

Architect and urbanist Dr. Eveline Prado Trevisan has worked on urban projects for Belo Horizonte City Council for three decades, coordinating their bicycle mobility program, Pedala BH since 2012. She created the GT Pedala BH in partnership with cyclists, an open, advisory, and leaderless working group that brings together representatives from civil society, local advocacy associations, and the public. Since 2018, she has been working to reduce road speed to improve safety and reframe the role of the street as an important meeting place.

In your view, what is a feminist transport system?

A feminist transportation system requires understanding that women have different mobility patterns than men, who have historically done the city planning. Although more women have entered the profession, male travel patterns continue to guide planning. While men's commutes are often more direct, moving from home to work or education, women's commutes are much more indirect, performing informal care tasks in addition to work or study. A mobility system that is feminist considers that difference. An important fact that reflects the exclusion of women in transport planning can be observed, for example, in Belo Horizonte, where only 11% of women commute by bicycle, this indicates that women don't feel safe cycling. Therefore, in a feminist system, bike lanes and sidewalks should be considered an integral part of the transportation network, rather than just cars and public transport.

How does the experience for women and girls in Belo Horizonte influence your work?

Historically we have had very little information about how women and children move around in Belo Horizonte. However, we recently approved a large public transportation corridor project with the World Bank where one of the requirements was to propose a gender equity plan. Although a very recent project and just focused on one corridor, the city government looked at the surroundings to better understand how women and girls move.

I am also working on speed reduction projects, specifically focused on making zone 30 areas viable in peripheral regions. For one of them, Zone 30 Confisco, we started a dialogue with the local community to understand their perception of street safety. In partnership with UN SDSN, we performed a gender safety audit near the Anne Frank Municipal school. In every project, we try to mobilize the community to understand the current situation from a women's safety perspective and show how it can be transformed by redesigning the streets.

What has been surprising for you as a feminist role model?

I have no doubt I am a feminist in my personal life, but I did not realize I could express this through my work and be seen as a role model. I work in a very masculine environment and live in a very macho country, so understanding I can represent a feminist perspective is something I had not even realized. I work so that we can have a more inclusive, welcoming city, especially for those who are most vulnerable. Feminism permeates all my work in a transversal way and I certainly emphasize the importance of that.

Who is your feminist role model?

I am inspired by Débora Diniz, who lives in exile after receiving many threats due to her work and research on abortion. I admire her because of her unwavering position.

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Renata Novaes is another role model who has had an impact on me. She is a Black woman who has stood up and said she shouldn't have to educate anyone about feminism or racism, especially men. "The damage is yours. It's up to you to educate yourself."

Researcher Simony César has likewise done wonders for women and mobility by developing the Nina app, an important tool for use in feminist urban planning.

Have you had a transformative experience that has guided your work?

As I have matured in my career, I have gained a better understanding of feminist issues. My first shift began after I joined the participatory budget, where I directly experienced work in public management. I began to understand how perverse public service can be for women, especially those who work against the status quo. As a woman working on cycling, it has been a challenge, but I have learned through my leadership the value of bringing like-minded people together to make projects feasible. For me this meant finding allies, knowing who my partners are, and strengthening my resolve in the process.

What advice would you give others who want to be a part of a feminist transformation in transport?

You need to have perseverance, patience, firmness and flexibility at once. Be very firm in your position and convictions if you want to help transform the mobility system to be respectful and inclusive for women. At the same time, be ok recognizing that working towards the ideal means needing to go back, rethink, and readjust many times. We need to listen attentively and be open to any changes that may be necessary on the path forward to equitable cities.