, women were associated with the “traditional”, economically tightened pole (**Jaquette and Staudt, 1985**).

Nevertheless, modernization theories of the 1950s were not garrisoned from critics. In the 1960s, the dependency theory denounced their model of development as a function of a global division of economic activities that imposed to the so-called South limited opportunities to exploit their own resources, captured by the North to develop their own nations, which confirmed a dependency system that perpetuated colonial economic rules (**Cardoso and Faletto, 1970**). The limit of this approach was to understand development uniquely resulted from economic growth, assuming that the control over material resources could actually bring nations into modernization. However, the causes of economic “delays” were much related to the redistribution of wealth and not only with its production. In conformance with this realization, complementary definitions embracing equity (**Overseas Development Council**), rural and agricultural change (**Boserup, 1970**), basic human needs (**Mullen, 1984**) and poverty reduction (**Staudt 1990**) gained strength.

From the combination of these concepts with the influence of the second feminist wave, resulted the formulation of feminist approaches to development, denouncing academia’s omission on exercising its responsibility of meta-critique in the largest part of its research agenda. What prevailed hitherto in the academic environment were gender-blind researches, which disregarded years of social fights for gender equality, not questioning the gendered construction of knowledge itself (**Moser and Peake, 1996**).

An emblematic paper that announced this new research stream was Esther Boserup’s *Woman’s role in economic development* (**1970**). Boserup criticized agricultural development strategies that, while neglecting the important role women had on farming, benefited men and increased resource gaps between both sexes. Her work made clear that modernization theory and the policies and projects that followed them had enhanced men’s power at the expense of women, increasing women’s dependence on men.

This paper came along with the conception of a whole theoretical framework named “Women in Development” (WID) in the early 1970s. The term was coined by a Washington-based network

of development female professionals that acknowledged that modernization was having an unbalanced impact in men and women, in such a way that the development supposed to bring benefits for both was actually augmenting gender gaps (**Tinker, 1990**). This network spread its influence to women circles in United Nations agencies and also among scholars engaged in research on women's productive work, the sexual division of labor and the impact of development processes on women (**Young, 1993**), conquering a significant space in politics as much as in research.

What WID inaugurated was a political strategy in which demands for social justice and equity for women were supported by the demonstration of the relevance of such measures for development as a whole. They claimed for a channeled allocation of development resources to women based on economic efficiency arguments that proved the benefits that women's activities brought (and could bring) for overall economic growth.

WID was largely influenced by the liberal feminist movement in northern countries, which advocated for the implementation of a just political system, sensitive to women. They argued that women's disadvantages were mostly resulted from the internalization of oppressive stereotypes they established in their relationships with men and that were present in various socialization instances (**Connell, 1987**). Therefore, if these stereotypes were reshaped with better balanced gender relationships – by offering girls better formation, by introducing programs with a gender equity preoccupation, by making labor markets more open to women – the disadvantages would be, in principle, eliminated.

Hitherto, policy-makers had disregarded women's productive social role by directly identifying them with their reproductive roles, an imaginary that transpired in the shape of the policies, which were circumscribed to feminized social welfare concerns, such as nutritional education and home economics. This had been the way policy was designed both by colonial authorities and by post-war development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Realizing the narrowness of such approach, WID centered its discourses on women's productive labor and integration to economy, rather than social welfare and reproductive concerns, aiming to reformulate women's identity for development policy. They claimed for the disassociation of women's image with this of passive recipients of welfare programs, outlining their active contributions to economic development. Furthermore, WID argued that women were a "missing link" in development, since their economic value was not taken into account in the development process (**Tinker, 1990**) and, therefore, they would represent a real potential to increase economic growth. For WID, much of women's subordination was related to the non-recognition of their productivity.

WID advocates found that it was more effective to demand for social justice and equity for women strategically linking these claims to mainstream development concerns. Put in other

words, it meant that arguments for equity would have their persuasion power maximized if framed within the pursuit of some overarching goal from which a large majority of people could benefit (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**). The United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), established in the first UN Women's Conference in Mexico City, provided the channels through which these demands were voiced with a larger reaching capacity.

Nonetheless, WID scholarship was contested in several points - both as theory and *praxis*. Critics departed from different points of the political spectrum, although most of them shared the premise of recognizing the omission of WID in explaining gender as a social construct resulted from power relations between men and women. **Jaquette (1990)** argued that if WID were based in the assumption that development resources should be reallocated in favor of women due to their productivity, consequently, if women's productivity were proved to be lower than men, they would justifiably deserve less support. However, being productivity a function of capital and other assets to which women were majorly excluded (exactly due to gender disparities defined on socioeconomic relations), women's productivity tend to be lower, what was not accounted for in WID's model. **Whitehead (1990)** raised another pitfall of WID discourse, misleading on defending investments in women on the basis of a win-win strategy because, in fact, they were still redistributive policies. Even though women could be interpreted as a "missing link" in development strategies, still the benefits of including and supporting them could not compensate all the costs involved in restructuring the system to implement women-sensitive policies, leading to the conclusion that, actually, the argument of women's productive role was more a moral than an economic one. **Goetz (1994)** also pointed that while demonstrating the economic gains of investing in women, WID ended up inverting the aim to identify and fulfill women's needs and interests in development to the benefits that "development" could extract from women to achieve its own goals.

In the policy realm, WID discourse, although effective as a political strategy to sensitize and mobilize donor agencies, resulted also in the displacement of much of the central demand of gender equity to a secondary position, conditioned by the proof of positive growth synergies (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**). Under this framework, planners would target women as a social group that could contribute to the achievement of prioritized development goals, without considering their particular needs.

Besides, the overemphasis of women's usefulness in development could also attribute to them responsibilities that should be State's, in the sense that before the acknowledgement that services -such as the guarantee of daily minimum nutrition, health care and education - were being assured by women's activities, authorities would accommodate themselves, instead of assuming the compromise on delivering them. Concomitantly, WID ignored the impact of social relations that constrains women's economic choices and opportunities, exactly by reinforcing their disadvantaged position within them, as their reproductive roles kept not being recompensed.

These problems are well illustrated by the anti-poverty strategies adopted by international agencies during the 1970s. Donor support, while claiming to absorb WID demands for women's "productive employment", ended up reinforcing stereotypes that WID was not able to contest. Most of the projects implemented by the time aimed to help poor women to contribute more effectively to meeting family needs, but they subverted their empowerment potential while limiting the capacitation to income-generating activities for women to the development of their skills in nutrition or traditional handicrafts. Hence, these projects did not challenge the gender determination of social roles, being insignificant to overcome poor women's economic marginalization (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**).

Despite all these limits, WID had a very important implication in discussions and researches on a topic that hitherto had been mostly disregarded. It also boosted the women dimension into development agencies and governments, to the point that whole institutional machineries were established to concentrate only in it. It was from the recognition of WID's problems that a new scholarship "gender and development" (GAD) raised in the 1980s.

The main objective of GAD, on the one hand, recuperated WID's claims for making economic policies and productive processes more accountable to women but, on the other hand, proposed the incorporation of the gender concept as a social construction, acknowledging that many of the issues faced by women worldwide stemmed from their unbalance relationship with men. Overcoming WID's focus on women-specific projects, GAD was engaged in "mainstreaming"⁶ gender at the program and policy level, advocating as well for more participatory development strategies, which would politicize the development agenda, by bringing to decision-maker instances opinions and claims collected among women's NGOs and other grassroots organizations (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**).

Fields beyond political sciences had influenced GAD scholarship. The feminist approach to anthropology, for instance, contributed to its understanding of gender, which was recognized in that framework as a cultural concept that determined the relative position of men and women in society, in such a way that status and power were a direct result from relations of production particularly difficult to be subverted. Equally significant was the sociological approach that based its analysis on men's and women's social activities, trying to demonstrate how the rules and practices of different institutions – such as the household, the market, the State and even the community – constructed and continuously reproduced women's subordination (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**).

⁶ "Gender mainstreaming" is the strategy to inform all the policy process with gender concerns, as will be clarified further on.

GAD was somehow the combination of “gender roles framework” research agenda with “social relations analysis” methodology. “Gender roles framework” extended the basis of WID – the understanding of women’s activities in synergy with economic growth – to gender conception. It argued that women’s productive contributions provide the rationale for allocating resources to them and, therefore, gender equity is a consequence of individual access to and control over resources. The novelty of this approach in relation to WID was the inclusion of household dynamics as explanatory mechanisms for resources’ allocation.

However, the “framework”, by focusing in the gender division of labor, failed in understanding the complementarity and the connections between women’s and men’s work that are largely imbricated by conflicts that result in women’s subordination (**Kabeer, 1992**). Moreover, it disregarded the extent to which powerful gender relations (especially within the household) can actually redirect resources allocated to women to men’s control. Yet, even though gender power distribution remained the same, women could indirectly benefit from these resources, because overall household income would increase. At the same time, such micro-level relationships are even more difficult to evaluate due to all individual variables that play a role in their configuration, for instance, how a woman’s interests could be personally translated into the will to witness an increase to all household members’ well-being (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**).

Conducting deep inquiries, “gender analysis” searches for the differences of both incentives and constraints to men and women’s work. The research in itself, putting in evidence the characteristics of women’s work, would be a tool to overcome stereotypes that imprison them in subordinated roles, striking their importance as producers. Besides, the expectation of “gender analysis” is that, from the results, policy-makers and planners could allocate policy compensations such as education, training and access to credit, to the disadvantaged groups (**Razavi and Miller, 1995**).

So, GAD was centered in understanding how social structures, processes, and relations prevent women from accessing an advantaged social position. As such, it would not be sufficient to reallocate economic resources to revert women’s subordination, because, above all, this subordination is an issue of power redistribution. Furthermore, not only the conflictive but also the cooperative gender relations should be examined, since they are also responsible for reproducing gender inequalities, as stressed by **Kabeer (1992)**. Sometimes, the intention of empowering women by allocating resources directly to them, instead of raising women status condemned them to more vulnerable social positions, when loosening traditional family and community ties that enabled them to access certain rights.

Nonetheless, GAD recognized that social relations were not static and this realization settled a normative environment where women could have hope to negotiate a different status under the condition of obtaining greater bargaining power. Therefore, it was within this approach that the

notion of “empowerment” penetrated gender discussions and political strategies (**Kabeer, 1992; Young, 1993**). Then, this could explain why “gender analysis” shed light on the need for women’s NGOs and grassroots organizations to be included in policy-making processes, considering that only with the active participation of policy beneficiaries it was possible to address their demands and provide the means for them to be actually included. In this way, these organizations could be a bridge to integrate gender in development planning (**Young, 1993**).

Despite the considerable influence capacity of GAD in diffusing the concept of “gender”, it has, more recently, faced criticism from gender theorists who question the actual changes that this approach represented to the drawbacks entailed by WID oriented discourse (**Jackson, 2001; Chant, 2000**). One major critique is centered on the limit capacity GAD has shown to mobilize the concept of “gender” to inform policy and practice, what becomes clear when acknowledging the interchangeable use made of the terms “gender” and “sex” in policy-making, without recognizing the relational component so essential to the concept (**Kaufman, 2003:3**). This failure was also stressed by the problematic marginalization of men in GAD (**Proudlock, 2003-2004**), a realization that has been increasing the interest of development agencies to bring men closer to gender studies and to policy-making (**White, 2000**).

(**Proudlock, 2003-2004**) emphasized that the success of any development effort to promote long-term gender equality and equity⁷ depends on a relational approach to gender that sheds light on the productive lives of both women and men as gendered subjects. **Chant (2003)** argued that one of the main reasons for the absence of men in GAD is the historical legacy of WID, what definitely could question the achievements of the GAD approach, if it represents more a continuity in practical terms. Besides, the marginalization of men is also resulted from an old concern of feminist thinking that fears the close presence of men to the allocation of GAD resources, which would constrain the capacity of such actions to bring women to the desired level of well-being (**Chant & Gutmann 2000**). Furthermore, the prevalent idea that men are already assured by the overall process of development due to existing patriarchal values and practices in the institutions that drive it, put aside, without problematizing, the need for a specialized focus on them (**Chant & Gutmann 2000**).

What is interesting, though, is that most of the research that attempted to bring men into the agenda was carried out by women (**Chant, 2000; White, 2000**). These scholars argued that while men are not included in gender-based discussions, the discourse tends to reproduce dichotomies that identify men with power, laziness and self-interest and women with subordination, heavy work burdens and altruism (**Jackson, 2001**), what is harmful for the conceptualization of progressive policies.

⁷ Gender *equality* refers to the equal treatment of males and females in law and in civil society. Gender *equity* refers to fairness. For example, gender *equality* implies that a pregnant woman should have equal opportunities in the work place. However, gender *equity* suggests that temporary unequal treatment from a male or other female colleagues may be necessary in order to meet her specific needs and take account of her pregnancy (Kaufman 2003:2).

Such stereotyped profiles could once more overload women, by reinforcing the exact dichotomous gender models that could support men to naturalize such attributes, while their contribution to the household livelihood was being neglected (**Proudlock, 2003-2004**). Many researches have shown as well that the growing insecurity of men resulted from growing unemployment rates fed a feeling of frustration among them for not being able to fulfill their normative role of “household breadwinner” (**Chant and Craske, 2003**). This frustration, in many cases, implied in psychological disorders, alcohol abuse and domestic violence, with negative consequences for women but also for the success of development projects (**Chant and Gutmann, 2000**). At the same time, it was equally minimized the importance of the power of decision that women conquered as a result of their ability to earn (**Kabeer, 2000**), even if it has to be nuanced. In addition, gender stereotypes also overlooked disparities that go beyond gender relations, such as age, class or race (**White, 2000**).

Hence, the active involvement of men in projects aiming to improve gender equalities could imply a relief for women of the sole responsibility for altering gender relations and make male subjectivity more complex by not focusing only in the instances of power but also in the vulnerabilities to which they were exposed to, which deserve consideration in development strategies. Moreover, the implication of men could benefit both genders, for instance, by reducing domestic violence, if men were to be supported with a public attention as well (**Proudlock, 2003-2004**).

However, despite the importance of avoiding essentialist gender dualisms, an agency-approach too strong in affirming women’s and men’s subjectivities would risk to promote a passive acceptance of non-equitable power relations that are indeed adverse for women. Such could be the result of a substitution of the women-based focus by an exclusive male-based focus, disregarding once more the need to account for gender as a result of interactions. Another cause for concern would be the assumption of an exhaustion of women’s role in development, misinterpreting the need to “bring men in” (**White, 2000:35**).

Both remarks attest that although the concept of “gender” as socially constructed and fluid was supposedly consolidated, hegemonic dualisms that essentially oppose women and men still persist and inform practices and policies (**Proudlock, 2003-2004**). In this sense, current scholarship has not presented much novelty in terms of the development of “new” notions, because the “old” ones are still pertinent to explain the phenomena over scrutiny and even need to be reinforced. Yet, exactly the continuous exercise of revisiting familiar mechanisms, made the room for new themes to be examined, themes that were, overall, out of the scope of gender analysis, despite their critical value to development strategies.

There is an overall trend in gender and development literature to specialize, what entails shifts in levels of analysis that open the possibility to a more diverse research agenda. Criticism on the basic conceptual tools of GAD to ensure that they would serve to understand cross-cutting

factors of disadvantages (including gender but also race, class, caste and age, for instance, which together would cause poverty and social exclusion) (**Editorial G&D, 2000**), put forward the various ways gender itself can be experienced beyond sex-determination, what valorized the experience of many individuals that could finally be recognized as the subjects that they are, as it was the case of many women.

Under this framework, it was then possible to account also for accumulated vulnerabilities, resulted from the interaction of factors such as gender and age. Despite the fact that many developing countries are “growing old before growing wealthy” (**Vera-Sanso and Sweetman, 2009: 365**), well-being in later life has not pictured as an elemental developing issue, and has been mostly disregarded as well in terms of strategies for poverty alleviation and gender equality. Yet, the United Nations Population Fund has stated that women live more than men in most developing countries and constitute over 60% of people aged 80 and over (**Vera-Sanso and Sweetman, 2009: 365**), what certainly should be considered in development strategies. This is especially because, in a context of poverty and limited social provision, gender and age intersect in complex ways that end up adding vulnerability to an already deprived population (for instance, with the effects of widowhood or reduced mobility) (**Vera-Sanso and Sweetman, 2009**). On this regard, intersectional research could inform a richer and more precise policy agenda, unfolding hidden crucial priorities.

However, the advances that such nuanced perspectives brought about seemed meaningless in comparison to the force recovered by gendered structural processes before times of crisis, such as this of 2008. In this context, it was once again emphasized the need to make women able to access more rentable and more secure forms of employment. Still, contrary to traditional thinking that had difficulty in encompassing simultaneous strategies that could overpass the time limits of a critical situation (what prevented the design of measures that could project a different outcome despite the need to attend present demands), before the 2008 crisis, this parallel means was suggested. This concomitant argument recognized the urgency to change the overall mentality and making men (and society as a whole) participant on care work, which always had been a burden carried mostly by women.

In addition to crisis-gendered analysis, contemporary research has also been concerned with the role of media in shaping attitudes and beliefs (**Hoare, 2007**) that influence the configuration of gender roles likewise. Even though the media has more often served to reinforce conservative agendas, Hoare stressed the potential it has to challenge existing power relations. While reputation is an important variable to secure political positions, media plays an important role in holding governments accountable to democratic ideals of transparency and “good governance” and also in sensitizing public opinion to human rights issues, in which gender equality and equity are concerned. The women rights’ movement has seen media as a platform for the achievement of rights themselves and, consequently, for development (**Joseph, 2006**). Nevertheless, while the

media is usually associated with the consolidated power, its role has been overall neglected by development actors (**Hoare, 2007**).

In any case, the debate on media is closely related to a broader phenomenon that has been mobilized as a powerful mechanism to scale up the results of power distribution: globalization. On the one hand, globalization era is depicted as one of increasing human exploitation and environmental degradation but, on the other hand, also one of opportunities, which mostly come from the networked dimension boosted by such global process. However, these opportunities are most limited by the positions that the earlier system, marked by colonialism, had generated. It had configured current gender- and race-biased patterns of marginalization and poverty, which are important factors determining people's capacity to respond to the global change today. In this sense, policies that imply a move beyond patriarchal dividend, for instance, policies that overcome the verbal acknowledgement of the value of unpaid reproductive work, could be very supportive for those that had already come from below. In the meanwhile of the consideration of such redistributive policies, women will continue to face the structural and cultural barriers that hold them from taking advantage of the economic and political changes associated with globalization (**Editorial G&D, 2000**).

At the same time, the 21st century has also introduced to the vocabulary of gender studies the word "diversity". This notion emphasizes the understanding of poverty as a complex condition resulted from a combination of vulnerabilities and deprivations, by stressing its individual experience. Additionally, bringing about the importance of individuality, "diversity" also challenges the narrow biological interpretation of "gender". In this sense, it could be framed as the first evolution on concepts framed along gender and development scholarship, by questioning the assumption that all societies have two clear gender identities equivalent to two sexes. Putting forward the claims of gays, lesbians and other various individual gender definitions, "diversity" can be the first step to undress the agenda of GAD of its sex-bias. Besides, it revealed one more limit of GAD, which failed to consider prejudice against same-sex sexualities as critical to development (**Editorial G&D, 2000**).

Moreover, the scholarship born from GAD has also finally recovered the urgency in assessing gendered development issues where they have been mostly disregarded: urban areas. Although the majority of the world's poor are located in rural areas, "in many cases poor urban people are no better off than poor rural people" (**UNFPA, 2007:10**). Besides, as the intense urbanization in cities of the South proceeds, it is mostly likely that poverty will be mostly incident in urban areas, constituting an important characteristic to be accounted for by development strategies in the 21st century (**UNFPA, 2007**).

Within the particularities of urban poverty, an especially prominent role is played by conditions of tenure, services and housing, all of which refer to the currently dominating discussions on

“slums”⁸, which were the specific urban target of the MDGs, as mentioned before. Even though urban poverty is not a synonym of slum dwelling, the fact that poor urban women are substantially housed in slum neighborhoods advocates for the pertinence of considering the intersections between these issues with the gender dimension in urban development agenda, once it is another very particular aspect of the urban poverty phenomenon and, at the same time, differentiates women urban poor from their rural counterparts (**Chant, 2007**).

First, poor urban women are more likely to rely on the wage economy than on self-provisioning through subsistence provision, what increases their dependence and vulnerability, especially when they are engaged on informal employment. Besides, given that poor urban women also have to cope with the precariousness of living in slums, where the effort to maintain the household is greater, their increasing involvement in the wage economy simply adds to their overload. Also, poorer urban than rural women may live in hostile physical environments, exposed to geological and environmental risks. Additionally, they are more at risk of gender-based violence. But all these factors gain in importance, when considered that increasingly greater numbers and proportions of women are living in urban areas relative to men (**Chant, 2007**), what urges the need for not only a gender-sensitive development agenda but, above all, a gender-sensitive urban development agenda.

There is little doubt, then, that the third MDG, as originally constituted, is unlikely to go far in addressing gender inequalities, because it disregards a crucial aspect that is the spatiality where these disparities are mostly concentrated: the towns and cities of the Global South (**Chant, 2007**). An important occasion for advocacy of gender-responsiveness in urban development at the international level will come up over the next months when the SDGs will be agreed at the UN General Assembly to succeed the MDGs (**Brouder and Sweetman, 2015**). Still, it is important to understand how this debate has evolved throughout time in order to grasp the extent to which it represents a novelty, since poverty was once mostly concentrated in rural areas (with these, therefore, representing much more a challenge for development), or the extent to which it has been just largely neglected at the expense of a large parcel of the population that was abandoned, suffering with the overlooked negative effects of gender-blindness.

1.4 Gender and Development in Urban Areas

The fact that gender is not easily integrated in development thinking is even clearer when the urban lenses are put on. The urban realm has predominantly been treated in more physical and spatial terms, usually associated with men’s domains, such as planning, engineering, economics and public administration, framing social sector issues, such as health, education, employment and social welfare more often as national-level sectorial concerns (**Moser and Peake, 1996**).

⁸ According to the UN-Habitat (website), a slum household is a household that lacks any of the five following elements: access to improved water; access to improved sanitation; security of tenure; durability of housing; and sufficient living area.

There is much more availability of research that include reflections on women incidentally than urban-specific research that indeed face the challenge of discussing the intersection of gender and the urban.

In the 1950s and 1960s urban research was centered in comprehending the patterns and processes of urban growth resulted from the “modernization” development model. Most of the works produced during these years have little consideration to social relations, except those that discussed rural-urban migration and the resulting issues raised from integration and assimilation processes. Nevertheless, mostly because the rural gender divisions of labor were the determinant factor to configure migration patterns, this patriarchal social organization excluded women also from urban research (**Moser and Peake, 1996**).

Once again, it was Ester Boserup (**1970**) who focused her attention in women’s place in urban dynamics, noting that women struggled to live in a male’s world or, in other words, how a full-fledged urban citizenship was conditioned to the participation in the labor market, which was so far essentially masculine. This work was way less celebrated than her rural research, which addressed the invisibility of women’s contribution to development, a reasoning much appropriated by WID advocates as a political strategy to sensitize authorities for women’s claims. This finding reinforces the stereotype that prevented women to be equally inserted in society.

In this work, Boserup recognized West African cities as displaying of exceptional urban semi-male social structures, highlighting the participation of women in retail trade. Yet, she emphasized that the modernization process is advantageous for men in such a way that to women are left the more traditional activities, what prevent them from accessing certain shares of urban job markets, which are reserved to men.

Closer to the 1970s, the approaches that appeared followed different foci according to the global area they were dedicated to, varying in a scale that positioned women between the “who waits” and the “who migrates”. Several works were dedicated once again to West Africa (**Little, 1965**) and among them Gluger’s emblematic *Women stay on farm no more*, which underlined West African different migration patterns.

These new scholarship gave more space to gender-specific debates in urban environment, being dedicated to study women’s invisibility as male-follower migrants, but also to the changes in family relationships and the autonomy and independence of women in urban environment (**Anaf, 1986**). Yet, urban policies did not reflect this progress, because, once oriented by a more liberal perspective, disengaged local authorities with social needs, while forcing individuals to rely on an their own efforts in the market place to secure well-being. Women were directly identified with their reproductive roles and, therefore, were targeted as beneficiaries of many top-down development projects that provided food aid and implemented family planning strategies and disseminated measures against malnutrition (**UNICEF, 1985**).

Meanwhile, another branch of literature explained the limits of the modernization development model, mostly regarding its deployment in “underdeveloped and developing countries”. Many reforms that were introduced with the objective to generate significant increases in overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with an expectation to equally boost development and individual income, failed to produce such results at the same time that poverty and unemployment rates were increasing. The works anchored in this framework were mostly gender-blind, once their primary concern was more a political one of understanding urban dysfunctions as a result of these structural economic changes, many times relying on the “urban bias” already introduced. Nevertheless, the politicization of urban problems put forward the role of local actors in the process of urbanization, advocating for a wider political agenda that would not only include infrastructure provision and industrial support, but also strategies for job creation and for supplying common goods and services.

Within this scenario, it is important to highlight the impact of International Labor Organization’s (ILO) and the World Bank’s policy planning in urban policy research agenda. ILO full employment policies shed lights on the researches about the informal sector⁹, that shifted the concerns with employment itself to the actual working conditions, or in other words, to underemployment.

ILO surveys, mostly conducted in large-scale enterprises, did not identify women’s work (**Moser, 1984**). It was only with the combined influence of the Women Decade (1975-1985) and the second wave of feminism that gender was more discussed in urban research and it became clear that women had a very significant role in the informal sector, which functioned as the main source of income for many of them and for their dependents.

However, when these findings were translated into policies, most of what explained women subordination, especially the division of labor within the household, was not addressed. In the end, women were targeted as a separate category and the development measures to increase their employability and income-generation options reinforced their gender roles while being concentrated in gender-specific occupations, which, in the most cases, were not able to empower them. These policies were framed as WID strategies that aimed to increase productivity at traditional activities rather than diversifying job offers, what could actually challenge gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, in the late 1980s, the focus shifted from income generating projects to micro-enterprises, with research and policy focused especially on training and women’s access to credit (**Berger and Buvinic 1989**). Moreover, gender-disaggregated employment statistics were finally produced.

With the global debt crisis and the recession of the 1980s, research on urban development were dominated by the understanding of this situation and the associated macro-economic reforms of structural adjustment put forward by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank

⁹ Term coined by the British anthropologist Keith Hart in his 1971 study of low-income activities among unskilled migrants from Northern Ghana to the capital city, Accra, who could not find wage employment (Hart ,1973).

to assist economies to recover. Feminist approaches accused these same strategies of having adverse effects on women, once structural adjustment policies (SAPs) would carry a “male bias” (**Moser, 1992**). Such critics generated another branch of studies that concentrated in identifying women’s strategies to survive in the male-dominated urban environment, a breakthrough in research frameworks that subverted the usual “top-down” policy analysis to a “bottom-up” approach (**Moser and Peake, 1996**). A chief contributor to this scholarship was the research and policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)¹⁰, which intrinsically carried the empowering ideology put forward by the methodological shift while being itself the reunion of informal workers organizations, researchers and practitioners from development agencies.

Although the unfolding of all this academic debate have spread the use of “gender” as a concept in political discourse in different power-scale arenas, its applied presence in policy and planning tools is still very limited, even with the growing importance of some organizations (such as WIEGO itself and the Self-Employed Women’s Association – SEWA, in India) in the advocacy work for a change. In a lot of cases, “gender” indistinctly substitutes the word “sex”, or, better saying, “women”, so that policies usually are based in a WID approach that does not achieve to subvert the essence of stereotyped social roles that subordinate them.

1.5 Gender and Development: the African Debate

African gender studies have also stressed the paradoxical uses that the word “gender” has, especially in dominant discourses: all the effort implied in the development of the concept is lost when the socially constructed notion is unthinkingly replaced by the biologically determined category that is supposedly overcome. However, they recognize that this is not a privilege of studies on Africa, but an overall trend. What African researchers criticize the most though is the supposed “richness” of the understanding of African continent – with several researches conducted there - when, in fact, most studies are not centered in African experiences, but only use Africa as a means for articulating Western concerns and modes of understanding (**Oyewumi, 2005**). Therefore, this scholarship urges for studies of Africa in its own terms, or bringing it to the gender debate, to “decolonize feminism” (**Lazreg, 2005**).

Even if academic feminists have denounced the limited reasoning in mainstream studies that reduced women to a singular dimension - this of reproduction and housework - when they approached “African women”, in a lot of cases, they have applied the same simplified logic that they had fought against (**Lazreg, 2005**). This realization was also representative in the feminist movement, when minority women recognized that their identification with middle-class white women’s demands could be as limited as with men’s, deciding to drop out the first wave.

¹⁰ Refer to <http://www.wiego.org>

In the academic realm, labels such as “African women”, “women of color” and “Third World women” have mostly contributed to reproduce social prejudices that only condemned these same women to their subordination, instead of leading to emancipation. When interpreting the reality of this women, most of the approaches ended up erasing the subjectivity behind them and generating an abstract study object categorized as the “oppressed”. Therefore, the analysis resulted from such definitions were not much compromised with the comprehension of the singular social mechanisms and relations that constitute the subjectivity of their “objects”, because they focused in revealing the causes of the “oppression”. Paradoxically, the language that would supposedly carry the means for empowerment actually made use of the same terms that constructed gender subordination at the first place (**Lazreg, 2005**).

Social relations in Africa today result from the combination of at least two factors. First, they are the consequence of the penetration of international parameters through economic and political relationships every since the slave trade and colonialism until the neocolonial links. Secondly, they still relate to all the indigenous African social norms that regulate local ways of living. In this sense, the position of women in contemporary Africa is, to the same extent, the intertwined expression of global influences and local culture. In any case, the problems they face are bound up in the wider African struggle for transformation in both national and international spheres (**Pala, 2005**).

Hence, there is a problem in the notion of “integration of women in development” put forward by the United Nations and largely adopted by international aid agencies supported by many academics because, once they disregard how gender relations are established in these countries as well as the local notions of “development”, they are not able to entail policy agendas that can cope with the issues of these societies and, at the same time, to promote real changes. For instance, if African women have been active in the provisioning of their families, it is not possible to conclude that they have been completely excluded from development or from socioeconomic exchanges (**Pala, 2005**). Therefore, many programs that would have the “good intention” of “including” women, when abruptly disarranging these social structures, could generate reverse effects.

From this finding, is asserted the need to be engaged with development priorities as the locals feel them. Under this perspective, what is interesting to notice is that, maybe because of the singular configuration that African socioeconomic structure generates, most of the concerns of gender advocates in Africa had been rarely framed as feminism per se, as in many “Northern countries”, but much more motivated by economic and political considerations. This could explain why, along the last decades, African women’s organizations have been advocating for gender equality by supporting measures to secure employment and training (**Pala, 2005**).

Hence, despite the intrinsic value of the objects of these claims that were already present in dominant discourses, they deserve a more important place in policy agenda exactly because they correspond to the demands of the public to whom the policies must be designed. Here, once

more, it is justified the choice of examining these tools as keys to gender sensibility in African urban development. The following pages are dedicated to the analysis of gender-specific training and employment policies in Abidjan as well as the contextual settings that oriented their modeling, in an attempt to evaluate the extent to which African urban development is embracing gender concerns.

2. Gender-sensitiveness in the development of Abidjan: an encompassed concern?

2.1 Urbanization in Côte d'Ivoire

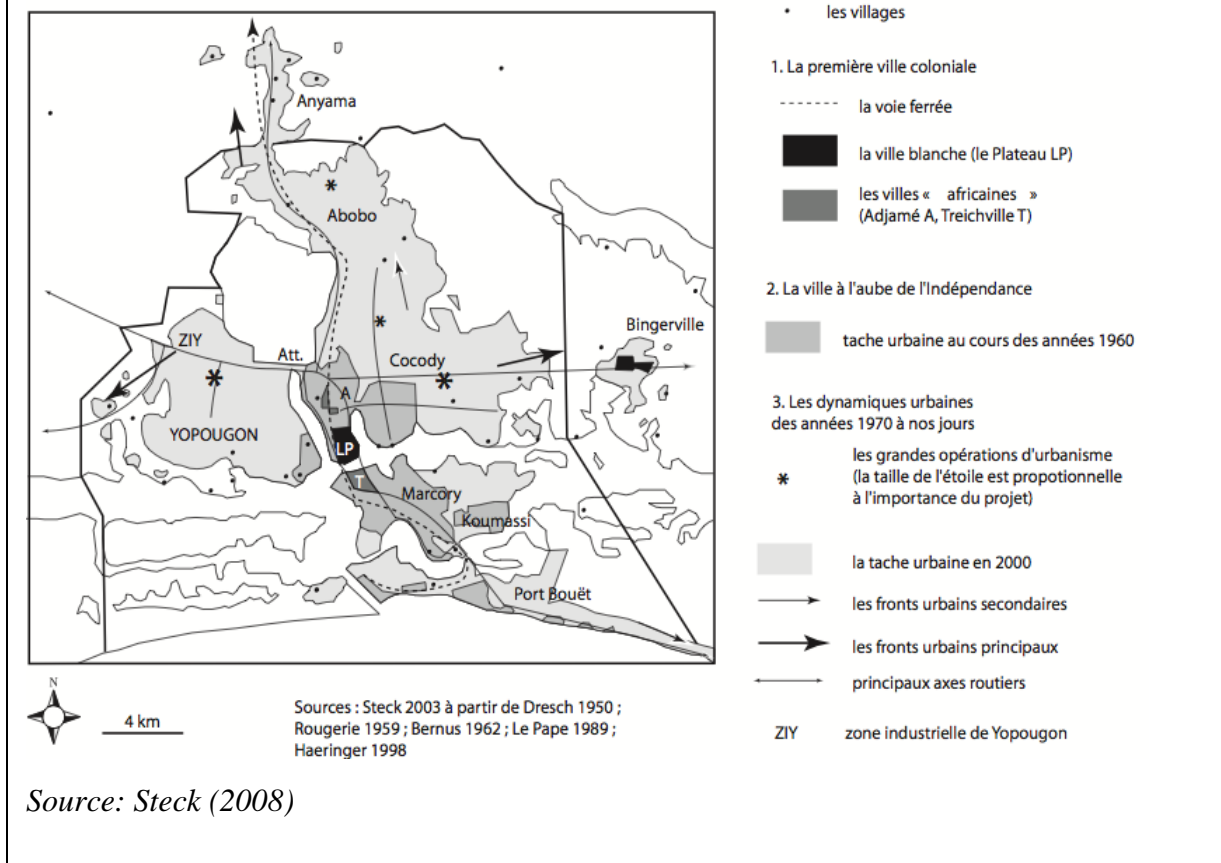
In the 1950s, still under colonial rule, Côte d'Ivoire lived a very important phase of its history and its economic and social development, mostly associated with the inauguration of Abidjan's port in 1951, which boosted local economic activity. It is in this context that the State conceived an urbanization plan for the city, aiming to optimize the possibilities of use of the urban space to foster its development and, more than that, to make Abidjan the major pole of Ivorian territorial development.

As the Ivorian capital at the time, Abidjan attracted an important amount of migrants, both coming from other regions and from neighboring countries that had always suffered with political instability differently from Côte d'Ivoire. Consequently, the city's population grew in an exponential rate, passing from 46,000 inhabitants in 1948 to 904,000 in 1975 and overcoming 1,400,000 already in 1980¹¹. However, despite the city's primacy to economic growth, it was not structured to cope with the speed and intensity of its expansion, generating a series of problems, such as the general exhaustion of urban equipment, environmental issues, rising unemployment rates and recrudescence of criminality.

The urban tissue in itself, in terms of its architectural plan and of its functions, was not designed to accommodate this growing population and its needs. Designed during colonial times, Abidjan had its urban functions mostly concentrated in some privileged quartiers (the "ville blanche" or "le Plateau"), while the popular quartiers (the "villes africaines": Treichville and Adjamé) were, on the contrary, under-equipped, lacking the elements of a "modern" socioeconomic infrastructure. The accelerated population growth generated the urbanization of new areas around this original node, composing an urban tissue particularly disarticulated, a juxtaposition of some specialized quartiers (industrial and residential zones) and insalubrious habitat zones. The colonial-planned urban functions have burst and the vast majority of the population lives today in quartiers that are also physically segregated from the main land by the water of the lagoons (Gibbal, 1974).

¹¹ Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat, 1980.

Figure 1: Abidjan's urban growth



What is remarkable in all this urbanization process is the complete negligence towards feminine migration, probably based in the common sense that automatically identifies urban migration essentially with young men looking for jobs. The associated literature that studied rural-urban migration either completely disregarded women or considered them as marginal migrants, who were not participants of the main phenomenon. Women that arrived to the city were framed as “passive” migrants, as if their mobility was completely related to the mobility of their respective male relatives, were they husbands, fathers or uncles. Besides, social and cultural structures could have actually determined a minor – or “passive” - feminine flow, on the one hand, because the urban job market was favorable to men’s employability and, on the other hand, because traditional gender relations did not valorize the migration of a woman out of her traditional roles of following the male and maintaining the family (**Comoe, 2005**). The social structure in rural areas framed women as genetic capital related to their reproductive function, as economic capital resulted from their work in the familial agricultural property and also as social capital, since men, having a wife, could benefit their social status and reinforce their relations network (**Ouattara, 2003**). Therefore, having women on their own meant both an unbalance in this social structure and a loss in overall capital accumulation.

Despite this oversight, after the 1980s, studies have revealed the numeric importance of feminine migration in comparison with men's as well as of autonomous feminine migration. In Côte d'Ivoire, between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, women actually represented 63% of the internal migration flows and 69% of the rural-urban migrants (**Bocquier et Traoré, 2000**), figures that, overcoming the 50% mark – especially in a country where demographic data revealed a minority of women (47.9% woman population in 1989, according to World Bank data), testified for the existence of autonomous women migrants. Nonetheless, the importance of the recognition of these numbers is not merely the breaking of this myth per se but also its unfolding. If in the social imaginary, a “passive migrant” represents a “passive” citizen or, more than that, not even a citizen, revealing the active position of women as migrants is, at the same time, affirming the active role they perform in the urban environment and, above all, manifesting their right to the city¹². This is because while the urban space is conceptualized in its economic function, a full-fledged citizenship is conditioned to productivity. In this sense, understanding what is the social role of women in Abidjan is completely related to finding the economic and political structures that base or can base gender sensitiveness within urban development.

2.2 Social role of Abidjanian women

In Côte d'Ivoire, despite the limits imposed by traditional social relations and the pressures and prejudices that came along with them, women have engaged in personal initiatives to migrate by themselves from the villages, on the search of more opportunities to construct their individual identities and to conquer economic independence that would allow them to ameliorate their living conditions. Many women gave this step out of the village and aspired the construction of an autonomous subjectivity through individual conducts, therefore, individualizing conducts (**Ouattara, 2003**). Nonetheless, what was exceptional in their strategies was not only their rupture with the expected social behavior and dominant rules of their origins, but, above all, how most of these autonomous migration flows were oriented towards urban centers, as if the city already occupied a privileged space in women's (and even social) imaginary for individual affirmation and for economic success. One could think that due to their very determined social role in the villages women would prevent themselves from assuming their individuality, but, in fact, at some point, they decided to challenge traditional patterns and the education within which they were raised with a more solid certainty – swallowed also by a large portion of hope – that the city had the space for them, the chance they were ready to assume. More than any other urban center in the country, it was Abidjan, the economic capital, which received as a primary

¹² Right to the city as proposed by Henri Lefebvre in 1968's *Le droit à la ville* and described by David Harvey as follows: “the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. (...) The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights”. Harvey, David (2003). The right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27 : 939-941.

destination these female migrants, much because it was pictured as this favorable land for the achievement of diverse aspirations (**Ouattara, 2003**).

Researches' findings (**Ouattara, 2003**) stressed that such aspirations had a stronger social than economic component, because the motivations for leaving the village were more often based in the possibility to escape from the burdens that the traditional society imposed to these women. They usually mentioned the precarious conditions in agriculture work, issues with their partners and a desire of changing their lives as the most important mobilizing factors to the decision of migrating. Besides, because the village gender role for women was very deterministic and restricted to being a "wife" and a "mother", the act of migrating was mostly possible for women who were not still married, who had separated or who were already widows and translated their desire to freedom, to disengage from the obligations so-deeply experienced by each of these women. Furthermore, migrating was directly associated with the individual movement they started in order to conquer a new social status: this of a city citizen.

Most of Ivorian female migrants installed themselves in the popular quarters of Abidjan, notably Youpougon, Abobo and Adjamé. Arriving there, the insertion of these migrants was done in three main steps: the welcoming, the economic insertion and the social insertion (**Ouattara, 2003**). The welcoming was usually done with the help of a relative, but it was very soon that women realized how restrained this help could actually be, because the relatives themselves did not have the means to sustain one more person with their household revenues. From the need to contribute to the maintenance of the household or to leave it, it came the urgency of finding a job, once the resources it could generate not only gave them the conditions to take care of themselves but seemed also to mean the full belonging in the environment where they were living. Once again, they might have been supported by relatives in this task, but also their personal initiatives contributed a lot for their success. The next level, their social insertion, depended a lot on how they were economically inserted to the extent that, while the city was a privileged spatiality for individuality, it functioned with very fragile social ties: not many people would come in their rescue or were willing to help. When women acquired a more stable economic position that diminished the visibility of their lacks, it was actually when more social relations were developed and when they became more part of the community. This was when society could not see them as aid demanders anymore.

Already in the 1930s women could be seen in the streets of Abidjan trying to find their space on them. Coming from rural areas, illiterate and with no professional experience to this urban center, which was not still very dynamic and which, furthermore, was designed to receive male workforce, women could not be easily absorbed in the job market and, therefore, have concentrated their activities in the illegal commerce of products, such as the palm wine. Nevertheless, these commercial activities have brought about a process of learning and social innovation that, despite many attempts of intervention, public authorities have not succeeded in suppressing. The emergence of these illegal small businesses represent the configuration of a

whole field of economic exchanges which sustain and is sustained essentially by women in Abidjan (**Le Pape, 1997**).

Between the two great wars, these (predominantly) feminine urban practices affirmed their place in the city. Little by little, through the daily action in these small businesses, women gained the experience both to operate them and to negotiate the borders of illegality with public authorities. They learned the value of reputation, of being accessible and visible for selling more and they had to experiment different strategies to avoid the risks related to their commerce, protecting as much as they could their goods from apprehension and defending themselves against physical violence (**Le Pape, 1997**). Such threatening practices were performed in a daily basis by local authorities to recuperate from women space in the urban tissue where they were never meant to be, both for not being allowed in terms of zone planning and legal rights and, above that, for being women. The public space was supposed to be a male realm.

In the end of the 1970s, the status of women in Ivorian society was brought in a very intense public debate, especially after the year of women in 1976, which had been a major ideological event in the country. Many aspects such as domestic cooperation, women's economic autonomy and masculine supremacy have been raised and, together with some ideas came from Northern feminist streams, had a significant impact, even for the production of social statistics of the time. Until then, it has been said that the data produced concerning women's employment was biased, because interviewers mostly disregarded many economic activities performed by these women, such as the ones involved in the management of the households (**Le Pape, 1997**).

After these long debates, all the data basis confirmed the growing importance of women both for urban and for households' economy. "The examples of women who have known, notably in semi-urban areas, how to conquer an important and independent economic position starts to be less rare, and these examples prove the absurd of some positions assumed (that claimed the lack of reliability of women)" ¹³. Between 1979 and 1992, the rate of women's remunerated activity raised from 38% to 47% in Côte d'Ivoire while men's diminished from 74% to 52%. At the same time, the rate of women's artisanal or commercial activity grew from 33% to 41% while men's shrank from 59% to 29% (**Le Pape, 1997**).

These statistics also exposed the double impact of 1980s economic crisis combined with the proposed structural adjustment programs over waged employment. Because these positions were mostly occupied by men, they were the ones that seemed to be most affected within such context. What was named "the informal economy" completely changed the limits of the urban job market, especially in a gender perspective, since women, being excluded from the formal

¹³ « Les exemples de femmes qui ont su, notamment en milieu semi-urbain, conquérir une position économique importante et indépendante, commencent à ne plus se faire rares, et ces exemples démontrent l'absurdité de telles positions de principe (qui prétendent au manque de fiabilité des femmes » Ousmane Diarra "La femme et le développement", Abidjan, Ministère du Plan, 1975.

networks, were nonetheless the main actors of the informal ones, with continuous activity even during those years.

Massive layoffs pulled men's remunerated activity down. But women, hearing that their colleagues were managing by themselves their own rentable initiatives in urban markets, continued migrating to the city (**Ori, 1998**). At the same time, women kept their small businesses running. As informal workers, they were continuously challenged by the changes in the business environment, in such a way that, even if they failed many times, they still would not prevent themselves from trying to adapt to the new circumstances. These women were not trained to drive their business to the right sense whenever an external shock hit them, but they were used to just change. Their activities would vary according to fashion, according to the product, according to market conditions, according to the seasons but, above all, according to the rhythm of opportunities and the alternation of successful and unsuccessful attempts (**Ori, 1998**). These factors combined were what inflated their remunerated activity rate even within the crisis.

However, it is very far from reality to use these figures to state that women were unaffected in this period or that they achieved a privileged position in their relationship with men. Indeed, feminine initiatives were more consolidated and became an essential factor of Abidjan's life, creating spaces of sociability, feeding the majority of city's inhabitants and, in a gender point of view, reclaiming different habits than those dominant in the marriage model (**Le Pape, 1997**). Yet, in fact, women continued to be deprived, their no-stopping activities just attesting how much women relied on them to survive in the urban environment. Women did not have the option to be unemployed and also had very limited employment options, performing activities that required limited resources, such as this of food trade. Younger girls could also work as housemaids, but it did not change the precarious employment conditions they were submitted to. Once more, the opportunities open to them were very restricted to the roles they were already performing in the rural areas: these of nutrition providers and house-keepers (**Ouattara, 1997**).

In Abidjan, despite the singular importance of the socioeconomic role hold by women, they are still predominant in the most vulnerable groups. The young girls are engaged earlier in domestic and economic occupations and this only reproduce a deep historical gender inequality in terms of access to education and, consequently, to more secure positions in the job market. Furthermore, the education rate is even lower in the households headed by a female artisan or street-seller (**Le Pape, 1997**). In order to understand these socially constructed disadvantages it is, therefore, relevant to understand the real consequences that SAPs had to women in Côte d'Ivoire.

2.3 Structured Adjustment Programs and women in Côte d'Ivoire

The Ivorian economy after independence was overall based on the agricultural sector - mostly on the production of cocoa and coffee – and, as such, was exposed to risks, being so closely tied to the fluctuation in world market prices for agricultural products. After two decades of strong growth, the regular renegotiation of the external debt, the State's payment of arrears to

enterprises and the reduction of the purchase price to coffee and cocoa farmers were signs of the financial crisis. Yet, it was, above all, the shock in the production apparatus that allowed to diagnose the national economy with the effects of the “Dutch disease”, which immersed the country in a very severe crisis from which it struggled to get out (**Kponhassia, 2002**).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank proposed a structural adjustment program (SAP) to Côte d’Ivoire, a neoliberal policy strategy that was supposed to help many African countries at the time to face the serious socioeconomic impact that the crisis had been imposing to them. The program comprised: the opening up of the market, cost sharing in hospitals and schools, privatization of government services to reduce public expenditure, retrenchment of workers in both public and private sectors as well as the liberalization of exchange rates (**Kinyanjui, 2014**). If on the one hand, the economic conditions of rural populations had already been deteriorated with the destabilization of agriculture, what led to massive rural-urban migration flows, on the other hand, such measures implemented with the SAP deepened poverty also in urban areas, once it provoked massive closures of import substituting industries and lay-offs, both in private and public sectors.

Contrary to the expected, the overall impact of SAP was to force many people to seek livelihood in economic informality (**Kinyanjui, 2014**), which had also been the destiny of the rural migrants. The combination of economic crisis and restructuring have also created further obstacles for women more than men in terms of livelihood resources, living standards and conditions and access to alternative labor or employment opportunities. Women who were in formal employment were concentrated in the government sector and, due to the strategy of reduction of public costs, were the first ones to be cut down, because they were still occupying mostly the low skilled jobs, considered more “dispensable”. Thereon, these women found shelter in the informal economy, but certainly suffering with the social demotion. Women who were already informal operators also had their position threatened as the number of informal workers increased in the city. Even with their experience in Abidjan’s streets, they were now submitted to the constant dispute of places in which they could carry out their trades and, at the same time, were more exposed to the conflicts with the city administration itself, which perceived hawkers as partly responsible for the increased criminal activity as much as for the disorder in the city (**Kinyanjui, 2014**).

Unfortunately, these were not the only negative effects of the SAP on Ivorian women. The liberalization of economy, by removing subsidies, played a very important role in increasing prices for consumer goods, therefore affecting food prices. Once resources and food distribution within the households are unequal, female family members were most likely to be affected by a decline in food consumption because preference was given to adult males (**Ali, 2003**).

Besides, cutbacks in government expenditure were responsible for the creation of constraints in the provision of social services, leading to a decline in social welfare. Being women already among the most disadvantaged groups in terms of access to such services, their situation was

even more sensitive (Ali, 2003). Cuts in health sector, for example, implied an alarming increasing rate of maternal health issues. Once again, different studies have shown that when households have to spend money for medical care which is difficult to afford, it is more likely to be spent on the men and boys, than on women and girls (Ali, 2003). Considering education, the decline in public investment resulted in increased private costs of schooling, what constituted a disincentive to the education of children, with still a greater negative impact on girls' education (Ali, 2003). The already existing disadvantages for girls entering the labor market were then accentuated, reinforcing a vicious circle of women's involvement in less productive and worse paid jobs and occupations. Furthermore, the cuts in social services provided by the State have also increased women's workload. On the one hand, they made more women involve themselves in income-generating activities to supplement their household revenues but, on the other hand, their domestic role received an extra push, transferring the responsibilities of the State (specially in terms of healthcare, education and adequate nutrition) to women's shoulders (Ali, 2003).

On the wake of the second World's Women Conference in Nairobi in 1985, DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women Network) organized a workshop critical to the process of SAP, under a feminist perspective. In this workshop it was pointed how undemocratically these policy packages have been imposed to the indebted countries, being restrictive to the participation of grassroots poor people, particularly women. This argument was reinforced with the recognition of the impact of such policies on these groups, both intensifying chronic poverty and pushing people below the poverty line (Ali, 2003).

2.4 Political crisis and women in Côte d'Ivoire

“Promoting gender equality and reducing gender disparities are major development issues in my country, Côte d'Ivoire, as they are unfortunately in many other countries. The problem of inequality between men and women and the persistence of gender disparities in the actions of public, social, economic and cultural life in Côte d'Ivoire was probably exacerbated by the crisis that the country has crossed between 2000 and 2010.

To the difficulties of structural order that already limited access of women to decision-making were added other problems related to the conflict's conjuncture that had reinforced the weaknesses, multiplied the risks and undermine even more our systems. Once again, it is women and girls who have paid a heavy price for the crisis. Yet, as paradoxical as it may seem, it was during the crisis that women positioned themselves on the national scene.”¹⁴

¹⁴ « La promotion de l'égalité entre les sexes et la réduction des disparités de genre constituent des enjeux majeurs de développement de mon pays, la Côte d'Ivoire, comme ils le sont dans bien d'autres pays, malheureusement. La problématique de l'inégalité entre homme et femme et la persistance des disparités de genre constatées dans les actes de la vie politique, sociale, économique et culturelle en Côte d'Ivoire, a sans doute été exacerbée par la crise que le pays a traversée, entre 2000 et 2010.

It was on the 24th December 1999 that Côte d'Ivoire broke the hitherto fasting of coups d'état, an exceptional status among its neighboring countries - Burkina Fasso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Mali - all of which had experienced the harsh consequences of such political instability to socio-economic development. So far, the country had been living in relative domestic peace and economic prosperity, welcoming foreign investors and workers and, therefore, becoming one of the most known destinations for migrants and refugees in West Africa. Surpassing the general elections programmed for October 2000, the putsch hit the Ivorian nation, spurring deep and contrasting feelings within different social groups (**Le Pape et Vidal, 2003**).

Although unprecedented, the political situation deployed with the coup was not unimagined. Since 1993, the difficult succession of president Felix Houphouet-Boigny signaled political tensions that could, sooner or later, implode in tenser unfolding. According to the Constitution, the successor of the President in case of death, demission or absolute impediment should be the President of the National Assembly - Henri Konan Bédié by that time. However, the Prime Minister Alassane Dramane Ouattara had political ambitions, supported by the long-lasting executive functions that he had been exercising in the absence of Houphouet-Boigny along all his medical treatment (**Le Pape et Vidal, 2003**).

With Houphouet-Boigny's death, the struggle for political power was structured around three main groups: the legality group - supporting the application of the Law, Ouattara's supporters and the opposition. Before the risks to which the country was exposed having no one in control of the State, especially if lasting for longer, the legality group excelled (**Le Pape et Vidal, 2003**). Nevertheless, this nomination did not put an end to power contestation, and the 1999 coup d'état is the very proof of ongoing disputes and an unsatisfactory political scenario.

The composition of the transition government had dissatisfied several officers. At the same time, scenes of loot terrified the population, who started to doubt the capacity of the militaries to govern Côte d'Ivoire, once the mutineers had so much more presence in the political scenario. Not being able to take part of the government, the young revolutionaries reclaimed the compensation for their actions. While not satisfied with the augmentation in their revenues, they started racketeering, blackmailing economic operators etc. (**Le Pape et Vidal, 2003**).

After a month, the situation became critical when many operators left the country claiming insecurity, what implied the rising of the prices, especially for products of basic necessity such as

« Aux difficultés d'ordre structurelles qui limitaient déjà l'accès des femmes à la prise de décision, se sont ajoutées d'autres problèmes liés à la conjoncture du conflit qui ont renforcé les faiblesses, démultiplié les risques et affaibli plus encore nos systèmes. Une fois encore, ce sont les femmes et les jeunes filles qui ont payé un lourd tribut de la crise. Mais aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, c'est au cours de cette crise que les femmes se sont positionnées sur l'échiquier national. » Raymonde Goudou Coffie, Ministre de la Santé et de la lutte contre le SIDA de la République de Côte d'Ivoire to Huffington Post in 08/03/2015 « Mettre les femmes au cœur des actions de santé, un engagement en Côte d'Ivoire ».

food, fuel and transport. Little by little, an environment of war was established, disturbing the peaceful atmosphere in which Ivoirians lived after 40 years of their independence (**Le Pape et Vidal, 2003**).

A heterogeneous political environment came into place with the tensions between the military joint, the mutineers, as well as Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) and Rassemblement des Republicains de Côte d'Ivoire (RDR), which had broken their coalition agreement. Due to the ultra-nationalist propositions formulated by almost all the sub-commissions formed to write the new text of the Constitution and reinforced by the changing attitude of the president of the Comité National de Salut Public (CNSP) on the concept of "ivoirité", socio-political tensions were generated and marked the last months of the Bédié era. "Ivoirité" had been developed in the academia, but was appropriated by a large part of the population during the transition as a political weapon. This appropriation sparked ultra-nationalist sociopolitical positions and actions that pressured the relations between Côte d'Ivoire and the neighboring countries and put foreign migrants in danger. It was, at the same time, used to defend the primacy of the country's presidency to an Ivorian, with specific concern to the aspirations of Ouattara, who, for having foreign offspring, was identified with the adverse effects of international intervention in the country (**Le Pape et Vidal, 2003**).

The adoption of the new Constitution and the organization of the presidential elections in 2000, which brought to power the head of FPI Laurent Gbagbo, did not put an end into the political crisis that actually disrupted in a civil war in 2002, even after the successively attempts of national reconciliation. The crisis started with simultaneous attacks on military installations in Abidjan, Bouaké and Korhogo by soldiers organized in the Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) who protested against their planned demobilization early in 2003. Soon the conflicts generalized, with government opponents demanding the resignation of President Gbagbo, the holding of inclusive national elections, a review of the Constitution and an end to the domination of the southern in the affairs of the country. The conflict was further compounded by the emergence of new-armed groups, the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) (**MINUCI, 2004**). The official end of the war was declared in July 2003, leaving hundreds of people dead and up to 150,000 displaced¹⁵. Besides, the country was split in half, with the government taking control over the South and the rebels over the North, what had kept the tensions between the two sides and, in fact, also the continuous disruption of more localized inter-ethnic clashes (**EAAF, 2005**).

The economic cost of the civil war and the following conflicts was very high: the gross domestic product per person (GDP per capita) dropped 15% between 2000 and 2006, what, consequently, increased poverty rates. The impact in human development was equally strong and Côte d'Ivoire's rank in human development index dropped from 154 in 1999 to 166 in 2007 (**AWID**).

¹⁵ Data from EAAF 2005 Annual Report

Postponed several times, presidential elections took place in October 2010, presenting Ouattara, Bedié and Gbagbo as candidates, with the victory of the former announced by the Comité Electorale Independante (CEI). However, a few days later the Constitutional Council, headed by a close ally of Gbagbo, announced the overturned result, with the victory of the latter. Despite the official procedure disposed in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1765 that confirmed Ouattara as the winner, both politicians formed their governments, as Gbagbo refused to cede power. The financial pressure exerted by the international community also did not generated the expected outcomes and a military offensive was launched, finally arresting Gbagbo. The post-electoral violence, culminate point of 15 years of conflicts, left more than 3,000 deaths (**Wells, 2013**).

The consecutive crisis had an exceptional impact on Ivoirian women. First, because actions against them were actually used as tactics of the conflicts deployed in the country. Both armed forces and civilian rebels perpetrated sexual violence against women and girls, who found themselves susceptible to such practices due to the very weak legal and security structures existent in their support. In a period of 6 months during the post-electoral crisis about 150 women were raped (**Human Rights Watch, 2007**). Secondly, because the conflicts brutally exposed – and accentuated – their social vulnerability.

The crisis accelerated the impoverishment of the overall population in process at least since the economic downturn of the 1980s. The prices of essential products rose as a consequence of the production freeze, the transportation blockade and the interruption of international trade. In an interview given to the Association of Women's Rights in Development, Honorine Sadia Vehi Toure, president of the Ivorian NGO Generation Femmes du Troisième Millénaire stated:

“Market prices have soared so much that some essential products such as oil, sugar, meat and onions are difficult to obtain. This is a real hardship for households. Before the crisis, many female-headed households could only afford one meal a day, so one can only imagine how much more difficult it is now for those families. Everyone is suffering” (**AWID, 2011**).

This testimony puts bluntly the burden that the scarcity of basic necessity resources added to the poorest, among whom the majority were women. Besides, gender inequalities were also underlined with the fragility – or even the close off – of public services provision, such as access to drinking water, healthcare and schools, once, whenever available, they privileged men and boys. On the top of that, because many NGOs and organizations that operated in Côte d'Ivoire were struggling to maintain their activities due to the difficulty on receiving external funds since the punitive sanctions imposed on the country, even this source of assistance for women was scarce (**AWID, 2011**). Middle class women who were cut of their original networks and that could no longer perform their usual activities were among the main victims of the social demotion resulted from the war, what revealed gender vulnerabilities that were even transversal to social classes (**Levron, 2013**).

It was the post-electoral crisis, though, that had mostly exposed the Ivorian women. This crisis worked as a push to urbanization. The generalized forced displacements configured important migration flows to urban centers, comparable to the economic-motivated waves. Evidently, the city was still addressed as being the most dynamic environment in terms of employment opportunities, but it also represented a more ethnically diverse spatiality, what meant, somehow, a more secure spatiality in times of instability (**Levron, 2013**).

The post-electoral crisis has displaced about 1 000 000 people, from which 300 000 to 440 000 installed themselves in Abidjan, mostly in the communes of Abobo and Youpougon. As characteristic also of previous waves, women represented a very significant number among these migrants. They were escaping pillages, destruction and land appropriations that have affected the rather limited productive capital to which they had access to and, at the same time, they were, in innumerable cases, betting in the city's opportunities to cope with the responsibility of assuming the control of their families, due to the death of many men during the clashes (**Levron, 2013**).

It was mostly in urban areas, and specially in Abidjan, that government's aids to displaced persons were concentrated. Actually, the government and local authorities did play an important role on limiting the negative effects of the crisis, with targeted actions on re-housing and first necessity items. They managed the redistribution of these aids to people – a process that could potentially spark new conflicts - and restored little by little a relative security. In Abidjan, the mairie of each commune selected and coordinated “technical committees” that put in place the emergency projects, especially the monetary transfers. Composed of seven members that supposedly would represent the diversity of the communities, very often the committees included members of women groups (**Levron, 2013**). Moreover, along with their participation in collective mobilization, aid donors recognized the primacy of the Ivorian women in buying, preparing and distributing nutrition within households as well as in securing health and education.

Besides, these actions have indeed facilitated the mobility of goods and people, a basic step to recover livelihoods, especially among the Ivorian women who lived from commercial activities, depending on finding providers and spots to carry out their trade in each new locality they move to. However, very few internally displaced persons have benefited from means of professional insertion and promotion of livelihoods. The financial aid they received was insufficient to support the generation of economic activities and, hence, this government strategy was not sustainably designed to promoted financial autonomy. In the absence of capital to develop their productive activities, the single women could not think prospectively, but only on securing the daily subsistence of themselves and their families (**Levron, 2013**).

In fact, since the 1980s' crisis, Côte d'Ivoire was not being able to accumulate resources to invest in the formal sector and in waged job creation. Even more after the political crisis, the macro economy is based in the informal sector, which employs up to 90% of the population, but is less productive. Côte d'Ivoire reached 48.9% of poverty rate in data from 2008, with a higher

impoverishment rate of women, who, already in the end of the 1990s, were still mostly illiterate (70%), a significantly higher percentage in comparison to men's illiteracy (50%) **(Levron, 2013)**.

Even women with higher schooling attainments were not succeeding in finding decent employment¹⁶. The previously dynamic public sector, in 1998, employed only 4% of the population, out of which only 21% were women. The private sector, in turn, employed only 7% of women with waged jobs. In this sense, even if Abidjan managed to economically integrate the new inhabitants that it had received, still women were in disadvantage on the search for adequate jobs. In fact, 2011 data revealed that 64.4% of women were employed in precarious jobs **(Levron, 2013)**.

Thus, the combined context of successive violent conflicts and economic crisis indeed left women in a still more risky position in Côte d'Ivoire. However, many of them survived through the crisis, putting forward strategies that remarked their active role in Ivoirian society. Although particularly affected by recession, women developed pertinent adaptation strategies using their entrepreneurial dynamism in the informal sector to compensate gender-schooling inequalities and secure their livelihood. Even in the west rural zones, women played an important role in return movements, developing multiple small activities with the aim to reconstruct the villages. Furthermore, women were also crucial for the transitional peace progress in Côte d'Ivoire **(Levron, 2013)**.

In this sense, the impact of the Ivorian crisis on women was twofold: on the one hand, it did expose them to physical and social dangers but, on the other hand, this exposure was equally responsible for their own mobilization and for the projection of their elementary role in development, both in social and economic terms. The war changed gender relations because it put many more women in the head of households. Nonetheless, it is their activities as informal workers that supported this position and, at the same time, allowed them to affirm their place in the Ivorian society.

Even so, such position is still permeated by much vulnerability and poor women continue to have the most precarious livelihoods. In the reconstruction of Ivoirian economy and society women must be secured against any vulnerabilities as much as men and emerge as constructors of the new society, a society that is each day more based in cities, where women are key actors. Despite the evident weight of urban centers or, more precisely, Abidjan in the development of Côte d'Ivoire, policies are still lacking strategies to incorporate women's primordial local role and to promote it. Thereupon, the solution of Ivorian development challenge passes necessarily through the recognition of women informal workers in Abidjan.

¹⁶ According to ILO, a decent employment is the "possibility of having a productive and properly remunerated job, assured in terms of security at the work's place and of a social protection to the family. The decent employment opens to individuals the possibility of empowerment and social insertion, as well as of freedom of expression, of syndication and of personal autonomy. It also supposes an equal treatment to women and men".

3. Urban informality and women's subjectivity in development planning

3.1 Being in the center and still struggling to be

Generally speaking, in Abidjan, the socioeconomic position of women is closely related to the role they perform as informal workers. Thus, to understand the space women have in Abidjan's development it is essential to understand economic informality and women's participation in it. This is not an unnatural exercise, after all, as it will be addressed later, women represent a significant number of the city's informal workers and the informal economy is a cornerstone of urban economy in Côte d'Ivoire. Therefore, Ivorian urban development policies must integrate both informality and women, otherwise they neglect a significant part of local reality.

The concept of "economic informality" has been interpreted by a wide range of scholarship and it is essential to follow the evolvement of the conceptual debate in order to visualize the varied derivation of urban development policies addressed to it. In the 1970s, ILO launched the World Employment Program, a strategy to include the issue of employment generation in the center of national planning and development effort as a policy objective in itself. This strategy was constructed in opposition to the ones developed in the 1950s and the 1960s, which tried to apply the logics of Japanese and European reconstructions after Cold War in the "Third World". These latter were centered mostly in capital formation and export promotion, therefore understanding employment generation as a residual and eventual consequence of successful results in such efforts, what was visibly not the case in the "Third World", once unemployment rates there did not respond well to the investments on the generation of "modern sector" jobs. In the cadre of such Program, it took place the first comprehensive employment mission to Africa in Kenya in 1972, in which not only the concept of "informal sector" was coined but also guided the whole analysis of the country's employment situation (**Bangasser, 2000**).

In the report on Kenya, informal activities were defined as "primarily those of petty traders, street hawkers, shoeshine boys and other groups 'underemployed' on the streets of big towns" (**ILO, 1972:5**). Besides, the report suggested that "the bulk of employment in the informal sector, far from being only marginally productive, is economically efficient and profit-making, though small in scale and limited by simple technologies, little capital and lack of links with the other ('formal') sector" (**ILO, 1972:5**). It also added that "within the latter part of the informal sector are employed a variety of carpenters, masons, tailors and other tradesmen, as well as cooks and taxi-drivers, offering virtually the full range of basic skills needed to provide goods and services for a large though often poor section of the population" (**ILO, 1972:5**). Moreover, according to the report "informal activities are not confined to employment on the periphery of the main town, to particular occupation or even to economic activities. Rather, informal activities are the way of doing things, characterized by: ease of entry; reliance on indigenous resources; family ownership of enterprises; small scale of operation; labor-intensive and adapted technology; skills acquired outside the formal school system; and unregulated and competitive

markets” (ILO, 1972:6). At the same time, the report described their counterparts, formal-sector activities, characterized by: “difficult entry; frequent reliance on overseas resources; corporate ownership; large scale of operation; capital-intensive and often imported technology; formally acquired skills, often expatriate; and protected markets (through tariffs, quotas and trade licenses)” (ILO, 1972:6).

An equally precursor work on the “informal economy” was **Hart’s (1973)**, which relied on the concept to capture urban labor markets that he had studied in Accra, Ghana. As much as ILO, he understood the informal economy in terms of a dualist model of income opportunities of the urban labor force, based largely on the distinction between wage employment and self-employment, the latter being the realm of informality.

Nevertheless, much of the work enlightened by this dualist perspective viewed informality as related to poverty. The imbalance between the growth of the population and the growth of modern industrial employment combined with the imbalance between people’s skills and the structure of modern economic opportunities, would result in a massive exclusion from these last ones, enclosing an important part of the population in poverty. This viewpoint sustained many predictions for the disappearance of the informal sector in African economies, based on the argument that such strategies would not be applicable in consolidated “developed” countries (**Kinyanjui, 2014**) and that, coherently, could not be appropriated in strategies of development themselves. Translated into policy-making, such logic pushed vigorous efforts to maintain and improve the modern appearance of the cities, what meant, on the one hand, an attempt of regulation and formalization and, on the other hand – and more concretely, the promotion of general clean up, with the removal of “disordered elements”, category to which hawkers and informal workers would belong.

Another approach to “economic informality” is the structuralist (**Castells and Portes, 1989**). It explained the informal economy as relying on a specific form of relationships of production unregulated by the institutions of society. Such form was on the rise and at the same time was universal, heterogeneous and systemically linked to formal firms. Informality was, therefore, understood as a result of the development of capitalism itself. Operating under capitalist strategies, formal firms would attempt to reduce labor costs and increase their own competitiveness. Before the power of organized labor, the costs imposed by taxes and by social legislation and the global competition, many firms would incorporate a cost-reduction strategy in which they decentralized their activities in sub-contracting chains and outsourced the production, in many cases even abroad, to industries that eventually made use of informal workers (**WIEGO, 2008**). In this sense, the structuralist scholarship developed a critique on the dualist one, by understanding economic informality as a product of capitalism, what consequently implied that both economic streams – the formal and the informal – could not exist independently and, more than that, were actually overlapped in various points.

Hereof, the 1990s proved that despite all the endeavor to “formalization”, it was the formal sector constituted by import-substituting firms and government parastatals that shrank in the place of the informal economy. In the same period, multinational corporations adopted informal strategies as part of their distributional framework, which meant that they had recognized informality as a crucial dynamic for the success of their business on regards to the contexts they were operating. This phenomenon put forward the resilience capacity of economic informality before the continued efforts to its eradication (**Kinyanjui, 2014**).

Hernando **de Soto**, in his work on Latin America’s informal sector (**1989**), inaugurated a different pattern of thinking that did not positioned the informal economy as inferior to the formal sector and placed it beyond a strategy of survival, recognizing in it an innovative entrepreneurial solution to the excessive regulation by the State. According to de Soto, informal agents would be compelled to operate informally to avoid the costs of becoming formal, related to registration and licenses, as well as the costs of remaining formal, such as taxes, compliance with regulations and laws, and higher rates for public utilities. For the State, the avoidance of fees, penalties, taxes and labor laws would represent a real economic burden. At the same time, informal workers would be submitted to a vulnerable situation in which they did not have property rights and enforceable contracts and were excluded from formal sectors’ benefits (**WIEGO 2008**). Envisioning the potential of these micro-entrepreneurs, he put forward the ease of laws and regulations so that their informally held property would actually be converted into real capital (**Kinyanjui, 2014**).

Building on the outcomes of this legality approach, **Maloney (2004)**, focusing on self-employed individuals, notably micro-entrepreneurs and, especially, male micro-entrepreneurs (**WIEGO, 2008**), argued that the informal sector was “voluntary”. Evaluating the costs and benefits of formalizing or remaining informal, many of them would choose the second option, a way to earn income while avoiding the excessive costs of payroll taxes and social protection contributions imbricated in formality. The remark on gender is extremely important to the extent that it points to within-class gender inequalities even in the informal sector, once an underlying message of the “voluntarist” approach would be that women were not performing the entrepreneurial activities but operating in still more vulnerable positions where, perhaps, such a choice did not have the space to take place.

In any case, the evolution of the debate on “informal economy” arrived to the point where informality can be interpreted as a “revolutionary and heroic entrepreneurship” (**Kinyanjui, 2014:14**). As **Kinyanjui (2014)** argued, it is “revolutionary” in the sense that an important amount of urban workers rely on it to include themselves in the urban economy and in the city itself, therefore serving both as a means for collective action and as a base for an individual feeling of belonging. Besides, it is the demonstration of a “heroic entrepreneurship”, since it is the platform for many people’s everyday struggle to survive and improve their livelihoods.

Kinyanjui (2014) also put forward that the informal sector should not be perceived as the subsidiary of the formal one, once, as such, it would be locked in a position where efforts always have to be made and resources expended in order for it to claim its space in urban dynamism, even if informal practices have already been recognized by formal structures themselves, as it is the case in the multinational distribution chains mentioned above. Hence, in a neutral environment where informality is not constantly persecuted, it actually could display of a great potential even to stimulate local development, due to its innovation capacity. Furthermore, a large part of the “disorder” attributed to informal activities in the cities could be, in fact, attributed to the inability of planners to comprehend them and design models capable of such accommodation, challenging the assumptions that it corresponded to intrinsic characteristics of the informal sector.

Paradoxically, the informal sector actually operates, especially in developing countries, in support of the “disorders” of the State itself, which lacks capacity to generate enough formalized jobs and to provide social security for the unemployed. This is the context in many African cities and this is why the more significant key for understanding these urban labor markets is their high degree of informality (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008**).

City authorities have been reluctant to promote and advance economic informality as a strategy for urbanization (**Kinyanjui, 2014:76**), but it is the source of livelihood in which many Africans rely (**Simone, 2004**) and its importance bypasses economic returns once it is a cultural trait and, more precisely, the reaffirmation of a cultural trait. The raise of the informal economy can be situated in the context of the process of independence that brought about a goal for self-governance in politics and in the economy, which were distorted with the presence of colonial institutions. In a large majority of pre-colonial African societies, individuals worked for themselves and waged employment was largely unknown, but colonialism introduced the capitalist modes of production based on mines, industries and the cities, what upset their means of living. In this sense, the informal economy was the answer found for individuals to regain their earlier position of workers on their own account, which also involved livelihood negotiation (**Kinyanjui, 2014**).

Still, “informal employment” is used to describe employment relationships that are not governed by formal economic regulation and/or basic legal and social protections, and this regulatory status deserves special attention. This is because, even though the informal sector provides many jobs, the quality of employment matters and, usually, informal workers earn less, not constantly, lack access to basic public services and protections and, therefore, are more exposed to poverty risks in comparison with those who conquered their space in formal labor markets (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008**). Additionally, beyond the opposition constructed between “formal” and “informal” employments, one should consider how, in reality, it is much concretized in the

format of a scale, in which each position is characterized by stronger or weaker formal/informal elements.

Thus, both sectors are also internally diverse, as shown in the work of **Gunther and Launov (2006)** for the informal sector in Côte d'Ivoire. The authors found that the Ivorian informal labor market had a dichotomous structure with distinct wage equations and, therefore, should not be treated as a homogeneous sector. One part of the informal sector was found superior to the other in terms of significantly higher earnings as well as higher returns to education and experience. Besides, while testing whether the structure of the informal sector was a result of market segmentation, which holds individuals from entering the formal sector, or rather a result of comparative advantage considerations, with individuals deciding for themselves to comply or not with business and employment regulations, they found an entry barrier to the formal sector to the “lower”-tier of the informal sector and voluntary behavior in the “upper”-tier informal sector.

So, the informal sector heterogeneity is expressed on regards to a diversity of aspects that configure its employment relationships. It varies across different sorts of economic activities, in the nature of employment relationships (wage employment, self-employment, etc.) as well as with stronger or looser links with the formal counterpart, and this situation puts forward the need to reconsider the “unified invariable role to informal activities in the economy” assigned by many approaches (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008:12**). Here, the debate on “informal economy” between those who understand informal work as determined in a large extent by poverty conditions (**ILO**) and those who view it as an expression of individual power of choice following cost-benefits calculations (**De Soto, Maloney**) is once more recalled. Such distinctions matter for policy-making, since it is clear that the needs of a so-called entrepreneur are not quite indistinguishable from those of a working poor (**Gunther and Launov, 2006**). Besides, their bargaining powers are equally disparate, with the formers being way more likely to push their claims forward, while the latter dispose of limited resources and, therefore, a weaker capacity of self-mobilization. One more time, this has consequences to the organization of priorities in the policy agenda, hence, reflecting a plurality of possibilities of urban development strategies.

There are “push” and “pull” factors configuring patterns of informality. An important “push”, for instance, was the limited capacity of structural adjustment reforms to absorb local workforce, making a large part of the population to rely on informal activities to maintain their livelihoods. At the same time, the over cost of registration of small enterprises and the lack of benefits coming along with it represent a “pull” out of formalization and an incentive for operators to informalization. Nevertheless, in the context of sub-Saharan Africa the “pushes” seem to be more relevant. Despite the existence of some successful informal businesses, workers dependent on informality as a survival strategy are more statistically significant (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008**).

Another aspect of the informal sector in African cities is the predominance of small-scale distribution, or in other words, street trade as its most important activity. According to **Skinner**

(2008:2) “a vibrant array of traders selling everything from fruit and vegetables, to clothes, traditional medicine and even furniture is what characterizes African cities”. Such commercial form has an important role within the capitalist mode of production, while it disposes of a low-cost labor reproduction, considering that to maintain the petty commodity production workers do not require very sophisticated skills, and, concomitantly, provides the means of living to a large mass of people. And this not only to the workers themselves that extract their revenue from it, but also to consumers, who thanks to the traders have access to goods and services in more appropriate quantities and forms as well as in different parts of the city and times of the day, what can be more convenient to individual needs. Still, despite their role in urban economy, street traders are continuously involved in the everyday political struggle that alternates ephemeral decisions of local authorities to incorporate or exclude them of the urban landscape and its dynamics (**Skinner, 2008**).

Beyond the implications to physical structure planning, the nature of economic activities in which informal workers are engaged is also critical to social policy design and, more specific, to employment policies for urban development. Usually manufacturing and other industrial activities have their productivity determined on the side of the supply, meaning that it is according to the quality of production factors such as workers’ skills and technologies that the production capacity varies. Therefore, investments targeting those specific factors are very likely to return higher production rates. Informal activities based in commerce are a more particular case. The productivity of street sellers can be expressed by the quantity of transactions they manage to consolidate, but such quantity depends much on the offer as on the demand and on the development of the market itself, what makes their business growth model more sensitive to external variables (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008**).

The offer side accounts for personal and professional attributes of the sellers, for their capacity of mobilizing resources to expand the availability and the diversity of products as well as to certify their quality, and for the type of products they are selling. Yet, higher investments in their business do not necessarily translate into a higher productivity because the demand could be restrict and the market underdeveloped, depending on general economic conditions, the location of the business and even chance. Once a transaction relies on a successful encounter, the boundary between the supply-side and the demand-side in the determination of the overall productivity is not clear (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008**). In this sense, policies to support such activities require more previous analysis before design and, still, their outcomes would not be easily predictable nor evident or straightforward even after produced.

But none analysis of African urban job markets would be sufficiently consistent without the introduction of the gender dimension, a still more complex but fundamental element to be considered. Women are an important constituency of urban African population and the majority of them operate in the informal economy. In Côte d’Ivoire, for instance, statistics for

employment based in the 1996 Household Survey estimated in 52.7 the percentage of the informal in total urban employment, what corresponded to 414 200 urban informal workers, out of which 246 500 were women. Besides, according to the same survey, 37.3% of the men were employed in urban areas in comparison to 73.4% of women. This data supports at least three statements on the characteristics of Ivorian urban job markets:

(a) The informal sector is the main pool of urban employment;

(b) Women represent the majority of urban workers;

And, finally, (c) women constitute the most important group of workers in the informal sector.

More recent estimates of labor force participation rates from 2008, accounted a total participation of 64.2%, being the male's 88.6% and the female's 38.5%, an evidently underestimated value, perhaps explained by social norms and cultural factors that influence women's measured labor force participation rates, for example, by disregarding activities performed within their reproductive role and, beyond that, probably their work in the informal sector (**Heintz and Valodia, 2008**). This issue of data is not a minor one, after all, such measures inform public policies. Apparently, instead of focusing in the previously identified singularities of Ivorian employment patterns, public surveys have regressed in terms of disaggregation capacity both by sector and by gender, what must impact the local policy agenda.

Acknowledging the significant participation of women in informal activities, it is possible to argue that all the space that have been denied to the informal economy in urban development strategies is equally contributing to much of their own deprivation. How can women be incorporated into the urban economy if urban development policies have been mostly framing the informal economy where they abound as "disorder"? Besides, generally speaking, while the informal sector is not object of development policies, women are largely excluded from the incentive policies that could be directed at it (**Hugon, 1989**).

As already suggested above, much of women's place in the city is related to the role they perform as informal workers. Still, it is crucial to question the extent to which such socioeconomic position allows them to exercise their agency in order for them to not only be, but be recognized as active producers of African cities dynamism. So far, their expression in number has not much been translated into a full-fledged citizenship in most of these urban centers. This is not to say that the city is not being affected by the exercise of their work, because, in any case, the urban tissue is socially constructed¹⁷, but to remark that much lacks hitherto to their concrete social and economic inclusion.

If urban development policies had hardly addressed the issue of informal workers' productivity, they have been even more opaque when it was about women informal workers. Women are

¹⁷ Lefebvre, Henri (1974). *La production de l'espace*, Paris, Anthropos.

already often disadvantaged in African societies and the minor production of tailored policies sensitive to their causes just added to existing gender inequalities. Women often earn less than men when performing the same sort of activities and are concentrated in more vulnerable forms of employment. Besides being submitted to employment conditions, which are unsafe and unhealthy, many women workers also suffer with sexual harassment and abuse (**Sweetman, 2009**).

This also holds true for the gender dynamics of the informal sector, while women usually occupy the most precarious forms of informal employment, for instance, as unpaid family workers (**Chen, 2014**). Furthermore, the constraints imposed by the gender division of labor are equally expressed in the nature of urban activities performed by women, revolving around the foodstuff chain (petty trading food stuff, production of food and drinks, preparation of meals, etc.), craft activities (hand-crafts, basket-making, pottery), textile activities (tailoring) and domestic services (**Hugon, 1989**), which, for being considered low-skilled, have been less targeted by development policies and less invested on, therefore segregating women in access to education and to other employment opportunities as well as information and start-up capital.

In addition, such gender-based activities might suffer from the fact that, in a large extent, the market in which they are operated is gendered too. Considering the types of products those women informal sellers have available, their location in the city and their mobility capacity, a considerable share of their costumers are women as well. Women who, in a number of cases, are exposed to similar vulnerable situations and who are buying such products (the daily ingredients, kitchen artifacts, clothes etc.) on behalf of the accomplishment of their role of food providers, housekeepers and mothers, but who dispose of limited incomes likewise. Such incomes are unlikely to go through upward variations and generate a demand expansion that could actually represent real gains for the sellers. In this regard, at least this niche of the informal female market is locked in itself, because neither the demand or the supply are able to expand much, consequently returning a limited revenue, which is often constant but, at the same time, subjected to external shocks depending on the overall economic situation.

In any case, most of the women in African cities need to carry on an income generating activity even if they are married, since this income is counted upon for the household budget. In the couple, usually the man's and the woman's budget is independent and, therefore, any missing resources imply a gap with consequences for the household wellbeing. Women's responsibilities concern providing family food by small everyday purchases, paying for children's schooling (both coping with the costs of clothing – uniform, for instance – and of books – in various cases the most difficult for them to afford), and securing, whenever needed, basic healthcare, and men usually provide the necessary for accommodation and other basic staples (**Hugon, 1989**). Hence, it is their activity as informal workers who provide their own and their families' livelihoods.

Whilst women participate in the making of household livelihood, this does not necessarily mean they have control over it neither the equivalence of value given to their contribution and this of men's. In many cases, women's engagement with the household provision increases without any compensation in terms of power distribution (**Sweetman, 2009**). So, in such a context, it is entailed a process of "feminization" of responsibility and obligation (**Chant, 2006**), within which women are increasingly charged with both (low remunerated) productive and (non-remunerated) reproductive activities to maintain the household, while men keep holding the privileged power position that assures them the authority over the household. This overburden to which women are submitted leave them sometimes in an even more vulnerable situation (**Chant, 2006**), contrary to what is expected before the capacity of earning, but such vulnerability is accentuated by the fact that women are undervalued both within and out of the household.

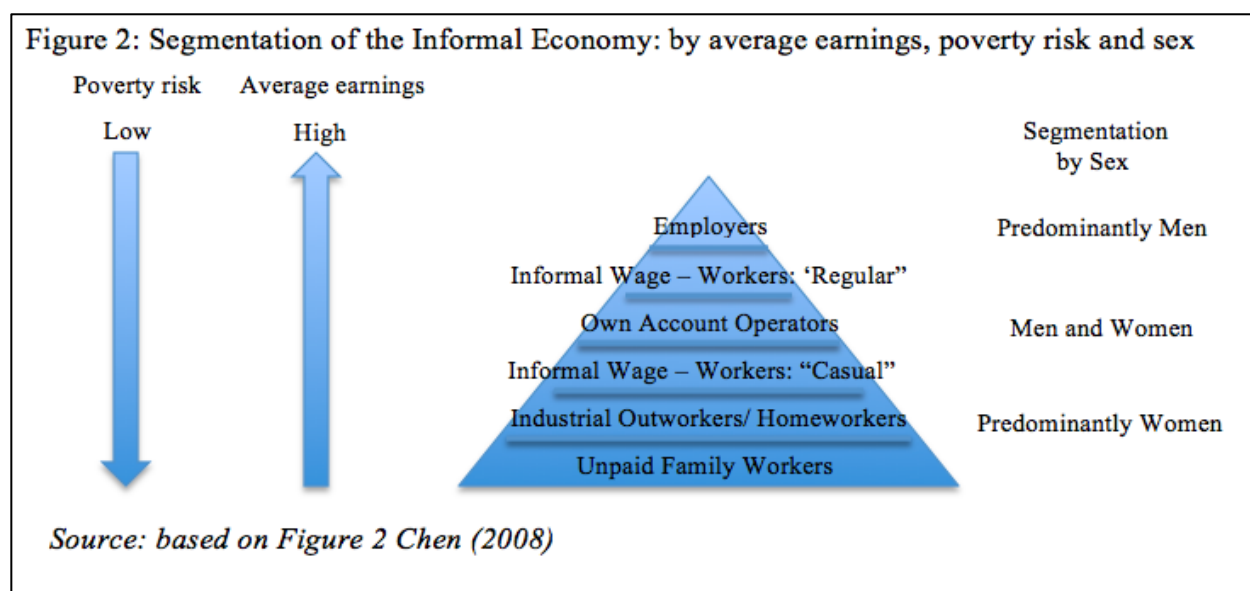
This undervaluation of women in the African urban environment, despite being an issue that deserves attention in its own terms, expresses concerns beyond the "gender" aspect, once they reflect the inadequacy embedded in the adoption of modes of understanding the world that were conceived from foreign paradigms. It is in this sense that the paradox behind women's struggle to be in the center of the African city (where they actually already are, especially when exercising their informal activities) is related to ways of thinking the city, of experiencing the city and, consequently, of planning the city that refer to colonial development strategies delinked from local realities of urbanization and from local means of negotiation of urban life, which are largely based on informality (**Duminy et al, 2014**). Hence, instead of being supportive – and strategic, urban planning has been disrupting the very dynamics that constitute African cityness.

3.2 Women as African urban subjects

While the city is the realm of productivity, a full-fledged citizenship is much conditioned to the recognition of individuals as productive actors within it. Although a large extent of African production is located in rural areas, African urban centers continue to represent the most important location of the productive capital, while concentration and spillovers that add to major capital gains are premises of such spatialities. As highlighted above, the productivity in African cities is much an outcome of the performance of firms in the informal sector. In Côte d'Ivoire, 24% of the GDP is generated by the informal sector excluding agriculture (in data from 2000 - **SWAC/OECD, 2011**). However, it is only a minor share of these informal workers that actually detain the rights that should come together with these results.

The explanations for this are complex, full of paradoxes. On the one hand, there is an unbalance between the performance of the informal sector in overall urban economy and the stigmatized image that the sector as a whole carries in front of authorities, who are responsible for enfranchising. On the other hand, the contribution of the sector to economic growth hides the vulnerabilities of a majority of informal workers who cannot afford to overcome the absence of public support by making use of the economic returns of their activities, because these are

compromise with the provision of their and their dependents' surviving means. These workers are mostly women.



Despite the indispensable role of feminine activities for society, for households and for women themselves, these informal activities usually return very limited sums, enclosing a large majority of women in the lowest strata of urban African societies. Women's contribution to the economy remains largely invisible (**McGrath et al, 1994**), to the extent that many women are not considered as workers (**Jumani, 1987**), hence, causing their handicap in entitlement to rights. But, considering that the informal sector encompasses innumerable alternatives of business, it is indeed of crucial importance to comprehend the difficulties women face to occupy also themselves the upper-tier segment of such sector that could actually prop their social upward mobility. Comparing evidence from Cotonou (Benin), Ouagadougou (Burkina Fasso), Abidjan, Bamako (Mali), Niamey (Niger), Dakar (Senegal) and Lomé (Togo), (**Grimm, Knorringa and Lay (2012)**) found out that among the bottom capital quartile of firms 65% are managed by women, whereas in the top quartile this rate drops to 30%.

This data is of even more relevance when considered the strong intergenerational correlation of the self-employment status (**Pasquier-Doumer, 2013**), which is the most common employment status among informal workers and particularly among women informal workers (in their case, it is the most common employment status combined with their status of homeworkers and unpaid family workers)¹⁸. Then, if gender disparities limit the performance and constrain opportunities of women's business, this is also a concern for future generations that might be continuously

¹⁸ "Almost two-thirds of women in the developing world work in vulnerable jobs as self-employed persons, or as unpaid family workers. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, this type of work accounts for more than 80 per cent of all jobs for women (UN 2008)" in: Sweetman, 2009.

submitted to such negative effects, many times trapped in poverty and with lower opportunities to overcome them. In Côte d'Ivoire, where female-headed households are a growing trend, this is critical. Such findings are, therefore, of great interest for policy-making, notably for urban development policies.

When women entered the informal sector they were not pursuing “entrepreneurship” as an end in itself, but as a way of life that helped them to cope with their own social exclusion, manage household poverty and uplift their families. Nevertheless, their claims for livelihood rights come from the desire to be identified as producers and not as providers of supplement incomes, even because they are not so (**Kinyanjui, 2014**). In their daily struggle as informal workers, women are structuring part of the informal economy and attributing the meaning of its social and economic function (**Ori, 1998**). Thus, action is required to favor women's productive environment, because this might be the main step to their recognition as urban subjects.

In urban economies that are not able to maintain and adapt their capacity to create jobs before demographic changes, even less when haunted by long-lasting and frequent crisis as the one underwent by Côte d'Ivoire, gender disparities grow in the labor market (**Arbache et al, 2010**) and, consequently, economic empowerment of women, who usually are the “losers” in such contexts, stands out as a central concern to gender equality in the city. This is not to say that women's urban subjectivity should be only perceived in this perspective, but, at the same time, their productive role has been one of the most overlooked issues in African cities with critical consequences also to local development (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**). Besides, certainly, the achievement of the gender equality goal should not be restricted to increase women's productivity in the informal sector, after all, the fact that they are concentrated there reveals great part of gender disparities in African urban labor markets and in those urban societies as a whole. However, because most policies that criminalized the informal sector have just imposed more obstacles to the already difficult livelihood of the most sensitive women groups – sometimes, ironically, resulting exactly in the inflation of this same sector, African urban development policies should welcome initiatives that support the informal economy, the largest employment pool of these cities and a singular element of African cityness. More specifically, policies to upgrade women's performance in the informal sector must be components of any African urban development strategy, because this is where resides the bulk of women's recognition as urban producers and, so far, their invisibility has been just generating and accentuating gender disparities.

Now, by far, the most common element in all these disparities is the difference between individuals of each sex in human capital variables, such as educational attainment, vocational training and years of real or potential experience, which explain gender gaps in productivity. Firm characteristics are also co-determinants of a lower production, but they are much a result, once more, of the restricted human capital owned by women for having been excluded from

educational opportunities (**Arbache et al, 2010**). According to the human capital theory, workers maximize their revenues by investing in their productive capacity through education and an accumulation of professional experience. At the same time, productivity is directly correlated to earnings. Thus, formation, mostly in the format of professional training (with high incentives to entrepreneurship skills), appears to be the first stage for women's final professional insertion and affirmation, with the promise to generate a significant shift in the scale of their productive activities from simple reproduction to enlarged ones (**Kouamé, 1999**).

As already pointed out, women mostly run commercial business that are more dependent on the demand-side and that, consequently, might not directly benefit from formation programs, which primarily upgrade the supply. Nonetheless, these programs engender many other positive effects for women's empowerment despite this constraint, as it will be discussed next. Furthermore, more than enhancing any business activity and above all, what these policies must seek is to reduce gender inequalities.

4. “Gendered” politics, “gendered” policies?

4.1 Gender Mainstreaming and Women’s Empowerment

GAD advocates internationalized the mobilization for gender inequality causes using the privileged space of the United Nations Conferences on Women, whose debates penetrated national agendas with gender concerns through the setting of the Decades of Women in several countries. In 1995, Beijing was the stage for the Fourth World Conference on Women in which many governments across the world committed to a common agenda to pursue the empowerment of women to achieve gender equality: the Platform for Action. The Plan for Action promoted the strategy of “mainstreaming gender” as the means towards this objective (**UN Women, 1995: 27**), as long as:

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality” (**UNESCO, 1997:28**).

Other definitions made the concept more precise by detailing both its institutional aspect, which concerns the institutionalization of gender issues in administrative, financial, staff and other organizational procedures in order to achieve the goal within the organizations themselves, and its societal aspect, focused in the empowerment of women (**Moser and Moser, 2010**). In any case, the bulk of the strategy is to identify the privileged *loci* of gender equality achievement with the realm of politics and, at the same time, to engage policy-making with this social transformation to which policies are the tools.

Although requiring an assemblage of policies, gender equality, as it was specifically put forward in the Plan, passes necessarily through women’s “empowerment”. Many feminists have pointed out that the definition of this term impoverishes much of the value that empowerment carries, at first, for being beforehand based in action. However, in order to evaluate the performance and the accomplishments of policies this definition is crucial, for being the precondition for measurement (**Kabeer, 1999**).

The process of empowerment involves the notion of power, which is more adequate for gender analysis when associated with the ability of making choices (**Kabeer, 1999**). As **Kabeer (1999)** understands it, empowerment cannot be disassociated from the condition of disempowerment, while it is a process that implies change, a social change from a state of denial of the ability to making choices to one where this ability is acquired. Kabeer also points out, though, that the

notion of choices has many nuances. First, she mentions how it is crucial for choice that more than one possibility is presented, or, put in other words, that exists the possibility of having chosen differently. Secondly, she also stresses that some choices are more critical than others and that, therefore, empowerment implies the ability of finally making the critical choices when they are at first denied.

Beyond the importance of these insights, where Kabeer adds more to policy-making and, consequently, to gender mainstreaming, is in the identification of the three fundamental interrelated dimensions involved in the exercise choice - resources, agency and achievements – because they open the possibility of, to some extent, measure the capacity of policies to empower. As Kabeer defines them, resources are the pre-conditions of the choice, including material resources and various other human and social resources. They are acquired through multiple social relationships that take place in various institutional domains of society, such as the household, the community and the market. Nevertheless, resources can take both the form of actual allocations or the form of future claims and expectations.

For her, agency is the ability one has to define goals and to pursue them. In this sense, agency is more than the action of choosing, encompassing the meaning, the motivation and the purpose of this action, which can also be defined as having the “power within”. Kabeer goes beyond understanding agency as decision-making, pointing that it can take the form of “bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance” (**Kabeer, 1999: 438**). Besides, she identifies both a positive and a negative meaning of agency. The positive would be the equivalent to the “power to” define goals and pursue them, even when suffering the constraints exercised by another individual or collective opposition. However, she argues that agency can also be negative, in the sense of “power over”, which is the capacity to exactly exercise this opposition with enough strength to deny the agency of others. Nonetheless, the most interesting aspect of agency exercising is that it can happen without appearing to, what has been known as the agency involved in “not-deciding” (**Lukes, 1974**).

Kabeer refers to **Sen (1985b)**, who encompassed these notions of “resources” and “agency” in the concept of “capabilities”. “Capabilities” involve, at first, the capacity people have to live the lives they want and, at the same time, being valorized by the society for it, while this life is not only about “being” but also about “doing”, a concept that, at some extent, refers to the already mentioned idea of productivity and citizenship. These different possibilities of life are the different “functionings” and the “functioning achievements” are the possible ways of “being and doing” indeed chosen, once more reminding how ways of life require a function, require a degree of utility. However, Kabeer accepts that “functioning achievements” might be non-valued ways of living by virtue of individuals that are lazy, incompetent or have different preferences and priorities, but this would not be a characteristic inequality situation. She recognizes inequality when people cannot achieve the value of “being and doing” for not having the choice itself

and/or the ability to choose, when individuals are, therefore, disempowered. Furthermore, while the ways of “being and doing” of the disempowered are not valued, inequalities just keep growing.

Thus, disempowerment exists when choosing differently is not a matter of being able to, but one of being in an unequal position that does not allow to choose. Moreover, what is an even more delicate issue is to recognize the disempowered within decisions that were apparently made by them, or, more precisely, when inequalities exist but are not perceived as being “unjust”. In such contexts, the apparent “choice” is, in fact, the very mark of inequalities that are deeply encrusted in rules, norms and customs of society, when tradition and culture are unequal. In this sense, Kabeer reminds that in assessing if an achievement embodies meaningful choice, it is imperative to question if the choices were not only materially possible, but also if they were conceived to be within the realms of possibility.

For a significant number of women in many African cities, while they have been “being and doing”, the condition of disempowerment persists, because their activities are not recognized as “functionings” by the society and, at the same time, because it is doubtful that they were actually “chosen” among other possibilities of livelihood by women themselves: the small business¹⁹ that women usually drive represent in a much more expressive way their struggle for securing daily surviving means for them and their dependents. Still, forasmuch as the informal sector is not a minor setting of these cities neither one that does not count with already valorized “beings and doings”, so too there is a potential for women to be empowered within it. Much of this potential could perhaps be brought about with the adoption of gender-sensitive training policies as strategies for reducing gender inequalities in the city, therefore, strategies for a gender-sensitive urban development.

4.2 “Gendering” training policies and empowering women informal workers

Gender inequalities have always fallen upon women in terms of education²⁰ and such deprivation made them even less able to compete with men in the formal and the informal sectors of the economy, apart from a culture of work that already unprivileged them for associating labor with a male domain. Now that much more women are the head of households, specially in contexts such as the one of Côte d’Ivoire where the effects of the crisis combined with the conflicts

¹⁹ There is a debate on defining this sort of informal activity as “small business” or “income generation”. This last term is usually pursued as casual activities “which women move in and out of as time and needs dictate and probably supplementing male household income” while the former is associated with a “more permanent form of economic activity, often the sole source of income of a household”. (Leach et al, 2001: 20) Because this dissertation is arguing on the crucial economic role of women in the city, it understands women activities as “small business”.

²⁰ “Education” is understood as having access to “basic education”. “Basic education refers to education intended to meet basic learning needs; it includes instruction at the first or foundation level, on which subsequent learning can be based; it encompasses early childhood and primary (elementary) education for children, as well as education in literacy, general knowledge and life skills for youth and adults; it may extend into secondary education in some countries.” (WCEFA,1990).

impacted the urban labor market layout, it is even more unjustified the male orientation of the training programs available. These programs are particularly important to women who work at the least profitable end of the informal sector, because enhancing and developing new skills are means for them to face the competition and the uncertainty of the markets where they operate, characterized by, on the one hand, product saturation (since most of the women run the same sort of business which overall represents an extension of their domestic tasks) and, on the other hand, an unstable demand that is dependent of external economic factors. Moreover, training tailored to women-only conforms a space where they can express themselves freely, without the constraint that many feel in the presence of men (**Leach et al, 2001**).

Training programs impact the interdependent relationship between resources, agency and achievements and this is why they, to some extent, configure channels favorable for women's empowerment. First of all, in regard to resources, it is the very essence of these means to contribute to human capital. Higher human capital levels correspond to better quality labor and, once labor is a key input for firm production, notably in small business, to a stronger productive capacity. **Hallward-Driemeier (2013)**, looking at results from the gender module and survey of new entrepreneurs to qualitatively assess the prevalence of a broader set of human capital measures and their association with performance outcomes²¹, found that women have, on average, lower levels of human capital. Still, she also found that education and business skills generate increases in human capital for both women and men and that the marginal returns to women of these skills are no different from those for men. So, if men have, in numerous cases, succeeded in capitalizing their informal business, historically having had more access to programs (and spaces) where they could acquire competences that helped them in this path, these results showed that women could (and can) be equally benefited.

The bulk of business skills with significant productivity effect is composed by management techniques, financial skills and entrepreneurial skills (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**). Management techniques comprehend establishing formal objectives, monitoring employee performance, engaging in process innovation and engaging in participatory decision-making, all of them correlated with higher productivity (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2012**). **Hallward-Driemeier (2013)**'s research results showed that while men seemed to score higher in innovative processing, women compensated with higher scores in the indistinctly important techniques of participatory decision-making. Besides, once learned, no gender constraints appeared for the better use of any of these techniques (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**), what indicated that previous disparities were just a matter of exposure to each of them.

Financial skills are the ones that allow entrepreneurs to evaluate risk and opportunities among competing options. It means, for example, being able to acknowledge characteristics and dynamics of the market, assess market demand, create business planning, keep track of expenses

²¹ Firms were sampled in Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and Zambia.

and revenues, determine prices, appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of loan contracts, and even to forecast savings. In this sense, financial literacy includes some conception of interest rates and inflation that brings up to the business rationale the crucial time dimension (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**). The importance of these skills, for instance, for entrepreneurs to assume credit and even for creditors to concede it to them, underlines the primacy of training for economic empowerment. More concretely, financially literate entrepreneurs have presented 10 to 15% higher productivity than their counterparts (**Gajigo, 2010**).

Finally, entrepreneurial skills include marketing skills, capacity to attract and affiliate costumers as well as to understand the importance of quality. At the same time, these skills are related to both experience and motivation. In terms of experience, years served as a formal-firm employee and as an apprentice are significantly associated with current enterprise productivity (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**). Although many women informal workers could be considered experienced due to the long time they were performing their activities, years served as non-enterprise employees were associated with lower productivity (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**). Another aspect that accounted for gender gaps in experience is family background, as a predictor for entrepreneurship achievements. The fact that daughters have not received as much as sons mentoring neither introduction to networks of business contacts of family enterprises could explain gender gaps in productivity (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**). Moreover, a relevant outcome of **Hallward-Driemeier (2013)**'s research was how little correlation motivation had with actual performance and how skills were the most important dimension of human capital. The gender-biased common discourse had associated entrepreneurship motivation with an inherent male characteristic that could explain men's dominance in the upper-tier circle of entrepreneurs, but such assertion was challenged with the highlight of the critical role formation had in giving men this advantage in detriment of women.

Training was considered more effective when tailored to the group served, not requiring complexity in many cases. Simple "rules of thumb" appeared to be very effective in previous initiatives and even more than more traditional education to less educated entrepreneurs (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**), what gives a hint for the design of programs to women. Very basic business management ideas, such as keeping separate the accounts and the finances of the business and the household, were also pointed as a real need (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**).

According to a research conducted by **Leach et al (2001)**, in a significant number of cases training had a positive - albeit varying - impact on the scale and nature of women's economic activities and their income. And **Hallward-Driemeier (2013)** found skills to be effective on increasing sales and profits and, after training, revenues appeared to be more stable before external shocks, therefore, generating and securing material capital. Also, candidates with better skills sets were found more likely to get credit, because having the richer human capital makes them better risk for creditors. This finding could be mobilize to argue that the agenda for

expanding skills is a fundamental part of expanding opportunities, including expanding access to finance. Furthermore, human capital expands opportunities for women to approach new market niches. Assuring women the right to develop their skills supports them to have more choices of enterprising, hence affecting the extent of gender sorting across activities. Of course that simply providing training is not enough to assure that all women will expand their business, because other factors might be significant constraints, specially in cultures where gender inequalities are deeply settled. Yet, even if not every women informal workers achieve to be independent entrepreneurs, many fewer would without access to the resources training generates (**Hallward-Driemeier, 2013**).

Nevertheless, **Kabeer (2010)** reminded the importance of not only guaranteeing women access to human and material capitals, but to consider that the control of such resources is what actually could support significant changes in their achievements, otherwise remaining as a potential. Despite the difficulty on measuring this capacity due to all situations where appearance can superpose the facts, **Leach et al (2001)** did not find any direct impact of training on women's control of material resources, but found it in regards to increased income, which is one of the training outcomes. Moreover, in terms of the human resources, there is no doubt women had their control, albeit requiring refreshing sessions to appropriate the new knowledge enduringly.

In terms of agency, the mere participation in the training can be itself an empowering experience for women, specially for those who never had access to it or to schooling before (**Leach et al, 2001**). **Leach et al (2001)** found that training supported women's self-esteem and, at the same time, entailed a more positive attitude from them towards their productive work. Through training, women started having pride at performing their activities, a confidence resulted also from the concrete expansion of their earnings and that encouraged them to move about in public space with men and seek for new markets. Considering the saturated condition of the market where they usually operate as mentioned before, this search, if resulting in diversification, could relatively benefit even the women that did not have access to training. Furthermore, training can boost women's entrepreneurship. Even if many women were not at ease to compete with men, while this possibility became somewhat concrete, women could acknowledge their capacity to perform as well in traditionally male domains, in some way challenging social norms and culture as a whole.

In opposition to the usual competitive atmosphere that turns women against each other, training can lead to a group solidarity effect. It provides the space for them to share experiences, concerns, ideas and information, a unique opportunity in comparison to men's more common and functioning networks (**Leach et al, 2001**). The frequency to courses and the exposure to their peers can contribute, therefore, for their mutual identification, essential for the construction of associations, cooperatives and other communitarian assemblies that are not only beneficial for

the economic health of their business, but also for constituting a platform through which women can fight for their causes against more powerful actors of the urban scene.

In any case, participation in training programs enhances women community status, because they become role models for others in the neighborhood (**Leach et al, 2001**). Serving somehow as inspiration, once more affects women's self-awareness and they become more conscious of their economic and social roles, what is crucial for them to develop a critical assessment of their position within and out of households. Such reflective exercise has the potential to make women question the shaped gender roles that have been at the root of the cause of their oppression and to provide them the basis for a political voice.

It is a fact that the change training could engender in the status within the household was less certain according to the findings of **Leach et al (2001)**, highlighting that it is still this instance the milestone of gender disparities. Nevertheless, a policy tailored to women means that local authorities are considering them as urban actors that deserve special attention for being participants of the urban development and, once it is implemented, it functions as an indicative to all of a positive advance towards a gender-sensitive culture, since culture is not a definitive construction but one that evolves throughout time with reflects also in the domestic realm. So, the importance of training was not minimized in spite of its first research results.

Given the resources provided by training programs as well as the supportive conditions they arouse for the exercise of agency, it is possible to recognize empowering achievements at least on the enhancement of the capacity of women to survive through "bad months" and crisis, which implicated choice-making. Hereof, if the business did not grow expressively, the small gains and a higher mobility still suggest more resilient business and, behind them, more resilient women. But, beyond that, perhaps the major realization of these gender-sensitive strategies is to expose to women themselves their role in the urban society and economy, because their acceptance of subordination is the most perverse effect of the inherited patriarchy.

Thus, designing training programs to women is empowering for them to the extent that it implies significant changes in all the three indivisible dimensions of such condition. An increase in income, for instance, without subsequent increases in the other elements, would not be enough to qualify a condition of empowerment, maybe a reason for recognizing training as a more gender-sensitive policy than pure credit. Nevertheless, training benefits women informal workers' empowerment but also the informal sector, which can rely on a more skilled and productive labor force, able to "function" in African cities and, therefore, exposing valuable ways of "being and doing". So, training is a coherent strategy for attenuating gender inequalities as much as for African urban development and, if prioritized, it will come the day when women will choose to operate as entrepreneurs in the informal sector as much as "voluntarist" male businessmen already do.

4.3 The engagement of the Ivorian government to women's economic empowerment and its translation into action

For a long time, education and training at all levels were thought to benefit equally females and males, but this assumption was much due to a lack of sex-disaggregated statistics that made governments blind to existing gender disparities. In the post-independence context of the 1950s and 1960s, when the initiatives applied to expand educational systems started to exhaust, the scale of the issue surfaced, and by the 1970s it became clear for both governments and donor agencies that girls were lagging behind boys on regards to educational access, permanence and achievements (**Leach,1998**).

Still, even with the gap becoming larger, formation for girls and women was not seen as a priority. Aiming to follow development models that could bring rapid economic growth thanks to the creation of a “modern” sector based in industries, governments did not recognize any potential for investing in women to integrate this workforce, because they identified them with their reproductive roles of “wives” and “mothers”. Therefore, investments were concentrated in forming a skilled and disciplined workforce basically composed by men (**Leach, 1998**). This gendered perception of work did not account even for the important productive role women always performed in agriculture or for their heavy engagement in activities in urban informal sector, being themselves responsible for the course of its development. In that framework, the rare educational opportunities targeted specifically at women were pretty much designed to form them with basic knowledge on home economics, measures that could improve their performance in their attributed reproductive role (**Leach, 1998**).

In Côte d'Ivoire, the picture of national education was not different. In the 1960s, within the restructuration of the country after the independence, education emerged as a key axis for development, but the great majority of the head of households were reticent to the schooling of girls. Girls were raised to be at home, to cook, to fetch water and to keep the daily management of the house and later to care for their husbands and other family members as well as to rear the children. Therefore, the incorporation of women in government policies was done hand in hand with this vision, crystalized in the "Foyers Féminins" created in 1961: education structures designed to women with an objective to equipy them to their role of wives in a “modern” Côte d'Ivoire. The mission of these institutions was, thus, to educate women so that they would be more efficient housewives, and even literacy was instrumentalized for the management of the household (**MSFFE, website**).

The advocacy work of WID, carrying forward the claims raised along the feminist movements to extend women's rights in the South, was a turning point for the visibility of the cause of gender disparities in formation. They argued that women represented a true potential for economic growth and development, but once investments on their capacitation were neglected, this potential was being wasted, at the same time constituting a mass of poor that represented a

burden in governments' expenditures. By the time, two third of the world poor and two third of the world adult illiterates were female, what suggested a clear link between gendered poverty and illiteracy (**Leach, 1998**). In 1976, in the wake of the debates concerning the status of women in Ivorian society, it was created the Ministère de la Famille, de la Femme et de l'Enfant (MFFE), an institutional mechanism charged of managing women's needs and favor their integration to development, by supporting tailored measures for their education and formation, for their economic activities and for their sensitization and information about women's rights.

However, the following decade was when Côte d'Ivoire experienced the severe effects of the economic crisis, which caused regressions in many social sectors, but especially in education and, above that, in its intersection with gender. The country's formation structure suffered with a lack of investments and the national educational system was dilapidated (**Hauhouot**). Despite the evidence of the benefits of educating women, the urgency of the economic situation propelled the government to engage with the measures proposed by the IMF and the World Bank in the Structural Adjustment Program where such concern was definitely not a priority. Although the SAP intended to recover the Ivorian economic force, it was not a strategy sensitive to social issues and, in fact, as discussed before, women crossed those years ending up in a worse-off situation.

In order to face such negative social consequences, the Ivorian government introduced parallel measures. With employment standing out as a main concern in that context, the government implemented specific measures tailored to the identified deprived population on job markets, such as youth and women. One important example was the creation of social funds, such as the Fond National Femme et Developpment (FNFD), created in 1994 to finance women's small business under the conjoined management of the MFFE and the Caisse Autonome d'Amortissement (CAA). It aimed to stimulate self-employment among these social groups, considering the perennial potential of such strategies if successful individuals undertook the expansion of their business, hiring other people and dynamizing the job market. Along with these funds, the Agence d'Etude et de Promotion de l'Emploi (AGEPE) have also designed tailored programs that were included in the 1995's Plan National de l'Emploi, such as the Programme Special d'Insertion des Femmes (PSIF), for expanding the accessibility of women to the labor market (**Kouamé and Gueye, 2000**). These actions represented WID-based strategies of the Ivorian government, aiming to reduce gender inequalities in the access to employment and, concomitantly, associating women's work with the overall economic growth.

In 1995, the government participated to the Beijing's World Conference on Women and reaffirmed its commitment to promote gender equality by signing the Platform for Action and, in the same year, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination on Women (CEDAW). Nevertheless, the national policy agenda reflected with limits these gender engagements because employment opportunities were seen more as an issue of credit than

education and formation. This is not to say that material capital is not an essential means for the change in the economic condition of these women, but to reflect upon the nuances that such policies carry along with them, questioning why, overall, they have been proposed as substitutes rather than as complementary to one another.

Development agencies themselves had reduced the importance of training for poor women (**Leach, 1998**), especially after the 1980s when microcredit programs spread as the dominant poverty alleviation strategy. Of course they represented a breakthrough in the sense that, at some point, credit was mostly assured to men, who were expected to be the heads of households and the breadwinners. Society saw women's activities more as supplementing sources of revenues, also because they were most performed in the informal sector and, for being out of the statistics, this sector was not considered "real" work. To some extent, amplifying the credit portfolio to women was related to the Conference held in Nairobi in 1985 (the edition before Beijing), but maybe it was less an achievement of women's struggle than to a higher recognition of the informal sector, once in that context of crisis also men's participation rate in it increased considerably. Credit appeared as a solution capable of combining a dominant neoliberal policy approach, which understood that supporting material means was a sufficient measure for women to find their own space in the labor market and the urban economy, with a less expensive and more measurable delivery, in comparison with training policies that were more demanding and more difficult to have outcomes measured, with their results appearing in the long-term. However, as argued before, training is important to support women's earnings and status as much as for the management of credit itself.

Still, the rarefied training initiatives to women had promoted limited awareness among them of alternatives to traditional occupations and, therefore, their perception of their own employment potential was extremely narrow. Training had been usually provided in areas such as sewing, embroidery, cooking, with little incentives for profitability, not disposing of a clear business capacitation alongside vocational technical skills, because women's economic activities were seen more as projects than enterprises. Such an approach left a doubt on whether the programs were actually designed on support of the overcoming of gender disparities or whether, as institutions of the machinery, they were not just being used as one more tool to reaffirm the male's social dominance (**Leach et al, 2001**).

In any case, the political crisis of 1999 affected the Ivorian progress towards gender equality. The coup d'état provoked the contraction of socioeconomic indicators and, more specifically, those related to the education of women and girls, which had just been promoted with the gender axis of the *Projet d'Appui au Secteur Education-Formation* in 1999 inscribed in the *Plan National du Développement du Secteur Education-Formation* (PNDEF 1998-2010) of the *Ministère de l'Education Nationale*. In the plan, it was included the principle of mandatory schooling to all Ivorian children until the age of 16 independently of sex.

In the year 2000, Côte d'Ivoire participated to the Millennium Summit that instituted the Millennium Development Goals and committed to this global agenda. Then, in 2002, the government developed the Document de Strategies de Reduction de la Pauvreté of 2002 which was, on the one hand, inscribed in the cadre of consolidation of peace and the reestablishment of the social cohesion, the recovery of the Ivorian economy and of the well-being of people disturbed with years of socio-political and military crisis and, on the other hand, the translation of the government's will to achieve, by 2015, the MDGs to which it had committed, notably the goal of poverty reduction. Nevertheless, for a country with an average of 40% of poor people, 67% were women²². Hence, this document incorporated a component related to the gender equality MDG, with the proposition of actions to educate girls and to teach illiterate women to read and write as well as to encourage women's entrepreneurship, relying on the FNFD. In 2002, it was also adopted the Plan National d'Action de la Femme (2003-2007), in which the old "Foyers Féminins" already re-named Institutions de Formation et d'Education Feminine (IFEFs) were presented as the local coordination mechanisms of the delivery of training to women.

But these movements in the realm of politics were not taking place to the detriment of civil society organization. Whilst not congregating all the interest parts of the issue because the most vulnerable women were not particularly mobilized, in 2003, in a very tense moment of the sociopolitical crisis, Ivorian women created an important platform - the Coalition des Femmes Leaders de Côte d'Ivoire (CFeLCI), which aimed to assure an effective participation of women in the reconstruction of the country and in national development, by requesting a quota of at least 30% of women's participation in public and private decision-making instances, referring to the resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council. At the same time, CFeLCI proposed to policy-makers several reforms to reinforce female leadership, to promote women's social image and to monitor the attainments in gender equality. All these propositions were supported by the visible role women were playing in the resolution of communitarian conflicts resulted from the coup and, therefore, in the national reconciliation and in the reestablishment of the peace in the country (**Coffie, 2015 to the Huffington Post**).

Yet, Côte d'Ivoire had no autonomous government structure in charge of the implementation of the guidelines of the government in terms of gender and equality between sexes. It was only in 2006 that such institution was created within the Ministre de la Famille et des Affaires Sociales (MFAS). The Direction pour l'Egalite et Promotion du Genre (DEPG) was made responsible for monitoring the respect to the principle of female-male equality, for coordinating all the gender-sensitive initiatives and for promoting the gender approach as a tool for analysis, diagnostic and planning of development policies, plans and programs, following the "gender mainstreaming" strategy. The opening that DEPG represented to the implication of gender concerns in the policy agenda settled the conditions for the president to issue in 2007 the Declaration Solennelle de la Côte d'Ivoire sur l'Egalite des Chances, l'Equite et le Genre, which manifested the intention to

²² Data from 2002, Profil de Pauvreté en Côte d'Ivoire, Institute National de Statistiques, July 2013.

introduce a 30% quota for female candidates in elections, as recommended by the Conference in Beijing and, in 2008, to adopt the Action Plan to implement the Resolution 1325, a victory for the women's movement of CFELCI.

The adoption in 2009 of the Politique National sur l'Egalite des Chances, Equite et le Genre aimed to introduce the shift between the used WID to a GAD approach in national strategies concerned with disparities between women and men. It was definitely not sufficient to have been diffusing the concept of "gender" without integrating it as a procedure, a tool for development planning. Thus, it proposed the pursue of a just and equitable development with equal chances for men and women also in the decision making process and based in four main axes - Gender, Governance and Human Rights; Gender, Macroeconomic layout and Budget analysis; Gender, Reconstruction and Basic Social Services; and Gender, Capacity Reinforcement and Institutional Mechanism for Monitoring and Evaluation – that aimed to account for the most important Ivorian challenges in terms of gender inequalities. Moreover, the policy suggested the need to sensitize the actors of development to "gender", recognizing the importance of partnerships and the involvement of the community.

However, in 2010, once again Côte d'Ivoire suffered with a political crisis, the pos-electoral crisis, which deeply destabilized the country. Given the conflictive state in which it was merged, the focal issues introduced by the gendered national policy had almost not developed because they lost the necessary support and attention, while the priority was given to the erupting clashes that prevailed. But, as argued before, although women were a target of the actions within the conflicts, the crisis had also altered their position in society and, at the same time, many women had mobilized for the establishment of peace, what, to some extent, resumed their demands in the agenda.

The gender-sensitive institutional structure that was in construction before was then reinforced by the reorganization of the MFFE with the Direction des Institutions de Formation et d'Education Feminine (DIFEF), charged to manage the IFEFs, which were redesigned for a more significant role as well: they were suggested to be true national development instruments with new goals. The objective of these basic structures for feminine formation was not anymore to educate women and girls exclusively for a performing household management. As extracurricular institutions and alternative education sources, their objective was, from then on, to assure to the illiterate or non-schooled feminine population tailored training programs expected to enhance their competences and give them extra development tools that could boost their financial independence and, at the same time, engage women's work formally in the development of the country.

The IFEFs' actions were reframed to provide both sessions or campaigns for communitarian awareness (sensitization and formation in actual topics and topics of general interest) and

formation programs encompassing literacy, education to family life (general, environmental and food hygiene, child care and family planning, home economics and civil and moral education) and the disciplines for the creation of income generating activities (sewing, baking, embroidery, crochet...). In addition, beyond being spaces of learning, they were also conceived to be spaces of contact, exchange, information, documentation and advice. Nevertheless, the government was aware that the attainment of these goals necessarily required reforms of these structures, so that they could actually offer to women and girls this privileged environment for the promotion of their empowerment in order to embrace them as actors of the Ivorian socioeconomic development.

In any case, other operational tools were introduced by the government in a complement to the institutional framework. Still in 2011, it was created the Compendium des Competences Féminines de Côte d'Ivoire, which attempted to increase the visibility, the participation and the leadership of women in the management of public and private affairs as well as to function as an observatory, where the priority sectors for gender disparities could be identified, with a special attention dedicated to professional insertion. Besides, two other funding mechanisms added to this apparatus, the already existent FNFD, more oriented in 2013 and 2014 to the entrepreneurship of women and the assistance of victims of the pos-electoral crisis, and the Fond d'Appui aux Femmes de Côte d'Ivoire (FAFCI), created in 2012 with support of the Ivorian First Lady to facilitate women's access to low-cost credit and develop or boost their business.

In the meanwhile, the government established the Plan National du Développement for 2012-2015 with the core objective to upgrade Côte d'Ivoire into an emerging nation by 2020. In order to achieve this objective the plan put forward 5 strategic goals, encompassing the gender dimension in the third one:

1. People live in harmony in a secure society in which “good governance” is assured;
2. The generation of national wealth increase, is supported and shared guided by the equity principle;
3. People, particularly women, children and other vulnerable groups have access to adequate social services in equity with other social groups;
4. People live in a healthy environment within an adequate living framework;
5. The positioning of Côte d'Ivoire in the regional and international scenes is effective.

Nonetheless, all these measures were not sufficient to change the situation of the country that still ranks 136th in the gender inequality index (**World Economic Forum, 2014**). In practice, as shown in the report of **MSFFE** evaluating the implementation of Beijing's Program of Action (**2014**)²³, the plans have not been implemented in a systemic manner, the budget allocation to

²³ Ministère de la Solidarité, de la Famille, de la Femme et de l'Enfant. Rapport de la Côte d'Ivoire sur la mise en oeuvre du Programme d'Action de Beijing vingt ans après. Juin, 2014.

support both specific institutions and policies have been insufficient and the main political debates do not encompass in a regular basis the sex specificities and the concerns of women. Moreover, the propelled GAD approach was not satisfactorily incorporated.

In regards to women's economic empowerment, the success of gender-sensitive programs depends on their contribution to change labor market mechanisms, in terms of access and mobility, but with a particular accent on access and mobility to markets where, traditionally, they did not belong to. Despite the advances that the IFEFs could represent in the path towards gender equality, rather than being prepared to perform activities that their stereotyped gender roles lead them to, empowerment means allowing women to access formation channels that would make them ready to perform any sort of activity in equality with their male counterparts (**Kouame et Gueye, 2000**), and this is not what is so far being proposed by these landmarks of the professional insertion strategy. Detaching sex from career opportunities would actually have an impact in gender relations and how they are played, negotiated and constituted. Besides, gender-sensitive initiatives should not be restricted to provide to women education on reproductive tasks, exactly because this unquestioned association stands on the root of most of gender disparities.

Beyond that, a country that envisions gender equality as an axis for development must not ignore the policy implementation process, but conceptualize institutional mechanisms able to differentiate local specificities and, therefore, implicate local authorities. If, on the one hand, the IFEFs were conceived to articulate the national sphere with the local arena for the delivery of training programs, on the other hand, they were not communicated in adequacy with this objective and lack coordination links with local administration, which are imperative to their integration in local development strategies. Deprived from resources, DIFEF has limited agency in the overall governance apparatus and, consequently, the delivery potential that could be enjoyed due to the local disposition of IFEFs is not favored, what, thus, result in the difficulties to meet the needs of beneficiaries. Furthermore, it is unconceivable that the Ivorian Development Plan itself was not sufficiently able to delineate action lines for the implementation of these policies, failing to mobilize key development actors and to delegate missions to them, despite the prediction of their involvement.

The gender concern is overlooked at the local sphere, something depicted in the fact that only 5% of the “mairies” are headed by women (**Maimouna, 2013 to @bidj@an.net**). More specifically, in Abidjan, the economic capital, concentrating almost 20% of the country's population²⁴ and, therefore, a pillar of Ivorian development, there are no tailored institutions to deal with gender issues, confirming that the urban development still does not recognize gender as an equivalent valuable strategy. The district's government attains its goals organized around

²⁴ Total population Côte d'Ivoire (2008): 18 260 044 (World Bank);
Total population Abidjan (2008): 3 536 470 (CIV AGEPE SEA 2008)

health, education, security, transportation, electrification, access to water in a struggle against poverty without giving attention to how they reach differently women and men, what is definitely not in conformation with a gender-sensitive urban development strategy. In institutional terms, the governance of Abidjan is driven by the district council, under the management of the governor, and with the contribution of the consultative committee and the commissions, which include folders of planning, development and employment; economy, budget and finances; environment and well-being; tourism and handicraft; equipment infrastructure and transports; education, health, social affairs and leisure and security and civil protection, but neglect the gender axis.

In 2013, Robert Beugre Mambe, Abidjan's governor, identified women as being the most vulnerable social "entity" of the district, and announced a project that aimed to give to the female population of the 30 villages of Abidjan (organized in 13 communes) support for their productive activities, specially the attieké²⁵. The governor planned the development of cassava crops, creating manufactures to process the attieké and a commercialization circuit (**Ismael, 2013 to @bidj@an.net**). He also mentioned a program of assistance to form women on both mechanisms and saving systems. Nevertheless, initiatives like this one are very punctual and, more importantly, isolated from the urban development strategies.

To some extent, the gap in translating national directives to local arenas represents a failure of the MDGs themselves that are taken as the guidelines for national development, while these goals did not predict a concrete delivery plan embracing local actors and did not stress the particular importance of the urban dimension. Still, the impasse that this fracture represents to the attainment of gender equality could be an obstacle to the ambition of Ivorian authorities to make Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020, because the accomplishment of this goal is a cornerstone of sustainable development.

However, the local administration itself has a responsibility on any drawback along this pursue, because it has been being largely blind to gender issues. In any case, the existing gaps on the governance of gender disparities in Abidjan are a reality and this is even more injurious considering the particularities of the development of this city. Abidjan's development has historically unfolded in feminine presence and through feminine action. Not only because its social tissue is much constituted by women that migrated since the beginning of the city's growth onwards, but also because its main economic sector and employment pool – the informal sector – is much sustained by the active participation of women workers. This role that Ivorian women play on the urban scene and, more specifically, within the informal sector, is largely overlooked by local authorities, who set it apart from the whole of development strategies.

²⁵ Attieké is a side dish made from cassava root that represents a significant staple food in large parts of West Africa, notably in Côte d'Ivoire.

It is exactly in the interaction between many of these urban development strategies with the gender dimension that Fondation Orange intends to situate the program “Maisons Digitales”, proposing a necessary linkage for building coherence and intersections where today there is only a large vacuum of communication, as it will be more deeply developed in the following chapter.

5. Orange Foundation “Maisons Digitales”: Bridging some gaps

5.1.1 Bridging the delivery gap... while towering in corporate philanthropy field

The international agenda informed by the MDGs raises important global concerns, pointing to critical issues that must be solved for the achievement of more equitable societies and stressing the needed reforms and improvements on the governance of these issues by national governments in coordination with donor agencies. However, it lacks an assessment of policy implementation and of the deployment of the following programs and projects that take place at the local level (**Satterthwaite, 2005**).

Local governments have a development vision that determines priority policy sectors as well as priority policy targets, both in terms of focus areas and beneficiaries. The way rules are formulated, appropriated and manipulated by these actors shape policy boundaries and determine who has access to which sort of service in which quality and even who is entitled to rights. At the same time, these authorities watch over other local stakeholders that are also implicated in the delivery of policies, such as NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and private providers (**Hasan, Patel and Satterthwaite, 2005**). Moreover, besides their political projects, their capacities, in the form of human and/or of material resources, bind local actors for carrying out their actions likewise. Indeed, national governments and international agencies are significant players in the achievement of development goals and must be integrated in policy models in which they have responsibility. Nevertheless, while local bodies are the ones on the base of the policy chain, meeting the MDGs is much more dependent on whether or not these actors are meeting local needs and if they are more accountable to those with unmet needs, who are at the center of the MDGs targets (**Satterthwaite, 2005**). In this sense, the role of higher instances is actually to support and guide local actors to the adequate and desirable paths.

In Côte d'Ivoire, despite some interesting initiatives such as the IFEFs, the national government has hitherto not succeeded in enacting constructive channels for the coordination of more gender-sensitive development strategies. The government acknowledged in its discourse and in consecutive law making the importance of the issue and also committed to several international conventions (including the United Nations Millennium Declaration) that engaged with gender equality, recognizing its humanitarian value and its relevance for national development. However, it failed to mobilize local authorities to take their own responsibilities and even failed to identify the key local actors, neglecting, for instance, the urgency of establishing a clear gendered urban axis in the national development plan. Concomitantly, for their part, these local authorities, notably in Abidjan, which is a pillar of the Ivorian economy, are not yet sufficiently sensitized to gender concerns and, therefore, did not integrate them among the significant urban development strategies where they should be.

Still, where local governments do not ensure the delivery of full-fledged policies, other actors have been bridging these gaps, among them the mentioned local and international NGOs, CBOs and private enterprises (**Satterthwaite, 2005**). Whether an issue of funding base or actual local capacity, the demand for the services keep existing and there might be stakeholders proposing to supply it. The need for partnerships was evoked in the Ivorian development plan and, if this tool was not as effective as it should to engage local authorities, it at least signed the openness of the Ivorian government to communicate with other entities, recognizing its own limits to the implementation of policies. In the case of the provision of women's training in Abidjan, a key matter for gender equality in that city, while the district's government lasted much apart from the provision of the service, FO aims to take some part of the action.

In many other cases, quite centralized foreign aid institutions, inevitably knowing little about local realities and the real needs of beneficiaries, were miserable in promoting significant social changes and, above that, had provoked the disruption of local dynamics, engendering effects that functioned in the opposite direction of the expected (**Satterthwaite, 2005**), the same trap experienced by national governments in the implementation of the policies informed by the MDGs. But FO's international structural organization already accounts for intermediary stakeholders, the local foundations and affiliates, whose role is to increase the capacity to support local processes on which positive outcomes depend. Beyond the importance for the deployment of FO's own projects, such model demonstrates the institutional means by which other policies could reinforce their efficiency (**d'Cruz and Satterthwaite, 2005**).

5.1.2 Bridging the delivery gap ... while towering in corporate philanthropy field

The value of local foundations and affiliates does not rest only in the role they play in relation to the projects themselves, but in the construction of FO's international strategy likewise. By the time of its internationalization, FO identified the lines of action already existent in these entities, understanding that they reflected the most strategic cornerstones to be supported in those respective contexts, then it selected common trends, combined with its own fields of expertise and repackaged them all in a unified action plan. On the one hand, this homogenization aimed to federate the existing foundations and affiliates and, on the other hand, it was a tool to boost FO's global image, to the extent that having delineated landmark programs would differentiate its actions from those of other institutions operating in corporate philanthropy.

Corporate philanthropy is anyhow a very particular field within the scope of the private sector. On the opposition of what is usually expected to be in the very core of these activities, it provides material and other supports to associations and organizations to carry out their projects without any direct counterpart requested from the beneficiaries, with the condition that they represent a general interest. In this regard, its main criteria are:

- (a) A not-for-profit orientation: there is no systematic objective of generating surplus and the commercial revenues of the institution are secondary;

- (b) A disinterested management: the managers of the institutions have no interest in the results of the operations and are not remunerated on the basis of their success, or, in other words, eventual profits are not redistributed but reinvested;
- (c) Social utility: the project must seek to satisfy the needs that are not or not well satisfied in their original conditions;
- (d) Sensitive public: the target of the actions are vulnerable and socioeconomic deprived people (**Seghers, 2007**).

Corporate philanthropy has developed in the sequence of critics raised by Marxist approaches after the War that projected a very negative image of enterprises, by always associating them with the realm of exploitation, class struggle and alienation. This representation also blamed enterprises for their social conformism, distant they were from the grassroots in their well-established hierarchies. Nevertheless, before a new political and economic scenario with deepen social needs, the place and the role of the private sector underwent a profound revision, which widened and changed its scopes of action and management methods. In fact, the changes were not reserved to enterprises, but also general interest actions were not seen anymore exclusively as charity, and even NGOs began, to some extent, to operate under the logic of competition, being themselves exposed to the constraints and risks of the market (**Seghers, 2007**).

On their side, many enterprises assumed more socially engaged and “responsible” missions, also envisioning the opportunities they had in hands for being organizations with the capacity to channel resources – even by attracting other partners – to generate considerable social impact and “create value” through their actions. Hereof, they acknowledged the strategic stand underlined in the engagement with social causes and in the contributions it entailed for the development of the areas where they operate. Corporate philanthropy appeared then as a means for these stakeholders to deliver social services whereas they did not correspond to the established categories of public action besides respecting – and expecting – a different demarche. Under this framework, corporate philanthropy developed an ingenious mechanism to deliver the services, which implicate companies’ employees to give skill-based supports to beneficiaries, in an attempt to develop a direct dialogue with civil society (**Seghers, 2007**).

In this sense, of course that corporate philanthropy must not be interpreted as an astonishing apology of enterprises for all that they had been accused of, but, on the contrary, it would be astonishing if they did not engage with the social environments that constitute both their potential workforce and market. Therefore, corporate philanthropy is a strategic move of the private sector to constitute productive and profitable working ambiances. Moreover, this strategic aspect is highlighted in the procedure adopted nowadays by private foundations, which is not a passive reception and support of external causes, but relies on the design of their own policies and management structures that select projects and eventual partners (**Seghers, 2007**).

In the case of FO, this policy evolved, as noted before, from the systematization of historical lines of action, which assembles also those of the other 16 foundations and 14 affiliates that

configure along with the French headquarter Orange's corporate philanthropy activity in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Since the time of its creation, in 1987, FO has voluntarily anchored its activities in the natural extension of the company's mission: to allow everyone to "communicate better". Along the first years, when it was still called Fondation France Telecom, it translated this aim into actions supporting vocal music, gymnastics and, by 1991, autism.

In 2005, with the internationalization, it reorganized its engagements around two domains, respectively health, with supports to visual and hearing impaired people and people with autism, and education, in the struggle for literacy and school attainment, notably to girls and women, identified as the most sensitive social groups in the "developing" countries embraced. So, FO's international strategy, informed by a bottom-up endorsement of core causes supported by local foundations and affiliates, was from its roots "gendered".

In 2007, when the whole group underwent the rebranding, the Fondation France Telecom became Fondation Orange. At the same time, FO designed the main axes in which it is based until today: education, health and culture. Finally consolidated, from 2010 onwards, it incorporated the digital dimension, in conformation with the update of the company's technology and expertise and, therefore, with the will of implicating the employees in the philanthropic actions.

Five years from then, now, in 2015, FO's main objective is to be "recognized" for its strong engagement with the "digital", which is, obviously and coherently, its differential from other corporate philanthropy actors. At the same time, internationally, such recognition inevitably is intertwined with the gendered strategy, notably in education, with the program "Ecoles Numériques" and its special attention for girls schooling, and with the newest "Maisons Digitales", whose intention is to inscribe FO's well-consolidated action for women's formation also in the digital demarche. Additionally, FO's 2015 objective encompasses the need to be "better known", which consequently engendered a focus on the proximity with beneficiaries through its projects, the mobilization and federation of the employees and, last but not least, the reinforcement and dynamization of the integrated international networks, assets they are for the reading of context-specificities.

5.2.1 Reinforcing its international strategy... while bridging some "gender" gaps

Despite FO's experience with women's formation abroad, "Maisons Digitales" still is a new program and this is why its respective call for projects was done only internally this time, as a matter of prudence. If it were an already implemented program, candidates would be, in their great majority, associations and organizations already known by FO, once they would have previously carried out projects together, after being indicated by local foundations or affiliates, their first partners, who hold a privileged selection capacity for being in the field. Besides, if the country offices would be implicated in the projects even in the case of an external call in

accordance with the “better known” strategy, such procedure also functioned as a tool to select those who had indeed both identified the program as a local need and committed to the deployment and monitoring of the project.

It was under this framework that FOCIT brought up its candidature to implement “Maisons Digitales”. While women’s formation is a cross-border issue in many of FO’s countries, the Ivorian context is particularly demanding it and FOCIT recognized this need, at the same time envisioning the opportunity it represents for the image of the brand. More specifically, FOCIT understood the issue as a need and opportunity in Abidjan, where the economy is more and more based on activities operated in the informal sector and driven by women. Moreover, beyond the favorable local framework, the potential of the initiative is also endorsed by the unfulfilled needs of the national development plan, which relies on the attainment of its gender goals in order to place Côte d’Ivoire among the “emerging” nations by 2020. Before the limited action of the district government, FOCIT realized how it could be a privileged grassroots interlocutor in this cause for the national government, carrying along the name of Orange.

In this sense, FOCIT’s candidature for implementing the “Maisons Digitales” program amalgamates various interests and stakeholders. It assembles FO’s goals for representing promising outcomes, well articulated with the needs of beneficiaries, pointing to innumerable possible channels of engagement of local employees and, more, assured by the commitment of the local foundation, a crucial aspect for the selection of local partners and for the monitoring of the actions. It assembles FOCIT’s own goals of being recognized by the local society as an accountable social services’ provider, by the Ivorian authorities within the national development strategy and by FO itself, standing out from other foundations and affiliates of the group. It assembles the national government’s goals for contributing to the achievement of core objectives of the development plan. But, above all, it assembles the goals of Abidjanian women informal workers for supporting their empowerment and, therefore, their visibility among other urban actors. Hence, the resulted amalgam is a coherent assemblage of intentions with a great potential to come, coherence this that is likewise clear all throughout the lines of the project presented by FOCIT and already approved by FO.

The objective of FO with the “Maisons Digitales” program is to design and test a model of training that presumes the use and the appropriation of digital tools to develop and valorize the business skills of vulnerable women. In terms of content, FO expected projects to account for two axes: a literacy module and management modules. FO felt more legitimate to design a program on entrepreneurship, its intrinsic expertise, rather than a vocational one for activities related to the telecom domain, in accordance with the principle of project adjustment to local dynamics. But, besides this framing, no other guidelines or constraints were presented in the call as long as the candidate country offices were understood as being more qualified for further delineations.

For Côte d'Ivoire, FOCIT presented a project for supporting 1000 vulnerable women entrepreneurs via the "Maisons Digitales" from June 2015 to May 2016. It aims to teach 250 women to read and write and reinforce the entrepreneurial capacities of other 750 women using digital tools. These women will receive formation in management, financial and entrepreneurial skills, including accounting and simplified marketing as well as basic assessment of digital devices and software to make women more familiar with their use, perhaps appropriating them in their business' procedures.

In the literacy axis, the project comprehends the formation of 15 trainers by a specialist of the Ministère de l'Education Nationale (MEN) that will give the courses in classes for 20 to 30 women at the maximum. In the entrepreneurship axis, the project implies the participation of the NGO Planete Finance – specialist in microfinance - for the formation of 15 trainers that will teach in classes for an average of 20 to 25 women. Furthermore, the project predicts a sensitization campaign, with the organization of weekly sessions in a rotating basis that intends to touch other 1500 women.

The courses will take place in Abidjan: in Treichville with the partnership of the NGO Siguidya, in Komassi with the partnership of Adjaratou Demin, in Yopougon with the partnership of the Comité de la Coordination de la Société Civile, in Abobo with the partnership of Solidaire, boutons hors de la pauvreté and, finally, in Abidjan's banlieue, in Anyama, with the partnership of Femmes Emergentes. 76.5% of the employment in Abidjan is concentrated in the informal sector and 78.7% of Abidjanian women found their livelihoods within it. Moreover, while this sector is shared in 1.4% of agriculture, 13.3% of manufactures and 85.3% of services, 92.1% of women work in this last market niche. Besides, 45.9% of Abidjan's informal workers are self-employed, condition that represents also 56.6% of the informally occupied women in the city (**CIV AGEPE SEA 2008**). It is, therefore, in coherence with the demands of the Ivorian context that FOCIT selected the Abidjan for a training program for informal self-employed women.

The project will start with meetings between FOCIT and its technical partners - the Ministère de l'Education Nationale et d'Enseignement Technique, more specifically the Direction de l'Aplhabétisation et de l'Education Non-Formelle (DAENF) and Planete Finance – for the negotiation and validation of the contents. Then, other meetings will take place with the Federation des ONG de Développement de Côte d'Ivoire (FEDOCI), for the identification of groups and associations of women that will be engaged in the project as beneficiaries and with the NGO Femmes et TIC, which will assure the regular animation and the sustainability of the Ivorian "Maisons Digitales". Another phase of exchanges with women's associations is predicted, the ones pointed in each commune, so that the content can incorporate their demands. After, it will take place the integration of the content in digital platforms for them to be accessible through the devices. FOCIT will then make an internal call for volunteers, in order to

implicate employees in the animation of workshops, especially for the use of digital tools, considering their expertise. Finally, the deployment of the project will be intertwined with a monitoring procedure that expects two evaluation reports, at the mid-term and in the end of the action. Apart from the most evident need for such methodological practice, which assures the “good governance of the projects, monitoring and evaluation are a particularly important procedure within FO’s implementation strategy. This is so since, by principle, FO does not engage itself in projects longer than a year, notwithstanding using the sustainability of the action as a basic criterion for the selection of projects, hence, it expects local partners to present such a strategy, which is unattainable without keeping records of the deployment process.

5.2.2 Reinforcing its international strategy... while bridging some “gender” gaps

Beyond being appropriate for meeting the corporate philanthropic goals of FO and FOCIT, the Ivorian “Maisons Digitales” are an interesting approach for gender-sensitive development policies in Abidjan. It has already been argued that formation and professional insertion policies for women are crucial in that context but, despite the importance of the national IFEF public system for the delivery of such policies, the economic opportunities encouraged by these institutions, even before their restructure that aims to make them genuine tools for the promotion and empowerment of women, continue to not attain the main goals inscribed in GAD, which presuppose the development of channels for women to challenge their traditional societal roles, whereas IFEF’s programs constitute, in fact, extensions of the attributed feminine activities from the household to the street. Meanwhile, “Maisons Digitales” come closer to be a GAD-oriented formation to the extent that it proposes the acquirement and the enhancement of a transversal set of skills that could be applied in any sort of activity; yet, skills that were usually associated with men: business skills. Besides, “Maisons Digitales” can support the reduction of the digital divide²⁶, which is also a factor of gender disparities in contemporary society.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) were said to play a significant role as a tool for development, for contributing to the creation of new types of economic activity and employment opportunities, to the enhancement of networks and to participation and advocacy within society. As long as they have less access to such technologies, women are, once again, in disadvantage in relation to men, what, therefore, exacerbates existing inequalities and engender new ones. If, otherwise, ICT are used as means for addressing the gender dimensions of this fracture, they can be a powerful catalyst for the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality (UN Women, 2005). Thus, in alignment with the business axis, this is the intention of FO with “Maisons Digitales”, not to “digitalize” gender roles (what takes place, for instance, when training for typists or secretaries are supported by digital tools), but to use these devices for business upgrading.

²⁶ “Digital divide” as in (UN Women, 2005: 2): “differences in resources and capabilities to access and effectively utilize Information and Communication Technologies”.

For supporting women to cross gender borders in the informal market both by performing different activities and augmenting the scale of their business, “Maisons Digitales” can be characterized as a gender-sensitive approach. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely for a GAD program to refer to the “house”, the feminine socially attributed realm. More than being a matter of labeling, this association points to the limits of the transformation power of the program, which is likewise an imperative aspect for empowerment, a process that intrinsically means social change. Hereof, it is evident that the program is still inscribed in the logic of “smart economics”, which rationalizes investing in women and girls on behalf of other economic goals **(World Bank, 2007; Chant and Sweetman, 2012)** that have to do with the objectives of FO within the corporate philanthropy field.

Still, the program is a valuable initiative in Abidjan, because local authorities are not, for themselves, identifying the issue as a key element of the city’s development. To some extent, the deployment of the project will actually dynamize the coordination between stakeholders, implicating the national government with the Ministère and even grassroots women’s organizations, what, with success, has the potential to sensitize the local government as well. Of course that without this engagement and the creation of spaces where women could actually question their attributed social position to shape their own lives, it is not possible to speak about a full-fledged gender-sensitive urban development. Yet, even if “smart economics” does not intend to challenge the social order, FO and its “Maisons Digitales” will be bridging some gaps.

Conclusion

Abidjan, economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire and an important hub in West Africa, has been developing, since its very early stages, in the presence and with the participation of women. For many years, these women have found their ways to secure their own livelihood and of their dependents in this city, mostly by performing activities in the informal sector, which was, in great part through their work, gaining importance until become the main provider of goods and services and, consequently, the main employment pool of this urban center. Before the structure adjustment program and the consecutive political crisis, Ivorian women have been one of the most injured social groups, but they have not ceased their activities and even played an important role for the resolution of conflicts and the agreement of the Ivorian peace. Despite their higher exposition to risks especially during the clashes, these events have had also an impact on women's socioeconomic position in Abidjan, with more of them assuming the head of households, an increased responsibility supported, once more, by the income generated through their small business. The value of these business for Abidjanian women is put forward in their feminist fight, which is not exclusively about challenging male domination, but mostly having their work recognized by local authorities and society in order to be also considered among the urban subjects entitled to rights that entail better opportunities for themselves and their families.

In fact, the historical role that these women have been playing in the city-making process has so far been much invisible to the local government and this negligence oblige them to continuously struggle to be where they actually belong. Many women are not holders of a full-fledged citizenship, what encloses them in a vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability that exacerbates gender disparities. Nevertheless, while local authorities do not translate the centrality of women in Abidjan's society into gender-sensitive policies, the very development of the city is compromised, after all, such large goal cannot be achieved in detriment of gender equality.

Moreover, urban development is much related to policies for the better performance of the workforce and, if designed to be effective, they should not be limited to grow the possibilities in this productive factor, but to attack the gender bias that characterizes it (**Kouame, 1999**). In this sense, gender-sensitive formation policies should be integrated in the bulk of urban development strategies in Abidjan, at first, because training have a positive impact in worker's productivity, but, above that, because it has a direct effect on the empowerment of women, providing positive inputs to all the three interdependent variables involved in such process: resources, agency and achievements.

However, at the moment, apart from punctual initiatives, the local government has not yet included such policies in the urban development plan. At the same time, the national government, even if concerned with gender issues, signing international conventions and assuming this commitment also in its development plan, has not been able to construct proper delivery channels for concrete gender-sensitive training policies. The base structures of the

national training system for women, the IFEFs, have not yet incorporated a Gender and Development approach, and, so far, pretty much offer courses that agree with the perpetuation of the extension of feminine attributed roles from the household to the street. In fact, the national government have not succeeded to design a proper gendered urban development axis whereas it was unable to sensitize local authorities to engage in the cause of gender equality, what is clear on the distance between the IFEFs and the urban development policies with which they should be intertwined.

Still, if training policies are not implemented with a significant degree of gender-sensitiveness, this will impact the national development plan conceived to make Côte d'Ivoire an emergent nation by 2020, since gender equality is imperative for the achievement of such goal. Furthermore, considering the weight of Abidjan in the structure of the country, the failure might be even more consequent if such policies are not delivered in this city, not to mention that if Abidjan is not sensitive to gender, other regions are probably even worse. But the difficulty in achieving reduced gender inequalities at the local level is not independent from the absence of implementation guidelines on the part of the international blueprints that have been informing the local policy agenda, such as the MDGs. Despite the important advocacy work of the “gender mainstreaming” strategy proposed by the chief international agencies, they lack a plan for the delivery of the policies, which is crucial for their deployment and for the success of the process’ outcomes.

In any case, although Abidjan could challenge many of the arguments explaining women social exclusion based on historical rural-urban migration trends and the novelty of the feminine presence in African cities, the situation of Abidjanian women are not any better and the lack of policies tailored to face gender disparities only adds to their vulnerability. Then, **the current public policy layout in this city has little room for gender-sensitiveness due to a failure of coordination among responsible international and national actors to engage local authorities with the gender equality cause, but, above all, due to the blindness of the local government itself, who has not constituted a clear gendered urban agenda as it should, neglecting the important role women have been performing for the development of the city.**

However, the vacuum in the governance of gendered demands in Abidjan have attracted the attention of FOCIT, which identified an advantaged environment for the deployment of the program “Maisons Digitales”, a 2015 landmark initiative of FO for reinforcing its international strategy and achieving the goals of being “recognized” and “better known” by the public, standing out from other actors in corporate philanthropy field. “Maisons Digitales”, by delivering to women a training program on business skills and introducing to them digital devices, has the potential to function more as a GAD policy in comparison with the existent supports, while such formation overcomes the feminine-based orientation that other programs usually have and offer concretely means for the reduction of the gender digital divide. Moreover, by implicating the national-tier, with the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, and grassroots women's organizations, “Maisons Digitales” also suggests possible points of convergence between top-down and

bottom-up claims, delineating a policy delivery chain that can bridge the implementation gaps of the current framework. Simultaneously, as a policy model, it can serve as a tool for filling up the missing link to integrate gender into local development planning, by impacting the gender awareness of local authorities, after all the private sector would not enter a field without acknowledging the strategic role it plays for its working environment, evidently, equivalently strategic for the urban development. **So, the Ivorian “Maisons Digitales” points to the existing room for the implementation of gender-sensitive policies, as long as such policies are, on the one hand, a real need and, on the other hand, instrumental for the achievement of an adequate entrepreneurial environment as well as of urban development and even national development.**

Of course that the “smart economics” logic referred to in the instrumentalization of the training policies passes by, in a large extent, the gender engagement that it at first signals, because it does not intend to question the gender social order, but to make it more “efficient”. Efficiency and rights are not “one and the same” (Chant and Sweetman, 2012: 523). Yet, “gendering” development is a challenging task and, sometimes, it requires strategic decisions of collaborating with stakeholders that essentially have a different vision on the objectives of the work. This is so exactly because these stakeholders occupy privileged power positions that enable them to establish measures that, if not exactly conceived to promote social change, point to the recognition of women as urban subjects, while making them subjects of policies and, therefore, indirectly impact the social world. Nonetheless, the actual achievement of an empowered condition will much depend on the capacity of these projects to shape attitudes and beliefs in wider society, because conflicts between women and men are embedded in a very particular aspect of “togetherness” that might block the renegotiation of gender roles if based exclusively in the redistribution of means (Sen, 1990: 147).

Indeed, gender inequality is a complex phenomenon that assembles disparities coming from various sources and in different depths (Sen, 2001). It encompasses the multiple relationships between women and men, gender and sex, public and private, formal and informal, urban and rural, modern and traditional, local and global, development and growth and even research and policy. The scope of this dissertation is bounded to provide policy-makers an extended overview of Abidjan’s context, evaluating how narrowly the gender dimension has been incorporated in the urban development strategies and acknowledging here a development trap. In this sense, without omitting the complexity involved in the range of interrelated dimensions, this dissertation still settle the analysis at the local level, understanding it as a privileged locus of operation to mitigate gender inequalities, concomitantly emphasizing an equivalent privileged power position for the governance of these issues in the local political arena.

The real reach of the analysis, though, has been much constrained by the distance between the production of the research and the actual field of policy deployment, which is the city of

Abidjan. In terms of methodology, specially considering the filiation with the Gender and Development approach, it would have been enriching to merge in the field and collect data from those on behalf of whom this dissertation is actually written – the Abidjanian women – after all, hearing their voice is a crucial stage of the process of empowerment advocated here. Unfortunately, there was not an occasion for this, and the research relied much in a careful exercise of documents' examination and critical assessment, in an attempt to still build a coherent puzzle, despite the lack of women's inputs. In addition, for engaging with a research field that has not yet been largely explored, specially when intertwined with the debates of "informality" and "education", such exercise was even more challenging.

It is not possible – and not the purpose of this dissertation - to argue that the case of Abidjan justifies the diagnostic that African urban development is being conceived with limited gender concern, as long as speaking of "Africa" is always a contraction of its plurality. Nevertheless, what this research proposes is to use the strength contained in such unified concept to raise the interest on a stronger engagement of the academia itself with the urban African gender agenda, because the debates on African urban development have been much negligent to this issue. Therefore, the limits of this work do not sign the defeat of its intention, which is to nourish debates and encourage further investigation, considering the relevance of research for higher gender sensitiveness in policy-making likewise.

For the moment, this research already has the concrete possibility of inform the delivery of FO's "Maisons Digitales". If the program is already conceived at this time, the project has not yet been implemented, and this dissertation provides a deep scrutiny for the projection of interactions between its deployment and the local Ivorian reality, possibly also indicating elements of success and obstacles to be avoided, specially questioning its engagement with the actual rights of women. At this stage, before the apathy of Abidjanian government, the initiative is indeed valuable and, above all, necessary. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that much of the gender inequalities existent in Abidjan today have to do with foreign paradigms carried along development ideologies that produced gender-blind public policies and that, consequently, undermined the very development that they supposedly proposed. Thus, the ultimate expectation of this dissertation is to sensitize local authorities to the fact that if they do not take for themselves the duty to deliver gender-sensitive policies, other stakeholders will do it, perhaps bridging important gaps, but still introducing variables that could turn the goal of local development a more distant one.

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