

Women's economy.

Tokyo's new housing patterns and urban development.

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In Japan, women's access to housing is materialised under the traditional patriarchal system with the male head of household. Women are seen as dependent on him. As the traditional saying goes, "女わ 3回に家なし - Onna wa sankai ni ie nashi" (women do not own a house during the three stages of their lives, neither as a daughter, nor as a wife, nor as a mother)¹. These gendered social norms translate into gendered institutional structures that limit women's choices and access to housing (Hirayama, Y., & Izuhara, M. 2018).

The structural changes faced by post-growth societies explain the shift away from this conventional family model. The transformation of the family system based on traditional marriage is both a cause and a consequence of these societies, which are characterised by an ageing population and demographic decline on the one hand, and a delay in the formation of family units and low fertility rates on the other.

In this context, so-called *womenomics*² policies are based on the conceptualisation of economic growth as dependent on increased female labour force participation. This in turn implies that the female economy becomes an important factor in the consumer market. With this conceptual framework, under the government of Shinzo Abe (2012-2020), policies are being implemented to address the consequences of the "lost decade": the economic slowdown, the loss of relevance of the Japanese economy in the international arena, and the challenges of a shrinking population, by promoting the inclusion of women in the workforce at all levels and implementing neoliberal policies that include the liberalisation of government policies on access to housing.

In order to defend this argument, the report on *womenomics* analyses the growing weight of women in the consumption of luxury goods and, more importantly, in the single person housing market. This is a consequence of the increasing tendency of women to remain unmarried. With women's access to mortgage credit, their investment in real estate products is encouraged, forming a specific segmentation of the market (Aveline-Dubach, N. 2014)

As a result of the application of these policies, the theory of the man as the main economic support of the family unit is undermined, motivating the formation of diverse family units, including professional and single women with purchasing power, who prefer small units close to the workplace rather than the suburban units representative of the patriarchal system. As women enter the full-time labour market, family dynamics change and so do their spatial needs. Working women (married or not) prefer to live close to their place of work. This new demand for housing cannot be met by the traditional model of the women-housewife, where the preference is for housing in the periphery, where family life takes precedence, but rather by greater density within the nuclear city.

This growing tendency of women to remain single and escape patriarchal control consolidates a space of freedom inhabited mainly by elite female empowerment. As neo-liberal political trends have particularly influenced the redefinition of labour and housing systems, these policies result in individuals and families becoming responsible for many aspects of their lives, including access to housing and childcare, representing another dimension of widening social inequalities.

At the same time, the city of Tokyo is undergoing a process of transforming its productive base into a service-based economy, leaving the industrial base open to development. The process of

¹ Housing in Post-growth Society. Pag 122

² Goldman Sachs Japan Portfolio Strategy, © Goldman, Sachs & Co., Agosto, 1999

reorganisation of government agencies makes centrally located public land available to the market for intervention. The regulatory framework, at both national and local level, is equipped with the necessary instruments to accompany this regeneration process, which aims to make Tokyo a world reference city by encouraging foreign investment in the real estate market, incorporating many of its premises.

Based on these social, economic and regulatory vectors, this paper examines the urban policies implemented to respond to this new paradigm and the changes that are evident in the construction of the city.

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