

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Jin, Jiayi, Huang, Kexin and Zhu, Mingyu (2023) Engendering the City: A Participatory Approach to Gender-Responsive Planning and Urban Design in Cairo. In: Urban Poetics and Politics in Contemporary South Asia and the Middle East. Advances in Religious and Cultural Studies . IGI Global, pp. 269-290. ISBN 9781668466506, 9781668466513, 9781668466520

Published by: IGI Global

URL: <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-6650-6.ch013> <<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-6650-6.ch013>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link: <https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/51294/>


Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

# Chapter 13

## Engendering the City: A Participatory Approach to Gender-Responsive Planning and Urban Design in Cairo

**Jiayi Jin**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8009-4814>  
Northumbria University, UK

**Kexin Huang**

Northumbria University, UK

**Mingyu Zhu**

Newcastle University, UK

### ABSTRACT

*The city of Cairo has witnessed a considerable increase in crimes against women, compelling women to avoid or minimise their use of public spaces in recent years. The absence of consideration for women in city planning has made Egyptian women feel further excluded and threatened by the public space, in addition to the patriarchal social relations and religious conservatism. As part of the ‘gender-inclusive cities’ research project, this study adopts a participatory approach as a tool for women’s empowerment with the goal of promoting bottom-up models of planning, dissolving gendered norms, and improving women’s status in a patriarchal society. The chapter provides an example of localised gender-inclusive design addressing women’s spatial sensibilities and connecting them to the broader objectives of participation and emancipation. The findings of this study can help planners and policy makers co-create safer public spaces for local women, reduce spatial inequality, and facilitate their right to the city.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6650-6.ch013

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 20th century marks the start of normalising women's involvement in the city and growing inclusion in the public domain and marking the massive shift of daily gender patterns in the city (Meece et al., 2006), defined by people's lifestyle, composed of the shifting societal views and expectations, and individual ambitions, thereby working as an invisible demographic shift in cities. This development has led to the increase of women's involvement in the public sphere of the city, no longer being confined to the private sphere of the household. The form and structure of the contemporary city is, however, threatening this advancement by perpetuating the "traditional" gender roles within society through the use of a city structure that makes it difficult for women to balance the time between societal gender expectations and their personal aspirational opportunities spatially, especially with places socialised by patriarchal religious structures. The city was therefore used to divide and control the 'natural' division between the sexes (Roberts, 1998) through its structure that rigidly defined public and private spaces; men's and women's spaces respectively (Kuhlmann, 2013), therefore bringing threats to women with their increased patronage, who were not considered in the design of public spaces as direct participants.

The relationship between the different genders and the city is a topic that has been thoroughly researched from a sociological perspective, thereby paying greater attention to the relationships between people, including gender roles and power relations in cities (Bier, 2011; Casanova, 2009; Casanovas et al., 2015). How these societal relationships then reflect into space during the development and growth of the city form and structure is, however, not as thoroughly and extensively explored in a way that results in concrete conclusions and design interventions about gender equality in the networks of the city.

The study is based on a series of public co-creation workshops on 'Gender-inclusive Cities' based in Cairo, Egypt, where is known to be one of the least gender-equal regions globally (Haines, 2017; Kato, 2017). Women and girls in Egypt face violence on a disturbing scale both at home and in public. A 2017 Reuters Survey of 19 megacities worldwide ranked Cairo as the most dangerous megacity for women (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2017). While parts of the city retain a form of pre-industrial structure that allows some people to combine production and reproduction activities in one space, it has yet to establish a spatial framework within which women are free to roam public spaces alone and access services to increase their quality of life. This means it is easier for people who only need to engage in paid work to navigate the city, while those with unpaid responsibilities are increasingly disadvantaged by the same structure. Due to societal gender relations in Egypt, those systematically disadvantaged are predominantly women. Whether intentionally made that way or not, the result of contemporary urban planning and design paradigms is

women being unable to access the same opportunities and participate in the local economy the way men are enabled to. The pervasiveness and frequency of sexual harassment also make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable when accessing public spaces in the city. Attacks against women and girls in the public domain have long plagued Egyptian society, and women and girls of all ages face sexual harassment at every step of their daily life: in the streets and on public transport, in schools and universities, and at their workplaces.

The authors hope to increase awareness of gender-based inequalities at a local level and involve local citizens to highlight how public spaces can take action to tackle the issues raised. The research team has worked closely with local community-based organisations and design agencies in implementing and perpetuating a strategic framework for urban planning to enable local women to have a wider range of access to their needs and opportunities in the public space, thereby enhancing their quality of life and potential for social mobility. The end of this research outlines design strategies and recommendations that can be served as a guideline for gender-inclusive planning and design processes toward meaningful, effective outcomes and long-term improvements. This planning paradigm is centred around gender equality and planned co-creation sessions help to emphasise the significance of providing an evolutionary, adaptable, and thereby appropriable and participative approach to spatial planning and design, as a core factor in reducing spatial inequalities in the city.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The Gendered Body in a Contemporary City**

Cities are spaces of opportunity, where there is a higher range of prospects and aspirations for individuals to pursue than in semi-urban and rural areas (Tacoli & Satterthwaite, 2013). Women are therefore allowed to be more independent and are given more possibilities through the city, where they can experience “some relaxation of the rigid social values and norms that define women as subordinated to [...] men generally” (Pepera, 2019; Tacoli & Satterthwaite, 2013). Not only can women participate in a wider range of educational and employment opportunities, particularly with higher demands for varying skillsets in various fields (Goldin & Katz, 1996), but there are also more opportunities for engagement with society outside the household in the different varieties of public and semi-public spaces present in the city. Even more so with increasing globalisation, cities have become spaces with endless amounts of things to do, see and experience, in both the positive and negative sense.

However, when it comes to the essence of the form and structure of the city, particularly relating to the networks and how these different spaces are linked with each other, authors believe current urban design practices have not gone far enough with accommodating women and adapting to the ‘invisible’ demographic shift mentioned earlier. Spatial design is still regarded with the same lens as before this change in people’s patterns, and large problems that come with this lack of consideration are dealt with retroactively through measures of social isolation and induced fear of public space, which make the city increasingly less hospitable for women. Regarding social isolation, this is not necessarily a gendered problem of the city; individuals who live alone will also face the struggles of balancing housework with paid work, as the unpaid work for the household is necessary for the household to function, whether or not the women are the ones to be tasked with them. Some families have contributions done equally by both men and women, however, when it comes to the average household and larger families, where the individuals in question have to work to support those living with them, while taking care of others within the household in the meantime if they are children or elderly, and/or disabled, this task more often than not falls onto the “wife” in the family (Silbaugh, 2007; Tacoli & Satterthwaite, 2013). These women are consequently unable to manage enough time in the day to do housework, care for the household, travel, and pursue their ambitions, while also taking care of their physical and mental health. As the “tradition” was, the city is built by men, around the idea that a man goes to work during regular working hours, while his wife is at home taking care of the house and those living inside it; it is therefore built around stereotypical assumptions about masculinity and femininity in the city which induces women’s fear in public space (Roberts, 1998).

Women’s fear for their personal safety is a strong factor in their decisions to participate in urban life (Tacoli & Satterthwaite, 2013). Due to the higher risks of violence, while women have a higher degree of autonomy in cities, it is again cut short by perceived fear of certain urban spaces, which can hinder them from pursuing the opportunities they aspire for; they are “vulnerable to the fear of harassment and attack and [...] this considerably limits their use and enjoyment of public spaces in the city” (Roberts, 1998). A lot of the fear perceived by women in cities is a result of certain land-use and accessibility patterns laid across cities, such as a lack of visibility in public spaces, inconsiderable transport systems and poor infrastructure designs (Kuhlmann, 2013). Kuhlmann (2013) makes a point to note that women are not afraid of the places with bad lighting, lines of sight and psychical or social visibility themselves, but are afraid of “becoming victims of crime while unobserved by social control measures” (p. 192). Therefore, an understanding of the systems at work in space results in these kinds of inconsiderate spaces with heightened vulnerability for women.

Looking back at the quote from Sassen's work – *Globalisation and its Discontents* (Sassen, 1998, p. 82), it becomes apparent that not only does the male-led culture and power dynamics in the global economy exclude the workers and sectors from the image of globalisation, but because of the covering of these majority-women economic sectors, the problems and inconveniences they encounter in their patterns through the city are also, in effect, hidden from the mainstream planning and design considerations. This results in the emergence of retroactive plans when the problems grow out of hand that push women further into the private sphere of the city despite them putting in the effort to enter the public sphere. Kirsten Day (2006) extends this discussion by reviewing feminist approaches to urban design and public space, she argues that focusing on crime and safety displaces the fact that women have historically employed public space as a medium for struggle against oppression. Day suggests that designers and planners should move beyond “universal design” (Day, 2006) criteria as their normative goal and think about networks of public spaces that can accommodate needs and aspirations characteristic of specific social groups. In that respect, physical features of such public networks and individual spaces become crucial to enabling women to become leaders in their cities and communities. Even though women's fear of/in public space will not be removed by better lighting design, landscape of urban furniture alone, feminist designers and planners have offered successful examples for how increasing women's safety leads to a fundamental rethinking of women's roles and place in the city.

### **Gender Inequalities Reflected in Social Contexts and Urban Settings in Egypt**

Gender inequality exists in all societies around the world. The trending hashtag #metoo, ordinarily introduced by activist Tarana Burke, collected several million stories about sexual harassment and assault against women every year (Khomami, 2017; Tuerkheimer, 2019), with a wide range of territories. However, based on social indicators and gender statistics, “women in the Arab region are on average more disadvantaged economically, politically, and socially than women in other regions” (as cited in Khalil, 2017, p. 1). Egypt is one example of those Arabic countries where sexism and inequality have continued to thrive, leaving women and girls vulnerable and excluded from decision making regarding their own quality of life (Sweeting, 2020). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which is looking at indicators like the pay gap and number of women in parliaments, ranked 150 countries on gender equality in 2019, Egypt has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.449, ranking it at 108 out of 162 countries (UNDP, 2020). Only 18% of the working-age women are now participating in the economy, compared to 65% of

men (El-Kot et al., 2021), gender inequality in Egypt was also severely exacerbated after the pandemic (Samari, 2021).

Women in Egypt face inequalities across policy and community sectors as well as in the household, especially after the rise of Islamic conservatism in the 1980s (Braker, 2018; El-Safty, 2004). In this country, married males typically function as household heads and make choices for the whole family (Bier, 2011). On the contrary, women take on traditional roles in the household and seldom enter the workforce (Assaad et al., 2018). The difficulties with overcoming gender inequalities are rooted in the social construction of genders: In 'women working' Casanovas et al. (2015) define gender as [a] societal and cultural construct based on the biological differences between the sexes that assign different capacities, behaviour, emotional and intellectual characteristics to girls, women, boys, men, and trans\* people. These attributes vary according to society's relationship between sexes. The definition makes clear that these attributes are changeable due to their socially contracted nature (Casanova, 2009). Currently, in Egypt, the majority of women are still doing the larger share of unpaid (and often unappreciated) labour. Leave the numbers about job opportunities alone, a person's gender influences almost all activities and experiences. The struggle of men and women of course is connected: While men are not socially allowed to take certain roles, like the homemaker or having a job in care, these responsibilities mostly have to be done by women.

The dichotomy of gender roles created a gendered perception of space, as men perceive public space as their own territory while women perceive it as a daily ambush (Braker, 2018). Consequently, women in Cairo face significant spatial barriers to access employment opportunities, manifested in increased safety risks in space, which heavily reduces their mobility capacity. This is perceived as the natural state of the city despite it not always having been the case (Ilahi, 2009). From the 1920s to the 1970s, feminist movements in Egypt made significant progress in freeing themselves from the long-standing patriarchal chains, obtaining equal education, expanding professional opportunities and making changes in the status law, which made them successfully acquire their share of public space (Braker, 2018). However, the rise of neoliberalism and the religious dogmas under patriarchal interpretations since the 1970s marks a distinctive regression in women's status in Egyptian society (De Koning, 2009). In a sprawling wave of economic frustration and despair, men become more violent towards governments, the built environment and women (Braker, 2018). Since the patriarchal social expectations assert that men should be the head of the household and be prioritised in economic and political matters, the fact that more and more women had education and permanent jobs while some men were lagging behind was seen as unacceptable and abnormal (Braker, 2018; El-Kot et al., 2021). This was when women were forced back into the domestic space by a juxtaposition of patriarchy and conservative religious and cultural doctrines. Today, despite equal

degrees of higher education between women and men, women make up the majority of the unemployed workforce. Because of the increasing absence of women in the public sphere of the city, women in Cairo have visibly less freedom than men to perform their tasks. Increased safety risks in the city, particularly related to sexual harassment and assault, drive women away from public spaces. This further makes them avoid facilities and structures that allow them to access opportunities but require them to use public spaces, including public transportation (Ilahi, 2009).

As the capital city, Cairo is recognised as one of the top 10 most populated metropolitan regions globally, host to a fifth of Egypt's 100 million inhabitants in the Greater Cairo Metropolitan Region and just over 9.5 million inhabitants within the city bounds of Cairo (UNFPA, 2018). The increasingly popularised development of new towns and gated communities, which end up not having access to public transportation, is another factor that contributes to the hindrance of many women's mobility because they rarely own cars themselves or are not allowed to drive because of religious/cultural reasons. This makes them reliant on other members of the household to drive them to the nearest public transportation stop, particularly when they cannot drive themselves to their destination immediately, thereby interlinking schedules further in a way that leaves these people tired before reaching their work or classrooms, and after arriving home as well (*idem*). Still having tasks to complete within these times of energy depletion discourages those whose schedule functions this way from engaging in education or employment, and pursuing their aspirations, when the time wasted to strive for it leaves them with a lower quality of life. Derived from statistics by the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS). The percentage of employed women per neighbourhood with a temporary jobs map (TADAMUN, 2019) shows that participation in the formal or informal labour force is linked to the availability of either proximally (*idem*). These temporary jobs also tend to be less secure, with lower wages, thereby keeping the wealth distribution fixed to the local conditions. As such, it can be concluded that a lack of distribution and connectivity to employment opportunities is one of the causes of women's lower access to opportunities in the city. This is not considering the safety and comfort issues that come with busy public transport or informal modes of transport, such as minibuses and taxis, which are becoming increasingly unsafe for women travelling alone due to the prevalence of stories of harassment and kidnapping, that incrementally deter women from using them out of fear (ITDP, 2019). This lack of a sense of safety in the public sphere and in public transport therefore keeps Egyptian women from liberating themselves through income-based independence.

Additionally, in the last years since the 2011 uprising, repeated attacks on women protesters around Cairo's iconic Tahrir Square have drawn attention to the endemic sexual harassment and violence faced by women in Egypt in the public sphere.



Successive authorities have used the violence as a way to smear their political opponents and, under Mohamed Morsi's rule, even blamed the women themselves. The problem is compounded by an inadequate legal framework, as well as the long-term failure of the security forces and judicial authorities to take complaints of sexual harassment or other forms of gender-based violence seriously.

## **A Dialectical Discussion of Gender-responsive Planning and Design**

The issue of women and gender in city planning and design became prominent in the 1970s when feminist activist-professionals seeped their ideas into practice, particularly in the United States and several European countries. Academics started following up on the issue in the 1980s and made significant progress in the city planning literature during this time with work produced by Clara Greed, Marion Roberts, Jos Boys, Dory Reeves, Teresa Boccia, Sasa Lada, Liisa Horelli, Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, and others (De Madariaga & Neuman, 2020). Today, progressive urban planners, designers architects and policymakers developed a series of approaches and methods to address women's needs for agency, safety, access and comfortability in cities. For instance, 'Gender mainstreaming' is a process that involves the integration of a gender perspective into the planning and design of policies, programmes and projects to promote equality between women and men and combat discrimination. They use tools such as Gender stakeholder consultation to promote evidence-based and participatory policy-making (The European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

The dual approach of combining gender mainstreaming and specific measures for the advancement of women, to ensure better policy making and better use of resources is implemented in the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as other gender-sensitive goals. 'Gender-inclusive urban planning and design' incorporate cross-sector departments, strategies, typologies and fields of expertise to integrate participatory engagement with community and government project partners in developing a built environment that is more inclusive, for men and women, for those with disabilities and for those who are marginalised and excluded (World Bank Group, 2020). The group designed and used tools to collect data, such as Walk Audit to document and examine the physical aspects and social uses of the studied area, as well as public space checklists to understand if a public space is well-designed and gender-inclusive.

Although the European approach was overall practically-oriented, some theoretical frameworks were also being developed. For example, feminist urban scholars adopted and developed Henri Lefebvre's 'the right to the city' and incorporated feminist agendas, which termed the 'neo-Lefebvrian right to the city', as they identified that

## **Engendering the City**

there was a lack of perspectives on gender inequalities in his work because of the philosopher's predominate concern with the work-class in cities due to his Marxist tradition.

*The right to the city is not simply the right to access education or work. Rather, it is the right to belong everywhere, to inhabit cities through independent exploration, to influence institutions as well as attain a livelihood. It is also the right to encounter difference: not only different people, but different experiences – not only a limited 'leisure' experience, but meaningful encounters across social classes in daily life (Whitzman, 2013, pp. 32-52).*

In this way, the right to the city is inextricably linked to the active participation of women in building safer and more inclusive cities. The right to the gendered and feminist city serves as an alternative to solve the conflicts over urban planning and design against patriarchal cities and prevent the violation of women's right to participate not only in public affairs and decision-making but also in a variety of urban activities because of gendered power relations (Fenster, 2005). Intersectionality serves as a critical lens to understanding any gender issues because women are not a homogenous group, so different women experience different degrees of problems and risks based on factors such as their age, educational level, class, ethnicity and nationality. Hanson (2010, p.17) argues that the social, cultural and geographic context is 'absolutely central' in understanding the relationships between gender and mobility. Loukaitou-Sideris (2020) identifies that there is significantly less research on gendered urban planning and design in the Global South than in the Global North, despite the fact that gender inequalities are often more pronounced in the latter. She found that women in the Global South face more acute problems in terms of mobility in cities. For example, they have less access to motorised transportation, own fewer cars or have driver's licences, and some women's mobility is even more constrained than others because of religious/cultural norms preventing them from driving, cycling or using transit (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2020). This situation in research calls for more voices from women and other underrepresented social groups in the Global South, especially from the Middle East, most of Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

In Egypt, the centrality of women's corporeality in public debate became clearer during and after the Egyptian uprising in 2011, a revolution that sought democracy and social justice but excluded women from reconstructing the Egyptian constitutional referendum, barred them from committees chosen to negotiate with the military forces (Hafez, 2016). Moreover, they were repeatedly harassed and threatened with gang rape in Tahrir Square. Hafez (2016) contends that gender becomes the principal instrument that defines the urban space envisioned by the Egyptian state. The authors argue that despite the gender-related issues that are pressing in urban Egypt, it does

not get enough attention it needs from academics and practitioners. Situating in the aforementioned practices and literature, this research aims to develop a framework of gender-responsive design for the local context, which goes beyond “universal design” (Day, 2006) by addressing the imperative issue of gender inequalities in the city’s public space and contributing to a transnational understanding of gendered experiences in cities.

## **ENGENDERING THE CITY: A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH**

Our research activities in Cairo were supported by different researchers, urban experts and activists from two organizations CLUSTER and UN Women (Egypt), with the aim to make the city more inclusive for all genders and sexualities, regardless of age, abilities, class, religion or economic background. The majority of research activities has been conducted in the summer of 2022, as an extension of our current research project ‘Gender-inclusive Cities’ which got funded in October 2021, the authors conducted a series of webinars and on-site participatory workshops with the local residents and students, women’s groups and local NGOs in this context. It attracted more than 300 participants between June and September, 80% of them were women from both urban and rural locations around the Greater Cairo Region. The participatory approach serves as an empowerment tactic that promotes feminist urban planning techniques. It is a method of challenging planning that views the city as a neutral environment and exclusively employs statistics, plans, and models, in contrast, it respects local expertise, particularly that of women. The experiences, needs, and individual and collective knowledge of local women and girls have been carefully accessed in this process to develop gender criteria. Moreover, this overall participatory approach makes an important contribution to bring gender issues to the center in the formulation of future urban development, provide a much stronger emphasis on gender equality as a development objective, and on the mainstreaming of gender issues as integral to locally owned development strategies.

### **Framing and Insight Gathering through the Online Seminar**

Research activities with this participatory approach were divided into two phases: during phase 1, the research team develops an online seminar with the Department of Architecture, Cairo University on creating a safe city for all. It starts with online mapping and questions students from Egypt and the UK to map how they navigate their way around the city, with 10 questions based on their daily experiences like ‘What do you think about when you step out at night?’ and ‘what prevents you from accessing public streets or using public transport? These were simple questions



women's consciousness, physical well-being, liberty and fundamental rights" said by one Egyptian student in the webinar panel discussion.

## **Neighbourhood-Level Interactions and Co-Planning Sessions**

From this point on, phase 2's on-the-ground interaction began in collaboration with the Cairo Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Programme. Utilizing the "evaluation of everyday networks" technique, the study team walks across three Cairo neighbourhoods, including Zamalek, Al Manial, and As Sabtiyyah, and investigates women's everyday life via mapping with the local residents. On a map, every woman has to locate her home and the public spaces, facilities, and services she uses in her neighbourhood, town, or city. Once they have located these elements, participants mark on the map the paths and routes they use, how they move between places – walking, by bus, by car, whether they move alone or with someone, and which activities they develop. The individual exercise ends by identifying elements that favour, or make difficult, the development of their everyday life.

Every map also included a ballot chart to ask people to vote for what is important to them in a public space - greenery, safety, seating, street food, shopping, sense of freedom, scenic beauty, entertainment, toilets, accessibility, etc. Through these neighbourhood-level discussions, what started emerging were city-level patterns of how people from diverse backgrounds navigate in their city and what are the most inclusive spaces that work for all. People began sharing their gendered experiences and barriers in mobility physical, social and economic. In As Sabtiyyah, most women shared that, religious spaces or coffee shops were their favoured public space since that's one place they feel they are "allowed". While female residents of Zamalek felt that their neighbourhood was safer than most other neighbourhoods in the city, but it's still prone to late night crime due to the absence of "eyes on street" in its design. Female participants from the local neighbourhoods have all shared their recognised gender divisions in access to different spaces within the city "*...many things here (Cairo) are difficult for women, I don't feel safe in public transportation, unless using women-only carriages, I hope to see buses cover all of Cairo and not only the popular spots...*". "*We see women struggling in all aspects. Even a simple walk on the street, and they are easily subjected to harassment, whether verbal or even physical.*" Unsurprisingly, sexual harassment and violence were the biggest fear for all women due to the gendered power relations reflected in space design in Cairo. The research team heard the same story in each of the three neighborhoods surveyed (Zamalek, Al Manial, and As Sabtiyyah): young women are frightened for their physical safety, and angry that this harassment and bullying is not taken seriously. "*Harassment should not be seen as part of a "normal" life for anyone*" said

## **Engendering the City**

*by a young participant in Zamalek. "...and it is not harmless fun. It is frightening, disempowering and completely unacceptable."*

The mapping and selected conversations between participants and researchers have been shared in the public exhibition at a central and open-to-all public venue, as shown in Figure 2. The public discussion and co-creation activities were continued, and all visitors to the exhibition were invited to share their comments and contribute ideas on what they would do to make their respective neighbourhood more gender-inclusive with powerful as well as playful ideas. Each participant group was encouraged to share their findings with the other groups in order to create a collective list of favourable and unfavourable elements that affect daily life within a specific urban built environment. This makes people more conscious of how they may shape the community's priorities and the factors that must be taken into account when planning by reaching a consensus as women move from the personal to the collective experience. Many participants in these sessions recognised that the city of Cairo has significant problems in terms of its layout and infrastructure, which has hindered communications and mobility to adjacent neighbourhoods, especially for women and the girls.

In addition, the fact that many local neighbourhood like As Sabityyah had been settled without much planning or public spending on infrastructure had led to a lack of public spaces, and poor-quality facilities. By co-planning and placemaking, everyday public spaces such as an underpass, a pavement, the space under a metro line or around the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations, and selected courtyards of cultural spaces were transformed into vibrant public places where people from all walks of life came together to participate in the discourse generated. There were several interactive public activities designed to include people's voices and experiences through their daily life experiences, which entails situational performances of superiority and deference, and senses of belonging and nonbelonging in the urban public space. Particular gender and class performances determine in which parts of the city one can feel at home, and how one is seen and treated in different spaces on Cairo's segmented map. Another activity crowd-sourced different genders' mobility across the city by asking them what kind of public space they frequent the most, when and through which mode of transport. By tying their responses through different coloured threads/points, the visitors created a city-level pattern of their relationship with the city. An integral approach of the project was not just on-street neighbourhood discussions and public interactions but also connecting to policy and governance to mainstream the discourse on gender and sexuality. The results were sent to the planning department of each municipality at the end of phase 2, which in some cases have been included in the local neighbourhood plan.

*Figure 2. Participatory co-planning sessions and public exhibition of ‘Gender-inclusive Cities: How to design the city for ALL?’ which invites the public to share their experiences in their local neighbourhoods. (Gender-inclusive Cities, 2022)*

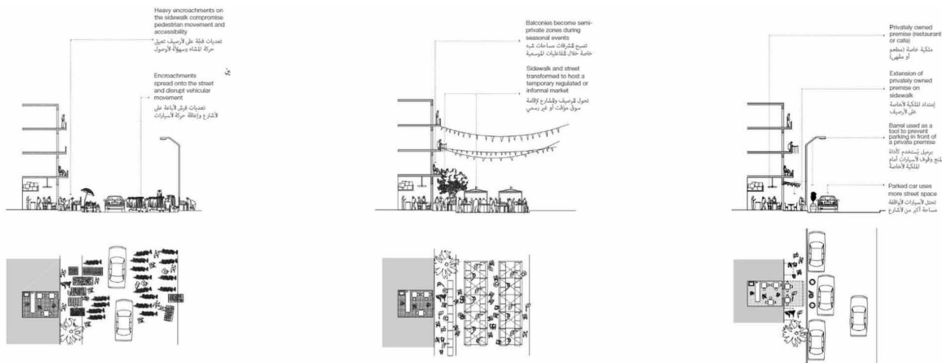


## **Design Strategies and Recommendations**

Based on the diverse information gathered from workshops and the exhibition, the research team carefully examined how participants perceive relationships between socio-cultural, spatial and functional phenomena in the city of Cairo, and converted their perceptions of the streets, parks, squares and other public spaces into achievable goals for improvement. It outlines broad commitments that will serve as a guideline for gender-inclusive planning and design processes toward meaningful, effective outcomes and long-term improvements in the status of women and girls, which can be summarised in 5 design strategies: 1) Safe: In both public and semi-public settings, everyone is free from real and perceived danger, and all spaces are considered safe and respectable for women’s socialising; 2) Freedom: all genders have freedom of movement in the public space, women can be ‘bi-rahithum’ (at ease), dress and socialise as they like, without being annoyed or being seen as disreputable; 3) Accessible: Everyone can access the public realm easily and comfortably and use every inch of the public spaces and all services on offer, without suspicious and restrictions; 4) Connected - To get connected with different opportunities and services provided, everyone can move around the city easily and economically to accumulate wealth and achieve economic or social independence; and 5) Healthy - Everyone has the opportunity to lead an active lifestyle, free from environmental health risks, women and girl can access to a variety of leisure spaces with the mixed-gender public in their neighbourhoods. And new urban development or regeneration projects in the city should allow easy access for all. Although these objectives seem rather radical to the current gendered cityscape in Cairo, they are presented as urbanist imaginations that have the potential to galvanise social and spatial changes.

## Engendering the City

Figure 3. Spatial translation of the gender-inclusive design strategies with one local street in Al Manial, Cairo. (Gender-inclusive Cities, 2022)



The public sphere, as Habermas et al. (1974) denotes, is “the entire realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (p.49), and material space is included. Therefore, the negotiation and appropriation of the public space in Cairo should be viewed as a form of political contestation against gender inequality. When women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities of all ages and abilities have access to mobility, safety and freedom, health and hygiene, and security of tenure, they have the same right to the city as straight, physically fit men. Through incorporating these gender-inclusive design strategies on the street for different events and activities (Figure 3), these interventions enable local women to share the same freedoms, opportunities, and levels of participation in their neighbourhoods, access a full range of public services, workplaces and other key amenities whenever they need or want. Eventually, adaptable street interventions contribute to the urban development process of combining productive and reproductive roles efficiently and unlocking new economic opportunities for all citizens. As a result of their comfort and sense of community in the city, local women and girls will be able to maintain their mental, physical, and emotional well-being, and create social networks to help them deal with the demands of daily urban life. They can build wealth and other assets to maintain security and agency for long-term prosperity and have an equal voice in public decisions that affect them.

A key recommendation for future planning is carefully designing the pedestrian network to connect public services and appropriable spaces between transport stops and market areas, to form an even distribution of services across clusters, so there’s no lack or overabundance in one area. Secondly, minimising women’s barriers to accessing economic and leisure opportunities through the development of principles that establish gender-inclusive spatial networks that coincide with the local socio-cultural conditions, so women’s economic empowerment including



women's ability to participate equally in existing street markets will be increased. Thirdly, incorporating different social activities can appropriate urban spaces and generate a responsive urban design that embraces diversity and promote inclusion. For instance, some underused spaces can be transformed into temporary art spaces and pop-up shops where different social groups can enjoy the spaces equally. Last but not the least, this "Gender-inclusive urban planning" should incorporate cross-sectoral initiatives to address gender requirements holistically since gender inequality is a cross-cutting a cross-cutting issue that can only be solved by collaborating across different sectors, practices, and fields of knowledge. In addition to this horizontal, cross-sectoral integration, gender inclusion must be vertically integrated — linking "on-the-ground" community expertise with government-level policy and action — to ensure sustainable impact as well as promote vertical communication and collaboration on future projects. Local community and government partners should be brought together to co-define project goals and methodologies; carry out project activities; and evaluate project success.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Further elaboration of this research may be possible with direct involvement between urban designers, policy-makers and local women to capture the ingrained intangible elements of culture that can be used to further ground the strategic framework in the local fabric. Given the local sensitivities of place, the more this research can be embedded within the specific local research, the more it can facilitate the revealing of these intangible aspects that may have been overlooked in this research; this may include a longer period of ethnographic approach to investigate local conditions, issues and identify needs and solutions. To progress the research further, an improvement in the way of facilitating the evaluation of the critical spaces and informing their design conditions should be made, to better prepare for the implementation process. In the meanwhile, a future direction of this research could also be conducted to mitigate the specific local constraints and implement an evolutionary system to achieve spatial gender equality. For example, by defining where to locate functions, it becomes possible to introduce specific actions, in a way that allows the project to grow into a city-transformative movement for gender inclusion. This includes more design-based, co-creative activities between self-organised local actors and urban experts, developing this new paradigm for urban planning and design, and more specific programmes of requirements based on prior research. Finally, this research can then also be explored in the dimension of the participation of other marginalised groups or communities, to identify possible differences in implementation if the needs and patterns considered are not that of women, but of other minority groups.

## CONCLUSION

Due to the changing economic climate induced through processes of globalisation, urbanisation and capitalism, the global economy has shifted to an increased demand for feminisation to increase the available workforce and accessibility to the city. Because of this, women's role within cities is changing, from being limited to the private domain, to expanding into the public, however, urban spaces are not being transformed accordingly in support of this socio-economic transformation. The recent discussions over the revival of neo-Lefebvrian discourses based on the right to the city are symptomatic of the gender neglect in most urban thought. And this neglect is especially obvious in the city of Cairo, where women continue to endure an unequal position when accessing the city, and they are still facing multiple social, religious, and legal discourses that support and legitimise gender inequalities. In this context, the transformation of gendered cityscape is also a form of political contestation against gender inequality prevalent in the society, in order to ensure "Access is guaranteed to all citizens" (Habermas et al., 1974).

As a group of urban planners, the authors argue that transferring the socio-economic change into spatial form is necessary to improve gender equality, increase social resilience and allow spaces to adapt to changing demographic contexts. Through our online and physical workshops with local students and residents in Cairo, the authors successfully identified a range of gender-related problems that are influenced by and reconstituting the daily experience in the city. This investigation helps us to establish more nuanced understandings and, consequently, develop strategies and recommendations to support gendered and grounded notions of everyday rights. By changing the physical dynamics in the city, it is possible the cultural and power relations within society could also see a shift towards an equal and inclusive world for women with increased safety and comfort in public space. People shape the city, but the city also shapes its people. Destroying the spatial systems that stemmed from the division of gendered tasks and the assigning of gender norms may therefore be key to gradually dissolving these norms in society itself and increasing the quality of life for women in the city.

The authors also acknowledge that engendering the city will be a lengthy process in the setting of many socio-cultural obstacles, particularly in non-western nations and Islamic contexts. It is vital to keep in mind that classic feminist methods may require to be reevaluated and closely tied to the local and current needs and context while (re)designing and (re)developing public spaces. The focus on women's rights in the city might be most effective when it is embedded in the *sine qua non* for both social and economic advancement (Kato, 2017). More and more local-based co-creation and co-planning activities between urban designers and local women could be planned, not only to change structural and unconscious biases that limit

the potential of women, but also to emphasise their contributions to creating a safer place against gender-based bias and violence. Hence, changing perceptions about women's role in the city is an indispensable requirement for shaping urban space for inclusion and equity that Egypt so desperately needs.

And finally, the authors believe this “Gender-inclusive urban planning” ought to include cross-sectoral activities to meet gender requirements holistically because this is a cross-cutting problem that can only be remedied by working across many sectors, practices, and fields of knowledge. Partners from the local government and communities should be mobilised to co-define project objectives, co-plan all the procedures, carry out project activities and assess project performance collectively. The authors are encouraged to continue the ‘Gender-inclusive Cities’ project with identified future research directions, aiming to tackle gender discriminations and their spatial manifestations in order to create well-connected, safe public spaces with local communities and design organisations, using transportation planning, cohesive urban policies, and well-thought spatial designs for engaging the city, and through using participative processes to thoroughly understand women's needs. There could be more efficient and comprehensive approaches to include diverse perspectives in planning strategies if multiple rights to the city are considered, and their spatial tactics are identified. A renewed commitment to the multiple uses of space that is attentive to different users within the urban design framework has the potential to maintain a more complete sense of gendered rights in everyday life.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This research was supported by Northumbria Seed Fund 2022 and Northumbria University. We thank our colleagues from CLUSTER and UN Women who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted all the research activities in Cairo, and we would like to express our gratitude to all staff from CUFÉ Architecture Department for the enthusiasm they brought to this research and the exhibition and workshop spaces they provided at their department. We would also like to show our gratitude to all the participants in the mapping sessions and the following exhibition for sharing their insights and experiences with us.

## REFERENCES

- Assaad, R., Hendy, R., Lassassi, M., & Yassin, S. (2018). Explaining the MENA paradox: Rising educational attainment, yet stagnant female labor force participation. *IZA Discussion Paper Series, 11385*. <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/11385/explaining-the-men-a-paradoxrising-educational-attainment-yet-stagnant-female-labor-force-participation>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191–215. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191 PMID:847061
- Bier, L. (2011). *Revolutionary womanhood: Feminisms, modernity, and the state in Nasser's Egypt*. Stanford University Press. <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=18176>
- Braker, B. (2018, August). Women in Egypt: The myth of a safe public space. *Jane Jacobs Is Still Here: Report of the Conference Jane Jacobs 100*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327285947\\_Women\\_in\\_Egypt\\_The\\_myth\\_of\\_a\\_safe\\_public\\_space](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327285947_Women_in_Egypt_The_myth_of_a_safe_public_space)
- Casanova, J. (2009). Religion, politics and gender equality: Public religions revisited. In S. Razavi (Ed.), *A debate on the public role of religion and its social and gender implications* (pp. 5–33). UN Research Institute for Social Development.
- Casanovas, R., Ciocchetto, A., Salinas, M. F., Valdivia, B. G., Martinez, Z. M., & Escalante, S. O. (2015). *Women working: Urban assessment guide from a gender perspective*. Col.lectiu Punt 6.
- Day, K. (2006). Being feared: Masculinity and race in public space. *Environment & Planning A, 38*(3), 569–586. doi:10.1068/a37221
- De Koning, A. (2009). Gender, public space and social segregation in Cairo: Of taxi drivers, prostitutes and professional women. *Antipode, 41*(3), 533–556. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00686.x
- De Madariaga, I. S., & Neuman, M. (2020). Planning the gendered city. In I. S. De Madariaga & M. Neuman (Eds.), *Engendering cities: Designing sustainable urban spaces for all* (1st ed., pp. 1–15). Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781351200912-1
- El-Kot, G., Leat, M., & Fahmy, S. (2021). The nexus between work-life balance and gender role in Egypt. In T. A. Adisa & G. Gbadamosi (Eds.), *Work-Life Interface* (pp. 185–213). doi:10.1007/978-3-030-66648-4\_7

- El-Safty, M. (2004). Women in Egypt: Islamic rights versus cultural practice. *Sex Roles, 51*(5), 273–281. doi:10.1023/B:SERS.0000046611.31760.04
- Fenster, T. (2005). The right to the gendered city: Different formations of belonging in everyday life. *Journal of Gender Studies, 14*(3), 217–231. doi:10.1080/09589230500264109
- Goldin, C., & Katz, L. (1996). Technology, skill, and the wage structure: Insights from the past. *The American Economic Review, 86*(2), 252–257. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2118132>
- Habermas, J., Lennox, S., & Lennox, F. (1974). The public sphere: An encyclopedia article. *New German Critique, NGC, 3*(3), 55. doi:10.2307/487737
- Hafez, S. (2016). *Egypt, uprising and gender politics: Gendering bodies/gendering space*. <https://pomeps.org/egypt-uprising-and-gender-politics-gendering-bodiesgendering-space>
- Haines, G. (2017). *Mapped: The best (and worst) countries for gender equality*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/mapsand-graphics/mapped-the-best-and-worst-countries-for-gender-equality/>
- Hanson, S. (2010). Gender and mobility: New approaches for informing sustainability. *Gender, Place and Culture, 17*(1), 5–23. doi:10.1080/09663690903498225
- Ilahi, N. (2009). *Gendered contestations: An analysis of street harassment in Cairo and its implications for women's access to public spaces*. <https://www.ocac.cl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Nadia-Ilahi-Gendered-Contestations-An-Analysis-of-Street-Harassment-in-Cairo-....pdf>
- ITDP. (2019). *In Cairo, ITDP works to improve transport access for women*. <https://www.itdp.org/2019/03/14/itdp-improves-transport-women-cairo/>
- Kato, M. (2017). Women of Egypt. *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*. <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/women-of-egypt/>
- Khalil, R., Moustafa, A. A., Moftah, M. Z., & Karim, A. A. (2017). How knowledge of Ancient Egyptian women can influence today's gender role: Does history matter in gender psychology? *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 2053. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02053 PMID:28105022

## **Engendering the City**

Khomami, N. (2017). *#MeToo: How a hashtag became a rallying cry against sexual harassment*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/20/women-worldwide-use-hashtag-metoo-against-sexual-harassment>

Kuhlmann, D. (2013). *Gender studies in architecture: Space, power and difference*. Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203522554

Loukaitou-Sideris, A. (2020). A gendered view of mobility and transport: Next steps and future directions. In I. S. De Madariaga & M. Neuman (Eds.), *Engendering cities: Designing sustainable urban spaces for all* (pp. 19–37). Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781351200912-2

Meece, J. L., Glienke, B. B., & Burg, S. (2006). Gender and motivation. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*(5), 351–373. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.04.004

Pepera, S. (2019). *Women and the City*. <https://womendeliver.org/women-and-the-city/>

Roberts, M. (1998). Urban design, gender and the future of cities. *Journal of Urban Design, 3*(2), 133–135. doi:10.1080/13574809808724421

Samari, G. (2021). Coming back and moving backwards: Return migration and gender norms in Egypt. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 47*(5), 1103–1118. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2019.1669437 PMID:33716548

Sassen, S. (1998). *Globalization and its discontents: Essays on the new mobility of people and money*. New Press.

Silbaugh, K. (2007). Women's place: Urban planning, housing design, and work-family balance. *Fordham Law Review, 76*(3), 1797–1852. <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4340&context=flr>

Sweeting, L. (2020). Bruised but never broken: The fight for gender equality in Egypt and Bangladesh. *Global Majority, 11*(2), 102–116.

Tacoli, C., & Satterthwaite, D. (2013). Gender and urban change. *Environment and Urbanization, 25*(1), 3–8. doi:10.1177/0956247813479086

TADAMUN. (2019). *Women and Precarious Employment: A spatial analysis of economic insecurity in Cairo's neighborhoods*. <http://www.tadamun.co/women-and-precarious-employment-a-spatial-analysis-of-economic-insecurity-in-cairos-neighborhoods/?lang=en#.Y1jqK3bMJjE>

The European Institute for Gender Equality. (2022). *Gender mainstreaming*. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>

Thomson Reuters Foundation. (2017). *Inform. Connect. Empower*. <https://www.trust.org/documents/trf-2020.pdf>

Tuerkheimer, D. (2019). Beyond #MeToo. *New York University Law Review*, 94, 1146. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3366126>

UNDP. (2020). *Human Development Report 2020, The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene*. <https://www.undp.org/egypt/press-releases/human-development-report-2020>

UNFPA. (2018). *UNFPA Annual Report 2018*. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/unfpa-annual-report-2018>

Whitzman, C. (2013). Women's safety and everyday mobility. In C. Whitzman, C. Legacy, C. Andrew, F. Klodawsky, M. Shaw, & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Building inclusive cities* (1st ed., pp. 32–52). Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203100691-12

World Bank Group. (2020). *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design>