

Gender-sensitive cities: A Tec distinguished professor's vision



*“We can’t imagine a **sustainable city** without incorporating a **gender perspective**.”*

The architect, urban planner, and distinguished professor at [Tec de Monterrey Zaida Muxí](#), who is part of the [Faculty of Excellence](#) initiative, recalls that her gender awareness began in her university days.

At that time, she became aware of the inequalities and challenges she faced as a woman and realized that this had to do with a patriarchal organization.

This expert in **urban planning with a gender perspective** points out that although there have been important advances in promoting inclusive spaces, this concept still needs to be understood by those who make cities, such as investors and policy actors.

As a result, she has devoted her career to studying and proposing **sustainable cities** from a gender perspective, based on the inclusion and **diversity** of people and lives to strive for the prosperity of society and the world.



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Today, as a distinguished professor at the Tec, she uses her knowledge in this field and collaborates with teachers to prepare students to join the effort to **design inclusive, fair, and sustainable cities**.

Developing gender awareness at the university

Zaida studied Architecture, Design, and Urban Planning at the **University of Buenos Aires**. Her father, a civil engineer, invited her to the construction sites where he worked and inspired her to choose this career.

"I remember the musty smell from the construction sites. It wasn't very pleasant, but I liked it. I also had a collection of books (on the subject) that I enjoyed looking through," she recalls.

While studying at college, she **learned simultaneously about architecture and fashion**, which was also one of her great passions thanks to her mother, who liked to design clothing.

At that time, Muxí was beginning to develop her **gender awareness**, although she did not realize it at first. However, little by little, she became aware of the inequality and **challenges** she faced as a woman.

She realized that this had to do with a **patriarchal organization** and a gender perspective of society.

“I was used to the fact that if you went down the street, people were going to say things to you. You had to think about how you were going to move or dress and take a lot of precautions that unfortunately many women still have to take so that nothing happens to them.”

As a student, there were also times when I felt pressure from the questioning and different treatment of some professors in the academic environment just for being a woman.

*“Once I understood this, **I began to study feminism and gender**. I realized that I was experiencing gender discrimination because of a prejudiced assumption that a woman couldn’t possess the knowledge and skills needed to study architecture.”*

Although she did see a balance between male and female students in her university days, she did not perceive this in her professors. Most of the professors were men, and while **there were one or two female professors**, none of them taught her.

*“**There are three conditions needed to recover a city: participation, sustainability, and gender perspective.**”*

Moving for professional and gender development

Zaida Muxí decided to move to Spain to continue her education because she anticipated complicated living conditions in Argentina due to its political and social environment. She left her life and her family to move to Europe.

Although there was a boom at the time in architecture in **Barcelona**, which was about to host the 1992 Olympic Games, she did not feel safe. Although her mother was Spanish, Muxí had no nationality or residency papers.

What’s more, Spain was new ground to her, and she didn’t know whether anyone would want to hire her.

*“**I faced difficulties** I hadn’t had in Argentina, but I was aware of that, and I also knew that I had to knock on many doors in order to find work,” she adds.*

She found a fashion-related opportunity in a factory until she sorted out her legal status. Then, she worked in several architectural firms and even remodeled a house in Seville, where she lived with her partner at the time.

Her work gave her enough visibility and resources to resume her studies and pursue a Ph.D. in Architecture at the Seville University School of Architecture.

Based on her professional experiences and already a researcher, the [Faculty of Excellence](#) professor delved deeper into the topic of gender perspective and urban planning.

*“When I finished my doctoral thesis, I realized there are three conditions needed to recover a city: **participation, sustainability, and gender perspective**. Over the years, I’ve been strengthening these areas,” she says.*

*“**I was experiencing gender discrimination because of a prejudiced assumption that a woman couldn’t possess the knowledge and skills to study architecture.**”*

It was during her stay in Seville that she ventured into writing. She first collaborated with an Argentinian who had a magazine on architecture called “*Casas Internacional*,” writing articles and texts on the subject.

Her doctoral thesis, titled “[The Architecture of the Global City](#),” was inspired by the urban planning of her hometown. Its focus was on how politics and economics shaped that Latin American city.

She also did research on the participation of women in architecture. At the same time, she collaborated with other experts in the field and authors such as **Jordi Borja**, with whom she worked for four years and co-authored the book “**Public Space, the City, and Citizenship**.”

“That’s how I came to the urbanism of public management, politics, and social analysis. This book was very important. It’s the most cited book I’ve done because it had quite an impact,” she says.

She has also published her findings on **women’s participation in architecture** in books such as “[Women, Houses, and Cities](#)” and “**Architecture and Politics**.”



Bringing her vision to public service

With a career increasingly positioned in urban planning and gender and in conducting **workshops with women** and collaborating with feminist collectives such as [Punt 6](#), the professor began working as a government consultant in Barcelona.

“I’ve always been interested in politics as well, and there’s a bit of urban planning, social architecture, and gender issues in that,” she says.

In 2014, she was invited to be part of a new party's political movement, which ended up winning a year later with **Ada Colau** as the first woman to hold office as mayor of Barcelona.

After the elections, she was invited by the mayor of a neighboring municipality, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, to become **Director of Urban Planning** and to look at issues such as housing, environment, public space, and urban ecology.

The projects that Muxí promoted during her public administration included the participation of girls and boys in the design of a square with a **gender perspective**; a **resource center for women**; and a feminist economy.

She was later responsible for the management and execution of the **Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategy** financed by the **European Regional Development Fund** and was also a member of the **Bit-Habitat** foundation's board of directors.

“We can't imagine a sustainable city without incorporating a gender perspective.”

Joining the Tec as a Faculty of Excellence professor

Muxí is a full-time professor under the Tec's **Faculty of Excellence** initiative, where she collaborates with the **School of Architecture, Art, and Design (EAAD)** at the Guadalajara campus.

This initiative seeks to attract **outstanding global leaders** to join the teaching staff and contribute to broadening student's learning experience, as well as to promote international cooperation, innovation, diversity, and research.

The academic believes that this region of the world is experiencing something historic with **feminist movements** and is excited to be part of this moment as a lever or accelerator for this ideology to be incorporated into teaching.

“This means the possibility of impacting, bringing together, and weaving networks to help this ongoing transformation in this space and in this fertile land where it's happening,” she adds.

Zaida's first contact with the institution was as an invited guest in 2013 to give training to Tec professors on **housing** issues at the Guadalajara campus. In 2018, she returned as the organizer of a conference at the campus.

During the pandemic, she again provided training sessions to Tec teachers on **architecture, urban planning, and gender**, in which only 30 percent of the attendees were men, which caught her attention.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/2qUMyjbLsReRgdn4/>

Today, through her work as a distinguished professor at EAAD, Muxí promotes an **interdisciplinary introduction to the gender perspective** in all the school's programs.

As in her first contacts with the Tec, she continues to **train teachers and professors**. Currently, her work with the faculty addresses housing issues.

*“From that broad framework, we’ve built a series of **communication and training strategies**,” the professor says.*

*“In addition, we’ve created the **gender initiative** based on my residency, and we’ve incorporated gender as a competence and history subjects with a gender perspective into the **2026 Syllabus**,” she adds.*

She also points out that the aim is to generate a **guidebook** to **promote equity** in all events at the different school sites.

*“The institution we’re in has all the ideological will to incorporate this and to be **an agent that can and must transform society** for the better because we’re in an immense crisis. It still needs to be put into practice, and we’re working to do this,” she concludes.*

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