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LOCAL AND REGIONAL TIME AGENDA

Topic 2

TIME, MOBILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

An opportunity to
increase resilience

TIME FOR LIFE

A contextualised reflection on the sustainable city

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We are traversing an ecological and social crisis that threatens the survival of a significant part of the human population and many other living things. Climate change, depleting energy and materials, biodiversity loss and challenges to accessing water are forcing us to adapt and rethink economic models and politics itself.

This crisis is caused, among other things, by the clash between the time(s) needed to sustain life –cyclical and slow– and the vertiginous and linear times of capital and business. This head-on collision carries consequences – anxiety and mental health ailments, exploitation of labour, intensified logics of patriarchy, forced migrations, conflicts, and wars– that are disastrous to people's lives.

Subjugating the times necessary for life to the times of capital hurts women, particularly non-whites, migrants and the impoverished, the most. Due to the gendered division of labour inherent to patriarchal societies, they are the ones who invest time and health in maintaining lives in systems that attack them regardless.

Human life is eco-dependent and interdependent. It is subject to the physical limits of the planet, it is vulnerable, and it must be intentionally cared for in community.

Our priority is sustainable life, so we know that surviving in decent conditions is a matter of reorganising time. We must subtract time from the activities that are at war with life, and establish paces and speeds that preserve, rather than deteriorate, the material foundations of existence.

We must make time –ecological time, economic time and everyday time– political. Public institutions must devote efforts to imagining, developing and implementing time policies.

These time policies are especially important in cities, since cities, which devour resources and generate waste and pollutants at a break-neck pace, are at the root of the eco-social conflict. They are also the backdrop against which many inequities, conflicts, and violence materialise.

From a standpoint of gender, municipal time policies can neutralise situations of domination and violence and develop co-responsibility in time. We must cement policies to reshape broken ties with nature and between people.

To advance policy proposals around time, gender, and sustainability in the city, we must explore new perspectives and consolidate them in transformative proposals. The following are some of them, in three areas: urban metabolism, structure and governance, and new imaginaries.

Urban metabolism

Cities are open systems that exchange energy, materials, and information with their surroundings, in addition to generating all manner of waste. Analysing these flows is central to assessing the impacts they generate and proposing sustainable, fair and resilient alternatives that ensure urban functioning within the Earth's limits.

- **In the energy-climate nexus, time.** Cities have rapidly consumed fossil fuels that were formed beneath the surface of the Earth over millions of years, and whose massive use has driven us to climate emergency. Renewable energies are the future, but these must come with reduced energy consumption, energy sovereignty and fair redistribution that take intersectional inequities into account.
- **The rhythms of water.** We are disrupting the water cycle through excessive consumption and pollution. We must reduce the demand for water, consider the impacts of climate change and ensure time for natural generation. In cities, public management must guarantee the human right to water, a good that is essential for life.
- **Feeding the city.** Haste and time poverty in the city make healthy diets difficult. Since women are subject to the constraints of daily care, this “hunger for time” hurts them more. City managers must make the culture of “eating well” central and support projects around food sovereignty. Besides promoting agroecology, these proposals challenge attitudes, roles and the gendered division of labour.

- **Extending periods of use, reducing waste.** No planet can withstand the rapid and multivarious generation of waste that typifies our global consumer society. We urgently need a circular economy that mimics the biosphere's slow cycles and biocompatibility and works as a team with nature, since we cannot close cycles in isolation from it. Strategies of zero waste must be co-responsible so that they do not fall chiefly to women and the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Structure and governance

The structure and governance of cities affect natural, community and social times. We must review urban planning, mobility, infrastructure, facilities, commerce, etc., with a new perspective that allows us to readjust time for life and ensure ecological and social sustainability.

- **Building cities: time-focused urban planning and mobility.** The urban planning structure hijacks our time, so we must rethink the city with an environmental and feminist perspective that enables us to take it back. This urban transformation must be based on proximity, support for local commerce and cities that are polycentric. We must also make walking, cycling, and public and collective transport easier, minimising the use of private vehicles and pacifying the traffic and speed of the city. Examples of this include Bolzano, the metropolitan areas of Milan and Barcelona, Strasbourg and others.
- **The *palaces of the people*: facilities and infrastructure in the city.** Public libraries, schools, clinics, social centres, parks, playgrounds, neighbourhood gardens, sports facilities, stores, and the like are spaces that satisfy needs, build community and make care work more feasible. In addition, many of them can be adapted as climatic shelters. The policies in Bolzano are an example of this.
- **Towards other models of commerce in cities.** The impacts of consumer society are magnified in cities by the “cathedrals of consumption” concentrated within: shopping malls. Also on the rise is online shopping, a form of “fast consumption” that negatively impacts the environment, working conditions and the commercial fabric of neighbourhoods. Municipal policies must be clearly committed to local trade.

- **Health and time.** The dizzying pace of everyday life affects people's well-being and health. We possess a biological clock that operates in sync with circadian rhythms, an environmental clock that connects us with nature, and a social one that involves human relations. Haste makes people, and women in particular, ill. Time policies in the city should facilitate daily schedules for school, work, eating and sleeping that mitigate this situation and allow us to free up quality time to reconnect with nature and build social relationships.
- **Governance in tune with the quest for resilience.** We need citizens and social movements to participate in enacting transformative political measures. An active citizenry must address the eco-social crisis and change the “business as usual” in which governance was conceived. Actions such as the Strasbourg Mobility Revolution demonstrate this.

Time for life and new imaginaries

New social imaginaries are likely the most crucial element to facilitating time for life. We need new glasses with which to see the world, and must reconnect with the Earth and its processes in order to gain consciousness of our vulnerability and interdependence. We need new narratives, cities entwined with the fabric of life, and a citizenry educated to drive the necessary processes of change.

- **Cultural narratives and productions.** Before us lies the enormous task of disputing many of the imaginaries constructed by the economic model and acquiring an ecosocial literacy that will allow us to bring to heel the life-destroying model in which we find ourselves. We must generate and reach consensus on possible, desirable and hopeful horizons which are based in reality, and we must reinstate time for life. Ecofeminism and feminist economics can illuminate this transition to sustainable living.
- **Aligning the city with natural time.** Cities have frequently turned their backs on the biosphere on which we depend and developed at the expense of fertile soils, forests, rivers, and coasts. We have generated fictitious imaginaries according to which it is possible to live outside the natural fabric of life. We must cement plans to renaturalise cities and guarantee the ecosystemic functions on which we depend, functions which generate environmental health and alleviate people's nature deficit. We also need bioregional planning that can build bridges with nearby rural and natural territories.

- **Learning for a resilient and just future.** Against the current backdrop of multi-system crisis, we must reflect on our lessons to learn as a society. We must acquire an ecosocial competence equipping us for new imaginaries that can forge a collective commitment to life and, together, shape a new culture of the Earth.



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