

# #Handbook - How Gender Inclusion Is Influencing Urban Design

## Résumé

**Le genre et l'urbanisme sont des sujets importants pour la promotion de l'égalité des sexes dans la planification urbaine.** Les chercheurs ont montré comment la planification spatiale peut reproduire les inégalités sociales et les stéréotypes si l'approche n'est pas sensible au genre.

Les espaces publics ne sont pas neutres et ont toujours été dominés par les hommes, tandis que les espaces privés sont associés aux femmes. Cependant, depuis quelques années, le sujet de la sensibilisation au genre dans la planification urbaine et le développement est devenu un enjeu politique majeur en UE.


- Vienne est un exemple de succès en matière de planification urbaine sensible au genre. Dans les années 90, le conseil municipal de Vienne a commencé à promouvoir l'urbanisme sensible au genre en mettant en place une unité pour les femmes dans la direction de l'urbanisme. Les parcs publics à Vienne sont un exemple parfait de la mise en œuvre de la sensibilisation au genre dans l'urbanisme.
- En France et en Suède, les promenades exploratoires pour les femmes et les visites en bus guidées sont des initiatives inspirantes. En 2016, le conseil municipal de Paris a publié un guide intitulé "Genre et espaces publics".
- En Suède, le programme européen de coopération territoriale URBACT a lancé l'initiative "Villes égales en genre" pour mettre en lumière les politiques sensibles au

genre. La ville de Umeå propose des visites en bus guidées depuis 2009 pour montrer le paysage de genre de la ville.

## Handbook

### Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design

Key findings As a result, cities work better for men than they do for women. people all have different needs and routines when it comes to our access to the city. However, the city is built for the "neutral"

 [https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design?utm\\_medium=website&utm\\_source=archdaily.com](https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design?utm_medium=website&utm_source=archdaily.com)



## Article

#DCRainbowCrosswalks Washington, DC USA. Flickr by Ted Eytan Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)



- Written by **Camilla Ghisleni** | Translated by **Diogo Simões**
- @August 8, 2022 10:00 AM

In the 1970s, in Berkeley, California, a group of disability rights activists called the Rolling Quads began dismantling curbs and improvising sidewalk ramps, demanding access for wheelchair users. But what people did not expect was that wheelchair users would not be the only ones to benefit from the intervention. Soon, pedestrians with baby strollers, heavy suitcases or simply with reduced mobility started using the ramps. Likewise, a gender-inclusive city works better for everyone. A city where all gender minorities of different ages and abilities can move around easily and safely, participate fully in the workforce and public life, live healthy, sociable and active lives, is a city that improves everyone's lives.

**+ 2**





It is with this example that the Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design, published in 2020 by The World Bank, begins its last chapter. By proposing practical and theoretical strategies to create cities with gender inclusion, the handbook decouples urban design from the logic that makes the white and economically active man the “neutral” user of the city. Therefore, the initiatives presented by the guide seek to break with the perpetuation of patriarchal gender norms reflected in the city, patterns that began to be questioned in the 1970s, when feminist scholars in the US and Europe analyzed the ways in which urban planning excluded the needs of women. Nowadays, more than 50 years later, this discussion is urgent, and it touches other parameters including different minorities related to gender identity, such as transgender, agender, gender neutral, non-binary, etc.

In this sense, thinking about urban planning from the perspective of gender minorities is a topic of fundamental significance, as these strategies are responsible for shaping the



environment around us, which, in turn, shapes the way we live, work and rest. To illustrate, imagine a single mother who lives on the outskirts of town and doesn't feel safe on her nightly commute home. For this reason, she begins to work informally from home and earn just enough to live with the risk of landslides or floods. Or, imagine if a transgender man is assaulted on the bus returning from his night class, he may give up his studies or even stop attending public spaces. Finally, there are many possible scenarios to be described here that illustrate how an urban environment not planned to serve these minorities can trigger serious social and economic impacts.

Save this picture!



#DCRainbowCrosswalks Washington, DC USA. Flickr by Ted Eytan Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)

In view of this, gender-inclusive urban planning must be *participatory*, actively including the voices of minorities; *integrated*, adopting a holistic and transversal approach that promotes the construction of the citizen-city relationship; *universal*, meeting the needs of all minorities regardless of age and ability; *educational*, sharing data and studies on gender equity; and *financed*, reserving sufficient resources to implement the necessary urban strategies.

In practice, according to research carried out with gender minorities in different cities, the major challenges identified in the occupation of public space and carrying out daily tasks are concentrated in accessibility, safety and ease of movement. With this in mind, many cities have been rethinking their urban design, considering four fundamental criteria:

## **Accessibility**

A few years ago, a group of sociologists developed a study in the city of Vienna, Austria, which showed that girls stopped going to parks from the age of nine. Already understanding the possible causes of this, a pilot project was put into practice. It renovated an existing park, including new accesses, dividing open areas into more private spaces with landscaping and benches that facilitate interaction, as well as the inclusion of courts for other sports like volleyball and badminton. From this strategy, almost instantly a difference was noticed in the patterns of use with more presence of girls and the LGBTQIA+ community, breaking the possible monopolization that was happening in the parks by boys and football. This example clearly demonstrates what accessibility means today. Much more than making spaces physically accessible, accessibility today means that everyone can access and use public space freely, easily and comfortably.

Besides the above case, the accessibility implemented in gender-inclusive urban planning can be seen in the creation of gender-neutral public bathrooms present in some cities around the world. In addition, toilet facilities are incorporating adequate diaper-changing spaces (no longer just in the women's restrooms) and disposal systems for menstrual products.

[Save this picture!](#)



Students in a gender-neutral bathroom. Courtesy of The Gender Spectrum Collection

## Mobility

As well as accessibility, mobility is a key aspect that is being rethought in urban design with gender inclusion. In addition to common structural strategies, such as increasing sidewalks or elevated lanes to facilitate the movement of pedestrians (who are, to a large extent, gender minorities), it is possible to perceive other logistical strategies that bring gender into the discussion.

Public transport and night routes are constantly portrayed as major challenges, as they bring up situations of vulnerability and insecurity. Therefore, in order to change this scenario, simple strategies are being applied in different cities around the world. These include implementing bus and train schedules that meet the needs of all genders and not just focus on traditional travel patterns or hours, and instituting a stop request program allowing passengers to request a hop off at any point along an overnight bus route. This also includes expanding transport networks to the outskirts, providing reduced or free school transport to increase access to educational opportunities for



children and ease the burden on mothers, or the creation of gender-divided spaces, such as buses or subways, exclusively for minorities.

[Save this picture!](#)



© Stefano Aguiar

## Security

In addition to mobility issues, vulnerability is also in confined, poorly lit and poorly maintained public spaces, which can convey a sense of danger. With this, special attention is being given to public lighting, especially around bus stops. In some parts of New York, you can see a gender-sensitive approach, as in pioneering Vienna, which made the city's parks and streets safer and more comfortable on an individual level. In them, better lighting was installed, and semi-enclosed pockets in parks were created, which are visible, but still offer a reasonable level of privacy for those who are not comfortable exposing themselves from all angles, bringing more security, especially to LGBTQIA+ groups. It is about escaping from claustrophobic and closed projects or large



open squares dominated by security lighting and wide viewing angles dictated by surveillance strategies and the protection of private property.

Another interesting initiative that is being rethought for cities with gender inclusion concerns urban furniture. As with Vienna's parks, a new bench arrangement seems like a simple strategy, but it can mean a lot. The usual aligned benches, which facilitate distance viewing and surveillance, reflect the masculinity of the public space. However, when positioned in opposition to each other, they create spaces for coexistence and face-to-face interactions, increasing the sense of freedom and security of the gender minorities who attend the place.

[Save this picture!](#)



© Interboro

## Representativeness

As well as furniture, urban monuments also speak about the masculinity of public space. While elements that represent a common narrative, they have now incorporated

more critical thinking, embracing representativeness and diversity. In the city of Manchester, for example, the Alan Turing Memorial was inaugurated in the Gay Village in 2001, and in Berlin, in 2008, the memorial to homosexuals persecuted by Nazism was inaugurated.

But beyond the monuments, it is possible to see in several cities the creation of a “brand” or visual identity for the public space that is inclusive and welcomes sexual and gender minorities of all ages and abilities, helping to undermine public hostility and increase the sense of belonging.