

Chapter 4

Gendering urban public space

Fran Tonkiss

Abstract

Public space is a key concern for the politics of the city and for its physical design. A focus on gender has been pivotal in expanding approaches to urban public space beyond classical and often narrow ways of thinking about and making spaces for public life in the city. This discussion draws on insights from feminist theory, planning and design, and urban social research and analysis to explore critical themes around gender and public space: including typologies of spaces and uses; safety, access and amenity; everyday mobility and political mobilization. These are long-standing issues for gendered understandings of urban public space, but they have also been foregrounded in the recent context of a global public health crisis, and the acute challenges this has posed for the public life of cities and the management of urban space.

Key words: gender, public space, access, safety, mobility

Introduction: gendering urban public space

Public space is central to both the understanding of urban life and the design of urban environments. As an ideal, and in the many physical forms it takes, public space is a core element of urbanism. This makes it relevant as much to political and cultural theorists—interested in the city as a site of collective life—as it is to the planners and designers who give material shape to these social arrangements. A focus on gender in theory and in design enlarges the sense both of the *subject* of public space—who is there—and the *forms* that urban public space might take: what kinds of space count as public. This discussion traces some core debates in this field, bringing together perspectives from feminist theory, planning and design, and urban social research and analysis. It engages with urban public space as sites of collective gathering and mobilization, social exchange and reproduction, informal encounter, routine transit and everyday co-presence.

Basic freedoms of public space continue to be skewed along gender lines across urban contexts, whether through formal or customary prohibitions on women's and girls' access to public spaces, restrictive social norms around public behaviour or uneven dynamics of fear and vulnerability. Dominant social codes and spatial orders around gender and sexuality constrain the everyday access, safety and dignity of queer, trans and gender-nonconforming subjects (Namaste 1996; Azzouz and Catterall 2021; Duplan 2023). The spatial inequities—both stark and more subtle—experienced by women as a diverse majority and by minoritized gender and sexual subjects intersect with other vectors of social difference in the city; as Shilpa Phadke (2013, p. 52) puts it, 'the exclusion of women from public space cannot be seen in isolation but is linked critically to the exclusion of other marginal citizens'. Such marginality bears heavily on minoritized groups in the city, but is also a common urban property. It is notable that the priority for public space within the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals focuses on 'universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities'. Everyone falls under one of those categories at some point in time. The language of inclusivity is familiar but in this case revealing, underlining the reality that spaces which in

principle are open to all are too often—and in various way—unsafe, exclusionary or inaccessible for an urban majority.

Debates about urban public space are extensive, and any attempt to capture them is necessarily selective and inevitably must be over-simplified. Cities have long been metaphorical and material sites for understanding the nature of ‘publicness’ as a social condition and a spatial register. In this connection, feminist approaches have been key in taking thinking about public space beyond classical frames of meaning, and the assumptions around gender and sexuality, class, race and culture on which they were premised. Central to such perspectives is the argument that dominant notions of an urban public sphere—in European thought in particular—were fundamentally bourgeois and intractably masculine in the kinds of public life they envisioned, who was imagined as taking part in it, and the kinds of spaces in which it was taken to unfold (Fraser 1990). By bringing notions of difference and disparity into view, it becomes possible to see the complex ways in which ‘public space is classed, communalised and caste(d) along with being gendered’ (Phadke 2013, p. 52). Neither is this simply the work of theory or critique: women’s spatial claims—whether enacted via modes of collective action or in everyday practice—have been crucial in contesting and transforming normative conceptions of how and by whom publics are made.

While forms of public space and access to them vary markedly, key points of commonality and difference across urban settings show how a gender lens brings insights to the analysis of cities and public space. The discussion that follows sets out from the notion of ‘publicness’ in relation to spatial typologies and uses. It goes on to consider key cross-cutting themes for the analysis of gender and public space—including issues of safety, access and amenity, mobility and mobilizations—before reflecting on these in light of the radical challenges for the public life of cities that were foregrounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Being in public: spatial types and uses

A focus on gender puts into question a simple conception of public space as freely accessible or open to all. The starting point of feminist and queer approaches to urban public space is the inequities in access and affordance between different kinds of body in the city. Working from a principle of difference, moreover, serves to expand the types of urban spaces seen or felt to be ‘public’—from squares, maidans and parks to streets and street corners, bridges, sidewalks and alleys; buses, trains, share taxis and transit-stops; markets and malls; playgrounds and school gates; beaches, riverfronts and canal-sides; swimming pools and public baths; cafes, teahouses, fast food restaurants and food courts; hair salons, barbers and beauty parlors. Ways of being in public, that is, are not merely curated by strategies of design and planning but emerge from everyday practices of use. Putting gender in place helps to make public life visible in ordinary or alternative spaces in the city, opening a lens onto mundane spaces of common use that are shared as a routine matter of co-presence. Streets and sidewalks in this sense are the primary surface of urban public life, where people engage with, negotiate or ignore the presence and passage of others, and which both support and stratify competing spatial claims. It follows that unequal shares of the street, uneven patterns of vulnerability and access, disclose the formal and informal logics of policing, privilege and exclusion through which common ‘rights’ to the most ordinary public space are rationed and regulated around gender and other lines of social difference (Beebanjaun 2017).

If the quality of ‘publicness’ in urban space is not necessarily a matter of purposive design, neither is it simply determined by property relations. Across a range of urban and historical contexts, spaces which have been understood and animated as *public*—places of ceremony

and assembly, informal gathering, interactive exchange and incidental encounter—have been held in private hands, from sites owned by landed elites and religious bodies to the privatized public spaces typical of recent varieties of neoliberal urbanism. It might be that a normative ideal of public space – provided by public authorities for collective use by a general urban public—represents only a minor spatial share and a fairly short historical moment in the story of those sites which people experience or claim as public. To see gender in urban space is, moreover, to recognize the range of ‘private’ uses and activities that routinely take place in public—child care, family life and social reproduction, sexual expression, contact and intimacy; as well as the fact that public space is a work environment for many kinds of labour: including street vending, trading and hawking; delivery riding and pedicabbing; gardening, cleaning, waste-picking and sanitation work; security and policing; sex work; busking; begging. Easy distinctions between public and private are troubled by both typologies of urban space and practices of use which cut across, mediate and recombine these categories in contingent ways.

Access, safety, amenity

Urban public spaces play a signal role in gendered geographies of safety and fear in the city (Valentine 1990; Pain 1997; Koskela and Pain 2000). The work of feminist geographers, criminologists and urbanists, however, puts into question the assumption that gendered fear and vulnerability can be ‘designed out’ of urban environments, and safety designed *in*, through interventions around street lighting and enhanced visual accessibility, public realm measures, landscaping or improved maintenance. Valuable as physical design strategies and spatial care are, the social uses of space may be more crucial in shaping how gendered and sexualized subjects perceive risks and safety in urban public space, and how able they feel to access it. Well-used spaces that accommodate a variety of uses and users can certainly be encouraged through strategies of design and programming, including the provision of food and other markets; park, play and sports areas; cultural spaces and public facilities (Mahadevia and Lathia 2019). At the same time, ordinary users routinely animate spaces which might seem to offer little in the way of purposive design or public amenity. Places that are reasonably accessible and relatively loose provide surfaces for everyday ‘design’ in the acts of spreading a rug or parking a cart, kicking a ball, setting out goods for sale, or lighting a grill.

Dynamics of risk and safety in the city involve a tricky tension between density and latitude, involving? the spatial capacity to accommodate many people in the same place while maintaining a viable social or spatial distance from each other. The sense of being able to keep one’s physical and personal distance in a crowded space can be especially important in enabling women, gender and sexual minorities, older people or people with disabilities to occupy shared public spaces. While degrees of physical distance will be variable (and sometimes impossible to maintain), a sense of bodily integrity and personal separateness may also depend on the perception that one is free from scrutiny, surveillance or undue regard. It is a cornerstone of public space design that the presence of ‘eyes on the street’ is a first principle of urban safety, but for women and LGBTQ people—in various ways and in disparate urban contexts—gendered norms around privacy or the simple desire not to be looked at can be crucial to access and affordance in everyday public spaces (see Al-Bishawi, Ghadban and Jørgensen 2017; Azzouz and Catterall 2021). Balancing privacy and visibility, publicness and discretion, are dilemmas of social interaction as much as they are problems for design. Such tensions—and the ways in which they come to be (more or less) resolved in specific places—underscore the fact that urban public spaces are always a co-production of social dynamics, spatial designs and practices of use.

The language of ‘use’ in urban design is one way of talking about bodies in cities. Women bring their bodies with them when they enter public space. They are also more likely than men to bring *other* bodies with them: bodies that are smaller, more fragile, louder, less mobile, adept or autonomous. Everyone takes their body with them when they go out in public, of course, but the bodies of women, trans and non-binary people, children, older people and those with disabilities are marked by differences from generic social and planning norms around size, use, mobility, physical needs and spatial order. This is nowhere more evident than in long-standing and wide-ranging urban struggles for safe, accessible and sanitary public toilet provision for women; and in intersecting campaigns for safe, accessible and sanitary provision for trans and non-binary people, for elderly and disabled users, and for male carers of children (Beebeejaun, 2017; Joshi, 2017; Ray, 2017; Greed, 2019).

Public toilets are spaces in which issues of gender segregation in the city are especially acute. In abstract terms, public spaces are understood as open to all, but the realities of spatial dominance by men—in diverse urban contexts and persistently over time—has produced *de facto* patterns of exclusionary segregation, in many settings reinforced by explicit legal measures or by powerful social norms around gender separation. Demarcating public spaces for use by women has been one means of opening up access to sites otherwise commandeered by men; in parks, public buildings, baths, swimming pools and beaches segregated by gender on a permanent basis or at particular times (Şahin 2018; Shahrokni 2019; Watson 2019). In a range of cities internationally—among them Cairo, Delhi, Dhaka, Dubai, Karachi, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Mexico City, Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro, Tehran and Tokyo—transport agencies designate women-only carriages, seats and sections on trains, metros, buses and share taxis, variously to protect public decency, promote women’s transit safety and combat sexual harassment. Similar initiatives have been tried and dropped in other cities, and in some cases are only patchily observed in cities where they do exist. The political and planning logics underlying such transit strategies involve an uneven mix of state concerns to enforce gender segregation in public, protective measures around women’s safety, and rights-based claims for women’s spatial access and mobility (Dunckel Graglia 2016). Whether the product of patriarchal or paternalistic ordinances around gender mixing or women’s vulnerability, or of more assertive claims for women’s spatial autonomy, gender-segregated spaces and services on transit or in public toilets, in parks or on beaches, raise difficult questions that are not easily resolved in general or beyond specific spatial situations: including the amount and quality of those public spaces allocated for women’s use; spatial access, safety and service provision for trans and non-binary users; and the rights and spatial security of women *outside* these designated spaces.

The question of women’s access to and safety in public space is never only or primarily a design matter when spatial freedoms are so routinely bound by social or legal norms around gendered behaviours, bodily comportment, modesty and respectability. While in some circumstances women’s use of urban space may be contingent on being able to maintain degrees of privacy and distance in public, Shilpa Phadke (2020, p. 282) writes that ‘what women need in order to access public space is not safety—which is inevitably conditional upon women being respectable—but rather the right to take risks without their presence being questioned’: by the simple act of being there in places, at times, for purposes, in ways (or in clothes) that are not policed by patriarchal conventions or, indeed, feminist judgements. The necessary trade-off, for Phadke, is that ‘for women to have unconditional access to public space, everyone else, including those perceived to be unfriendly to women, should also have

unconditional access’ (Phadke 2020, p. 282). Spatial freedoms in the city, that is to say, are not always comfortable, seldom non-conflictual and never without risk.

Mobilities and mobilizations

As the example of women-only transit makes clear, access to urban public space is not simply a question of being ‘in’ it, but often a matter of moving through it. Feminist perspectives have been critical in tracing gender disparities in spatial access and occupation but also in everyday movement in public. Gendered patterns of work, care and social reproduction mean that women typically have different daily travel needs and behaviours from men, including shorter trips across varied time-frames, greater trip chaining involving multiple tasks and stops, more movement on foot and via collective transport, more travel with (and for) others (Ng and Acker 2018; Soto Villagrán and Mejia Dorantes 2022). These mobility patterns mark out transit systems as types of public space in which women may spend significant amounts of daily time—often in the company of children, while encountering numerous others—following complicated routes and undertaking varied tasks. They also highlight the importance, in design and planning terms, of transit networks as public environments, where points of access, interchange and waiting—bus stops, station platforms, entrances and forecourts, pedestrian paths—require a focus on amenity and accessibility, safety and comfort to accommodate different bodies and diverse everyday needs. This ranges from the large and small barriers to access posed by elevated and underground transit or securitized ticket-gates, to the need for seating, sanitation, shade, shelter and ventilation for users for whom a great deal of ‘travel time’ may be spent in the mundane work of waiting.

Cities are routine territories of everyday mobility, but thinking about movement in public space is also to think about gender-based protest and political mobilization. While social movements commonly use urban public spaces as sites of mobilization, it is notable how often these spaces are not simply the stage for forms of gendered protest, but a key part of their claims. From ongoing movements to Take Back the Night originating in the 1970s to the SlutWalk movement this century, protestors have taken to the streets and squares of cities internationally to oppose sexual violence and harassment, the formal and informal policing of women’s bodies, and to assert women’s rights to spatial freedoms in the city. Such mobilizations make claims to public space that are also claims for the dignity and autonomy of gendered bodies. Some of these interventions work through highly visible spatial interventions and occupations; others involve forms of direct action based on women doing very ordinary things in public space—from the collective ‘lactivism’ of breastfeeding flashmobs or nurse-in protests, to the dissidence of women driving cars in public streets in Saudi cities, to the routine rebellions of cycling or drinking tea at roadside dhabas in Karachi or hanging out in parks and public spaces in Mumbai (Cook 2016; Galán 2016; Kirmani 2020; Phadke 2020).

These repertoires of gendered protest—some spectacular, others mundane—have a common root in the spatial disruption and disorder that is posed by women simply walking down the street, taking and claiming public space in the city. The remaking of urban spaces of ceremony, government, commerce and transit as sites of protest and occupation has a particular valency when it is enacted by female bodies. Women’s access to and freedoms in urban public space diverge markedly across national and legal settings, and within cities are deeply striated by race, class, culture and age, but their mobilizations in public commonly disrupt the spatial norms around which urban environments are ordered, the legal and tacit rights of different actors, and gendered conventions and presumptions of occupation and use.

Public space and the pandemic

Public space has long been a core concern for urbanists, but it came into focus in powerful ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. This period brought into high relief certain issues that are raised when urban public space is set within a gendered frame, as questions of access and mobility, safety and risk, bodies and uses took on particular salience. As radically as this public health crisis impacted ‘normal’ spatial relations and routines in public, it also underlined common themes in the gendering of public space: access and safety; public spaces as sites of work, social reproduction and mobility; and spatial types and uses.

A concern with safety is prevalent in gendered analyses of urban public space but it became a collective preoccupation during the pandemic. The capacity of public spaces to give people breathing room carries with it a double edge, and there are always degrees of risk in the possibilities of public encounter. Access to the city frequently entails a trade-off between the affordances and freedoms that urban environments offer to women and minoritized subjects, and the threats they might contain in terms of physical safety, bodily comfort and psychological ease. If negotiating the presence of others while managing oneself is a *normal* condition of being in public, it took on new urgency and immediacy in COVID times. The kinds of spatial and bodily awareness that may be routine for women and gender and sexual minorities in navigating public environments became a more general urban attitude. The sense of potential vulnerability in shared spaces; the need to keep reasonable physical and psychological distance; reflex alertness to the latent risk that lies in interpersonal encounter—all ran through techniques and repertoires of the body that were practised in more general efforts to maintain a fragile safety for oneself and others.

The public management of urban space during the pandemic sought to balance dynamics of risk and safety through more directive means. Against the backdrop of lockdowns, stay-at-home and shelter-in-place orders, there remained ongoing practical needs for access to public space for a variety of purposes. For large shares of urban populations in the global south, locking down and social distancing were spatially simply unfeasible (Bhan, *et al.* 2020), and across rich and poor world cities the ability to withdraw from shared and public spaces is deeply shaped by class and economic disparities. This is partly about the importance of urban public space as a site of work: COVID exigencies sharpened the precarity of workers—such as street vendors and informal waste workers—whose livelihoods vanished under spatial lockdowns, while underlining the necessity of other kinds of labour in public, from transport workers to delivery riders. Pandemic conditions also made clear the extent to which the work of social reproduction relies on infrastructures of urban public space. Accessing food and essential goods, and care and caregiving, were common permitted exceptions to spatial restrictions on movement across numerous urban contexts—the ‘private’ work of feeding and provisioning households and of caring for kin constitute a major and necessary share of activity in public. Gendered mobilities of care, moreover, troubled official measures to contain movement within limited travel distances, as geographies of family obligation and need extended beyond the restricted radius designated by spatial control orders.

Such gendered geographies were especially relevant to distinctive measures in cases such as Peru, Panama, and Bogotá, Colombia, where movement control orders were based on sex; with men able to go out in public for permitted reasons and a limited time on certain days, and women on others. While these sex-based mobility policies aimed to reduce movement by a simple binary calculus, they encountered familiar problematics and blind-spots around the complexities and inequalities of bodies in public space: including gendered imbalances in childcare responsibilities and the highly feminized situation of single parents; the spatial

rights and protections of trans and non-binary people in a sex-based system; the challenges faced by people in poorer, peripheral and under-served neighbourhoods in meeting essential needs within a limited window; and the rights of children, disabled and older people, including with carers of the opposite sex (Wenham, *et al.* 2022). Beyond a generic spatial subject, and a binary model of sex, the diversity of people's needs, bodies, dependencies and mobilities renders public space a variegated landscape of access, use and movement in times of crisis but also as an ordinary spatial reality.

The risks and restrictions of the pandemic period placed a premium on urban public space, at the same time highlighting how uneven access to such common spaces may be. Ordinary public spaces in the city, as Luger and Lees (2022, p.799) put it, 'became visible in new ways during Covid-19 lockdowns around the globe. Spaces experienced as afterthoughts—in-between, small, interfaces between domestic and public, hopped or stepped-over on a typical day—took on new value.' Incidental and interstitial spaces became crucial thresholds between public and private, allowing for social interaction at a physical distance: doorsteps and stoops, windowsills and ledges, rooves and fire escapes, curtilages and courtyards. The spaces between buildings became animated as sites of public culture, with movies projected onto walls and screens for people to watch from windows and kerbsides in cities from Berlin and Bogotá to Paris and Rio de Janeiro, and music performances and DJ sets taking place on balconies and rooftops. As formal places of public gathering were subject to restriction and regulation, everyday actors engaged in the creative re-making of more mundane, nearby and semi-private spaces for 'public' uses of encounter, exchange, performance and protest.

There are important design insights that might be drawn from these everyday practices of making and taking public space in the city. Some of these were realised by urban authorities during the course of the pandemic, or are informing post-pandemic planning and design in different settings. Chief amongst these is the simple lesson that people need *room*—to be together and apart—in public space. The temporary widening of pavements to facilitate circulation while allowing for social distance has become part of a post-pandemic urban design toolbox; a focus on the primacy of pedestrian movement in the city, together with improved cycle lane provision, disrupts the share of public space typically given over to motorised traffic, and private cars in particular. The need for people to access nearby open spaces for exercise and play, social contact, support and exchange, as well as for simple moments of pause, rest and solitude, suggests an approach to public space planning geared to the local, immediate and smaller scale as much as to more central, ceremonial and curated spaces. The temporary and often improvised nature of design and planning interventions during the pandemic—from street closures and pocket parks to one-way circulation routes; *al fresco* eating or *plein air* performance spaces but also outdoor testing and public health facilities—underscores the value of *pro tem* and flexible uses in urban spaces that are subject to changing needs, variable numbers, shifting temporal rhythms and weather cycles. Pop-up, tactical or temporary urbanism is not simply a style move by guerilla designers or DIY urbanists, but a resource for 'official' spatial planners and service providers, as well as a routine strategy on the part of everyday users, as they claim pieces of the city in passing and re-tool ordinary spaces for encounter and solitude, play and protest, commerce, labour and care.

Conclusion

Putting urban public space in a gendered frame is to complicate basic assumptions about the design, use and control of space, as well as the ways in which gender shapes and is shaped by urban environments. It means holding at the same time what might seem contradictory

notions that public space is a continual site of struggle—for access, safety, identity, dignity—and yet is also ordinary, responsive and malleable. There are critical points of intersection between debates in feminist theory and approaches to urban planning and design which might continue to inform thinking about gender and urban public space. Chief amongst these is a concept of the ‘public’—as a political as well as a spatial category—premised on differentiation rather than universality, attentive to exclusions as part of the work of imagining more diverse versions of what counts as public space, and with an extended sense of the bodies it might accommodate and the kinds of uses it might support.

References

- Al-Bishawi, M., S. Ghadban and K. Jørgensen (2017), ‘Women’s behaviour in public spaces and the influence of privacy as a cultural value: The case of Nablus, Palestine’, *Urban Studies*, **54** (7), 1559-1577.
- Azzouz, A. and P. Catterall (2021), *Queering public space: exploring the relationship between queer communities and public spaces*. London: Arup. <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/queering-public-space>
- Beebejaun, Y. (2017), ‘Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life’, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, **39** (3), pp. 323–334.
- Bhan, G., T. Caldeira, K. Gillespie & AM Simone (2020), ‘The pandemic, southern urbanisms, and collective life’, *Society and Space*.
<https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/the-pandemic-southern-urbanisms-and-collective-life>
- Cook A. B. (2016), ‘Breastfeeding in public: disgust and discomfort in the bodiless public sphere’, *Politics & Gender*, **12** (4), 677-699.
- Dunckel Graglia, A. (2016), ‘Finding mobility: women negotiating fear and violence in Mexico City’s public transit system’, *Gender, Place & Culture*, **23** (5), 624-640. DOI:
- Duplan, K. (2023), ‘What would an inclusive city for gender and sexual minorities be like? You need to ask queer folx!’, *Social Inclusion*, **11** (3), 138-149.
- Fraser, N. (1990), ‘Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy’, *Social Text*, **25/26**, 56–80.
- Galán, S. (2016), ‘Cautious enactments: interstitial spaces of gender politics in Saudi Arabia’, in F. S. Hasso & Z. Salime (eds), *Freedom without Permission: Bodies and Space in the Arab Revolutions*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 166-195.
- Greed, C. (2019), ‘Join the queue: including women’s toilet needs in public space’, *The Sociological Review*, **67** (4), 908-926.
- Joshi, N. (2018), ‘Low-income women’s right to sanitation services in city public spaces: a study of waste picker women in Pune’, *Environment and Urbanization*, **30** (1), 249-264.
- Kirmani, A. (2020), ‘Can fun be feminist? Gender, space and mobility in Lyari, Karachi’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, **43** (2), 319-331.

Koskela, H. and R. Pain (2000), 'Revisiting fear and place: women's fear of attack and the built environment', *Geoforum*, **31** (2), 269–280.

Luger, J. and L. Lees (2022), 'Revisiting urban public space through the lens of the 2020 global lockdown', *Urban Geography*, **43** (6), 797-809.

Mahadevia, D. and S. Lathia (2019), 'Women's safety and public spaces: lessons from the Sabarmati Riverfront, India', *Urban Planning*, **4** (2), 154-168.

Namaste, V. K. (1996), 'Genderbashing: sexuality, gender, and the regulation of public space', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, **14** (2), 221-240.

Ng, W. and A. Acker (2018), *Understanding Urban Travel Behaviour By Gender For Efficient And Equitable Transport Policies*, Paris: International Transport Forum.
<https://www.itf-oecd.org/understanding-urban-travel-behaviour-gender-efficient-and-equitable-transport-policies>

Pain, R. (1997), 'Social geographies of women's fear of crime', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, **22** (2), 231–244.

Phadke, S. (2013), 'Unfriendly bodies, hostile cities: reflections on loitering and gendered public space', *Economic and Political Weekly*, **XLVIII** (39), 50-59.

Phadke, S. (2020), 'Defending frivolous fun: feminist acts of claiming public spaces in South Asia', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, **43** (2), 281 293.

Ray, I. (2017), 'Public spaces, private acts: toilets and gender equality', *items: Insights From the Social Sciences*, <https://items.ssrc.org/just-environments/public-spaces-private-acts-toilets-and-gender-equality/>

Şahin, O. (2018) 'From home to city: gender segregation, homosociality and publicness in Istanbul', *Gender, Place & Culture*, **25** (5), 743-757.

Shahrokni, N. (2019), *Women in Place: The Politics of Gender Segregation in Iran*, Oakland: University of California Press.

Soto Villagrán, P. and L. Mejia Dorantes (2022), 'Urban projects and public space in Latin America and the Caribbean: walking towards a paradigm of gender equality', in J. M., González-Pérez, C. Irazábal and R. C. Lois-González (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Urban Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean: Cities, Urban Processes, and Policies*, New York: Routledge, pp. 535-560.

Valentine, G. (1990), 'Women's fear and the design of public space', *Built Environment*, **16** (4), 288–303.

Watson, S. (2019), 'Liquid passions: bodies, publics and city waters', *Social & Cultural Geography*, **20** (7), 960-980.

Wenham, C., N. M. Arauz-Reyes, D. Meneses-Sala and C. Rueda-Borrero (2022), 'Explicitly sexing health security: analysing the downstream effects of Panama's sex-segregated COVID-19 disease control policy', *Health Policy and Planning*, **37** (6), 728–736.

Author biog: Fran Tonkiss is an urban sociologist and Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8484-0669>