# Introduction:

Feminism and the notion of gender transcends many fields of research. Whilst there have been extensive studies related to gender and spatial practice, these have predominantly been in the paradigm of human geography. This literature review will explore the links between gendered experiences of urban spaces, and the potential for these to intersect with the realm of urban design.

This beginning of the review addresses the urban form around us, and uses past and current literature to understand the contemporary reality that our buildings, roads and spaces in between them have been designed by and shaped for men*.* This has shaped how women use spaces today, and has created exclusive spaces and inequality in urban spaces*.* This paper also sets out to document this problem as a result of the exclusion of women at both the participatory and decision making levels of urban practice.The absence of women in the urban design profession have helped entrench the level of patriarchy within urban spaces, and by acknowledging this within urban planning and design profession, there is potential to affect change by applying a gendered lens to the way the urban environment is constructed.

As an increasingly urbanising nation, New Zealand is yet to embrace engendering its cities, despite commitments to global planning methods such as the United National Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the findings of the literature review, the conclusion of this paper will offer suggestions for how New Zealand could begin to deliver gender-sensitive approaches to urban design through the notion of recognising women as a category of specific actors in local policy and in particular, within the planning framework.

# Methodology and Terms Used:

This paper is therefore a desk research based paper that aims to compile findings from strands of gendered studies and urbanism to further understand the potential influence of the gender lens and the way we design cities. This approach draws on a variety of texts from various disciplines, amassed from a variety of online and hardcopy sources. This literature review lays the foundation of the topic, and aims to establish what research has already been completed, and reveal what studies are needed to advance this area.

The preliminary findings reveal that using gender-mainstreaming as an official avenue for urban design practice creates a more equitable approach to creating urban spaces, and this analysis provides the platform to argue that there is much room to practise this approach within the realm of New Zealand planning.

**Public Space (and semi-public) / Feminism / Gender / Mobility**

*Include summary of these terms – any more?*

It ought to be noted at this point that women are not homogenous, and have diverse lived experiences and therefore different levels of exclusion from public spaces. This can depend on race, sexuality, culture, ability or whether they are single parents, for example. To include all of these perspectives, although ideal, would create additional complexities not suitable for the scope this paper. This should be kept in mind, but the notion of gender is the focus issue for this paper.

# A history of women in the city:

### Exclusion of women in urban spaces

The place of the home has traditionally been the most prominent location of women’s space making (Darling and Whitford, 2007). This is accepted as commonplace amongst many literary sources, and it is likely this was the opinion during times where modern town planning and allocation of space first took place. The famed prophets of modern town planning such as Ebenzer Howard and Thomas Coglan Horsfall did not have their visions exercised or challenged due to the absence of women working with them (Meller, 2007). Meller (2007) suggests that their visions facilitated the biologically determined function of women as wives and mothers, so homes were arranged accordingly for women to raise children away from the unsanitary conditions of urban spaces. It is no surprise then, that this view has perpetrated into current day planning, where city designers have neglected to create places that are appropriate for the unique needs of women.

Literature surrounding the gender nuances of the city typically looks to the history of a woman’s place in the home. The suffragette movement marks the beginning of women coming onto the street en masse, and since then their physical presence in urban spaces has been commonplace, particularly in the western world. Aldridge (1995, cited in Meller, 2007) emphasises that during important periods of planning, such as the Garden City movement, politically minded women had their minds geared towards other issues, which is part of the reason men were enabled to be the unquestionable key creators in city making. Women have nonetheless been fighting for their right to the city for decades, with “Reclaim the night” marches advocating for this since the 1970s (Whitzman, Andrew and Viswanath, 2014).

When looking back on the history of urban planning and design theory, there is an obsession within the profession of viewing pioneering urban designers and architects, such as those mentioned earlier, as heroes (Darling and Whitford, 2007). Their names are synonymous with the development of the urban profession. Furthermore, when looking at the modern-day bookshelf of inspirational urbanists, it is not hard to notice that a vast majority are written by men. This empirical period of designing cities and urban public spaces has allowed their urbanism techniques to become the norm (Greed, 1994). This creates challenges in imagining a city designed by women and for women, when we are entrenched in the patriarchal practices that have shaped urban frameworks of today.

### The division of private and public spheres

A text from 1980 discusses urbanism with a gendered perspective, arguably an early text to be promoting such a contentious issue. Wekerle (1980) vocalises the problem that there is an unspoken urban disparity that is unique to women. She blames the post World War II suburban trap as isolating women in the city fringe, whilst establishing the dominance of men in the public sphere. This echoes the findings of Meller. Already by the time Wekerle’s article was written, women’s labour force was dramatically increasing. The demand for domestic services such as day-care and drycleaning was rising, but the urban network to provide equitable access to these services was not catching up (Wekerle, 1980). Stereotypes of working patterns between men and women although now significantly transformed, nevertheless created a complex situation of the feminisation of poverty at one end of the scale, and “an increase in independence and choice for women at the other” (Roberts, 1998: 134). This statement enforces why designing a city for women, is designing a city for all. Wekerle (1980) ultimately states that to be emancipated from isolation, the design of interrelationships between home, schools and social community services need to be addressed. Almost 40 years after this article was published, these are still prevalent issues which can be addressed through applying a gendered perspective to urban design.

A newer type of space since Wekerle’s article has emerged, which is the semi-public space. Semi-public is not succinctly defined in any literature. Ergun and Kulkul (2018) identify the issue of safety in gated communities as a semi-public space, due to the segregation of those who do not live there. However, their argument goes beyond this and sees semi-public spaces as allowing attributes that take place in both private and public spaces to form. The key theme is that women feel more comfortable in semi-public spaces such as bookstores, cafes and shopping malls, as a result of fear and discomfort in masculinised public spaces (Jin & Whitson, 2014). There is however, a lack of literature that looks as semi-public spaces and gendered issues within them, so this review will focus on public spaces.

* 1. **Modern day public spaces and gender**

***Bulk this section with new readings***

As literature has recorded these findings of how public spaces have been shaped, many now turn to the matter of what this means for modern day public spaces. It is widely agreed that a good public space ought to be open and inclusive for all user groups (Almahmood et al., 2018). One of the most widely discussed results of masculinised spaces, is in regards to the perception of safety. Almahood et al. (2018) suggest this is not only regarding fear of crime and violence, but in the inherent way spaces feel masculinised. Such threats, whether real or perceived, affect the accessibility and mobility of women in public spaces (Sandberg and Rönnblom, 2013). Such behaviours include not going out at night or not travelling alone, and Yavuz and Welch (2010) emphasise that few studies offer insights of how to improve women’s perspectives of safety. The following section will therefore address what is being done in the profession to address how public spaces are being shaped to create gender equality.

# Addressing gender and urban spaces in the urban design profession:

### 4.1 Research of gendered urban design

Even though much has changed over the years regarding the norm of the male-breadwinner, and the presence of women in the city has correspondingly expanded, remarkably little about ease of mobility has changed, and women’s needs have still not been met (Jarivs, Kantor and Cloke, 2009). Geographical research of place and gender identity has illustrated the issue that women’s active use of space and time both affect and are affected by spatial structure and environmental change (Miranne and Young, 2000). Although much research has been done examining this role of gender and general urban life issues, in the field of urban design, the concept of gender is generally excluded (Connolly, 2006). Connolly (2006) outlines that prevailing attitudes that keep urban design resistant to issues of gender stem from fundamental relationships between “gender, patriarchy, capitalism, urbanism and the production of space” (at 128). Collectively these aspects effect upon the form of a city, spatial activity and thus create a gendered issue within the realm of urban design.

### 4.2 The effect of urbanisation on women and mobility

When looking at the amount of literature that outlines a gender inequality issue within urban spaces, it is hard to understand why the different patterns of women’s occupation in urban spaces are not being considered in design practice. It is known for example that women make up a bigger constituency of public transport users than men (Jarvis et al., 2009). Jarvis et al. (2009) look at the urban planning initiatives of London and Toronto from the 1990s which revealed that policy trade-offs between private and public transport users during this time, which prioritised the car, have subsequently resulted in profound gender- (and class-) specific consequences. The typical gendered division of the modern-day household now sees women dispersed between work, home, schools, the shops, and elsewhere, which makes them even more vulnerable to transport use restrictions (Jarvis et al., 2009). Therefore, dependence on cars has increased, adding financial and social strain, when the urban form restricts freedom of one’s mobility. Jarvis et al. (2009) have coined this restriction the “gendered automobility trap”. Women are thus passive victims of suburban development (Wekele, 1980). **Figure 1** demonstrates the everyday physical limits on women having their mobility circumscribed by their responsibilities, which is enhanced by imagining the burdens of pushchairs and prams as they face stairs and steep hills.

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***Figure 1:*** *The assumed responsibilities of the modern-day woman impedes her mobility (Jarvis et al., 2009: 168)*

Because gender is a social construct, it, along with other intersectionalities requires its attributes to be configured in space (Connolly, 2006). This is a suggestion as to why public spaces and urban design are important in dictating the way that gender can exist in the city. Miranne and Young (2000) identify that women’s and men’s experiences in the city differ, and these differences stem from relations of inequality. The nature of women’s oppression in urban spaces has been developed by feminist geographers (Miranne and Young, 2000), yet one seldom sees solutions or even discussion evident in modern urban design literature or studies. These studies of a woman’s place in the city reveal both the disparities between genders, and enhance the idea that a city designed for women’s needs, is a city designed for all.

# The place of women and identity in urban design literature:

A large body of literature addresses how environmental design, whether intentionally or not, excludes women (Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath and Oc, 2010). An extensive and growing list of literature furthermore looks at how gender influences how one utilises public space (Almahood et al., 2018). From the vast array of literature available, arguably there are limited published solutions regarding gender inequality. Key educational texts that are used internationally for the postgraduate study of urban design, such as Carmona and Tiesdell’s (2010) “*Urban Design Reader*” explicitly says it does not include gender dimensions of urban design, although acknowledges its existence. “*Public Places – Urban Spaces”* addresses the issue although it is pepper-potted throughout the text book. This section will break down the discussion of gender within educational urban design texts, to highlight evidence of crossover between urban design theories and gender, yet reveal the need for educational texts to include the topic for future urban designers.

### 5.1 Perceptual dimensions of urban design:

Urban spaces and places are more than just voids between buildings, in fact such places can become experiences and meanings. This is known as place identity and it plays an important role in triggering a sense of place attachment (Relph, 1976). These are perceptual dimensions of urban design, and this section aims to reveal that people create personal perceptions and place identities. “The term identity… connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself… and a persistent sharing of some kind of characteristic with others” (Erikson, 1959: 102, cited in Relph, 1976: 104). This statement articulates that identity is founded both within the individual person and the culture to which they belong. Relph (1976) explores the varying definition of identity of place through reconciling many scholars’ definitions. Of note is Nairn (1965) who offers that there are as many identities of place as there are of people due to identity of a city being in the experience of the beholder, as much as in its physical appearance (cited in Relph, 1976).

Relph (1976) notes that our experience of places is direct and often unselfconscious. Carmona et al. (2010) say that gender is one of the attributes that contributes to different environmental perceptions. Therefore, despite the unique upbringings of individual, there are aspects of imagery that are held by large groups of people. Mental “maps” are created by such groups and are an important aspect of studying urban design (Carmona et al., 2010). Women in particular perceive spaces from mentalities of fear, a notion that famed Feminist urbanist Jane Jacob’s says can be countered through the idea of “eyes on the street”: casual surveillance through urban design (Wekerle, 2000). Wekerle (2000) states that it is often grassroots feminist organisations that are forced to respond to issues of surveillance and perceived fear where urban design fails. This is why it is important to recognise that in designing places, it is vital to be conscious of specific user group perspectives.

### 5.2 Social dimensions of urban design

Any contemporary references to the “public” is by nature a universalising construct that assumes a collective whole, while in reality the public is fragmented into marginalised groups, many of whom have no voice, position or representation in the public sphere’

(Boyer, 1993: 118, cited in Carmona et al., 2010).

Social dimensions of urban design recognise the different levels of accessibility to the “public” realm, and that not all spaces are unitary. It has been suggested that in contemporary society that public spaces are better conceived of as overlapping public spheres that can involve different gender or socio-economic groups, for example (Carmona et al., 2010). Social dimensions of urban design appreciate these disparities. Carmona et al. (2010) conclude that women seek good sorts of urban design outcomes, such as areas free from traffic dangers or those not perceived as dangerous (ie, well-lit). For Cuthbert (2006), the recommended course of action is to ensure that professionals are aware of how past decisions have created a gendered environment, reinforcing the idea that what is good for women will also be good for men. However, this requires documentation and analysis of purposefully engendered planning and design, of which there is little. This paper is proof there is no doubt research occurring in the area, but to bring gender-mainstreaming into urban design practice, authorities must actively seek to collate basic data on women and girls in regard to cities.

# Global Action on Urban Spaces and Gender

Internationally, women’s participation in decision-making, where meaningfully included is recognised as important. Many influential documents have published their studies behind this. Two key documents are the UN Habitat Gender Issue Guide for Urban Planning and Design and the Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto (the Manifesto). Both recognise that women use and experience public space and the built environment different to men (UN Habitat, 2012; Commonwealth Association of Planners, 2018).

The Manifesto serves as a call to action, exploring a broad range of solutions but with slim detail. Leadership in planning is explicitly recognised as a critical component to delivering gender inclusive solutions in the built environment. Such leadership would recognise gender-inclusive planning amongst urban professionals (Commonwealth Association of Planners, 2018). The document provides many high-level examples of how this can be achieved, such as “equalise the role of women in planning, designing and occupying the built environment”, and aligning planning frameworks with sustainable development goals. However, no specific examples are provided to guide professionals on how to introduce gender sensitive planning management and methodologies.

A final proposal of the Manifesto is the development of a toolkit for professionals to assist in providing a gender lens to urban projects worldwide. Likewise, the earlier UN Habitat Guide supports institutionalisation of culture of gender mainstreaming and gender quality through projects and programmes. These statements are broad and there is a gap in literature by global authorities and partnerships to propose specific changes.

Although this gap in calls for action exists, the work of individuals and certain cities within the field of urban planning and design have created positive change for engendering urban spaces. The case of Vienna proves that gender mainstreaming at both the decision-making level and the participatory level are essential for equitable urban design practice. Likewise, it shows the power of a city to ignite change.

Change makers within Vienna’s urbanism sector saw the pioneering of addressing gender-specific issues. This occurred in 1991 by way of an exhibition, initiated by two young female planners, Eva Kail and Jutta Kleedorfer (Irschik & Kail, 2013). In this exhibition eight women of diverse age, ethnicity and marital status’ were featured, and it was specifically examined how they used public space (Kail, 2016a). Kail (2016a) states public space was chosen to acknowledge that the typical space assigned to women by society is the house. The exhibition looked at public places as places of fear, anxiety and well-feeling, and important spaces are used differently by different user groups.

The success of the event encouraged politicians to create the Women’s Office, which was established to specifically address gender planning issues (Kail, 2016a). As a result of many successful pilot projects, the Women’s Office department has been closed, and the employees have been dispersed across the organisation to ensure the expertise of gender planning remained (Reeves and Zombori, 2016). Gender mainstreaming is now established as a central strategic discipline of urban design and planning in Vienna, by way of a Gender Mainstream Manual (the Manual) (Urban Development Vienna (UDV), 2013). Very limited secondary literature has examined the successes of Vienna’s gender-mainstreaming toolkit, with Kail’s work being largely self-promoted by herself and documented in Vienna’s planning and design framework.

To help this topic be more widely promoted amongst professionals, and to give documents like the Manifesto and the UN Habitat Guide more standing, more research could be done to examine the value of gender-mainstreaming. It is widely agreed amongst literature that historically cities have been designed, planned and governed by men, creating the foundational issue at hand. Likewise, it is demanded that equitable cities through institutionalised gender-mainstreaming must happen. Yet lack of specific examples and successes creates a barrier that prevent action.

### 6.1 Gender mainstreaming in practice: parks in Vienna:

As mentioned, measures of success in Vienna have been largely documented by the champions of gender-mainstreaming themselves. The density of Vienna means it has minimal room for open public spaces, so the ones that exist are very important for urban life. Prior to the instalment of gender mainstreaming, the spaces that existed were typically dominated by certain user groups (Irschik & Kail, 2013). Irschik and Kail (2013) note that playground facilities and parks in particular, were geared toward the interest of boys. Therefore, parks were chosen as one of the first public spaces to create gender mainstreaming pilot programmes (Kail, 2016b). The Women’s Office found that girls used less space in their appropriation of space, and this appropriation enabled them to expand and strengthen their presence within public space (Irschik and Kail, 2013). One example of putting this finding into practice is where girls from local schools in the Odeongasse area were invited to contribute to a planning and design workshop. The workshop highlighted their wishes for clear subdivision of spaces, that offer different levels of activity and privacy (Irschik & Kail, 2013). Following these activities, the new spaces were designed by way of a competition for female landscape architects (Kail, 2016b). The outcomes of the gender-sensitive workshops and competition design are now present in the new established facilities (**Figure 2**).



***Figure 3:*** *Playground area featuring different levels and a see-through fence as part of gender-sensitive consultation, in Odeonpark, Vienna (Irschik & Kail, 2013: 208).*

Kail states success of these spaces not only benefitted younger and older girls who vocalised that they previously had no place to go, but younger boys who were pushed away from open fields by older boys had spaces to play as well (2016b). Showing that by including the perceptual imagined spaces of one group, a wider group were benefitted. Through these examples, it can clearly be seen how the Viennese government has mainstreamed gender planning and urban designing by bringing the concepts into official planning documents.

### 6.2 Larger European movement towards gender mainstreaming

European cities are now making a general movement toward fairer urban planning and design through governmental policies that allow room for gender mainstreaming (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013). However, this is not the time to be complacent in accepting improved gender awareness in urbanism as a good level of gender equality and equity to settle for. Greed (1994) notes that this viewpoint can often hold back feminist perspectives of urbanism from continuing to drive change into the 21st century. Feminist perspectives on urban design along with other professions remains a contentious issue that many will critique, yet there is so much more to be done to counter the patriarchy of the built form that composes cities of the modern day.

Vienna is not the only example, although it is the example with the most coherent policy and evidence of success. Other European cities are embracing gender mainstreaming such as the United Kingdom where the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has a gender mainstreaming toolkit, and Sweden, where the town of Husby underwent a feminist planning regime. The sense of powerlessness amongst the women of Husby was addressed through a bottom-up perspective where women of Husby were invited to share their thoughts on the redesign of their suburb, which had a history of being socially controlled by men (Sjöqvist, 2017). The findings of Sjöqvist’s (2017) study also found that women preferred to be included in the process from the beginning, not be forced to speak up down the track after being ignored in the process. These examples reveal that the collaborative gendered perspectives of urban design and planning allow for inclusiveness, rather than focussing on a singular consensus. This is important because the idea of planning for a consensus suggests there are simple solutions for overcoming differences, which there are not (Snyder, 1995 cited in Sjöqvist, 2017). Rather, gendered approaches to planning and design allow experts to work with individuals who represent a group to create more equitable spaces. Thus, participatory processes are fundamental to the idea of the women-led city.

In our own local case, gender perspectives of urban design have no official place within Aotearoa New Zealand and the remainder of the literature review will look what these studies means for New Zealand, and how these approaches could be brought into the local design framework.

# The Case of Vienna and beyond as an example for New Zealand?

### 7.2 The possibilities for gender mainstreaming in New Zealand

The international examples that exist within gender mainstreaming have of course come with critique. There is a perceived slowing down of processes and reduction of efficiency when including such processes in exercising bureaucratic procedures through governmental policies that allow room for gender mainstreaming (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013). Trying to imagine this being welcomed in the planning and design framework of New Zealand is difficult, particularly when the inherent agenda of the government frequently amends planning legislation to speed up the consenting and building processes. There are other major challenges within the gender mainstreaming progress, for example in the case of Husby, women included in the participatory process still found a disappointment in their exclusion at the official decision making level (Sjöqvist, 2017).

There are evidently many barriers to overcome, and the international examples are still having their successes measured, but the evidence of successes are growing, and this is encouraging for the urban feminist. The legislative architecture of New Zealand’s planning and design framework would allow for local authorities to include gender mainstreaming within their plan-making systems. New Zealand is committed at an international level, having ratified the United Nations sustainable development goals, and consequently the nation’s planning and design mechanisms ought to reflect these (Reeves and Zombori, 2016). Of note are Goal 5 – gender equality and empowerment of women and girls – and Goal 11 – inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. In the example of Auckland, the new Auckland Plan 2050 has an outcome dedicated to belonging and participation, recognising gender as part of the city’s diverse population (Auckland Council, 2018). Yet, like the ambitious 2012 target of being the “World’s Most Liveable City”, such goals and outcomes mean little when there are no tangible processes in place to achieve them, such as Vienna’s gender mainstreaming planning policy.

New Zealand is also signatory to the Commonwealth Manifesto discussed earlier. Therefore, policy and decisions and both central and local government levels ought to reflect the calls for action in the Manifesto. This includes encouraging women and girls to undertake STEM based subjects, and endorse the appointment of women in high profile leadership positions. This would be of particular importance in local government, where decisions regarding urban planning and design are made. An achievable suggestion based on the literature provided would be to require a woman to be on every Auckland Design Panel, which is a Council-led process, where a panel of experts assess high profile or high investment developments in Auckland.

Change is on the cusp, with groups such as Women in Urbanism Aotearoa, advocating for the voices of women and girls in the realm of urbanism (Women in Urbanism, 2018). Assessing the progressive examples from Europe, however, it is evident much can be done by local authorities to include feminist perspectives in the everyday design processes of Auckland, and the rest of New Zealand. Some lessons for Auckland could be perhaps to include a women’s advisory panel as part of the urban design panel to introduce gender impact assessments into the process.

# Conclusion

“Physical spaces cannot change gender roles, but they can support the social network”, (Kail, 2013a: 5.46). The subject of women and urban design is contentious and will remain so as women continue to fight for their right to the city. This literature review has outlined the significant changes that can be made to urban design practice through use of gender mainstreaming.

The history of the hegemonic way our urban spaces have typically been designed have both intentionally and unintentionally excluded women from public spaces. Although much literature exists regarding the social and spatial geographies of women, there is minimal research that offers solutions to the problem through urban design. Urban design theories address the issues, but fail to teach the significance of designing through a feminist lens in key educational texts, which arguably heightens the patriarchy existing within our urban planning and design frameworks today.

The case of Vienna is an influential example that reveals the possibilities of an official platform by which to undertake women-led urban design initiatives, to counter the disparity created by hegemonic urban planning and design methods. Change for Vienna occurred at the hands of driven women who as a result, were given the podium to normalise feminist planning and design, now known as gender mainstreaming. The women-led city is most importantly about balance of power, from leaders to locals, and designing urban spaces for the everyday user. Following the success of Vienna, other places in European cities and countries are beginning to implement gendered change.

The unique process of gender mainstreaming means that it would face challenges if attempted to be normalised into policy in many cities outside of Vienna. There are likely further improvements that we will see as time goes by, and new results are measured. From these findings, it is recommended the studies of gendered urban design are included within urban design education and training to cement the idea as an important perspective in urban design practice. With its legitimisation in urban studies, perhaps places like Auckland, New Zealand would be more inclined to follow suit. There is scope for New Zealand specific research to take place, and retrieve findings from local women and girls on how they use and perceive their neighbourhoods. Such research methods would add critical evidence to the study, that may encourage a stronger response from local authorities.

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