

Original Article

Gender and Urban Space: A Critical Study of Safety, Access, and Agency in Modern Cities

Rina Kartikasari

Department of Urban Studies and Gender Equality Faculty of Social and Political Sciences Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia.

Received Date: 16th September 2024

Revised Date: 05th October 2024

Accepted Date: 28th October 2024

Published Date: 21st November 2024

Abstract - Urban spaces are not neutral; they are shaped by social structures, power dynamics, and cultural narratives that often marginalize certain groups. This paper critically examines how gender influences the experience of urban environments, with a focus on safety, accessibility, and agency. Drawing on feminist urban theory, case studies, and urban policy analysis, the study explores how the design, planning, and governance of cities affect women and gender minorities. It highlights how unequal access to public spaces, experiences of harassment, and systemic exclusions reinforce gendered hierarchies. The paper also investigates community-led and policy-driven interventions aimed at creating more inclusive and equitable urban landscapes. Ultimately, it argues for a reimagining of urban space through a gender-sensitive lens that prioritizes safety, participation, and empowerment for all genders.

Keywords - Gender and Space, Urban Safety, Feminist Urbanism, Public Space Access, Spatial Justice, Gendered Mobility, Inclusive City Planning, Urban Agency, Intersectionality, Urban Governance.

1. Introduction

1.1. Contextualizing Gender in Urban Studies

Buildings, roads, and infrastructure are not the only things that make up cities. Cities are living, breathing places that are shaped by social identities, cultural values, and power structures. Gender is a big part of how people live in and interact with the city. Traditionally, urban planning has been led by male-centered views that often ignore the unique needs, problems, and daily lives of women and people of all genders. This has led to cities that think of a "neutral" user as a cisgender, able-bodied man, which leaves other people out in both obvious and subtle ways. Things like safety, caregiving duties, and making sure everyone can get around are often not taken into account when designing public transportation systems, streetlights, parks, or even zoning rules. Because of this, gender affects everything from how safe a person feels walking home at night to see if they all have the same access to public resources. In this way, gender is more than just a demographic group; it's a deeply ingrained part of city life that affects how people move through, see, and feel about the spaces around them. This means that we need to rethink how cities are planned and built so that they reflect the different lives of all people, not just a small group of privileged people. This paper puts gender at the centre of urban studies and calls for urban areas that are more welcoming and fair, where everyone's presence, needs, and voices are heard and valued.

1.2. Importance of Studying Safety, Access, and Agency

Safety, access, and agency are closely intertwined in the everyday urban experiences of women and gender-diverse people. For many, the constant worry about violence whether it's a real threat or a lingering fear can limit how freely they move through the city, participate in public life, or feel in control of their surroundings. Things like street harassment, poorly lit areas, broken or narrow sidewalks, and public transport systems that ignore gender-specific needs are not just minor inconveniences they are symptoms of a larger, systemic failure to consider



everyone's right to the city. These issues go beyond simple concerns about safety or comfort. They raise critical questions about who is truly free to move, who feels welcome and seen, and who has the power to shape and belong in urban space. When we examine safety, access, and agency together, we start to see how cities can either shut people out or open up possibilities. These insights help expose the ways in which social inequality is built into urban design and policy and point the way toward creating more just, inclusive, and empowering cities for all.

Table 1: Core Principles of Gender-Inclusive Urban Design

Principle	Description	Examples
Safety	Incorporate lighting, visibility, CCTV	Well-lit paths, emergency call points
Accessibility	Design for varied mobility needs	Ramps, tactile paving, gender-neutral restrooms
Representation	Engage diverse voices in planning	Workshops with women, gender minorities
Flexibility	Allow adaptable spaces to meet changing needs	Modular toilets, pop-up public spaces
Data-driven design	Use gender-disaggregated and community feedback data	Transport usage patterns, safety audits

Table 2: Toolkit Comparison for Gender-Mainstreaming in Planning

Toolkit / Framework	Key Features	Process Highlights
RTPI Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (UK)	Reflects on stakeholders, planning target groups, gendered review	Question prompts throughout project lifecycle
Arup Cities Alive (UNDP)	Four themes: safety, equity, health, enrichment; stage-wise needs analysis	12-stage planning, gender task forces
GLA Public Space Safety Guidance	Ensures gender-informed teams and inclusive data in public realm projects	10 lifecycle questions

1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

This study is guided by a central question: *How* does gender shape individuals' experiences of safety, access, and agency within urban environments? To explore this broader inquiry, several supporting questions are posed: How do urban design and public policy contribute to gendered exclusions? In what ways are women and gender-diverse people reclaiming space and asserting their presence in the city? What existing models offer meaningful pathways toward gender-equitable urban planning? At its core, the study seeks to unpack the spatial, social, and institutional barriers that hinder the development of inclusive cities. It also aims to spotlight successful practices ranging from grassroots initiatives to progressive policy frameworks that are helping reshape cities into more equitable, welcoming spaces. Drawing on both theoretical insights and grounded, real-world case studies, this research ultimately strives to offer practical recommendations for scholars, planners, and policymakers who are committed to building fairer and more inclusive urban futures.

1.4. Methodological Overview

To investigate these questions, the study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary methodology that brings together urban theory, feminist geography, and critical policy analysis. Rather than relying on quantitative metrics alone, the research delves into existing literature, gender-sensitive urban audits, planning reports, and illustrative case studies from diverse global contexts including cities in both the Global North and South. These materials are examined through a critical lens to uncover how gendered experiences are built into the structures, designs, and governing practices of urban life. An intersectional approach is central to this analysis, acknowledging that gender does not operate in isolation but interacts with other factors such as class, race, disability, and sexual identity to shape urban realities in complex ways. By blending theoretical reflection with empirical observation, the methodology allows for a deep and nuanced understanding of how gender functions in urban space while also identifying structural challenges and opportunities for transformative change.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Feminist Urban Theory

Feminist urban theory offers a powerful framework for examining how cities reflect and reinforce systems of power and patriarchy. Rooted in feminist geography and sociology, this perspective critiques traditional urban planning paradigms that have historically prioritized industrial growth, economic productivity, and the mobility of male workers often at the expense of caregiving, domestic labor, and community well-being. Feminist scholars argue that many cities have been designed around an imagined “universal” citizen who is typically white, middle-class, able-bodied, and male. This narrow vision has excluded the daily realities of women and gender-diverse people, particularly those balancing caregiving responsibilities with wage labor and community engagement. Feminist urbanism, however, moves beyond critique it offers a constructive reimagining of what cities could be. It advocates for planning models that center care work, distribute resources more equitably, decentralize power, and embed safety, accessibility, and dignity into every layer of the urban experience. At its heart, feminist urban theory envisions cities not just as functional spaces, but as inclusive environments where all individuals can thrive.

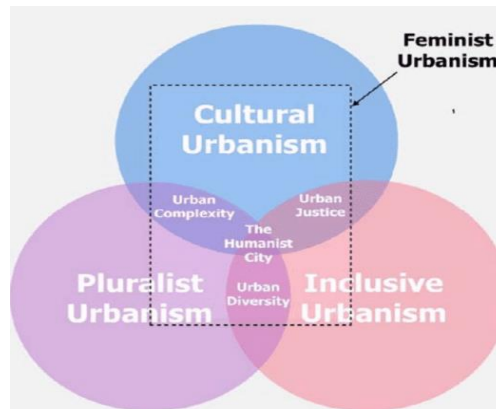


Fig. 1 Feminist Urbanism

2.2. The Concept of the Gendered City

The concept of the “gendered city” challenges the idea that urban spaces are neutral or equally accessible to all. Instead, it recognizes that cities are actively shaped by gendered norms through their design, governance, and everyday use. Urban spaces often reinforce traditional gender roles for example, through the division between public and private realms, where men are assumed to belong in public life and women relegated to domestic spaces. This binary plays out in the policing of women’s behavior in public, the persistent threat of violence, and the invisibility of unpaid caregiving work that sustains communities. At a more granular level, elements like public seating, restroom placement, transport infrastructure, and surveillance systems subtly dictate who feels welcome or excluded. Understanding the city as a gendered construct enables planners and policymakers to critically examine whose needs are prioritized, whose voices are silenced, and how urban design can be reimagined to promote genuine inclusion and equity.

2.3. Intersectionality and Spatial Justice

Intersectionality, a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizes that gender cannot be understood in isolation it intersects with race, class, sexuality, disability, and other dimensions of identity. In urban studies, this lens reveals that spatial experiences are not uniform but layered and unequal. For instance, while both a middle-class white woman and a working-class Dalit woman may face gender-based discrimination in urban settings, the latter is likely to encounter compounded barriers due to caste and class dynamics. This complexity highlights the importance of spatial justice, which refers to the fair distribution of space, resources, and opportunities within the city. True spatial justice requires more than simply adding diverse voices it demands a

reworking of urban systems to dismantle the structures that exclude and marginalize. Integrating intersectionality into urban planning is thus key to moving beyond superficial inclusion and toward deep, structural transformation.

3. Gendered Safety in Urban Spaces

3.1. Experiences of Harassment and Violence in Public Spaces

For many women and gender-diverse individuals, public spaces are often experienced as unsafe or threatening. From catcalling and groping to stalking and physical assault, gender-based harassment is a daily reality that shapes how individuals move through and engage with the city. These incidents are not isolated they create a persistent atmosphere of fear and hyper-vigilance. The result is a pattern of self-regulation: people avoid certain routes, change travel times, modify their appearance, or forgo opportunities altogether to minimize perceived risk. The fear of violence, even when nothing occurs, has a profound impact on autonomy, freedom, and quality of life. Moreover, these everyday violations are often dismissed as normal or inevitable, contributing to a culture of silence and institutional neglect. Public spaces, which should belong to everyone, are thus transformed into contested zones, limiting the ability of women and gender minorities to fully participate in urban life as equal citizens.

3.2. Night-Time Economies and Women's Mobility

The night-time economy comprising industries like hospitality, retail, transportation, and entertainment is a crucial driver of urban vibrancy and employment. Yet, access to these opportunities is not equal. Women and gender-diverse people often find themselves excluded due to safety concerns and inadequate transport infrastructure. The lack of affordable, safe, and frequent night-time public transit forces many to choose between personal safety and economic or social participation. Additionally, societal norms often stigmatize women in public spaces at night, framing them as transgressive or morally suspect, which further discourages engagement. As a result, cities unintentionally (or historically by design) limit who can move freely and work or socialize after dark. To build inclusive night-time economies, urban planning must incorporate strategies like gender-sensitive transit systems, enhanced lighting, mixed-use zoning, and community-led safety networks that empower rather than control. A city that functions for all must function for all times of the day and night.

3.3. Surveillance, Policing, and Their Impact on Marginalized Genders

Urban safety policies often rely heavily on surveillance and policing, but these approaches can produce unintended and harmful effects especially for already marginalized groups. For some women, CCTV cameras and police presence may provide a measure of comfort. However, for gender-diverse people, sex workers, racial minorities, and those from low-income communities, these systems can lead to increased scrutiny, criminalization, and even violence. Rather than offering protection, policing often reinforces social hierarchies and targets those deemed “out of place.” Furthermore, formal justice systems frequently fail to support victims of gender-based violence, with many discouraged from reporting due to fears of dismissal, retaliation, or institutional inaction. This creates a troubling paradox: over-surveillance without real safety. A more inclusive model of urban safety would shift focus from punitive control to community-based strategies such as participatory design, mutual aid networks, restorative justice, and environmental design that encourages collective guardianship without reproducing structural oppression

3.4. Case Studies (e.g., Delhi, São Paulo, Stockholm)

Several global cities offer insight into the complex dynamics of gendered safety and urban intervention. In Delhi, the 2012 Nirbhaya case sparked national and international outrage, leading to public safety audits, the installation of streetlights, and the introduction of mobile safety apps. Despite these efforts, deep-rooted cultural attitudes and infrastructural gaps continue to limit their effectiveness. In São Paulo, community-driven safety

projects in favelas have combined arts, education, and urban planning to reclaim public spaces for women and youth. These grassroots movements demonstrate the power of local agency in challenging spatial inequalities. Meanwhile, Stockholm offers an example of gender mainstreaming in urban policy, where the city systematically incorporates gender analysis into its planning processes. Projects such as gender-equal snow removal and inclusive park design show how even seemingly mundane policies can have a gendered impact. These case studies underscore that while challenges are context-specific, meaningful change is achievable through a combination of political will, community participation, and structural reform.

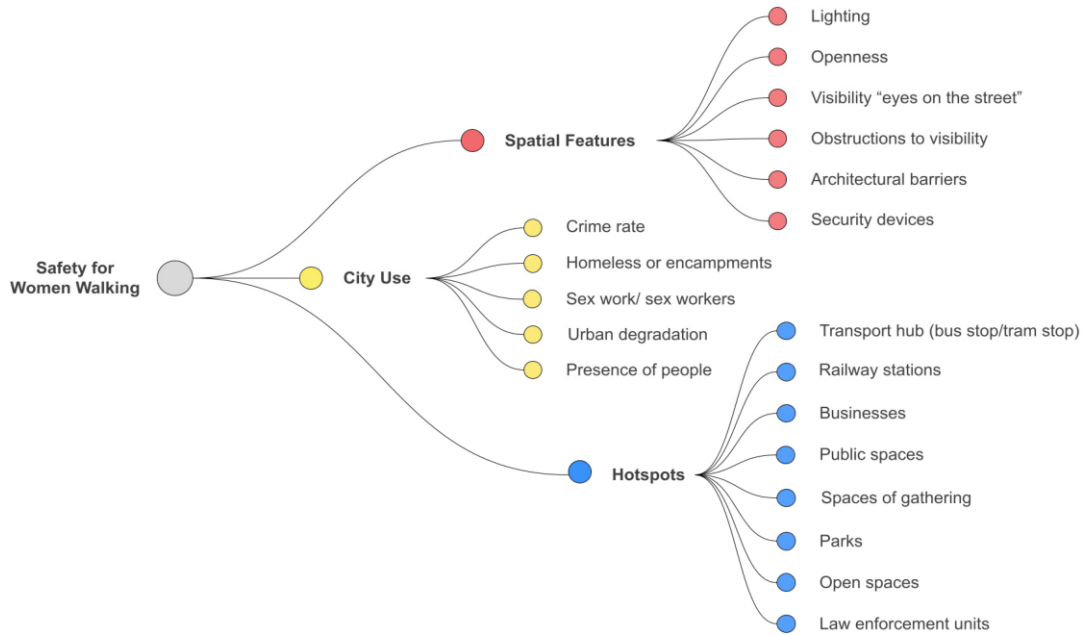


Fig. 2 Impact on Marginalized Genders

4. Access to Urban Infrastructure and Services

4.1. Gendered Patterns in Transport and Mobility

Urban transportation systems are often designed around a commuter model that prioritizes direct, peak-hour travel to and from business districts typically reflecting the routines of male workers in formal employment. However, women's mobility patterns are markedly different. Women are more likely to undertake "trip chaining," combining multiple stops for caregiving, household duties, and informal work. This renders traditional transport planning inadequate for their needs. Inaccessible or unreliable transit systems compel women to walk long distances, use costly private services, or forgo travel altogether. Additionally, fears of harassment on buses and trains further restrict mobility. Transport design, therefore, is not just a matter of engineering efficiency but of social equity. Feminist transport planning advocates for better connectivity, safer and more frequent services, and a reorientation of systems to serve diverse trip purposes thereby enhancing autonomy and economic participation for all genders.

4.2. Accessibility of Public Services (Sanitation, Lighting, Housing, Parks)

Access to basic urban services like sanitation, lighting, housing, and green spaces has profound gender implications. For instance, the absence of safe and hygienic public toilets often forces women to limit their time outside or risk health issues. Similarly, inadequate street lighting can deter evening travel and contribute to the perception and reality of danger. Housing insecurity, especially in informal settlements, disproportionately affects female-headed households who may face threats of eviction, gender-based violence, and lack of tenure rights. Access to public parks and recreational facilities is also uneven; many women report feeling unsafe or unwelcome

in these spaces due to harassment or male domination. A gender-sensitive approach to urban service provision must go beyond technical delivery to consider how infrastructure is experienced. This includes involving women in the design and placement of facilities, addressing invisible labor (e.g., water collection, child care), and ensuring that services are affordable, proximate, and responsive to the diversity of urban lives.

Table 3: Gendered Travel Patterns & Trip-Chaining

Metric	Women	Men
Licencing & car availability	Lower vehicle access	Higher vehicle access
Use of public transport vs private driving	Higher public transport use; more walking	Men drive more; women ride more often as passengers
Trip-chaining prevalence	25%-39% more than men	Less frequent, more linear trips
Trip distances & durations	Shorter trips, shorter duration	Longer, more direct trips

4.3. Economic and Social Barriers to Spatial Access

Economic inequality plays a critical role in shaping who can access and benefit from urban spaces. For low-income women, the cost of transportation, housing, and child care can significantly limit their spatial mobility. Informal workers, many of whom are women, often operate in precarious environments with little protection or infrastructure support. Additionally, social norms and expectations can act as invisible barriers restricting women's movement based on notions of honor, propriety, or religious customs. In many urban settings, especially in the Global South, women may require male accompaniment, face curfews, or be subject to moral surveillance. These socio-economic constraints are compounded by a lack of inclusive urban policy that acknowledges and addresses the specific realities faced by economically and socially marginalized groups. Therefore, spatial access is not just about physical entry but about the broader capability to participate in urban life on equitable terms.

4.4. Role of Socio-economic Class and Race in Mediating Access

Access to urban resources and spaces is not uniformly distributed; it is profoundly shaped by intersections of class, race, caste, and ethnicity. Upper-class neighborhoods often enjoy better infrastructure, security, and amenities, while lower-income areas are underserved and over-policed. Within these spatial hierarchies, women of color, Dalit women, migrant workers, and transgender individuals face layered exclusions. For example, while public transport may technically be available to all, the experience of racial profiling, harassment, or discrimination discourages many from using it. Similarly, spatial segregation whether through gated communities, slums, or ethnic enclaves further divides the city and limits interaction and integration. These dynamics highlight that urban exclusion is not merely a gender issue but a complex interplay of multiple identities. A truly inclusive city must recognize these intersecting oppressions and adopt an equity-focused approach that redistributes resources, reclaims space, and amplifies marginalized voices in urban decision-making.

Table 4: Socioeconomic & Intersectional Barriers

Barrier Type	Gendered Impact
Economic	Low-income women use public transport more; men drive more
Data gaps	Lack of female-focused data leads to male bias in infrastructure planning
Cultural & social norms	In India, 53% of women do not leave home on a given day vs. 14% men
Intersectional mobility gaps	In Santiago, women travel to fewer locations; gaps correlate with low income

5. Gender, Agency, and Participation

5.1. Women and Gender Minorities in Urban Governance and Planning

The participation of women and gender minorities in urban governance and planning remains significantly limited, both in representation and influence. Urban policy-making bodies such as municipal corporations, planning commissions, and transport authorities are often dominated by male voices, which leads to decisions that

reflect narrow priorities and overlook the lived experiences of other gender groups. This gender gap in governance results in urban environments that are functionally and symbolically exclusive. For example, the lack of women's voices in transit planning may result in routes and schedules that ignore the mobility patterns associated with care work or informal labor. Gender minorities, such as transgender individuals, are almost entirely absent from formal planning frameworks and often face active discrimination. Inclusion in governance is not just about numerical representation but about integrating feminist and intersectional perspectives into the structures of decision-making. When women and gender-diverse people are empowered to participate meaningfully, they bring to light overlooked needs and propose innovative solutions that contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban futures.



Fig. 3 Community-Led Spatial Interventions

5.2. Community-Based Spatial Interventions (e.g., *Safe Streets Initiatives, Women-Led Neighborhood Design*)

Grassroots and community-based spatial interventions have emerged as powerful counter-narratives to top-down urban planning. Initiatives such as *Safe Streets* campaigns, *women-led neighborhood audits*, and *community mapping projects* serve as tools for reclaiming space and asserting agency. These efforts are rooted in the everyday experiences of those who are most affected by urban insecurity and exclusion. For example, in many cities, women's groups have conducted safety audits by walking through neighborhoods at different times of day, documenting hazards such as poor lighting, isolated areas, or frequent harassment zones. These audits not only generate data but also foster collective consciousness and empower women as urban experts. In some cases, entire neighborhood redesigns have been proposed or implemented by local women's groups, incorporating features such as community toilets, childcare centers, secure public seating, and well-lit pathways. These interventions demonstrate how participatory design, when led by marginalized groups, can challenge dominant spatial logics and reconfigure the city into a more just and caring space.

5.3. Representation in City Councils and Decision-Making Bodies

Political representation in local governance structures, such as city councils, zoning boards, and planning review committees, plays a critical role in shaping urban development trajectories. However, women and gender minorities are consistently underrepresented in these institutions, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In many democracies, even where gender quotas have been instituted, the roles allocated to women tend to be symbolic or marginal, limiting their ability to influence core infrastructure or budgeting decisions. Furthermore, patriarchal institutional cultures often silence or sideline gender-diverse perspectives. Without diverse representation, urban development tends to reflect dominant socio-economic interests, reinforcing gendered exclusions. Increasing

meaningful representation requires not only electoral reform but also capacity-building programs, mentorship networks, and safe political environments that enable women and gender minorities to voice their concerns and shape urban futures. Representation is not merely a matter of equity but a fundamental prerequisite for achieving urban justice and spatial democracy.

6. Case Studies

6.1. Comparative Analysis of Gender-Inclusive Urban Projects

A comparative analysis of gender-inclusive urban projects across various cities provides valuable insight into both the universality and specificity of gendered urban experiences. For instance, in Vienna, gender-sensitive urban planning has become institutionalized through decades of public policy that prioritizes gender equity. Projects such as the *Frauen-Werk-Stadt* (Women's Work City) housing development offer pedestrian-friendly streets, on-site childcare, and accessible green spaces designed through consultations with women. Meanwhile, in Mumbai, the *Hamara Shehar Mumbai Abhiyan* campaign has worked to incorporate the voices of informal workers and low-income women into city planning, especially concerning housing and sanitation. In Nairobi, the *Safe and Inclusive Cities* program has focused on building inclusive public transport systems with safety features specifically designed for women. These examples demonstrate a range of approaches from state-driven reforms to community-led activism that have succeeded in placing gender at the center of urban planning. They also reveal how diverse political, economic, and cultural contexts shape the scope and sustainability of such initiatives.

6.2. Evaluation of Smart City Initiatives from a Gender Perspective

Smart city programs, often framed as technologically advanced and efficiency-driven, are typically silent on gender considerations. While they promise innovation in urban mobility, public safety, and digital governance, many such initiatives risk reinforcing existing gendered inequalities when implemented without a gender lens. For example, city surveillance systems and facial recognition technologies may enhance safety for some while criminalizing or profiling marginalized groups. Cashless transit systems or e-governance portals can unintentionally exclude women who lack digital literacy, access to smartphones, or internet connectivity. However, when smart city planning incorporates gendered data and inclusive design, the outcomes can be more equitable. In Seoul, for instance, smart safety apps were co-designed with women to allow real-time alerts and safe walking route suggestions. In India, a few Smart City Mission projects have begun experimenting with "gender labs" to integrate women's feedback into digital planning processes. Evaluating these initiatives from a gender perspective is essential to ensure that technological progress does not perpetuate exclusion, but rather becomes a tool for empowerment and equal access.

6.3. Successes and Limitations of Participatory Urban Design Efforts

Participatory urban design where citizens are actively involved in planning and reshaping their environments holds great potential for gender equity. Projects that include women and gender minorities in consultation, co-creation, and decision-making processes often result in more inclusive and responsive urban environments. Success stories such as the *Her City* toolkit developed by UN-Habitat illustrate how participatory tools can facilitate youth-led and women-led interventions in slum upgrading, urban mobility planning, and public space development. However, the effectiveness of these efforts varies widely based on institutional support, political will, and socio-cultural contexts. In many cases, participation is tokenistic, serving as a checkbox exercise rather than a genuine process of empowerment. Power imbalances between planners and residents, or between men and women within communities, can also distort participatory outcomes. Additionally, funding constraints, lack of technical training, and bureaucratic resistance can limit the scalability and longevity of grassroots initiatives. While participatory design is a promising pathway to spatial justice, it must be backed by structural reforms and long-term commitment to truly transform urban landscapes.

7. Policy and Planning for Gender-Equitable Cities

7.1. Global Urban Policies (UN-Habitat, SDGs, etc.)

Global policy frameworks have increasingly recognized the importance of integrating gender into urban development, though implementation remains uneven across contexts. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has been at the forefront of advocating for inclusive and gender-responsive urban policies, emphasizing women's rights to adequate housing, public space, and mobility. Key initiatives such as the New Urban Agenda (2016) explicitly call for cities to be planned and managed in ways that promote gender equality. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global blueprint for urban equity, particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). These goals advocate for safe public spaces, inclusive infrastructure, and women's participation in decision-making processes. However, translating global policy into local action requires more than alignment with international commitments; it demands sustained political will, funding, and contextual adaptation. The global frameworks provide legitimacy and direction, but they must be grounded in local realities and co-developed with those who are most affected by urban inequities.

7.2. Local Urban Planning Guidelines and Gender Audits

At the local level, city governments and planning authorities have started to integrate gender considerations through the adoption of gender audits, equity impact assessments, and gender mainstreaming strategies. Gender audits, for instance, assess the extent to which urban policies, spaces, and services account for gendered experiences. These audits can reveal gaps in transport planning, access to public toilets, housing policies, and street lighting, providing actionable insights for policy reform. Some municipalities like Vienna, Barcelona, and parts of Cape Town have institutionalized gender-sensitive planning guidelines that mandate inclusive design principles and participatory engagement with women and gender-diverse communities. However, in many cities, such tools are either absent or treated as symbolic rather than instrumental. Moreover, planning departments often lack the training or data required to conduct meaningful gender analysis. Strengthening local planning with gender-responsive frameworks involves not only adopting these tools but also institutionalizing gender expertise, fostering inter-departmental collaboration, and creating feedback mechanisms to ensure policy accountability.

7.3. Recommendations for Inclusive Urban Futures

Moving toward truly inclusive urban futures requires a multi-dimensional approach that reconfigures both the process and substance of urban development. First, urban policy-making must center gender as a cross-cutting concern, rather than treating it as a niche or secondary issue. This involves embedding gender analysis in all phases of urban planning from needs assessments to budgeting, design, and monitoring. Second, participation must be redefined to ensure that women, transgender individuals, and other marginalized groups are not only consulted but empowered to co-lead and shape their urban environments. This can be facilitated through targeted capacity-building programs, leadership development initiatives, and legal reforms that secure tenure rights and representation. Third, urban design must prioritize care infrastructure such as childcare centers, public toilets, and community kitchens and recognize the unpaid labor often performed by women. Lastly, disaggregated data collection, intersectional research, and gender-sensitive indicators are crucial to tracking progress and adjusting interventions. Inclusive urban futures will not emerge from isolated projects but from a systemic shift that reimagines the city as a space of justice, dignity, and shared belonging.

8. Conclusion

This paper has critically examined how gender fundamentally shapes the experience, accessibility, and governance of urban spaces, revealing that cities are not neutral environments but are instead constructed through patriarchal and exclusionary logics that prioritize male-centered mobility, safety, and infrastructure. Drawing upon feminist urban theory, intersectional frameworks, and diverse case studies from cities such as Delhi, Vienna, and

Nairobi, the study demonstrates how issues of public harassment, inadequate infrastructure, and underrepresentation in decision-making processes disproportionately affect women and gender minorities. These challenges are compounded by intersecting factors such as race, class, caste, and disability, leading to differentiated and often marginalized urban experiences. Despite the emergence of community-led spatial interventions and gender-sensitive policy frameworks, structural barriers continue to hinder equitable participation and access. The inclusion of gender in urban discourse is therefore not a supplementary concern but a necessary reorientation of how we conceptualize, design, and manage cities. Embedding gender equity within urban planning acknowledges the lived realities of diverse populations, challenges the norms of masculinized space, and shifts the focus toward care, safety, inclusion, and shared ownership of the urban realm. It requires urban practitioners and policymakers to move beyond technocratic or economic rationales and embrace social justice as a core principle of design. Future research must engage more deeply with intersectionality, particularly within rapidly urbanizing regions of the Global South, where informal economies, cultural hierarchies, and state neglect amplify gendered vulnerabilities. There is also a pressing need to investigate the gendered implications of emerging urban agendas, including digital urbanism, smart city initiatives, and climate resilience planning. Activism will remain crucial in driving this transformation, especially through coalitions that bridge gender with caste, class, and ethnicity to advance spatial justice. Feminist urbanism must therefore be both a critique of existing urban inequities and a generative force that imagines new possibilities. Ultimately, the future of inclusive and equitable cities lies not only in their physical infrastructure but in the values, voices, and power structures they uphold and in whose presence they are truly built to serve.

Reference

- [1] Beebejaun, Y. (2017). Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 39(3), 323–334. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [2] Fenster, T. (2005). The right to the gendered city: Different formations of belonging in everyday life. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 14(3), 217–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230500264109> . |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [3] Kern, L. (2020). *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*. Verso Books. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [4] UN-Habitat. (2016). *New Urban Agenda*. United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [5] Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [6] United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.
- [7] Phadke, S., Khan, S., & Ranade, S. (2011). *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets*. Penguin Books India. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [8] Levy, C. (2013). Travel choice reframed: “Deep distribution” and gender in urban transport. *Environment and Urbanization*, 25(1), 47–63. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [9] UN Women. (2017). *Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces*: Meth, P. (2010). Unsettling insurgency: Reflections on women's insurgent practices in South Africa. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 11(2), 241–263. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|
- [10] Pain, R. (2001). Gender, race, age and fear in the city. *Urban Studies*, 38(5–6), 899–913. |[Google Scholar](#)| [Publisher Site](#)|