

**Master's thesis**

**NTNU**  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Architecture and Design  
Department of Architecture and Planning

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## Exploring the effects of women's work towards gender equal public spaces:

Qualitative study of Señoras Constructoras work in  
Los Jazmines, Lima

Master's thesis in Urban Ecological Planning

Supervisor: Brita Fladvad Nielsen and Eszter Marklund-Nagy

June 2020



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## **Abstract**

The study explores the work of a local women's group *Señoras Constructoras* employed by a Franco-Peruvian NGO and their work in the public spaces of a residential neighborhood *Los Jazmines* in Northern Lima. The purpose of the research is to analyze the impacts of their work towards generating gender equality in public space. The study explores the examples of women's inclusion in all phases of public space development in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender equality in public spaces. A qualitative approach is taken with participatory observations as the main data-gathering method. In addition, semi-structured interviews were used to supplement the study. The research findings suggest a relatively smaller impact on physical and social equality of space than expected from the work done by *Señoras Constructoras* due to the relatively small collective power of the group and the burdens of the socially assigned gender roles.

Key words: public space, gender equality, women's inclusion, Lima, Peru



## **Resumen**

Este estudio explora el trabajo de un grupo local de mujeres, Señoras Constructoras, empleadas por una ONG franco-peruana, y su trabajo en los espacios públicos de Los Jazmines, un barrio residencial en el Lima Norte. El objetivo de la investigación es analizar el impacto de su trabajo para generar igualdad de género en espacios públicos. El estudio explora los ejemplos de inclusión de mujeres en todas las fases del desarrollo de espacios públicos, con el objetivo de proporcionar una comprensión integral de la igualdad de género en el ámbito público. Se adopta un enfoque cualitativo con observación participativa como el principal método de recopilación de datos. Además, se utilizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas para complementar el estudio. Los resultados de la investigación sugieren que el trabajo realizado por Señoras Constructoras ha tenido un impacto relativamente menor que el esperado en la generación de igualdad física y social en espacios públicos, debido a su poder colectivo relativamente pequeño, y el peso que aún tienen los roles de género socialmente asignados.

Palabras clave: espacio público, igualdad de género, inclusión de la mujer, Lima, Perú





## Statement of Originality

I certify that this is my own work and that the materials have not been published before, or presented at any other module, or program. The materials contained in this thesis are my own work, not a “duplicate” from others. Where the knowledge, ideas, and words of others have been drawn upon, whether published or unpublished, due acknowledgments have been given. I understand that the normal consequence of cheating in any element of an examination or assessment, if proven, is that the thesis may be assessed as failed. In addition, the thesis was conducted following the guidelines of Norwegian Centre for Research Data ensuring the privacy of the participants.

Trondheim,  
23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a vertical line, positioned above the name Rūta Marija Slavinskaitė.

Rūta Marija Slavinskaitė



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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

HDI - human development index

GDI - gender development index

GII - gender inequality index

INTRAC - International NGO Training and Research Centre

MMPV - Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables

NGO - Non-governmental organization

NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data

NTNU - Norwegian University of Science and Technology

PUCP - Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

UEP - Urban Ecological Planning

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme



## **1. Introduction**

Through using a case study approach, this master's thesis provides a look into the impact of women's inclusion in public space development towards seeking gender equality in public space in the real-life context (Yin, 1981). The fieldwork was conducted in the neighborhood of Los Jazmines in Northern Lima. The case study investigated the Franco-Peruvian non-governmental organization (NGO) Mano a Mano and their organized women's group Señoras Constructoras who focus on community based small scale approach to public space development in seeking gender equality.

### **1.1. Motivation**

The inspiration for the thesis came from fieldwork on urban informality conducted in Bhopal, India as part of the first semester academic curriculum at the Urban Ecological Planning (UEP) program at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). During the immersive three-month fieldwork based on grounded theory approach to learning urban planning and engaging communities, the primary focus of understanding urban informality became an informal market in the MP Nagar neighborhood. However, the lack of women informants during the field study suggested that women are the most underrepresented group in the public spaces of MP Nagar (Baranger et al., 2018).

The main findings suggested that women's use of public space was associated only to necessities, such as transit, instead of leisure. For example, loitering in public space is seen as a frowned upon activity for some women based on their social status, income, and education

level. The findings of fieldwork in Bhopal provided a new perspective to look at public space and its connection to gender issues. By following the connection between public space, gender equality, and urban informality, a new fieldwork was planned. A new urban context was selected in Lima, Peru due to the opportunities possible for the researcher and historic similarities leading to gender inequality related to public space appropriation and socially assigned gender roles.

## **1.2. Significance of the study**

The findings deduced from the previously mentioned experience, showed the importance of public space in the everyday lives of people. A number of researchers support that public space generates social activity: it's the space that creates social interaction more often than the other way around (Peters et al., 2010, Sack, 1993, Wirth, 1938). For example, Sack (1993) uses the term 'power of place' to define the effects of place and space to human behavior and explain how space provides an environment for social rules and social customs to occur. The social rules and customs contained by geographical bounds provide the social proximities to groups of people which Freilich (1963) defines as a community. Furthermore, Merrifield (1996) recognizes communities as one of the place-specific benefits which grants people to form their own social environment.

However, capitalism has greatly influenced the current urban territories and shifted the global scarcities from food and produce to water, air, and space generating disproportionate appropriation and exploitation of space to the benefit the few (Lefebvre, 1996). Public space became unevenly appropriated as well with exceptional exclusion towards minorities (Low and Smith, 2006).

While statistically, women represent half of the world's population, the enforced subordinate role in society gives them minority status (Hacker, 1951). The historically predetermined social norms extend into public space, which due to women's subordinate roles do not provide the same opportunities for appropriation. However, socially assigned gender roles make women greatly dependent on public space for transit and economic activity (Terraza et al., 2020). Therefore, equal public spaces need attention from researchers and planners.

In addition to the already unequal planning of access for women, the hardships on governments presented by rapid urbanization, pushes residents to urban territories and increases the inequality between citizens' possibilities (Peek and Standing, 1979). These unplanned processes frequently become unmanageable and often result in NGOs stepping up to mitigate the processes focusing on smaller scale objectives and goals than those of governments (Teegen, 2003). In order to understand the extent of NGOs in promoting social change in public space equality, this study looks into the way the NGO Mano a Mano started women's work group Señoras constructoras participates in public space development.

### **1.3. Ethics**

During this research study, data was gathered in accordance with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) requirements<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the data was gathered anonymously, without collecting any identifiable information and only with consent from the participants of the study. The data was stored anonymously and only accessible by the researcher. The data was deleted after the submission date stated on the cover page of the thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nsd.no/nsd/english/pvo.html>

#### **1.4. Research question**

Following a grounded theory approach to case study methodology (Timmermans and Tavory, 2007, Strauss and Corbin, 1994, Yin, 1981), the initial phase of the fieldwork had a relatively broad research question: how the informal politics of space relate to gender inequality and urban informality. As mentioned before, the initial research question was inspired by the researcher's previous experience. However, following the grounded theory approach, the research question was later detailed and revised according to the issues raised by the ongoing research findings. The research question was gradually narrowed based on the collected information and selected stakeholders. After the identified initial findings, the research question was stated as:

*To what extent does the work of women's organization Señoras Constructoras influence the gender equality of public space in Los Jazmines, Lima?*

#### **1.5. Thesis Outline**

The thesis contains 8 chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the main theoretical concepts and public space definition used in the study and provides a theoretical framework followed in the thesis. Chapter 3 details the research context. The following chapter provides the information regarding the methods used in the research. Chapter 5 consists of the case study. Then, Chapter 6 provides the research findings. Chapter 7 answers the research question and discusses the research value to gender-inclusive planning practice and theory. Chapter 8 concludes the research as well as proposes a way forward.

## 2. Theory

This chapter reviews the current discussions in academia on seeking public space equality.

The study hence contributes to research on three main topics – public space, gender planning, and intersectional inclusion in decision making. The first subchapter provides the working definition of public space used for the thesis in order provide a scope for the research.

Moving on, the following subchapter looks at the existing critiques and connections between identified concepts, starting with discussion on the right to the city determined by the politics of space (Brown, 2006, Harvey, 2010, Lefebvre, 1996, Low and Smith, 2006). The researcher further investigates the power over decision making and defining the marginalized groups in public space who, depending on the context, might be discriminated against based on gender, race, income, physical ability and other intersectional factors (Crenshaw, 1991, Davis, 1983, Francke, 1990, Gkiouleka et al., 2018, Low and Smith, 2006). While some academics argue for the visibility of marginalized groups (Merrifield, 1996), others critique such a limiting understanding of intersectional needs (De Backer et al., 2019, Gkiouleka et al., 2018, Low and Smith, 2006). Gender inclusive planning (Moser, 1993, Terraza et al., 2020) is used as an overarching example in seeking public space equality and inclusion in decision making.

The researcher argues that in order to create a truly inclusive space, the intersectional groups need to be included in the decision making, assessment and implementation of the space. The final section summarizes the chapter and combines the discussion on theories into a theoretical framework which provides the analytical foundation for the thesis. The theoretical framework is visualized and further explained.

## 2.1. Public space

While public space is often a part of contemporary urban planning and urban design discourse, the actual definition of public space is hard to identify. Public space is a very broad concept relating to built and natural, physical and social, urban and rural environments.

Zhang and He (2019) provide an interesting analysis on public space definitions and categorizations of various perspectives on public space conceptualization. The criteria selected for defining a public space for this research includes open air, building-less area, used by the public for various activities.

While these features might not sustain all the possible characterizations of public space, they convey a clear scope of the of public space researched within this thesis. The criteria identified by the researcher falls amongst the lines of public space definition conceptualized by Brown (2006) who has extensively reviewed the various public space definitions used in the academia. Therefore, the public space in this research is defined as "*all the physical space and social relations that determine the use of that space within the nonprivate realm of cities*"(Brown, 2006, p. 17).

Brown (2006) acknowledges the need of communal access to public space which provides a physical environment for unformalized social relations and expressing of social customs and politics. However, the social customs within the public space are tightly linked to its ownership which might not always be easily determined (Low and Smith, 2006). One could argue that being under the rules of governments or municipalities, public spaces become a part of the public property accessible to the greater public. However, Harvey (2010) emphasizes the difference between formal lawfully determined access and the informal social



limitations of rights to the city. Thus, an important takeaway is to look at the public space beyond the policies and into the politics of space and rights to the city.

## **2.2. Right to the city, intersectionality and gender-inclusive planning**

Lefebvre's urban theory 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996) is based on the anthropologically driven 'needs' of the urban society. He conceptualizes the urban sphere as a place for the communal exchange that has been shaped throughout the history, making it a crucial part of one's development. Lefebvre's idea of contextualizing the current situation in a timeline helps to comprehend the politics and the ideological construct laying underneath the visible surface, identifying historic determinants that have shaped the particular cultures, communities, and spaces around them.

The accessibility of public space and related decision making often becomes highly influenced by politics. The concept of public space politics introduced by Lefebvre (1976) has provided a new understanding on public space management and power dynamics, explaining why the urban development has an extremely uneven process and sprawl. Therefore, the public space accessibility and the definition of *undesirables* are often historically predetermined by social stratification (Brown, 2006). While more often the undesirables are identified as criminals and drug users it can also include people of different income, ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender and people with disabilities (Low and Smith, 2006). For example, people in poverty are often perceived as undesirables by the rich (Brown, 2006, Lefebvre, 1996, Merrifield, 1996) who tend to build walls in order to hide the 'unpleasant' sight of poverty, or evict entire informal settlements, shifting the related problems from one

place to another. Evictions paired with waves of domestic migrants without access to metropolitan areas often lead to formations of urban villages or 'edge cities' (Sultana, 2011). These sites convey the definition of fast growing capitalist led urban developments (Lefebvre, 1996, Merrifield, 1996) outside the growing urban centers and provide the proximity for those who cannot access the city itself. Such territorial marginalization against the undesirables provides further financial benefits for the rich by exploiting territories with economic potential and becomes deeply and structurally embedded in the planning processes (Fernandes, 2017, Jacobs, 1961).

Often the decision making over defining the undesirables is biased and linked to power over decision making within social and physical environments. Therefore, the equality of public space is closely related to the decision making, management and policing. Sennett (1970, as cited in Merrifield, 1996) advocates for the lawfully unregulated space giving it into the hands of society for the eye-for-eye ruling. Though, Merrifield argues such approach does not provide a clear definition between right and wrong behavior. In comparison, Walzer (1986, as cited in Merrifield, 1996) proposes theory comparable to Jane Jacobs' idea of the self-policing society, with 'eyes on the street' (Jacobs, 1961) that collectively restricts violation of the socially accepted rules by using community surveillance.

However, Merrifield argues that neither of the reviewed approaches to public space management and policing provide the answer to who decides what is socially acceptable and whose decision determines the undesirable groups in public spaces. For example, if based on historically developed social stratification, the socially accepted public space rules might provoke violence towards minorities, including women as a subordinate group (Falú, 2010).

Merrifield emphasizes the importance of visibility to marginalized and subordinate groups:

*"[m]aintaining visible presence in public is, therefore, vital for those unjustly stigmatized*

*and marginalized groups struggling for recognition*”(1996, p. 63). Furthermore, he draws attention to the importance of not only seeing the people and their problems but giving them recognition as human beings, not burdens. According to Merrifield, providing people with self-realization opportunities and visibility in the public space is a crucial part of forming an open-minded and equal place.

However, Merrifield stresses that visibility might increase violence against those that are not welcome by the radicals thus highlighting the need for monitoring and policing based on collectively agreed norms intervened by the state. Nevertheless, the researcher argues that Merrifield fails to recognize his own predetermined western beliefs. Similar to western feminists arguing for the need of women’s visibility in public space (De Backer et al., 2019), Merrifield fails to understanding cultural differences as some groups might not seek visibility in the public space specifically due to his identified threat of violence. For example, in Palestine and other societies with strict surveillance, anonymity in public space is very valued (De Backer et al., 2019).

Forgetting the intersectionality perspective created by black feminists would categorized ‘women’ as a single entity (Crenshaw, 1991, Davis, 1983, Hooks, 1981, The Combahee River Collective, 1986). Such generalization completely ignores other social categories determining the personal experiences of individuals within the urban realm (Gkiouleka et al., 2018). Thus, the truly inclusive and equal public space should be versatile and contextual (Low and Smith, 2006).

Therefore, in order to seek equality in the public space, decision making opportunities should be provided to the different needs of different communities and their members (Low and Smith, 2006). In order to address the needs of different people and communities, the decision makers need to consist of voices representing the various members of society and focus on

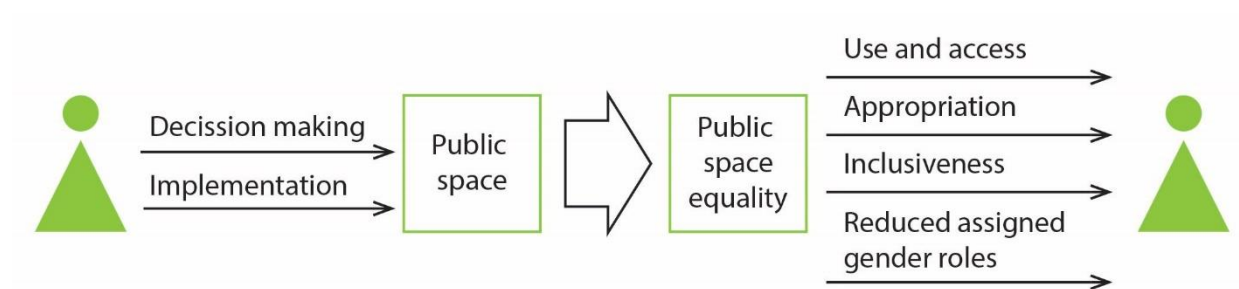
hearing those of stigmatized and marginalized communities. Pursuing to include a diverse variety of citizens in the planning processes, decision making, and implementation can provide an opportunity to change the current western white male dominated urban development sphere (Moser, 1993).

Designing gender inclusive cities provides an equal urban environment not only for women and men but more importantly for marginalized and excluded communities including but not limited to members of LGBTQ, ethnic and racial groups, people with disabilities, lower income groups and others (Terraza et al., 2020). While Lefebvre (1996) emphasizes the true shift in seeking inclusive spaces comes from societal changes, the work of architects, urban planners and sociologists provides the needed environment for social change. Despite the lack of one-fit-all solutions to gender theory implementation in planning processes (Moser, 1993), the examples of gender-inclusive designing and planning are emerging in Canada (Women Transforming Cities International Society, 2018), India (Terraza et al., 2020), Peru (Mano a Mano, n.d.-b), Austria (Foran, 2013), and Spain (Hegarty, 2019) to name a few.

### **2.3. Theoretical framework of the thesis**

Summarizing the chapter, the researcher links social exclusion from the public spaces to the decision makers. While some planners might focus towards increasing public space equality, only by including an intersectional group of people in the processes of public space development planners can seek for improving the public space and equality. Gender-inclusive planning focuses on addressing the gender needs within the urban realm and expanding the participants of change far beyond the professionals.

Thus, based on the theoretical overview above, the researcher developed the theoretical framework of the study. The framework suggests that women's participation in the decision making and implementation of public space would create equality in public spaces leading to increase in the use and access, appropriation, and inclusiveness (Figure 1). Including women in public space development would also offer a change in a male dominated field providing an opportunity to counter socially assigned gender roles (Brown, 2006, Moser, 1993, Terraza et al., 2020) and benefit the communities in creating a more equal environment.



*Figure 1 Theoretical framework*

### 3. Context of the research

This chapter offers an overview of the research context which introduces the main aspects of current gender equality status in Peru (Figure 2) and women focused organizations working with raising gender equality. In addition, a brief historic outline provides background information to better understand the current socio-cultural context in Lima which is an essential factor in the study.



Figure 2 Map of Peru. Adapted from HUHSUNQU (2009)

### 3.1. Historic overview

The influences that shaped Peru's society over time are important in order to understand the current socio-cultural context. The first identified signs of gender inequality in Peru can be traced to the Spanish colonization of the Americas. The intrusive social change enforced by the conquistadors overrode the local societal customs (Francke, 1990). The colonial period enforced machismo, economic division, racial and ethnic discrimination therefore creating a complex intersectional inequality against the native Peruvian society exceptionally discriminating women who became objectified by white men and sexualized for their vulnerability (Francke, 1990).

New social, political, and cultural dilemmas arose following Peru's independence from Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The newly independent country needed to define the new rules and norms and create an image for itself and its citizens (Oliart, 1995). The new uprising self-proclaimed elite which was creating social and economic proximity to other European countries followed the trends to separate themselves from the indigenous people thus, overriding the power dynamics (Oliart, 1995). Such social division between urban and rural communities resulted in systematic discrimination and exploitation between decision makers and citizens with no political power.

After independence from Spain, Lima became the capital of Peru. As seen in Figure 3 (Observatorio del Agua Rímac Chillón Lurín, n.d.), over the 20<sup>th</sup> century the growing urbanization and industrialization changed the country's demographics leading to increased domestic migration to the capital starting in the 1940s (Dietz, 1977). However, the systematic segregation between urban and rural communities led the domestic migrants arriving to the capital to settle in *pueblos jóvenes*, the shanty towns of Lima (Dietz, 1977).

The industrialization-based labor division adapted from European countries, which was excessively implemented in the urban territories in Peru, separated the importance between masculine and feminine roles (De la Cadena, 1992). Thus, the reproductive labor of women became dissociated from definition of work making it a less important activity. Furthermore, the racial and gender subordination put the indigenous Andean women at the very least position of Peru's society with the intersectional discrimination persisting in the following decades (De la Cadena, 1992).

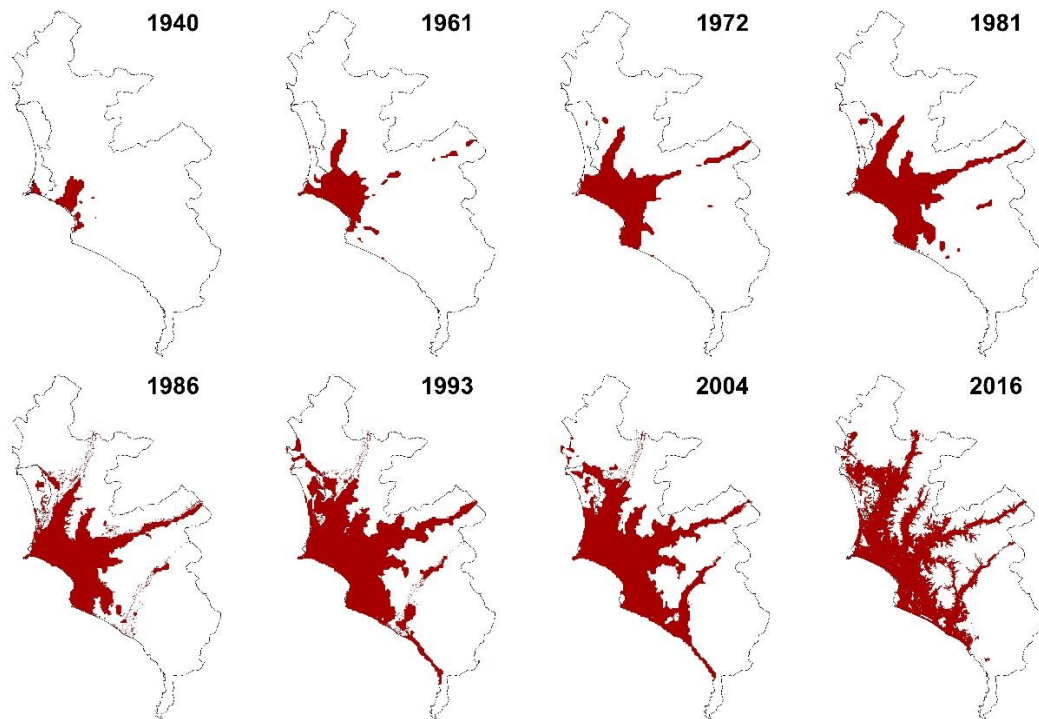


Figure 3 The areal growth Lima (Observatorio del Agua Rímac Chillón Lurín, n.d.)

The national conflicts in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century started another wave of domestic migration. The conflicts related to the communist party *Sendero Luminoso* (eng. Shining Path) which later was countered by Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori, forced the



indigenous people from the Andean regions to move into Lima for safety and opportunities (Copestake, 2009). Despite Fujimori's victory against Sendero Luminoso, his politics did not improve the lives of Andean citizens as he started a forced national sterilization policy targeting indigenous people, especially women (Mass sterilisation, 2002).



Figure 4 Map of Lima's municipalities (Lesniewski, 2019)

The rapid domestic migration enforced by the national conflicts led to the uneven urban sprawl and the extended development of *pueblos jóvenes* such as the research area in the municipality of Puente Piedra seen in Figure 4 (Lesniewski, 2019). The urban sprawl led to

the development of outer cities that became a part of Metropolitan Lima which now holds more than one third of Peru's total population (INEI, 2018).

### 3.2. Current situation

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides the global data on human development which helps to understand the current situation of gender equality in Peru in a global context. In relation to human development index (HDI), gender development index (GDI) measures the gender-gaps in life expectancy, education, and incomes and gender inequality index (GII) reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation dimensions. As seen in Table 1, in 2018 Peru ranked as 82 in both GDI and GII out of 162 countries (UNDP, 2019). In GDI Peru has achieved a lower than the Latin American average (0.951 and 0.978 respectively) while in GII Peru has a slightly better score (0.381 and 0.383 respectively).

	GDI	GII	HDI
Peru	0.951	0.381	0.759
Latin America	0.978	0.383	0.759

*Table 1 Peru and Latin America comparison (adapted by the researcher from UNDP data)*

The current president Martín Vizcarra together with *Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables* (MMPV) (eng. Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations) released the national policy on gender equality in order to promote equality between men and women in everyday life and guarantee the exercise of equal economic and social rights, especially those

related to the agricultural sector, which mostly involves the indigenous communities (MMPV, 2019). Opposite to C. Moser's (1993) critiques on ministries of women mentioned in the theory chapter, the policy shows an example how MMPV proposes a gender sensitive point of view without further women's exclusion from the society.

## **4. Methods**

The following chapter discusses the methods used during the research in order to answer the research question: to what extent does the work of women's organization Señoras Constructoras influence the gender equality of public space in Los Jazmines, Lima? The chapter provides detailed information regarding the methods of data collection, data analysis, limitations and challenges. Furthermore, chapter outlines the research design and the development of research problem throughout the study.

### **4.1. Research design**

For this research, a grounded theory approach was used, which provides an opportunity to explore the context in a wider scope and analyze the existing situation before predetermined focus (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, Timmermans and Tavory, 2007). Following Burton's approach to grounded theory research, the fieldwork started with a very broad research question which was used in order to avoid certain expectations in primary stages of the fieldwork but provide a scope of focus and direction and later provide space for adjusting (Timmermans and Tavory, 2007). Initial research question for the field work explored the relationship between women's appropriation of public space and urban informality. Based on grounded theory methodology, the research question was continuously revised and developed during the study and later finalized based on the initial findings.

After the fieldwork phase in Lima data analysis was paired with further desk research in order to finalize the study and provide a solid theoretical background for the grounded theory methodology. Therefore, the thesis development could be visually presented in two parts

(Figure 5). Main body of field research being held in Peru and then later followed by a desk research together with data analysis finalizing the study.

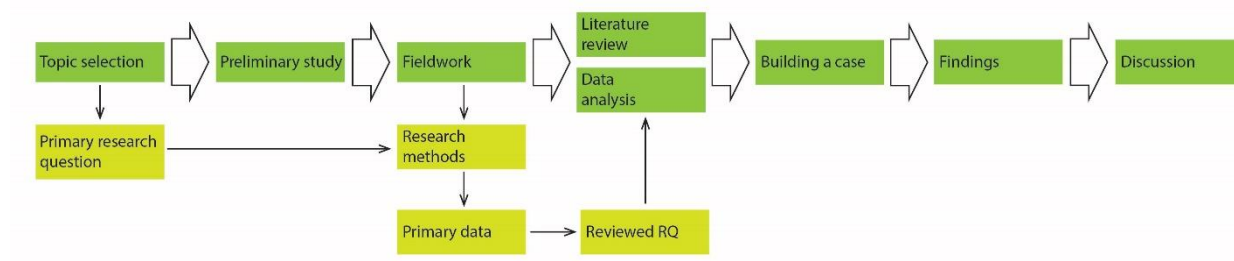


Figure 5 Research design

#### 4.2. Data Collection

Extensive research information was gathered during a 4.5 month stay in Peru however, key research data directly related to fieldwork was collected during a period of 26<sup>th</sup> October through 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019 with weekly visits to the site resulting in 7 weekly visits. Whilst at first data was gathered through three different community centers and NGO organizations, it was later narrowed down to Señoras Constructoras in Los Jazmines neighborhood due to their concrete focus on women’s empowerment and public space improvement.

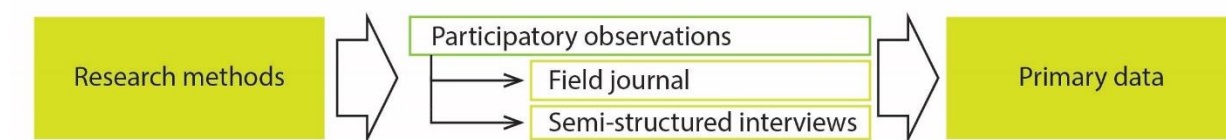


Figure 6 The flowchart of methods used during the fieldwork

Prior the fieldwork, the chosen methods focused on participation, such as transect walks, mapping activities, and drawing exercises. However, after the first field visit which provided a better understanding of the research possibilities, ethnographic set of methods were selected. Thus, the primary data was collected with series of qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and fieldwork journal (Figure 6). The data was collected in Spanish and later translated to English by the researcher. This research being a qualitative study had a relatively small sample size of 15 participants (Table 2). The sample size was affected by the research limitations that are discussed further in the chapter. The selected methods provided the proximity to the study subjects and the flexibility needed in qualitative studies.

	Workers of Señoras Constructoras	Volunteers	NGO representatives	Academics	Total
Female	7	2	1	1	11
Male	1	2	-	1	4
Total	8	4	1	2	15

*Table 2 Sample size*

#### 4.2.1. Trust building

First of all, in order to use ethnographic methods in the fieldwork, the researcher needed to achieve trust with the research group Señoras Constructoras. Nevertheless, trust building with Señoras Constructoras was challenged by other volunteers coming from Mano a Mano. Since usually volunteers at Mano a Mano stay for an average of 3-4 months and have a volunteer

rotation system which gives them a different task every day, the members of *Señoras Constructoras* were used to ever-changing helpers. Therefore, initially the women were not interested in the researcher's presence and participation in their work.

Nevertheless, after three weeks the women started recognizing the researcher as not being a part of *Mano a Mano* volunteers. The researcher's familiarity with construction work proved their worth and helped to gain recognition by the women. In addition, during one of the community workshops the researcher, together with other volunteers from *Mano a Mano*, and *Señoras Constructoras* participated in planting of radishes. Over the period of fieldwork, the radishes became a talking point and the pictures illustrating the progress of growing brought a lot of attention from the women (Figure 7).



*Figure 7 Radishes as a trust building object*

#### 4.2.2. Participatory observation

Participatory observation was selected as the most natural way of approaching the fieldwork as it allowed the researcher to discover the work, culture, and relations of the unfamiliar setting (Guest et al., 2013). The methodologies of institutional ethnography were used in order to prepare the researcher to give attention to the details of everyday life (Smith, 2003). Furthermore, works by Whyte (1980), Gehl and Svarre (2013) were used as an examples of public space observation.



*Figure 8 Participating in the work of Señoras Constructoras*



Participatory observation (Figure 8) has been the key method during the field research phase. Due to the limitations of language, which are further discussed in Chapter 4.4, participatory observations provided the best proximity to the everyday life and work of the research subject while also offering a first-hand unbiased experience with the research context. During the fieldwork the researcher took a role as a volunteer amongst the group of Señoras Constructoras. The goal of the observation was to understand the aims, impacts, limitations, threats and possibilities of Señoras Constructoras work towards public space improvement and increase in gender equality. The observations also provided insights in the use of public spaces by the community of Los Jazmines.

#### 4.2.3. Field journal

As participatory observation often asks for an informal and natural evolvement of trust building and understanding, some formal structure is needed. Keeping a field journal was an important measure to gather and analyze the researcher's observations. While the intense nature of Señoras Constructoras work limited the possibilities of voice or video recording for data preservation during the work hours, the field journal provided a great opportunity for data recording. Journal entries gave detail to the day's activities, interactions and conversations observed by the researcher and were made immediately after every field visit. In addition, the journal provided a space for detailing the data collection methods and reflecting on gathered data which was further used on improving the approaches and question focus as well as moving forward with strategic decisions in the fieldwork helping to maintain a clear focus.

The field journal also provided the opportunity to supplement the interview transcriptions with additional impressions and notes that greatly benefitted the data with qualitative information. Structured note taking helped to preserve the fieldwork timeline which was especially valuable in the phase of data analysis.

#### 4.2.4. Semi-structured interviews

Once trust was built and the researcher proved to be capable to participate in the work of Señoras Constructoras, semi structured interviews were conducted to engage the Señoras Constructoras, other NGO members, and academics in a more in-depth conversation. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the ability to adapt the questions according to the conversation and add additional questions throughout the fieldwork based on the preliminary findings from participatory observations. While the number of interviewees was not high due to the limitations detailed further, it provided a more focused and qualitative rather than quantitative discussion.

The initial interview guide consisted of location and physical environment related questions in order to fully understand the field setting (the interview guide can be found in the Appendix B). Over the period of fieldwork, the interview guide was supplemented with questions directed towards the social environment and the power over decision making in the case which were based on the observations and primary answers obtained during the fieldwork. The data gathered from Señoras Constructoras and NGO members together with data obtained from other methods provided a solid understanding of the case with enough

details given. Furthermore, the interviews with academics from Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP) provided a broader contextual overview from expert's perspective.

### **4.3. Data Analysis**

After the data collection phase through the methods mentioned above, the gathered material included voice recordings of interviews, field notes, photographs, and additional literature. The information gathered in the field journal was scanned while the voice recording of interviews were transcribed in text. Since a grounded theory approach was used in the study, data analysis also provided an opportunity to revise the research question and identify the main concepts of the research.

Later NVivo 12 software was used in order to sort and categorize all the information based on topics. Primary categorization of the data consisted of broad concepts including gender equality, public space and women's work. The three concepts repeating throughout the gathered data allowed the researcher to narrow the research question and define the scope of further research. Then, based on the research question the gathered data was further divided into the case study descriptions, conditions and results. Then the identified conditions were broken down to women's inclusion in the work of the NGO Mano a Mano and Señoras Constructoras while the identified results were further analyzed based on gender roles and the appropriation, inclusiveness, use and access to public space.

#### **4.4. Limitations and challenges**

During the field visits, it became increasingly clear that not all the initially planned data gathering methods would work. Due to intense work nature of Señoras Constructoras and the limited time schedule it was not possible to appropriately apply visual participatory design methods that would demand time off work and leaving the work site for transect walks or mapping exercises. Instead, on-site inductive methods were more possible to be done while being physically active.

During the fieldwork phase in Lima, the language limitations increased the challenges. Spanish, not being the researcher's native language, sometimes limited the clarity of the questions to interviewees. In addition, some of the initially contacted NGOs were reluctant to prolong further engagement. However, as the researcher improved their language skills during the time of the fieldwork, and followed with trust building with the research subjects, they became keen to participate in the discussions and were sometimes amused by the researcher's attempts to explain the concepts differently, occasionally including hand gestures in the conversations.

The physical environment and the location of the study created limitations for the researcher. The commute to the location and back added up to 4 hours per visit therefore it was difficult to visit the site more often limiting the researcher only to weekly visits. Señoras Constructoras also suggested the researcher to leave right after work before dark due to safety reasons, especially since researcher's racial differences could attract unwanted attention. While the researcher did not experience harassment in the research area which would be similar to Godfrey and Wearing (2018) during their research in Peru, it still posed a great threat and limited the time spent in the field.

Hence, the safety of the area affected the number of people the researcher was able to engage. For example, the researcher was unable to connect with the community members, who usually were out of the neighborhood during daytime. In addition, the very limited number of men employed by Señoras Constructoras did not allow the research to gather perspectives of men which would have greatly improved the research validity.

## **5. Case study**

The chapter discusses the case study conducted through the fieldwork in the neighborhood of Los Jazmines in Puente Piedra municipality. The primary data gathered during the fieldwork was supplemented by information gathered through desk research. The chapter provides greater detail on the context of the research area and the NGO Mano a Mano to further analyze the group of Señoras Constructoras and their work.

### **5.1. Research area: Los Jazmines**

As previously mentioned in the context chapter, the uneven expansion of Lima in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the development of outside cities. As seen in the Figures 3 and 4, the capital's proximity to the Andean mountains resulted in rapid urban growth and development in the valleys on the northern and eastern directions. The urban growth gradually increased the land prices in the outer cities (Somos Perú, 2018). Therefore, the less attractive steep hillsides surrounding the valleys became the hotspots for lower income domestic migrant settlements, where mostly Quechua speaking Andean ethnicity Peruvians came seeking for a better life in the capital (Somos Perú, 2018). Puente Piedra in Lima Norte is one of the municipalities surrounded by the mountains in metropolitan Lima where domestic migrants settled at the end of the last century.



*Figure 9 Puente Piedra (Decker, 2014)*

The municipality of Puente Piedra (Figure 9) was founded in 1927 (Manchego, 1927). The population growth of Puente Piedra first started in the 1940's with the start of rapid urbanization in the country (Somos Perú, 2018). In 2015 the municipality of Puente Piedra was estimated to have 353,489 residents (INEI, 2016). The rapid expansions of unplanned urban development in metropolitan Lima created numbers of challenges in order to achieve better living conditions in municipalities such as Puente Piedra. Additionally, in the areas with steep elevation changes the physical conditions increasingly affected the development of hillside infrastructure in achieving electricity, water and sanitation, transportation and physical accessibility. Furthermore, due to the uneven elevation the hillside constructions are in higher risk of damage from earthquakes which are a common threat in the country.

Current data shows that the issues related to poor planning such as access to water and sanitation, electricity and threats of earthquakes persists in the municipality, specifically in

the southern part (Gobierno local de Puente Piedra, 2011, MVCS, 2011, Somos Perú, 2018).

Interestingly, the lack of data on water piping information, as seen in Figure 10 (MVCS, 2011), shows limited, possibly manual, access to water and lack of sanitation and high possibility for informal water connections (see Appendix A for additional data).



Figure 10 Water piping data in Puente Piedra. Adapted from MVCS (2011, p. 19)

The southern part of Puente Piedra municipality consists of 4 sectors laid out in the valleys that are rapidly expanding onto the hillsides. Throughout participatory workshops the municipality has identified the southern part's major problematics to be in informal economy, lack of productive specialization for small businesses, youth unemployment, poor business management, lack of competitiveness of recreational centers (Gobierno local de Puente Piedra, 2011).



La Ensenada zone in the south of Puente Piedra started development around 25 years ago and now is estimated to hold 14 % of the municipality's population equaling to around 50 000 residents (CODISEC, 2017). The zone consists of 30 neighborhoods which are represented by community organizations. Geographically La Ensenada is in an inconvenient location. The municipal center Cercado de Puente Piedra is 11,4 km away. The most important road artery, the Panamerican highway, is 3,8 km away and Plaza Norte, the most important communication nod in Lima Norte is 12,2 km away. However, the Chillón river limits the access points to the Panamerican highway and Plaza Norte through the bridges while the access to the municipal center is limited by the roads going around the mountains (Figure 11).

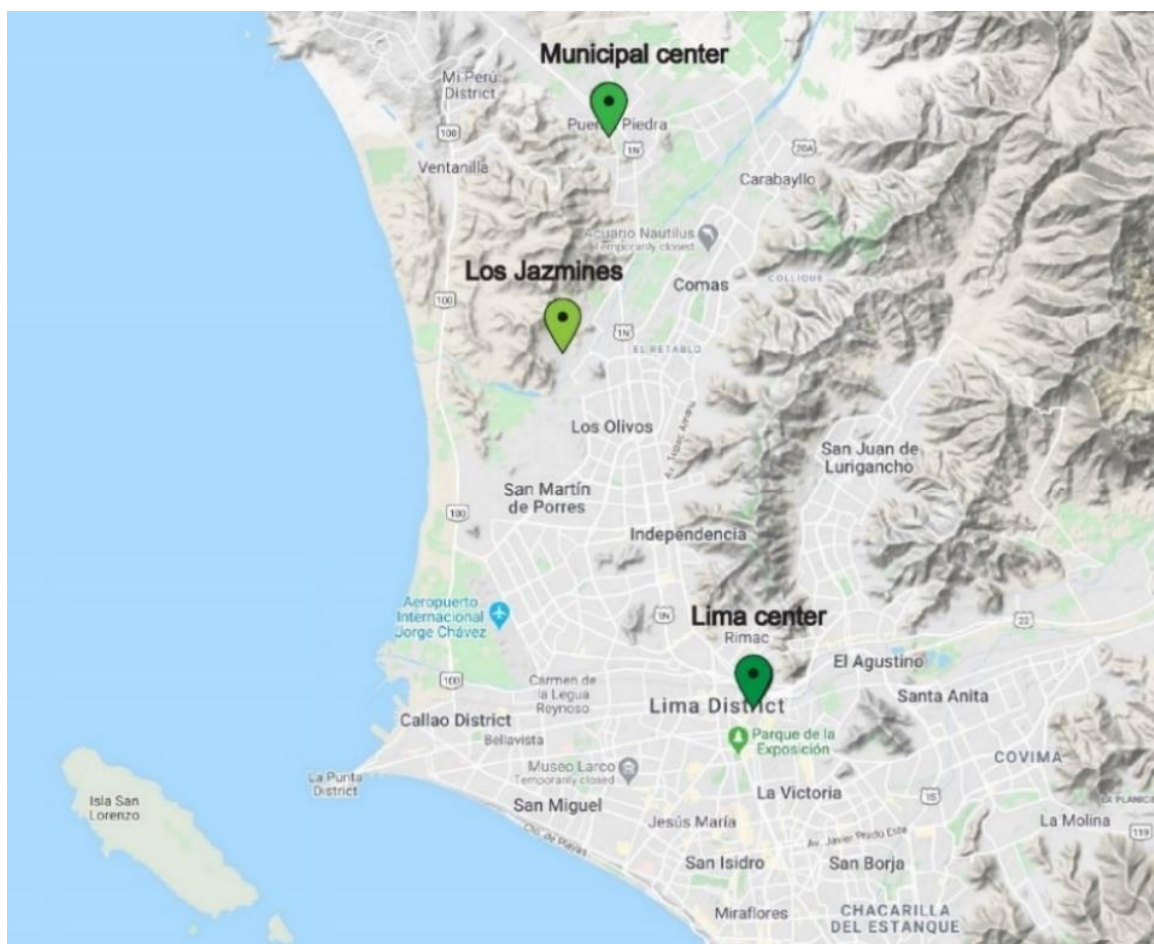


Figure 11 Location of Los Jazmines (Google Maps, 2020b)

The research focused on the Los Jazmines neighborhood located on the hillsides of La Ensenada valley. While the exact number of residents in the neighborhood is unclear, Los Jazmines consists of around 100 slots which usually houses one family but might also include the extended family members. Los Jazmines experiences the limitations of hillside living mentioned before (Figure 12). In order to challenge these issues, the NGO Mano and Mano and their project Señoras Constructoras have been focusing their work on improving the quality of life for the residents. Unfortunately, the slow improvement rates and soaring socio-economic inequality in metropolitan Lima separates the hillsides from the rest of the city. Therefore, the life on hillsides are associated to poverty.



*Figure 12 La Ensenada valley, marking of Los Jazmines (Google Maps, 2020a)*

Due to the lack of infrastructure paired with socio-economic struggles, La Ensenada and other hillside zones suffer from social stigmatization further affecting the social lives of the residents (Lima Cómo Vamos, 2019). The social divide increases violence, drug abuse, and threat of robberies which have been exceedingly observed by the police in Puente Piedra

municipality (CODISEC, 2017). The social insecurity limits the possible job opportunities in the area disproportionately affecting women (Gobierno local de Puente Piedra, 2011).

## 5.2. History of Mano a Mano



*Figure 13 Botiquin in La Merced, La Ensenada, 1994 (Mano a Mano, n.d.-a)*

Throughout the fieldwork the researcher gathered extensive information on the NGO Mano a Mano working in the neighborhood in Los Jazmines. Most of the information was gathered through semi-structured interviews engaging the volunteers of Mano a Mano, staff, and Señoras Constructoras. Additional information was gathered through the information posted online by the NGO. The Franco-Peruvian NGO Mano a Mano started in La Merced neighborhood on hillsides of La Ensenada in 1994 in order to improve the living conditions

of the newly settled domestic migrants (Mano a Mano, n.d.-a). The local health workers together with the help from a French nurse started a *botiquin* (eng. medical dispensary) to fight the ongoing spread of tuberculosis with the main objectives to increase hygiene, communication, and information accessibility (Figure 13). The *botiquin* allowed for a continuous community engagement which led to the development of the NGO.

Over the years Mano a Mano adapted their work towards community needs, raising awareness of community development, public space appropriation and focus on providing job opportunities for women in La Ensenada (Mano a Mano, n.d.-a). In 2000 the NGO was able to open a small library next to the *botiquin* and later in 2002 also start a toy library for the local children. The NGO grew gradually and in 2003 Mano a Mano was invited to replicate the health center and library seen in Figure 14 in Los Jazmines neighborhood on the opposite side of La Ensenada (Mano a Mano, 2012).

The library provided a space for community gathering and children's occupation while their parents are at work. Furthermore, this provided mothers a possibility to engage in financial activities and professional training while around 2000 children from the surrounding neighborhoods were able to benefit from educative and cultural activities (Mano a Mano, n.d.-b). Over the years the NGO also started organizing architecture and urbanism classes for children to raise their awareness about the environment and include them as both the recipients and actors of change.



*Figure 14 The Library building in Los Jazmines in 2007 (Mano a Mano, 2012)*

In 2006 Mano a Mano surveyed the residents of Los Jazmines in order to evaluate the situation and involve them in the decision making of projects. The residents identified a need for recreation center and green spaces. Additionally, domestic violence and urban disorganization were identified as the biggest issues. In order to address the identified issues and provide an opportunity for the local women to participate in the change of the neighborhood and gain financial independence Mano a Mano organized a group called *Señoras constructoras* in 2007.

Growing over the years and receiving attention and sponsors, the NGO was able to open a restaurant in Las Comas municipality together with an administration center and a hostel to host French tourist and volunteers in 2010. The restaurant and the hostel created new job opportunities for women and allowed to finance the ongoing projects of *Señoras Constructoras*.

### **5.3. Señoras Constructoras**

The start of women's group Señoras Constructoras in 2007 was quite challenging. The members of Señoras Constructoras shared with the researcher that the gendered nature of construction work seemed to be too masculine for adult to middle aged women and sparked a lot of mixed reactions from their families and the neighborhood community. In addition, the women shared that in the beginning they were quite shy to participate. Despite the shyness, 30 women started working as Señoras Constructoras. However, in 2019 only 7 women remained. It is also important to mention that a few men were also employed over time, two of them are still working at the moment.

With the help of Mano a Mano the women were able to learn construction, plumbing and electricity work (Mano a Mano, 2014). They also had the opportunity to improve their own living conditions. Furthermore, the women shared from their own experience that education in the Andean regions is financially difficult to achieve. Several members of Señoras Constructoras were able to seek secondary education in Lima. Additionally, one of the women shared that financial stability and additional aid from the NGO allowed to seek for her daughter's education as well.

When asked if they like their work, some women were more excited than others.

Nonetheless, all of them agreed and explained that while they enjoy the opportunity to learn and improve, the work is extremely physically challenging. The researcher was able to confirm this during the participatory observations. Working 6 days a week and rapidly moving from one project to another Señoras Constructoras constantly improve the conditions of the public spaces in Los Jazmines. The projects involve sports grounds, parks, urban community gardens, and playgrounds. Designs often include retaining walls which help to

protect the buildings and structures from earthquakes. The development of physical infrastructure implemented by Señoras provides opportunity for the residents to take advantage of the public space in Los Jazmines. Furthermore, in 2008-2009 Señoras Constructoras built 80 toilets improving the sanitation and hygiene conditions in Los Jazmines and surrounding neighborhoods (Mano a Mano, n.d.-a).



*Figure 15 The wall project by the library (Mano a Mano, 2015a)*

According to members of Mano a Mano around 80% of public spaces in the neighborhood are built by Señoras Constructoras. A visual report published by Mano a Mano in 2015 presents 8 years of work by Señoras Constructoras (Mano a Mano, 2015a). The report includes project for 40 meters long and 8 meters tall concrete wall which provided a space for a road and a park next to the children's library and reinforced the hillside (Figure 15).

Therefore, the work by Señoras Constructoras not only improves the lining conditions and public space infrastructure but even creates the space itself.

In summary, the NGO Mano a Mano started their work in order to improve the difficult living conditions in the rapidly growing urban settlements in La Ensenada valley. Growing

over time the NGO adjusted their work to accommodate the needs of the local community and provide solutions to problems such as gender inequality, safety and financial instability. Thus, the NGO focused on women's employment and their inclusion in public space development in order to improve the physical and social environment of La Ensenada, especially Los Jazmines neighborhood. The brief history of the NGO is summarized in a timeline below (Figure 16).



*Figure 16 Timeline of the NGO Mano a Mano and Señoras Constructoras development*



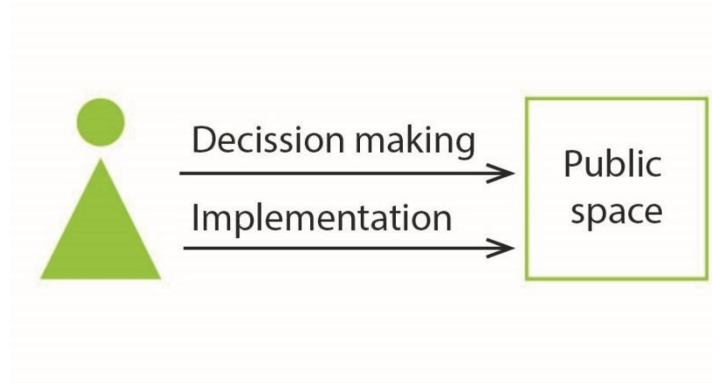
## 6. Findings

The findings chapter presents the empirical data gathered through the case study and provides the insights to answer the research question. This chapter divides the research question in to two parts in order to give a detailed look into the identified conditions – women’s involvement, and the effects as the impact of Señoras Constructoras work on the issues of socially assigned gender roles and the appropriation, inclusiveness, use and access to public space (Figure 17). The research findings were based on the information gathered through the methods discussed in Chapter 4.



*Figure 17 The public spaces of Los Jazmines*

## 6.1. Women's inclusion



*Figure 18 The identified conditions*

The field study with Señoras Constructoras provides a great example of women's involvement in the implementation of public spaces (Figure 18). The researcher would argue that public space implementation is the main work of Señoras Constructoras, making the physical change to happen in the neighborhood of Los Jazmines. Participatory observations of the women's work show their very high level of understanding of the construction work, materials, mechanics, and basic engineering. Later conversations revealed that one of the biggest assets of the work for the women of Señoras Constructoras is the ability to learn a lot through the process. Additionally, they are aware that the knowledge gained through the work gives them self confidence amongst other women.

However, Señoras Constructoras do not have a big role in the decision making of the construction projects. Interestingly, the women identified that additional education in engineering and architecture is needed in order to increase their role in decision making. The additional education would allow them to make and read architecture drawings providing them the ability to create and realize the wanted designs. Despite their insecurity, the

researcher noticed that during a couple of participatory observations, the women had no issue understanding the architecture drawings of the project they were working on.

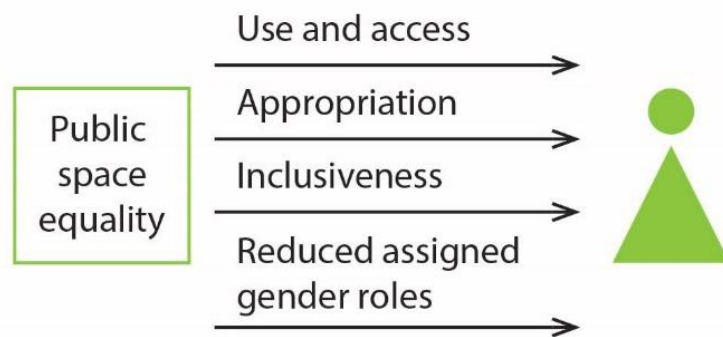
When asked about the possible projects the women would like to do themselves, they shared about needing additional public space infrastructure further up the hillside, especially since many of them live further or have friends and family to reach. However, the hillside extends outside the Los Jazmines neighborhood therefore creating bureaucratic issues restricting them from extending their area of interest.

Additionally while the *Señoras Constructoras* focuses specifically on women's work, one of the two men working with *Señoras Constructoras* has been a part of the NGO *Mano a Mano* for over 15 years, has the leading role in the constructions and is respectively called *maestro* (eng. teacher) by the women. While *maestro's* leading role in the construction work is rightfully earned due to his previous experience, it also creates hierarchy in the project therefore limiting women's initiative in the leadership and decision making.

## **6.2. The impact of *Señoras Constructoras* work**

The theoretical framework presented at the beginning of the thesis suggests that women's involvement would produce public space equality, meaning the increase in the use and access, appropriation, and inclusiveness of the public space together with contradicting and reducing the socially assigned gender roles (Figure 19). During the last 12 years women of *Señoras Constructoras* have built themselves reputation amongst the community of Los Jazmines. The members of the group agree that over time they have increased their

confidence and learned a lot. However, breaking down the impact of Señoras Constructoras' work shows varying results in achieving public space equality in Los Jazmines.



*Figure 19 The identified effects*

### 6.2.1. Use and access

Señoras Constructoras increase access to a lot of people by building physical infrastructure of public spaces. While sidewalks, stairs, and railings might be overlooked as a feminist issue, the study shows that they do represent one. During the visits to the area the researcher witnessed and experienced how the public space infrastructure provided an ease of access navigating through the neighborhood on the hillsides (Figure 20). The women walking their children from school while also carrying food for their family were the ones using the public space infrastructure the most since, as mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, they are more dependent on foot traffic. Hence, the public space infrastructure built by the Señoras Constructoras has made the neighborhood more physically accessible and usable for women.



*Figure 20 Woman climbing stairs in Los Jazmines*

Furthermore, besides improving public space infrastructure and the aesthetics of the public space the projects of *Señoras Constructoras* often focus on providing a space for children's occupation. Taking care of children falls under women's reproductive responsibilities set by the social standards therefore, safe space that provides children to play relieves women's unpaid labor. However, in the public spaces of Los Jazmines, boys of various ages are seen using the playgrounds for playing or exercising more than girls (Figure 21).

#### 6.2.2. Gender roles

Following the researcher's observations of boys playing in the public spaces of Los Jazmines, further conversation with *Señoras Constructoras* revealed that girls are more involved in housework, because it is seen as their responsibility as females. The women gave an example of a young teen girl living in the area who was seen before by the researcher. During her free

time, the teen helps her mom cook, clean the house or takes care of her sibling. Furthermore, the conversation specified that women generally do not use the public spaces of Los Jazmines for leisure due to the lack of time.



*Figure 21 Boys playing in Los Jazmines*

The social dynamics in Los Jazmines show the deep embedded roots of the gender conflict. Gendered division of labor puts excess strains on girls and women whose unpaid labor is often undermined. From early on the housework is seen as feminine and therefore given to girls which does not generate any financial stability for females. This was confirmed by Señoras Constructoras by saying that they get up very early to cook for their families, then they go work outside every day, come back tired and still have to work at home. Hence, the

comments from women confirms their understanding of unequal labor division as they see their unpaid ‘reproductive responsibilities’ as work.

Another example of misogynistic view towards women’s roles was observed by the researcher when a moto-taxi driver stopped to express his awe about the work done by women in a very sarcastic way. He went about the physical labor women were doing while building flower beds on the sidewalk saying that they should not be here, rather at home. While the women did not react to his comments making him drive away, afterward they seemed mildly irritated and said they did not understand the purpose of his comments. The women explained that even though such cases are rare they still happen. This example shows that even in the public spaces that are built from the ground by a women’s group, women are faced by gender discrimination and are treated by strangers as they should not be there.

### 6.2.3. Appropriation

Luckily the occasional disturbances by outsiders do not disrupt the calm social environment of Los Jazmines. Together with minor vehicle traffic, the setting allows the younger children to use and appropriate the playgrounds safely and roam the nearby streets unsupervised.

While it is more common to see children in the public space the researcher can suggest that the public spaces are being appropriated by the women of Señoras Constructoras and the community members Los Jazmines as well. Despite their lack of time for leisure, the people use the parks/urban gardens built by Señoras for gardening, (Figure 22) planting flowers, fruits and vegetables such as the radishes mentioned in the trust building chapter.

Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to observe the area past work hours due to the perceived lack of safety during commuting and warnings from the women and volunteers.

Therefore, it is possible that there are other forms of public space appropriation in Los Jazmines that were missed in dialogues.



*Figure 22 Garden in Los Jazmines [left: Mano a Mano (2015b), right: photo by author]*

#### 6.2.4. Inclusiveness

Looking into whether the area became more welcoming to the community members and the people from surrounding neighborhoods due to the work of Señoras Constructoras is hard to tell. One of the reasons, similar to observing appropriation of public spaces, is due to the fact that the researcher was only able to visit the area in the daytime. However, the conversations revealed that despite the public space infrastructure being built in Los Jazmines, Señoras Constructoras acknowledge the lack of public space infrastructure such as playgrounds in the rest of La Ensenada district of Puente Piedra municipality. Hence, the community tries to invite the neighboring children to use the playgrounds as well.





*Figure 23 The library of Los Jazmines in 2019*

In addition, based on the fact that the women of *Señoras Constructoras* live in the surrounding neighborhoods we can see that the separation between the neighborhoods is rather juridical than social. The social inclusion was observed by the researcher during a public workshop about planting held at the park by the library built by *Señoras Constructoras* themselves (Figure 23). The public workshops are usually organized by the NGO *Mano a Mano*. The volunteers of the NGO agreed that the invitations are always for everyone however, due to the physical and social proximity to the NGO itself there are usually less participants from other neighborhoods.

Despite *Mano a Mano* being involved only with the *Los Jazmines* neighborhood, it is obvious that *Señoras Constructoras* are engaged with the residents of the hillsides beyond the neighborhood borders. The casual everyday conversations between the group and the residents, who occasionally offer them snacks and beverages during work, show the strong social bonds in the area. However, it is hard to analyze how much the social community

relations have been affected by the work of Señoras Constructoras rather than being related to the social customs of Peru, that are especially vivid in the rural areas where most of the residents are from.

One of the visits to the area happened on a volunteer day organized by Mano a Mano that invited around 200 people in various activities. During the event, the researcher encountered one of the residents volunteering who was physically disabled. The researcher encountered them at the neighborhood library again during one of the other visits to the area suggesting that they might be involved in the community on daily basis. Due to the ethical restrictions of NSD (see chapter 1.3) the researcher was not able to interview them about the inclusiveness and the accessibility of the area. Nevertheless, the encounters suggest that despite physically challenging environment such as the lack of wheelchair accessibility the people with physical disabilities are included in the community life and find ways to interact and participate. However, further research is needed in order to discuss the inclusiveness of people with disabilities and other groups that might factor their acceptance and ability to be a part of the physical and social environment of Los Jazmines.

The summarized findings gathered through the fieldwork show that the work of Señoras Constructoras has increased the use, access and implementation of the area. However, additional empirical research focused on the relationship between the NGO and marginalized groups within the area, such as people with disabilities, would provide a better insight into the effects of the social inclusiveness within the community. Unfortunately, despite the identified positive changes, the shift to the socially assigned gender roles is difficult to make. While Señoras Constructoras have built their reputation in the community of Los Jazmines, their role in the construction field is still seen as unusual by the outsiders and does not affect deeply embedded gender conflict on a wider scale.

## 7. Discussion

Based on the findings of this research the following chapter answers the research question: to what extent does the work of Señoras Constructoras improve the gender equality of public spaces in Los Jazmines? In addition, the chapter uses the opportunity to discuss the possible implications to achieving gender-inclusive public space development theory and practice. By exploring the work of Señoras Constructoras, the researcher was able to identify the main takeaway points in order to provide a deeper understanding on how women's involvement in public space development influences the social and physical equality of public space.

### 7.1. Awareness

While Señoras Constructoras develop varying scale projects from flower beds to 40-meter-long concrete walls they only achieve results in Los Jazmines which holds around 100 houses. Though the community size is relatively small, the work of Señoras Constructoras produces value to the space and builds a collective responsibility and awareness to maintain and improve both physical and social environments in Los Jazmines.

In addition, the *botiquin* of the NGO Mano a Mano introduced in the case study chapter gives evening announcements through the speakers installed on a post and includes information about the new projects of Señoras Constructoras. The evening announcements use the work of Señoras Constructoras as the live example addressing the unequal division of labor between men and women. Furthermore, emphasizing the importance of sharing the care work equally in the family the evening announcements raise awareness on children's development.

In addition, Mano a Mano uses the evening announcements to encourage the use of playgrounds for the whole family focusing on the importance of family bonds and right to play in developing a more equal and happy society and reducing domestic violence. Thus, the work of Señoras Constructoras and the NGO Mano a Mano greatly improve the awareness of the physical and social issues in Los Jazmines and addresses the possibilities to tackle them.

Therefore, the researcher would argue that instead the need for visibility (Merrifield, 1996) discussed in theory chapter, priority should be given to raising awareness regarding the existence and the needs of marginalized groups. That way, instead of visibility that might pose threat of violence to vulnerable people, attention can be drawn to the issues and challenges of marginalized groups without provoking risks in the hopes of achieving a more physically and socially equal environment.

## **7.2.Limitations and opportunities**

The intended outcomes of their work are a statement against the unnecessary labor gendering. The women have gained financial independence, accessed education and improved the housing quality not only for themselves but for the whole community. However, since Mano a Mano is only able to develop projects within Los Jazmines due to bureaucratic reasons, it limits the possible social impacts outside the community.

Participatory observations revealed the differences to Señoras Constructoras relationship to people from outside the community of Los Jazmines. During one of the visits, the researcher had an opportunity to witness an encounter between the local residents, Señoras Constructoras and a visiting postman. Interestingly, when the postman encountered Señoras

Constructoras talking to a man living by the project site, the postman ignored the women while asking for directions and only looked at the man standing on the side. Only after women answered his question, the postman engaged in a conversation with them.

Señoras Constructoras represent a very small group of women working in the construction field which is still undermined and sometimes misunderstood by people outside of the community. The example with the postman shows how the physical infrastructure built by women does not have the same effect on valuing their work in the eyes of a visitor. This anecdotal case therefore supports Lefebvre's theory of social change rather than just physical change needed in the environment to seek for improvement in equality (Lefebvre, 1996).

Unfortunately, the researcher was only able to interview one of the two men working with the Señoras Constructoras because of the different schedules. Therefore, the primary information gathered during the fieldwork lacks a wider gender perspective. While the small number of employed men could relate how women focused organizations might even strengthen women's exclusion from the society (Moser, 1993) that is not the case with Mano a Mano as men are not restricted to seek employment with Señoras Constructoras. However, the women shared that many men do not apply because it is easier for them to seek employment in construction field elsewhere and gain more money than working for the NGO since they have more opportunities.

Due to the limited opportunities the women have for employment, Señoras Constructoras are very protective of their work. The women shared their understanding that in general women work more than men as the work is not limited to employment and includes the reproductive labor expected from women at home. Therefore, women cherish the opportunity gained through Mano a Mano to seek financial independence and learning opportunities.

Señoras Constructoras being a small group of 7 middle aged women in the male oriented field of construction understand their lack of collective power. While Señoras Constructoras admit they would be able to get projects outside Los Jazmines, the women agreed they would likely receive comments saying “*Ustedes son mujeres, no pueden hacer nada*” (eng. You are women, you can't do anything). During one of the visits the researcher was able to observe men working on a random construction nearby. While one of the men helped the women carry some equipment, they started a conversation. Despite seeing the women build a wall for the whole day, the man proceeded to explain construction processes and failed to acknowledge their work visible in front of him. Thus, the results of Señoras Constructoras work do not reduce the socially assigned gender roles as initially expected by the researcher. In Addition, even though the women would like the idea of an independent business and ability to earn a higher income, they identified the need of formalized training in architecture and engineering, and lack of personal equipment to expand outside the NGO. Therefore, the women are focusing on protecting their work and what they gain from it rather thinking of expanding and fighting for a bigger role in the field.

### **7.3.The role of the NGO**

The case is a great example of NGO focus on the strategic gender needs (Moser, 1993) such as employment, financial independency and education. Mano a Mano is a needed catalyst to bring opportunity for social change. However, even with growing over the years the NGO reaches its capacity to provide more opportunities for social change due to bureaucracy, finances, and human resources. Mano a Mano gives a solid example of strategic NGO actions

towards systematic expansion by growing from a small *botiquin* to a whole community and public space development system financed by a restaurant and a hostel. Nevertheless, the dependency system based on a single NGO showcases the limitations to the project sustainability.

The case emphasizes the importance of creating project independency and sustainability by the NGOs which is often undermined. While the work of Mano a Mano and Señoras Constructoras has improved the lives of Los Jazmines community, it lacks the focus on possible exit strategies for the NGO that would sustain the work of Señoras Constructoras and provide the ability to cope in the ‘what if’ scenarios when the support from Mano a Mano and finances gathered through the restaurant and hostel would not be available. Therefore, the researcher would argue for the need of attention on NGO exit strategies in order to provide project sustainability and improve the impact beyond the scopes Mano a Mano.

As the future planning of the NGO falls beyond the extent of this thesis, the researcher suggests a further look into the work of the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), specifically on their report “Exit strategies and sustainability Lessons for practitioners” (Hayman et al., 2016) and extensive research on project cycle by Engels (2010) as a starting point. Additionally, further knowledge on the topic could be gained from the field of business which has gathered a far wider academic discussion on project sustainability and exit strategies with such as examples as DeTienne (2010) and Burgelman (1996).

### 7.4.The outcomes of Señoras Constructoras work

Señoras Constructoras show a great example of importance of small-scale projects in local communities and their development in longer periods of time. Señoras Constructoras together with Mano a Mano use the public space as a tool to seek gender equality. Their work provides a great example both to systematic gender needs and community development together with tangible examples of women’s work and a solid argument against gendered labor division. Despite the work of Señoras Constructoras increasing the use and access, appropriations, inclusiveness, and awareness of the equality in the public spaces in Los Jazmines, it has a rather small gender equality impact.

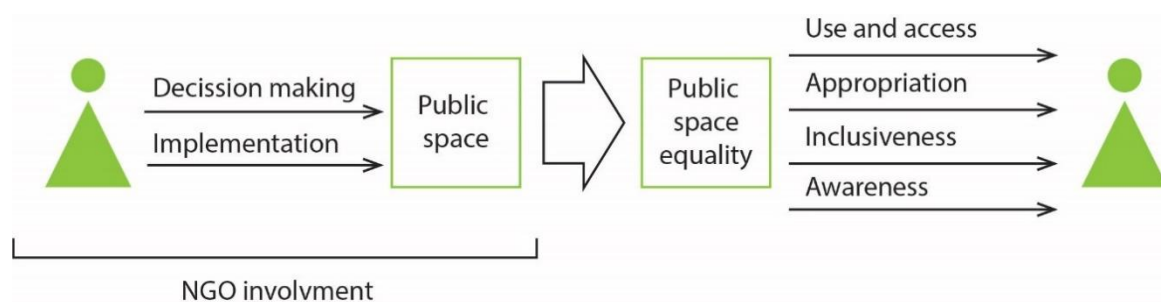


Figure 24 Updated theoretical framework

However, with the opportunity created by Mano a Mano, the women were able to establish a new role for themselves in the community of Los Jazmines showing that even though the results are small, they are possible to achieve. Though the results are smaller than expected in reducing the socially assigned gender roles, the researcher gives importance to the awareness of needed public space equality produced by Señoras Constructoras which provides attention



to gender inequality in public spaces. The summary of identifying the extent of Señoras Constructoras work is visualized in Figure 24 (for comparison see Figure 1).

## 8. Conclusions

Over the years the domestic migrants of Peruvian Andean regions found refuge and opportunity in the capital city of Lima. However, the systematic discrimination resulting from European influence created limitations towards indigenous people access to the territories within the city center of Lima leading to the development of *pueblos jóvenes*. Within these settlements, the access to physical infrastructure and the existing physical environment limited further developmental possibilities. Such challenges continuously effect the settlement residents with exceptional burdens faced by women due to the predetermined social customs and assigned gender roles.

This case study demonstrates an example of do-it-yourself urbanism, where the women's group Señoras Constructoras has an opportunity to make a change in public space development in Los Jazmines neighborhood in Northern Lima. The work of Señoras Constructoras started by the French-Peruvian NGO Mano a Mano aims for improve the public spaces of the neighborhood and maintain healthy environment and provide opportunities for education with exceptional focus on women and children.

The study shows how the work of Señoras Constructoras influences the physical and social environment of Los Jazmines neighborhood by raising awareness of gender equality, improve the use and access, appropriation and inclusiveness of public spaces. Despite holding a strong role within the community and succeeding in the construction field otherwise associated with masculinity, Señoras Constructoras do not make a significant influence towards reducing the socially assigned gender roles that create excessive burdens for women. Nonetheless, it is

important to understand that changing assigned gender roles is a very ambitious request for a small NGO, as it would require larger scale structural and institutional changes.

The collective power of Señoras Constructoras is quite small, as they are only a group of 7 women and their work is limited to the neighborhood of Los Jazmines due to the bureaucratic reasons. The NGO Mano a Mano has greatly expanded over the years and created financial stability for the ongoing projects. However, the project network being based on a single NGO created limitations to project sustainability. Therefore, Señoras Constructoras do not have the capacity needed in order to expand beyond Los Jazmines and Mano a Mano.

The discussion on the research draws attention to urban theories regarding the right to the city and gender-inclusive planning. The research provides insight on the importance of awareness in creating gender and intersectionality inclusive public space rather than focusing on visibility of marginalized groups that might be undesirable. In some cases, the unwanted visibility can even lead to conflictual environments. Therefore, the research argues for a more subtle approach based on the intersectional needs of different people.

The analyzed case emphasizes NGO involvement in seeking physical and social change in the environment. However, the time and scope limitations did not provide the researcher ability for a further look in the planning of Mano a Mano future development. Therefore, the researcher would suggest a further analysis of project sustainability, the opportunities to expand the work of Señoras Constructoras and possible partnerships with other stakeholders in the Peruvian society. Such research could provide useful insights in project exit strategies and sustainable planning in the NGO sector focused on gender-inclusive planning.



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## Appendix A: Supplementary municipal data

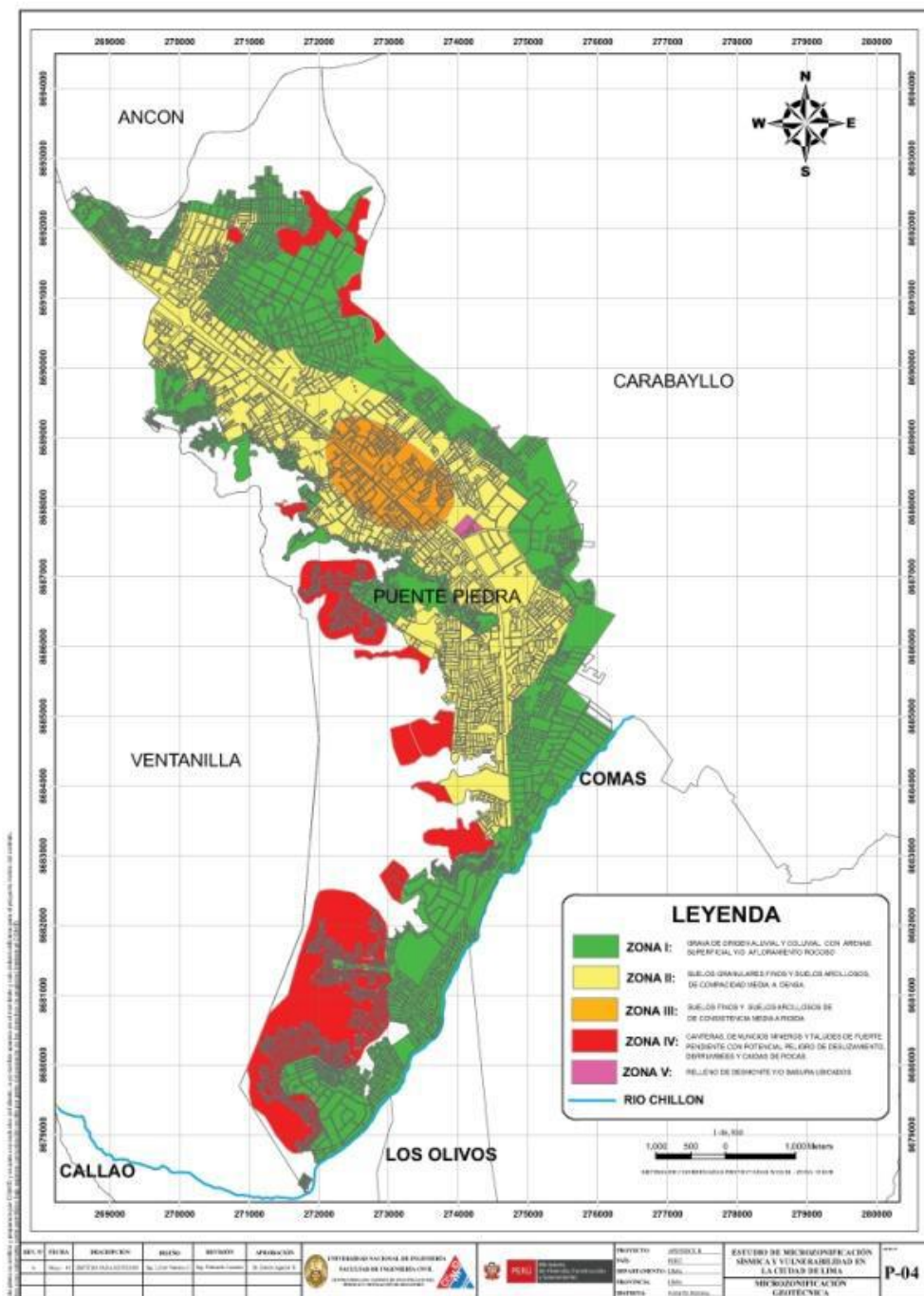


Figure 25 Seismic zoning in the municipality of Puente Piedra (MVCS, 2011, p. 9)

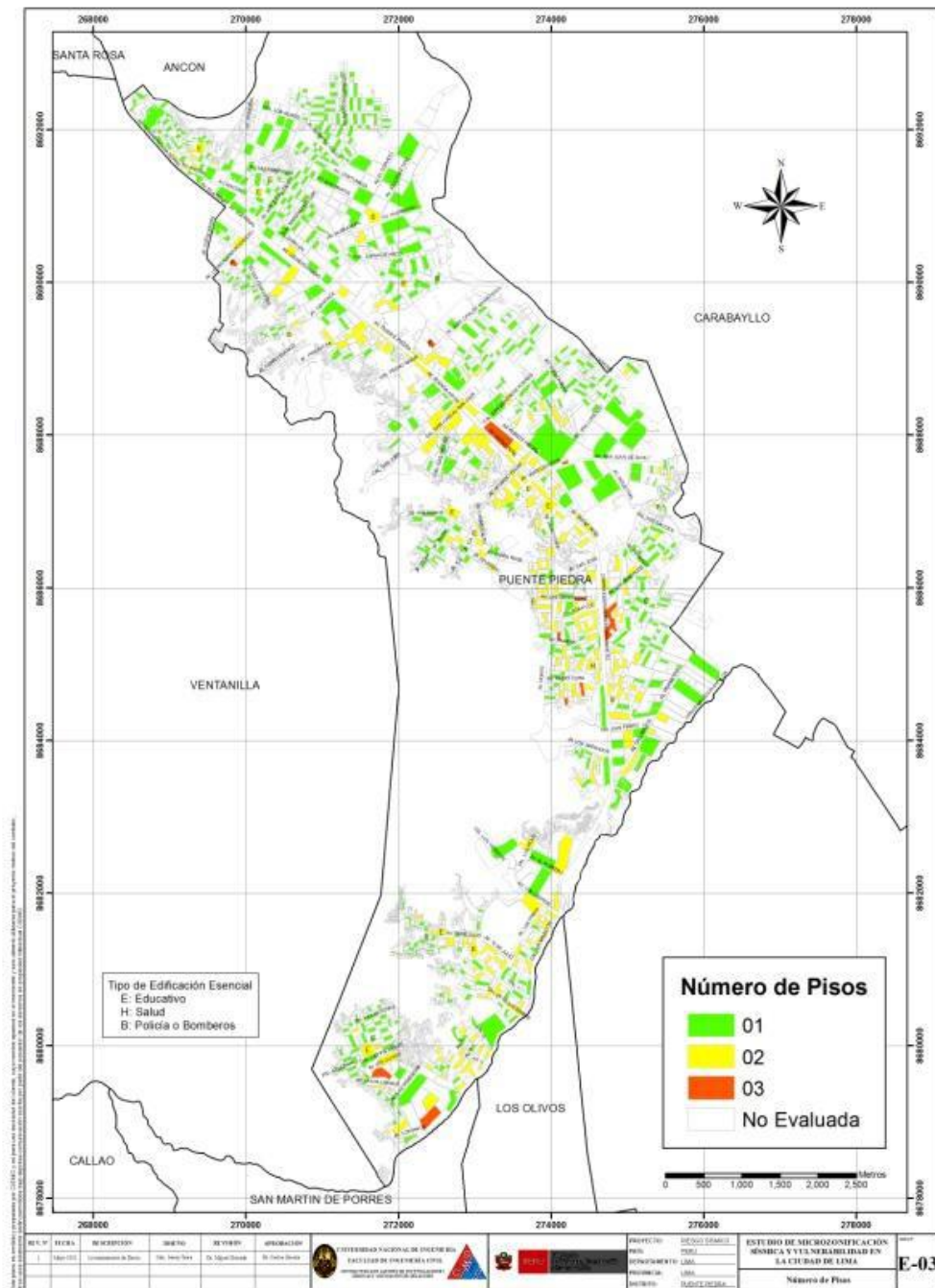


Figure 26 Building heights in the municipality of Puente Piedra (MVCS, 2011, p. 12)

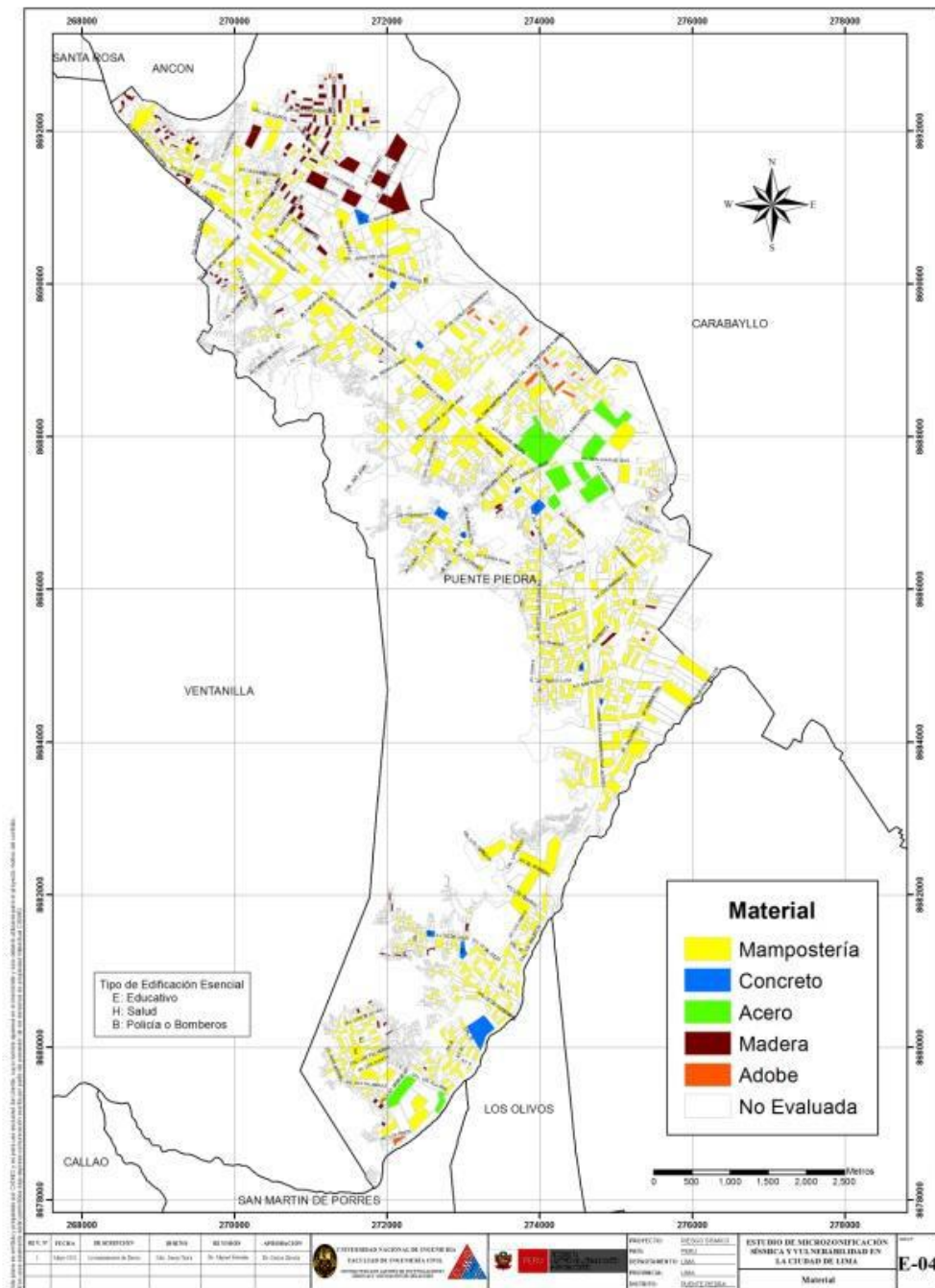


Figure 27 Building materials in the municipality of Puente Piedra (MVCS, 2011, p. 13)

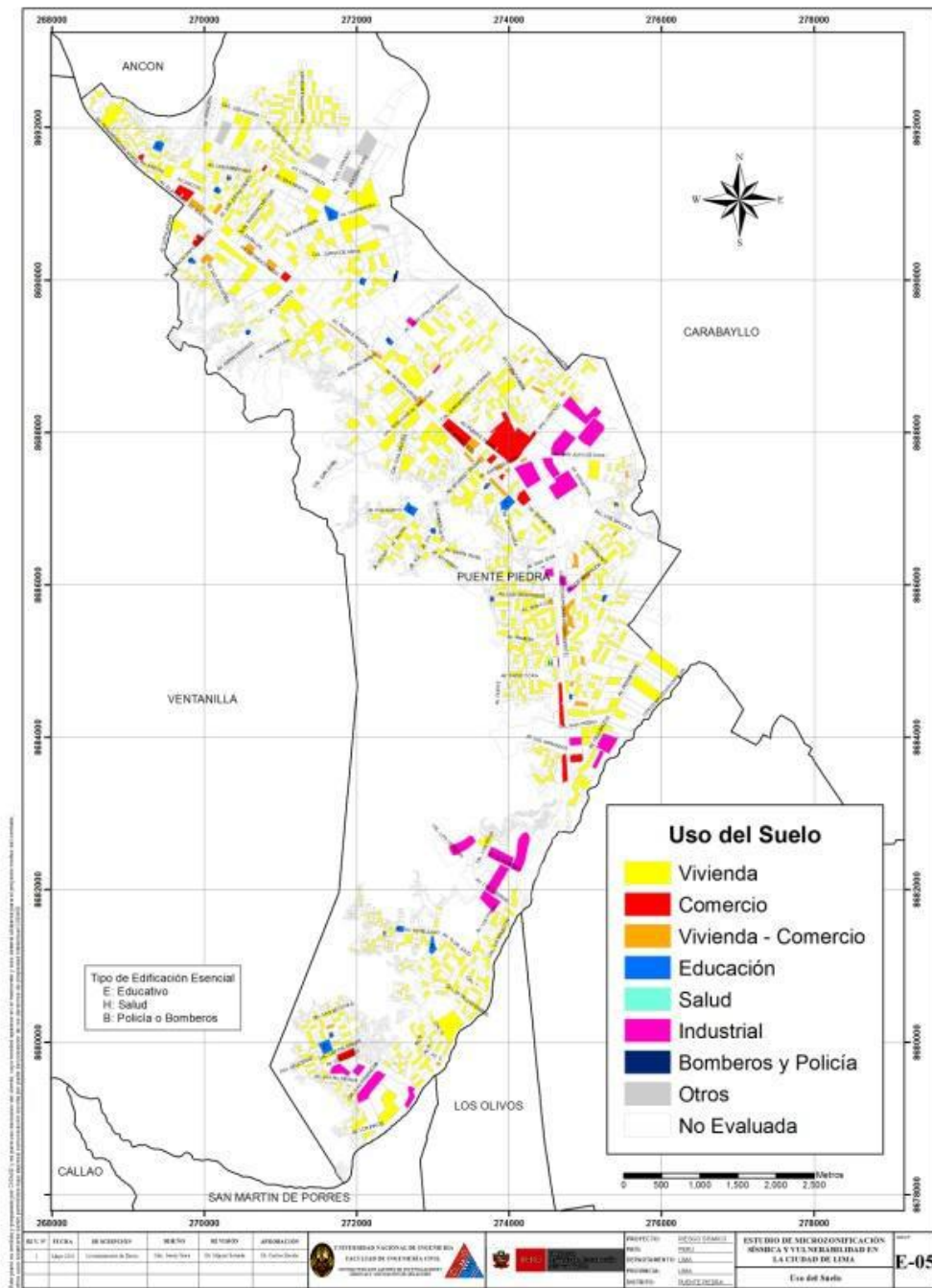


Figure 28 Land use zoning in the municipality of Puente Piedra (MVCS, 2011, p. 14)

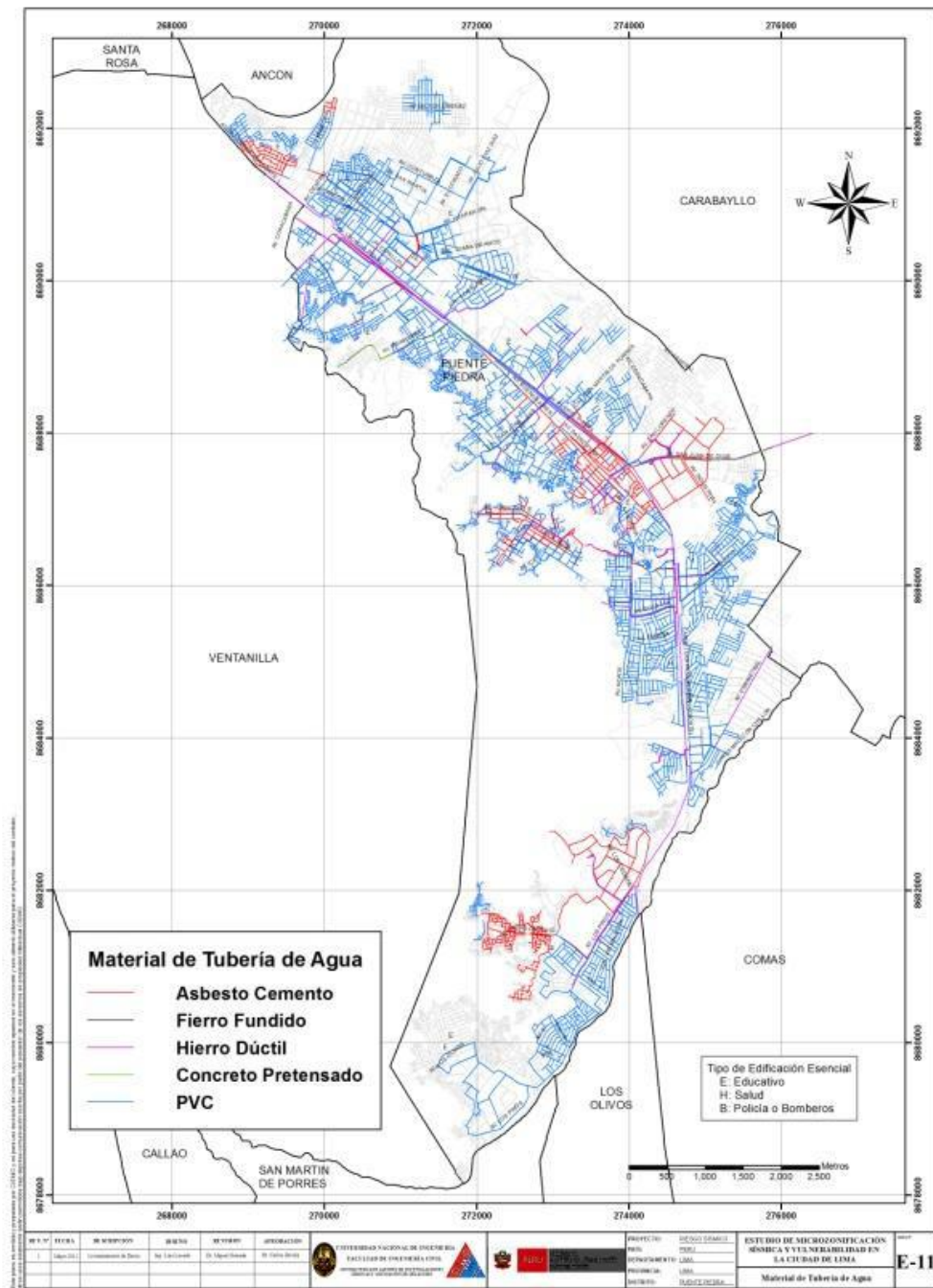


Figure 29 Water piping materials in the municipality of Fuente Piedra (MVCS, 2011)



## **Appendix B: Interview guide**

Interview guide for Señoras Constructoras:

1. Could you tell me what do Señoras Constructoras do?
2. How often do you meet?
3. How do you do the work?
4. How did you learn to do construction work?
5. How did you start working with Mano a Mano?
6. Do you like your work?
7. Do you receive comments for doing construction work as women?
8. How long have you worked with Mano a Mano?
9. How do you select the project locations?
10. What kind of project would you like to do? Where would that be? What are the limitations for that?
11. Who are the stakeholders involved in your work?
12. Would you like to have your own construction business? What do you need for that to happen?
13. Do you have vacation days?
14. Are you originally from Lima?
15. How long have you lived in the area?
16. What do you most like and dislike about the area?
17. How many people or families live in Los Jazmines?
18. How do you commute in the area?
19. Are the public spaces actively used?



20. Did your children use the playgrounds that you built?
21. Are you happy with the public spaces in Los Jazmines? Do you think it could be better?
22. What do you need in the public space to make it convenient for you?
23. What are the limitations to use the public space?
24. Are there any particular locations that are unsafe in the neighborhood?
25. Do you think your work helps to seek gender equality in the public spaces?

Interview guide for the NGO representative:

1. How would you describe the demographics of the area?
2. Has the neighborhood changed a lot over the time?
3. What are the best and worst qualities of the neighborhood?
4. Do many people in the surrounding area know about the NGO Mano a Mano?
5. How many volunteers do you usually have?
6. Do you need permission for the work in the public spaces? How do you obtain that?
7. What are the limitations to expand the NGO work beyond the Los Jazmines neighborhood?
8. What are the NGO goals and how do you achieve them?
9. What do you think are the biggest accomplishments of the NGO?

The interview guide for the volunteers of Mano a Mano:

1. How has your experience been so far?
2. What kind of activities do you volunteer for?
3. What projects have you worked on?
4. How often do you come to Los Jazmines?
5. How do you commute to and from Los Jazmines?
6. How long is your stay in Peru?

Interview guide for the academics:

1. Do you think there have been any particular milestones in the development of Lima that have changed the physical and social environment of the city?
2. Has the city development been affected by the gender perspective?
3. Do you think there is a citizen group that is particularly marginalized in Lima?
4. Can you identify any physical and/or social inequalities in Lima's public spaces? How does it affect the everyday life of the *limeños*?
5. What could be done to reduce the physical and/or social inequalities?
6. Who would you identify as the main stakeholders in seeking change?
7. Do you think the next generation of *limeños* could expect changes to happen in the city?



