

Humanist Cities and Post-Feminist Urban Social Geographies: Public Spaces and Plural Cultural Urbanism of Just Renewal



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ABSTRACT: This conceptual and exploratory research paper brings multiple yet interconnected ideas about the contemporary discussions on the form and content our cities should take, especially on the public spaces as the critical spatial and social nodes. One is the idea of plural urbanisms where by incorporating the City's plural elements — 'those many elements imagined for more than a single design or by a single designer, which is more powerful and wide-ranging, more influential and beneficial, even as it becomes more democratic, participatory, open-ended, and infinite.' This is coupled with cultural Urbanism, which promotes and celebrates the everyday, temporal, occasional, and timeless. From a methodological point of view, the article is based on the multilayered desk research method. Secondary analysis of relevant documents allowed us to examine previous research findings on the issue at hand and the successful way to reduce it through sampling a coding of relevant material. The approach is a qualitative one, focused on a light motive case study. Last not but not least, the paper draws attention and leitmotif focus to the feminist approach in looking at cities, especially places undergoing new (urban) renewal that was preceded by decades of physical and social decay, such as Detroit in the US. Such an approach works towards ethnographies of belonging and increases diversity in city renewal, where we improve our fundamentally heterogeneous, intersectional, and constantly evolving urban environments for the better. Using a critical approach without conclusive arguments, this exploratory paper analyzes the aforementioned positions further and explores its application to various urban phenomena; as a focus on a policy-oriented paper, it ends with some crucial policy recommendations regarding feminist urban planning.

KEYWORDS: Engendered Spaces, Feminist Geographies, Cultural Urbanism, Public Space

INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS NEW GEOGRAPHIES

From its earliest origination, a defining feature of feminist geography was its intellectual and multidisciplinary approach; this remains one of its strengths today (Nelson and Seager, 2005) but needs to go further in what we call here *post-feminist new geographies*. The basic premise of *feminism*, that inequality between the sexes exists and that inequality should be eradicated, has been an important call for change. This can be transferred into the context of the urban environment and cities' spatial definitions and characteristics. Gender is part of the *geography of everyday life*; gender is intertwined with what people do, how they relate to one another, the spaces they use, and the places and landscapes they make (McDowell and Sharp, 1999). Space becomes the essential element of the battle for the "equal" City, a city of all genders, sexes, and ethnicities; an all-inclusive city where all its elements, most notably its public spaces as the dominant pillar of democracy, will be available and utilized by all. As the anthropologist Shirley Ardener (1993) notes, no particular emphasis on the distinction between the terms "space" and "place" should be set or posed. In various disciplines, from urban planning, social geography, sociology, urban design, environmental psychology, anthropology, and urban geography, the terms have been (re) conceptualized frequently and often somewhat contradictory. One view, prevalent among urban geographers, sees "place" as a geographically and historically specific instance of the social use of space. On the other hand, Michel de Certeau (2011) states that space is a practiced place in a constellation that is the opposite of the usual definition in geography. Doreen Massey (1994) explains that space and place, and our sense of them (and such related things as our degree of mobility), are gendered through and through and that this gendering of space both reflects and has effects back on how gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live. What the post-feminist new geography needs to look at

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is firstly the core of differences between how men and women but also transgender groups, the LGBT community experience and use spaces and places in the City, secondly to show how these differences in uses can help to create both gender and better places, and thirdly to see what urban planning and urban design paradigm(s) are best suited for creating inclusive Urbanism and "glocalized" public places convivial to all groups: that is, the relation between globalization and modernization, as well as transformation and integration coupled with contextualization and culture and history of cities. Reaching the ideal of humanist and livable cities for all will have to go via the complex and composite, but necessary nexus of cultural urbanism, just sustainabilities, and feminist city planning approaches (Diagram 1).

What Makes a Great Public Space?

Numerous spatial and social qualities can make a perfect public space. Issues of size, scale, degree of physical enclosure, amenities, aesthetics, and other variables matter; public spaces at different times and in different contexts might change in their role of accommodating various and heterogeneous groups of people in the City (Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2010). These changing roles also mean changing conditions for various social and economic groups, those inhabiting the adjacent urban realms, and those visiting or passing by (Amin, 2008; Gehl, 2010). This urban complexity problematizes the notion of public space and redefines the grammar and system of public spaces, where no universal vocabulary emerges (Haas and Olsson, 2014). In feminist geographies, a study of geographies of fear has mainly focused on examining the relationship between women's fear and their perceptions and uses of public space. It has been contended that fear is entirely marked by gender and determines one's experience of the City and freedom of movement (Valentine, 1989; Ruddick, 1996; Koskela and Pain, 2000; Pain, 2001). Feminist geographers maintain that public space particularly that of 'urban space,' is engendered and 'sexed' as predominantly masculine and heterosexual space (Duncan, 1996; Binnie, 1997; Fenster, 2007 Crinnion, 2013).

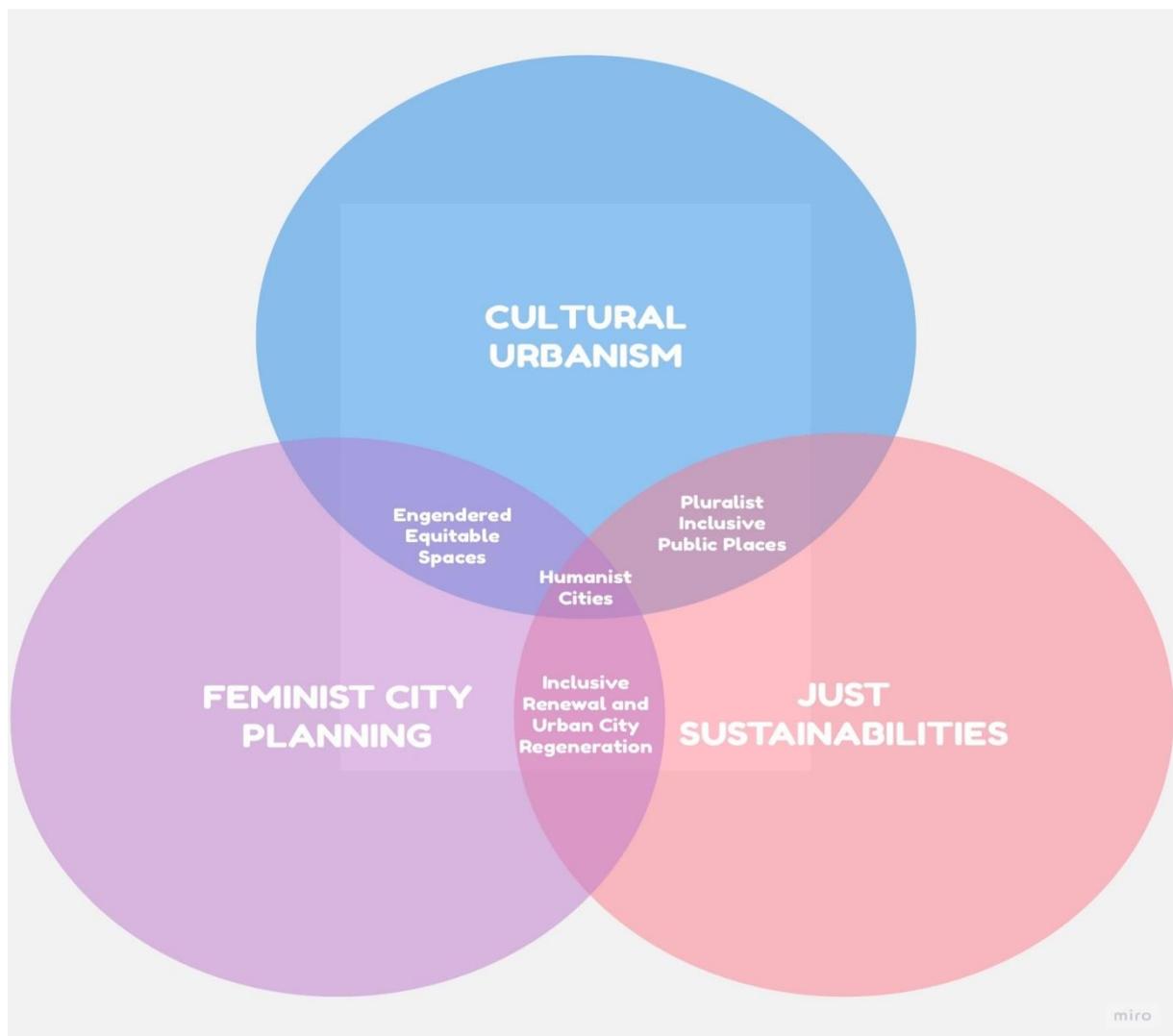


Diagram 1: Humanist Cities and Post-Feminist Urban Social Geographies: Public Spaces and Plural Cultural Urbanism of Just Renewal (Author's Own, 2023)

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Suppose we see the city as not just the spatial products but also as the product of social processes, the kinetic and static elements coming together. In that case, the rising paradigm of cultural Urbanism becomes even more pivotal in the City's struggle for just and all-inclusive gendered spaces. Meyer (2014) looks at cultural Urbanism as an approach that has seven major elements: paying attention to the context and history of the place as well as narratives, understanding the local preferences of all inhabitants, which allows for a diversity of users and uses, providing a variety of products, taking a chance to be different in space and place, establishing high-quality open space and public realms and one that creates higher real estate value because of all of the above (Figure 1).



Figure 1: What Makes a Great Public Place? Sundance Square forms the core of a new walkable, urban district in Fort Worth, TX, USA; Image Courtesy of PPS and Ethan Kent.

At first glance, such elements appear to support an ideal of what feminist urban researchers Dolores Hayden (1981) and Clara Greed (1994) both refer to as the "non-sexist city" of localized facilities, shops, amenities, and a mix of uses. Building upon this theory, it appears that a feminist city would be, in turn, one of a proliferation of options, and especially the flexibility of space, in contrast with the otherwise rigidity of patriarchal "places." This is consistent with the increasing use of David Harvey's (2008) *The Right to the City* and the subsequent movements for urban ownership that have recently been included in the New Urban Agenda outcome of the UN-Habitat III. According to this model of urban development, the rights of citizens to their city extend to all inhabitants of that City - including most notably those otherwise left out of the process of creating and managing our urban habitats. In recent years more women have been elected to positions of city mayors and other leadership roles and have unsurprisingly been the drivers of this movement. Specifically, the addition of The Right to the City to The New Urban Agenda was spearheaded by Ada Colau, the first female mayor of Barcelona, and Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris (Guardian Cities, 2016). Colau's incentive toward the feminization of politics is predicated on the understanding and acknowledgment that our cities have hitherto been primarily patriarchal and that this is a fundamental flaw in the future success of our cities:

"We still live in sexist and patriarchal cities – patriarchy goes hand in hand with the neoliberal City; they are two sides of the same coin. But right now, we have an opportunity for those individuals who have traditionally been let down as "second-class citizens" to become the main characters."

- Ada Colau

Cultural Urbanism, with all its elements, finds itself on the workable ground in the public realm as the fundamental and pivotal element of community support and building up, which is crucial for sustaining places and spaces. It is through the formation of 'community' that public spaces are most noted for (re)establishing social capital in cities. Traditionally, the primary function of the community (or *gemeinschaft*) was to serve as a link between the people and society, creating an arena of common interest; that way, citizens could relate to their societies in both a geographic and non-geographic sense (Tönnies, 1988; Hoggett, 1997). This becomes a central concept of public space at every level of interaction and experience among people. At the backbone of 'community-building' is the notion of 'the third space' (Oldenburg, 1991). This consists of the social surroundings separate from the 'first' and 'second

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places' – those of 'home' and 'work.' Such places are necessary for allowing diversity to flourish and for people to learn to live with and negotiate with each other. People generate a sense of pride, social cohesion, and civic identity in these communal spaces. Oldenburg (1991) makes the case that third places are integral for establishing civil society, direct democracy, engagement, and the feeling of attachment and sense of place. Such spaces serve as arenas for equity, diversity, and justice. It is also in these places where marginalized groups can exercise their rights, voice their opinions and stand up against injustice in a democratic forum, even if that means, in some instances, a temporary or permanent loss of order, control, and comfort. This is why it is crucial to dwell deeper into spatializing the inter-related concepts of justice, democracy, equity, citizenship, society, community, neighborhood, LGBTQ+ struggles, and so on, to explore, in a combined Soja-Fainstein-Harvey manner, how the spatial perspective might open up entirely new and fresh possibilities, novel ways of thinking about these (societally) traditionally essential concepts and ideas.

Public spaces and good urban places provide numerous benefits to all forms of business, innovation, and entrepreneurship, spanning both formal and informal sectors. Additionally, vibrant streets and inclusive public spaces become places of economic value and benefit – promoting income, investment, wealth creation, and providing employment (Andersson, 2016). The economic value of interconnected systems of quality public spaces manifests through direct attraction marketing and business points in bustling streets, active parks and squares, and other appealing public space forms. These spaces attract, retain, and lock people of all kinds, especially if they are well-maintained and of high aesthetic quality. Furthermore, public spaces can be utilized as a novel approach to intensify the City's vitality through urban renewal programs. This can increase property values, which can then be captured in the form of taxes through innovative approaches to municipal finance, such as land value capture.

Geographies of public space must also be the public utilities made available to urban citizens, including streets and the public transportation systems that use them. The ownership of this geography becomes critical when one considers the current dominance of automobile culture - and the ramifications thereof environmentally, psychologically, and physically. The auto-oriented City then, by extension of modern male-dominated urban power systems, is essentially a masculine city, with the symbiotic relationship of top-down male control reinforcing the single occupancy vehicle drivers of primary males. It can then be posited that a feminist city would be a people-oriented city, a car-free city, and, by extension, a humanist city. Globally, women make up more than 50% of public transportation users but are disproportionately the victims of harassment, discrimination, and assault on these systems, leading to compensation measures like women-only subway cars and taxi services (Peters, 2013). Conversely, the movements toward car-free city centers and protected bikeways have been dominated by female leadership, including such recent changes to Times Square and Broadway and Bryant Park in New York City, the 'superilles' (superblocks) in Barcelona, and the move to make the route adjacent to the river Seine pedestrianized permanently in Paris (Figure 2).

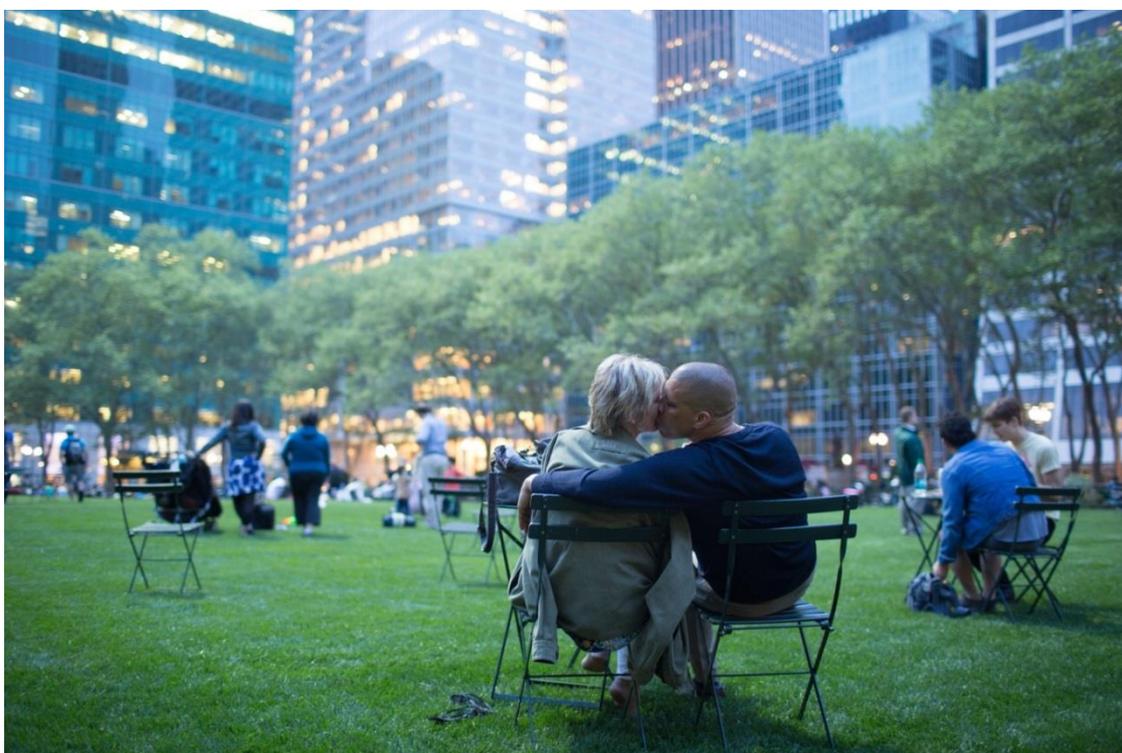


Figure 2: What Makes a Great Public Place? A couple relaxes on everyday urbanism movable chairs in Bryant Park, New York, NY, USA; Image Courtesy of PPS/Ethan Kent.

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Engendering Spaces in the Regeneration of Detroit (Light Case Study)

For too long, urban and feminist geographers, as well as urban and social geographers and anthropologists, have been contemplating the relationships between "social markers and the city" - social effects. In a classic 1980 essay called *What Would a Non-sexist City Be Like?* The American urbanist Dolores Hayden called for centers that "transcend traditional definitions of home, neighborhood, city, and workplace" (Hayden, 1980). Susanna Rustin points to the fact that "a woman-friendly city or a feminist city would be more porous, the divisions between home and work less rigid (so that domestic work is acknowledged as a productive activity) and careers (of children, disabled relatives and older people) are less excluded from economic life." In any case, such divisions are often artificial, with women in the global south undertaking economic activity that has too often been ignored (Rustin, 2014). Racialized and gendered people have historically not been allowed to be part of the citizenry, nor has race or gender been included or recognized as a characteristic of the ideal citizen (Rose 1993; Doyle 1994; Massey 1994; Marston 1995; Staeheli 1996; Wilson 1998; McDowell 1999; Domosh and Seager 2001; Warner 2002; Butler 2004; Bailey 2014). As England and Simon observe, these social markers affect mobility, access to housing and employment, and general feelings of (true) belonging within the City (England and Simon, 2010).

Detroit's urban regeneration and revival rests on a set of complex realities and actors. In the regeneration attempt to overcome the toxic and vicious circle of urban decline, Detroit's 'solutionaries' are also the anchors within their communities; planners and architects who plan, build and manage badly needed infrastructure that is meeting basic human needs of the population but also regenerating the built environment; entrepreneurs and real estate developers who create jobs for people that the labor market overlooks but also give the added value to spaces; and advocates who represent the interests of those at the margins, as elected officials and leaders of community-based organizations. All of them are keys to success in this new regeneration. But not all are the same.

Cultural urbanism in Detroit reflects the city's concerted efforts to rejuvenate itself through a strategic focus on arts, culture, and creativity. Iconic institutions such as the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) and the Motown Museum play pivotal roles in preserving and showcasing the city's rich cultural heritage (Detroit Institute of Arts, n.d., 2023; Motown Museum, n.d., 2023). Creative districts like Midtown and Corktown have become focal points for revitalization, emphasizing the promotion of arts, music, and local businesses. These areas serve as dynamic hubs for cultural activities, contributing to the overall vibrancy of the city (Midtown Detroit Inc., n.d., 2023). Public art and murals have become integral components of Detroit's cultural urbanism, transforming vacant spaces and fostering community engagement. The city has embraced these creative expressions as a means of revitalizing neighborhoods and instilling a sense of pride and identity among residents. Initiatives such as community art projects, festivals, and events actively involve the community, further enhancing the impact of cultural urbanism in Detroit (City of Detroit, n.d., 2023). Additionally, Detroit's cultural urbanism extends to entrepreneurship and innovation in the creative industries. Initiatives supporting local artists, musicians, and creative entrepreneurs contribute not only to the cultural vitality of the city but also to its economic development (Detroit Creative Corridor Center, n.d., 2023). The adaptive reuse of spaces, often repurposing abandoned industrial buildings for cultural and creative purposes, underscores the city's commitment to transforming its urban landscape (The Platform, n.d., 2023). As Detroit continues to evolve, celebrating its musical history and embracing diverse cultural expressions, cultural urbanism remains a dynamic force shaping the city's identity and future.

In thinking of new geographies of Detroit, engendering space must happen through culture and the spatial practices of possibilities on the ground. Spatial practices of place-making need to be a humanistic process defined by reality. Unfortunately, it is well known that nature has proven far easier to change and engineer than society or culture has. Geographies of exclusion: race, gender, and sexuality persist, but a possibility exists when a city or a region goes through such a transformation (for all the wrong reasons) that Detroit has. Planning from ashes can be a new start for many, not least for those groups that need to contend with their spatial exclusion from and marginalization within public and private spaces, as has been the case in urban Detroit for women, blacks, Latinos, and people of poverty.

In the case of Detroit, we need to consider the complex challenges that black gender and sexual minorities and women pose to conventional feminists and queer readings of space. Issues and mapping of the new sites of black struggle, resistance, and survival where black gender and sexual minorities confront marginalization and create new spaces of sociality, community, desire, pleasure, support, and love, are something that needs to be re-scoped anew under the current revival and regeneration. Feminist and queer theories of geography and the process of socio-spatial production need to highlight the generative socio-spatial practices that certain localities and spaces with their citizens involved can and may deploy to forge alternative possibilities for women, black LGBTs, queers, Latinos, and other marginalized groups in everyday life of Detroit, especially its nexus for social and cultural life – the public space realm (Figure 3).

The LGBT community in Detroit has played a significant role in shaping the city's social and cultural landscape. Over the years, Detroit has witnessed the emergence of various organizations and advocacy groups dedicated to supporting and empowering the LGBT community. Affirmations, a community center in Ferndale just outside Detroit, have been a crucial hub for LGBT individuals, providing resources, support services, and fostering a sense of community (Affirmations, n.d., 2023). Moreover, the Motor City

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Pride festival, held annually in Detroit, stands as one of the largest LGBTQ events in the Midwest, drawing participants from across the region and featuring a diverse range of activities, performances, and educational initiatives (Motor City Pride, n.d., 2023). In addition to community-centric initiatives, the LGBT community has actively contributed to Detroit's broader cultural and economic spheres. The Cass Corridor neighborhood, for example, has been recognized for its vibrant LGBT-friendly establishments, including bars, restaurants, and art spaces, creating a welcoming environment for both residents and visitors (Gallagher, 2015). As Detroit continues to evolve, the contributions and resilience of the LGBT community remain integral to the city's diverse and inclusive identity. Detroit's planners and decision-makers must merge and mainstream the City's new revival design and regeneration to a verifiable, scientifically proven, and workable solution for all groups. Data needs to be collected to determine how different groups of people use public space, especially the marginalized ones. Once the data have been analyzed and the patterns of use of public space, the planners and architects need to define the needs and interests of the people using it where urban planning and design and public space management can be used to meet these needs. Planning and designing safe public spaces for women, minorities, people with low incomes, older people, and other vulnerable groups means creating public spaces with features that enhance safety and feelings of safety and detract from features that cause (especially for women) insecurity and feelings of insecurity. Safety and security are the critical elements of any feminist city, and also putting people at the center. One has to break the pattern of marginalization for groups that have a completely alien experience of cities due to wrong policies and exclusion. Still, as a result, they are caught in the darkness of their parallel lives.

Social forms of engendered cities

On the other hand, Cultural Urbanism promotes and celebrates the everyday, temporal, occasional, and timeless, which conventional approaches to Urbanism and flagship buildings rarely accomplish. It is an urban ideal that explores the City's spatial and social fabric and the kineticism of relationships on the ground that defines the use and management of the built environment. It opens the differences and building environments that foster community interaction, enabling us to go deeper in seeing and understanding what makes our cities so unique and exciting, as well as what is the foundation for creating authentic places. Such an ideal also allows the dwellers and citizens to preserve the fine-grain urban distinctions, celebrating their tales, narratives, and histories, as well as differences that occur in space and time and between all different groups of users. Here, Massey (1994) again brings the key issues; those of space, where space must be conceptualized integrally with time, where a new way of thinking of space, not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations must be brought in: that what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations, that the spatial is social relations 'stretched out.' The fact is that social relations are never still, never implacable; they are inherently dynamic and kinetic. Thus, even to understand space as a simultaneity is, in these terms, not to evacuate it of all inherent dynamism. This is most evident in public places. If Massey looked at these issues through the lens of space, William Whyte did that through the lens of places, but in both cases, it was a fine-grain observation of people, cities, places, and spaces in between. 'Who makes our cities, and what part do everyday users have in the design of cities' is one of the crucial questions one has to ask and that city-making is a social process, and not just a hardware built environment issue, points to the 'close relationship and necessary link between the social and physical shaping of urban environments' (Tonkiss, 2014).

Whyte (1980) studied, in the vein of 'observational urbanism,' a series of urban spaces in New York City and commented on why some were successful while others were not. Among Whyte's main and bearing ideas and findings were: The social life in public spaces contributes fundamentally to the quality of life of individuals and society; Designers have a moral responsibility to create physical places that facilitate civic engagement and community interaction; Public spaces should be designed from the bottom up, not top-down; Design should start with a thorough understanding of the way people use spaces and the way they would like to use spaces. These lessons are crucial for inclusive Urbanism if the purpose is to study the differences between how men and women, as well as the LGBTQ+ community, experience spaces, and places and to show how these differences help to create both gender and place in the urban environment and settings of our cities.



Figure 3: The Beach at Campus Martius in Detroit Downtown Regeneration | Projects — Project for Public Spaces, Night Birds Eye View. Image Courtesy of PPS and Philip Winn.

More than 30 years after Whyte's observations, comparative studies have revealed a key component to transforming cities in the 21st century: women's increased space occupation. During the era of Whyte's study, the dominant gender in public space was male. This observation was not lost on Whyte himself when he regarded the success of a public space to be based upon women as an "indicator species." When redesigning what was then a disinvested and statistically dangerous Bryant Park, the percentage of males to females was systematically tracked to measure its eventual success. This practice continues to this day. In recent comparisons of Whyte's original studies in contemporary New York City, Keith Hampton found a proliferation of women in public spaces, spending more time lingering and in mixed-gender groups than the norm in 1970:

"The most dramatic changes in the social life of urban public spaces have been an increase in the proportion of women and a corresponding increase in the tendency for men and women to spend time together in public. [...] The increase in group behavior, women and lingering in public may have positive implications for engagement within the public sphere." (Hampton, 2014)

A contemporary to William H. Whyte, Jane Jacobs, similarly observed urban activity as well as the absence of women in Urbanism more broadly:

"Most city architectural designers and planners are men. Curiously, they design and plan to exclude men as part of normal daytime life wherever people live. In planning residential life, they aim at filling the presumed daily needs of impossibly vacuous housewives and preschool tots." (Jacobs, 1961)

Whyte's results on gender in public space come as no surprise when one considers the dynamics of power over urban environments of the time. Jacobs' commentary on the subject came from what could be considered the peak of patriarchal planning in the United States, the 1950s era of urban "renewal." In such top-down master plans, the separation of activities by gender by the male planners of the time was based on patriarchal prescriptions of ideal gender roles. Therefore, playgrounds, as opposed to public spaces, were the places for women in cities.

Her observations on diversity in our cities, as well as those who plan them, are equally relevant today: *"Most city diversity is the creation of incredible numbers of different people and different private organizations, with vastly differing ideas and purposes, planning and contriving outside the formal framework of public action"* (Jacobs, 1961). This a point so poignantly made by not only one of the greatest urbanists of our time but also one of the few well-known female urbanists then and now.

Gender ideologies and the practices of women and men are central to how spaces are constructed. These processes and practices are dynamic and fluid; they are constantly re-created and re-formed, even as the spaces they construct are changed and transformed (Staheli and Martin, 2000).

City-making is a social process, and the intricate and close relationship between urban environments' social and physical shaping is crucial for creating gender identity and inclusive public spaces. In line with that, as Louis Wirth (1938) and Fran Tonkiss (2014) observed, cities are fundamentally social forms, not necessarily built forms. Just as space, the network of processes and relationships that connect places (Massey, 1994) may be coded with a gender identity; it may also be given a (a) sexual identity. In feminist geographies, if public space is viewed as predominantly patriarchal, and heterosexuality is part and parcel of that form of

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masculinity—heteropatriarchy—then public space is sexed to the advantage of heterosexuals and the disadvantage of alternative sexualities (McDowell and Sharp, 1999 and Nelson and Seager, 2005). To challenge their spatial exclusion from public spaces and resist their spatial containment in the private place, many gays and lesbians and the whole LGBT community around the world invert the identities of public spaces at specific times, either squares or streets or parks, expressing thereby their identity and breaking the bonds and vicious circle of embedded masculine unshared spaces; thereby sustaining, challenging and altering gender and sexual identities vis-à-vis spatial geographies – those of spaces and places in the City (Fellmann, M., D. Bjelland, et al. 2013).

But this issue is not nearly a recent development and can be argued to be a near-continuous affliction on urban environments since the earliest days of human urbanization. Since at least the agricultural revolution roughly 12,000 years ago, women have been in a near-constant state of being physically, socially, or politically subjugated by the opposite sex. We are finally at a point in history where certain women have experienced the most incredible privilege since humanity settled in cities. And there's no debate that we have seen incredible gains in female representation in architecture and city government over the last hundred years. But this progress has been incremental, limited to a select privileged (lighter-skinned) few, and women remain seemingly consigned to supporting roles in an urbanism movement many argue was founded by a woman — Jane Jacobs. (Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017)

Academically, urbanist literature is replete with male-dominated outlooks on knowledge and understanding of our urban environments. A 2016 edition of the Routledge *City Reader* in the British publisher's Urban Reader Series includes articles by 66 named contributors. Four are women: a startling 6 percent (LeGates & Stout, 2015). *Urban Planning Today*, A Harvard Design Magazine Reader, published in 2006 by the University of Minnesota Press, includes 13 contributors. Two are women (Saunders, 2006).

Outside of academia's libraries and lecture halls, a growing (and profitable) industry is built around buzzwords coined mainly by men. To name a few: Richard Florida's "Creative Class" (2002), Jeff Speck's "Walkability" (2013), Fred Kent's "Placemaking" (Project for Public Spaces, 2018), Jan Gehl's "Cities for People" (2010), Gil Penalosa's "8 to 80 Cities" (880Cities.org, 2018), Andres Duany's "New Urbanism" (Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, 2010), Mike Lydon and Tony Garcia's "Tactical Urbanism" (2015). Inside Urbanism's public world of popular books and private companies, these men have created a new language spoken by few, with an influence felt by many. Of the more than 100 seminal texts and buzzwords compiled from the representative list above, fewer than 20 percent are by women, and virtually none are by women of color (Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017). Furthermore, though no significant urban organizations keep public data on gender representation at these events, the tally of identified participants on panels and keynotes at ten major urbanism conferences during 2017 revealed that roughly six out of every ten public speakers on the urbanist circuit are men (Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017).

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION: Towards a Just and Feminist City Planning

Spatial justice is a concept rooted in the examination of spatial inequalities and the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and environmental benefits within a given geographic area. Harvey (1973) introduced the term, emphasizing the importance of analyzing how space is socially constructed and how different groups may experience disparities in access to essential resources and amenities based on their geographic location. Spatial justice extends beyond the mere physical arrangement of spaces and encompasses the broader social, economic, and political dimensions of space (Soja, 2010). The concept underscores the need for equitable urban and regional planning, ensuring that all communities, regardless of their geographical location, have access to essential services and opportunities. Scholars argue that spatial justice involves not only the distribution of resources but also the recognition of diverse voices and perspectives in the planning and decision-making processes (Schmid, 2008). This participatory dimension emphasizes the importance of involving marginalized communities in shaping the spaces they inhabit. In the context of cities, spatial justice can be seen in efforts to address urban inequalities, such as the equitable distribution of public services, affordable housing, and green spaces. The goal is to create cities that are not only physically accessible but also socially inclusive, acknowledging the diverse needs and experiences of different populations within the urban environment (Marcuse, 2009).

Spatial justice refers to the fair distribution of resources and opportunities in physical space (Harvey, 1973). Social justice focuses on the equitable treatment of all individuals within a society, addressing issues of fairness and equality (Rawls, 1971). Environmental justice emphasizes the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, particularly in relation to marginalized communities (Bullard, 1990). Territorial justice involves fairness in the allocation of resources and opportunities across different territorial units (Soja, 2010).

In contemporary discussions on spatial justice, scholars continue to explore the evolving dynamics of urban spaces and their impact on social equity. Recent research by Fainstein (2019) emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of spatial justice, recognizing that it extends beyond the physical distribution of resources to encompass issues of cultural recognition and procedural fairness. The concept underscores the importance of addressing the power imbalances inherent in urban development processes, ensuring that planning decisions prioritize the needs and voices of marginalized communities (Fainstein, 2019). Furthermore, the work of Pulido (2017) emphasizes the intersectionality of spatial justice by examining how race, class, and gender intersect to produce unique spatial inequalities. As cities grapple with the challenges of rapid urbanization and globalization, these contemporary

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perspectives on spatial justice offer critical insights into creating inclusive and equitable urban environments. However, achieving spatial justice is a complex and ongoing challenge, requiring a comprehensive understanding of historical, social, and economic factors that contribute to spatial inequalities. It demands a commitment to policies and practices that address systemic disparities and promote inclusivity in urban development. As cities continue to evolve, the concept of spatial justice remains a critical framework for analyzing and addressing the spatial dimensions of social injustice and inequality. Urban justice encapsulates the pursuit of fairness and equity within the complex dynamics of urban spaces (Figure 4). Feinstein's (2019) seminal work, "The Just City," provides a nuanced understanding of justice in urban development, emphasizing the need for inclusive and participatory planning that addresses the power differentials inherent in city shaping. Peck's (2018) exploration of transnational urbanism delves into the impacts of neoliberal urban policies, shedding light on how these global forces intersect with local dynamics, often exacerbating social inequalities. These contemporary perspectives underscore the challenges and opportunities in creating cities that prioritize the well-being of all residents, particularly those historically marginalized in urban processes.



Figure 4: Just Choice Neighborhoods: Investing in People and Places; Modern European building apartment quarter. Other outdoor facilities, Nemenčinės highway, Vilnius Lithuania 2019, Digital Photo Model by Roman Babakin, Permission and kind courtesy of ©2023 National League of Cities. NLC100, Washington, DC

It has been a strong argument in research and literature, as well as in practice, that women's needs and lived experiences have been neglected for more than five decades in urbanism studies, urban design, and planning (Day 2011). Therefore, exploring the intricate relationships between the built environment and women in public spaces has become a significant line of investigation in research since the 1990s. This addresses the gap between designing safe and just urban public spaces and planning a more equitable city for women (Churchman and Altman 1994; Franck and Paxson 1989; Kallus 2003; McDowell 1983). Some studies have addressed and focused on the formation of gender identities in place and the experiences of women in public spaces (Day 1999, 2000; Massey 1994)

But of course, the women influencing the world of Urbanism should not be relegated to some position of subjugation and have indeed had a tremendous impact on how we view our cities. However, with the need for more representation in the public sphere, academic literature, and conference stage, much more needs to be done to improve the equity gap in the design and management and the knowledge base of our cities. This brings us to Feminist Planning as a possible, viable, and needed solution for planning & practice.

As we see it, and also based on research done by Leslie Kern (2020 and 2022), "feminist city planning" is a theoretical and practical approach to urban planning and design that prioritizes the needs and experiences of women and other marginalized groups, such as people of color, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ+ community. It seeks to address how patriarchal, heteronormative, and capitalist systems have produced cities that are often hostile, inaccessible, and inequitable for many people. In feminist city planning, the lived experiences and perspectives of diverse groups of people are central to the planning process, and decision-making is informed by understanding how the built environment affects different communities in different ways. This approach recognizes the importance of creating cities that are safe, accessible, inclusive, and equitable for all residents, regardless of their gender, race, class, sexuality, or ability.

Feminist city planning and urban design is a social movement and a school of thought that seeks to promote gender equality through inclusive and equitable cities in urban development. Feminist city planning aims to challenge traditional planning practices that

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prioritize the interests of developers, business owners, and wealthy residents and prioritize the needs and experiences of those historically marginalized and excluded from the planning process. This may involve advocating for policies and practices that promote affordable housing, public transportation, pedestrian-friendly streets, and accessible public spaces, among other things. *The following are some of the main principles of feminist city planning and urban design that we see as crucial in the context of those mentioned above and a cornerstone for policy-making for just public spaces and plural cultural Urbanism of renewal:*

1. Diversity and Inclusion: Recognizing and celebrating the diversity of urban populations, particularly in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and age. It involves creating spaces that are inclusive and accessible for all.

2. Safety and Security: Creating safe and secure environments, free from violence and harassment, for women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals. This includes design features that increase visibility and lighting and measures to control access to public spaces.

3. Accessibility and Mobility: Providing safe and convenient modes of transportation that are accessible to all, including those with disabilities, older adults, and children.

4. Economic Empowerment: Supporting the economic empowerment of women and marginalized groups through urban planning and design that promotes entrepreneurship, access to markets, and income-generating activities.

5. Sustainable Development: Implementing sustainable and environmentally friendly urban planning and design practices while considering the specific needs of women and marginalized communities.

6. Community Engagement: Encourage community participation and engagement in the planning and design process to ensure their voices and perspectives are heard and incorporated into decision-making.

7. Intersectionality: Recognizing that gender inequalities are intertwined with other forms of oppression, such as race, class, and sexuality, and that feminist city planning and urban design must address these intersections.

Coupled with those mentioned above, the paramount focus is on achieving equality, justice, and equity in cities, which begs for and requires a multifaceted and holistic approach that addresses the social, economic, and political factors contributing to inequality and injustice. Some ways to achieve these goals include:

Addressing systemic discrimination: This involves identifying and challenging the policies and practices that perpetuate discrimination and inequality, such as housing segregation, unequal access to education and healthcare, and discriminatory policing practices. Secondly, **promoting economic equality** involves creating policies and programs that promote economic growth and development while addressing income inequality and poverty. This could include initiatives like affordable housing, access to job training and education, and living wage policies. Thirdly, **ensuring inclusive governance** involves promoting the participation of diverse communities in the political process and decision-making and ensuring that government institutions are responsive and accountable to the needs and concerns of all residents. Fourthly, **fostering social cohesion** involves promoting diversity and inclusivity, building social connections and networks, and creating safe and welcoming public spaces accessible to all. Fifthly, **addressing environmental injustice** involves addressing the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards and pollution on marginalized communities and promoting sustainable and equitable development practices.

Feminist city planning considers the gendered impacts of urban development. It addresses issues such as access to safe and affordable housing, public spaces that are welcoming to all genders, free art in public realm, transportation systems that are safe and accessible for all, and the provision of essential services such as childcare and healthcare. It also considers the role that gender plays in shaping people's experiences in the city, including experiences of violence, discrimination, and poverty. Feminist city planning is interdisciplinary and draws on theories and practices from urban planning, feminist geography, sociology, and architecture. This approach aims to create more equitable, sustainable, and livable cities for all, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups, including women, girls, and gender-nonconforming individuals. Achieving equality, justice, and equity in cities requires sustained and collaborative efforts by governments, community organizations, and residents. It is essential to listen to and work closely with the communities most affected by inequality and injustice and to prioritize their needs and perspectives in policy and decision-making. By prioritizing all these principles and core focus areas, feminist city planning and urban design aim to create equitable, inclusive, and sustainable cities for all residents, regardless of gender or other social identities. Furthermore, it examines the City's paradoxical ability to oppress and emancipate, in a new light, how an (urban) environment teeming with gendered inconvenience, racial discrimination, and sexual violence can also be a locus of queer independence, community care, and emancipatory feminist world-making (Figure 5).

Post Scriptum: Software and Hardware of the City (DNA)

Finally, if we are going to reach a city of hope and a city of opportunity, a combination of post-feminist new geographies can give us explanations and answers as well as solutions for public realms, coupled with explorations in crucial elements of cultural Urbanism where a nuanced understanding of public space is brought in, might be an approach that many of our cities are missing. "Culture is the software of cities just as the built environment is its hardware," says Peter Calthorpe (2010). Harvey (2008) warns

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of an increasing threat of the homogenization of public space in cities to such an extent that they no longer promote a diversity of uses and people.

This also draws attention to the fact that our cities need to be open and plural to all transformations and changes occurring in a systemic and non-organized way in the urban fabric.



Figure 5: Lisbon street art: from Addfuel to Vhils, Feminist Graffiti Planning - Romantic piece by Jaqueline de Montaigne painted in 2022 on the occasion of her solo show “The language of flowers,” Lisbon. Courtesy of: BLocal blog: Travel + Street Art.

Brent Ryan is right when stating that three signal considerations for city planners and urban designers when acknowledging pluralism are: *eternal change*, *inevitable incompleteness*, and *flexible fidelity*. Cities are ceaselessly active, perpetually changing. It is the urban designer's task to make art with aesthetic qualities that can survive perpetual change (Ryan, 2017). The critical issue is that the public realm needs to remain an open and democratic common good of transformative character, not generic and stable. Public spaces have always been the arenas of conflict and the potential struggle over claims to control and accessibility to different (especially marginalized) groups in society. Public spaces are meant to characterize positive aspects of urban living – inclusivity, accessibility, and the disregard for status, and serve as the domain of the common concern. However, private interests often get in the way, leading to more significant inequalities, growing signs of exclusivity, and an overall erosion of the commons. This raises questions about whom the city is meant to serve and whether the public realm is public for all its citizens (Sennett, 2013). According to him, software and hardware co-evolve with each coming time and generation, 'culture informing and transforming the hardware of a city while technological change and infrastructure redirect the city culture.' The critical thing to remember, as Calthorpe (2013) observes, is that while each place is unique, universal human traits set the fundamental DNA of great cities: *human scale*, *diversity of action*, and *social interaction*."

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