INTRODUCTION to my Ph.D Thesis, the so called announcement of the defense of a thesis (spikblad in Swedish):

LEFT HAND LEFT BEHIND. The Changing Gender System of a Barrio in Valencia, Spain.
by Britt-Marie Thurén

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Abstract

A gender system consists of the cultural construction and the social organization of the fact that there are approximately two sexes. A gender system must change when other basic structures of a society change. This has been the case in Spain during the last few decades. In Benituria – a peripheral working-class area of the city of Valencia – change is interpreted as improvement, and there is an ideology of progress which has gender as a key symbol. Most Beniturians agree that the “traditional” gender system of complementarity and male precedence is on its way out. “Before” men had all the power, women only had “left hand”, defensive manipulative skills. “Now” this is thought to be unfair; women should become “persons”. But social circumstances do not permit very many women to attain the prerequisites of personhood as defined by progressives: a rich social life and a personal income. Furthermore, the habitus (accumulated experiences) of most women makes them feel uncomfortable outside family contexts. New contradictions are produced at the same time as old ones become more visible, and people experience cultural unease. Through the analysis of discourse and other methods, this study gives a description of critical contradictions in the Beniturian gender system and ethnographic illustrations of how different types of women handle them.