

Renovating Marginalised Urban Areas with Girls and Young Women.

A case study from Sweden

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Abstract

This article contributes to an understanding of the experience and impact of using gender-inclusive innovative planning tools to engage girls and young women in urban design, and the capacity of this process to democratise urban planning. The article focuses on the narratives of girls from a marginalised area on the outskirts of Stockholm, Sweden, who participated in the feminist urban development project #UrbanGirlsMovement. The article draws on a theoretical framework of feminist urban theory, intersectionality, and territorial stigmatisation, and illustrates how the gender-inclusive urban planning techniques used impacted local girls and re-framed the role of the planner. The girls' narratives revealed that it was an empowering experience to be part of an urban development process as it enabled them to recognise their own abilities and societal power. The process of engagement gave legitimacy to girls' ideas and designs, enabling them both to recognise and to use their own agency. Additionally, the process of redesigning a familiar place enabled the girls to regenerate the meaning of their local urban public space to incorporate their own subjective spatial identities. The article argues that intersectional planning tools and processes can help transform spatial inequalities in power and oppression which is crucial when renovating marginalised urban areas of Swedish suburbs. The #UrbanGirlsMovement shows that a planning process can produce more than physical designs; it can be a tool for enhanced democracy, equality, and justice in cities.

Keywords: Sweden, feminist theory, urban planning, intersectionality, girls and young women, marginalised areas

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I. Patriarchal planning: how do we stop it?

A common claim is that the city belongs to all its inhabitants, but it is filled with barriers, both visible and invisible. The contemporary city mirrors in many ways the oppression and exclusion in a society, reflecting past norms and values founded in boundaries between the sexes (see for example Jarvis et al. 2009; Larson and Jalakas 2008; Rendell et al. 2000). Planning theory and practice have been criticised for ignoring gendered perspectives that result in unequal and unjust planning practices (see for example Molina 2018; Jarvis et al 2009; Bradley et al. 2005; Hayden, 1980). In the words of feminist geographer, Jane Darke: “Our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete.” Indeed, cities have been designed with the idea of a homemaking woman, reinforcing traditional gender roles (Spain, 2014). Yet, despite significant changes to urban life in the 20th century as women entered the workforce, urban structures and services remain unable to meet the needs and wants of women.

These broader trends are especially evident when analysing the long-term effects of the Million Dwellings Program in Sweden. In post-World War II Sweden, the Million Dwellings Program was implemented to address the housing crisis caused by urbanisation and migration. The areas chosen for the project can be found all over Sweden and have different characteristics, such as villas and townhouses, but particularly apartments in tower blocks. While it successfully provided housing, the program's planning ideologies, such as suburbanisation and traffic separation, reinforced gender norms and limited women's freedom (Molina, 2018). Women, children, and the elderly were expected to stay within or near residential areas, while men had access to transportation infrastructure for work (Molina, 2018). These patriarchal planning ideologies perpetuated gender inequalities and increased segregation (Andersson, 2017). Additionally, car-dominated urban infrastructure and zoning patterns created unsustainable transportation and prioritised the needs of men over women, children, and the elderly (Greed, 2019). Many residential areas in the Million Dwellings Program are today in desperate need of renovation. To prevent further segregation of these areas in the future, it is crucial to address how the renovation processes are planned and executed, some of which are adopting gender-inclusive tools. Determining what is an ideal city, and for whom, is subjective and raises questions about power dynamics and who has a right to shape the city (Beebejaun, 2017). Various social groups experience the city differently depending on their gender, age, ethnicity, and experiences. Women are a group with distinct intersectional needs in urban public space (see for example Schalk, 2017). To challenge existing gender roles and norms, a shift towards inclusive planning approaches that consider a wider range of experiences is necessary. By integrating diverse perspectives into spatial planning processes, we can create more equitable and sustainable cities. In order to understand the diversity of city dwellers, traditional power structures and social categorisations need to be challenged, and the voice of the marginalised need to be enhanced in planning processes.

Swedish urban planning practice has lately been progressive in adapting to societal changes and new planning ideals (Rodela and Norss, 2022). One example is the feminist urban development initiative #UrbanGirlsMovement that was launched by the Swedish independent think tank Global Challenge. With the explicit purpose of highlighting the lived experiences of young girls in marginalised positions, to test new methods for inclusive and just urban development. It was executed in the suburb Fittja, a part of Botkyrka municipality south of Stockholm. It is one of many Million Dwellings Program areas around Stockholm that are expanding, while the majority of the existing housing units are in dire

need of renovation. The project proposed a toolbox of gender-inclusive urban planning methods to address issues of democracy, gender equality, equity, and justice. The toolbox is today administered by UN Habitat together with Shared Cities Foundation.

This article presents the findings from interviews conducted with girls who participated in the project. Exploring how the planning tools used during the project impacted the girls' perception of public space, as well as their identification towards Fittja as a place. Although this represents only one case study, it provides valuable findings for how a gender-inclusive planning approach can be effective when renovating marginalised urban areas, to create more just and equal cities.

2. Feminist Urban Theory: a framework for understanding gender integration in urban planning

Feminist standpoints on urban theory, planning, geography, and intersectionality serve as the theoretical lens through which this research is positioned.

Feminist urban theory brings an intersectional understanding of power relations into planning theory. Mainstream urban theory is countered by feminist urban theory, which stems from a feminist comprehension of space and social relations therein. Snyder (1995, p.103) argues that feminist theory can positively renovate planning theory, making it "critical, emancipatory, and conscious of gender and other differences." Thus, an intersectional understanding of social relations and how these materialise in space is highlighted by feminist theory as a variable of planning knowledge and practice. Feminist theory challenges the inherent principles of planning theory by deconstructing hierarchal dichotomies such as private/public, expert knowledge/lived experience, and theory/practice (Snyder, 1995, p.98). As a result, this opens discussions about the right to the city, citizen participation in decision-making, and the role of the planner.

Urban planning has been based on the principle that greater authority, legitimacy, and credibility are granted to scientific and technical knowledge over personal and lived experience (see, for example, Schalk, 2017; Listerborn, 2008; Snyder, 1995). The duality of expert knowledge and lived experience is particularly interesting when analysing the narratives of the girls participating in #UrbanGirlsMovement. During the project, young girls' experiences of living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood had a greater authority than the knowledge of experts in the field of urban development and planning. Hence, the hierarchy of knowledge during a planning process was purposely challenged during the process of the #UrbanGirlsMovement.

Building upon this, the research uses feminist geography to focus on gender relations as a primary understanding of space and place. This article draws on feminist geography to explore girls' subjective experiences of being in or out of place in Fittja, considering the social and physical aspects of human interaction with an area. Feminist geography understands gender as socially constructed and performed, shaping subjects to conform to normative demands (Butler 2006). Gender is contextual, relational, and productive, challenging the binary understanding of gender (Butler 2006). Feminist geography analyses place and space, where place is a geographically defined location given meaning through space. Space is socially produced through human interaction, while place encompasses both material and emotional connections (Listerborn, 2007).

Feminist geography is used in this paper to explore how space and place contribute to gender divisions and inequality, examining how gender and other power relations shape

spatial actions. As spaces are socially produced, gender is embedded in material spaces (Listerborn, 2007, p.3). Understanding the connection between gender and space is crucial to grasp the complexity of gender roles and norms in relation to the built environment. Gender is performative and subject to change, allowing for gender roles and norms to be transformed.

Further, to understand spatial gender relations, an intersectional analysis is required. Intersectionality examines the interconnected power dynamics of gender, age, class, sexuality, and ethnicity (Valentine, 2007; Crenshaw, 1991). It recognises that gender experiences are diverse and emphasises the importance of considering power relations. Hierarchical power dynamics exist within and between social categories, influencing identity and access to resources. Power is rooted in norms that marginalise and subjugate. Intersectionality is a valuable tool for comprehending the role of space in shaping subject formation (Valentine 2007, p.18), particularly in socio-economically deprived areas like Fittja. For the girls interviewed, gender intersects with age, class, ethnicity, and space, leading to multiple layers of prejudice against them. Understanding these power dynamics is crucial in participatory planning for transformative urban development to not only illuminate but address them (c.f Listerborn, 2008; Cornwall, 2003).

Age, as a social categorization, is especially significant in this research, as the girls interviewed fall under the United Nation's (2015) definition of youth. Youths are often marginalised and excluded from decision-making processes, reinforcing societal perceptions of young people as inexperienced and immature (c.f. Ambjörnsson and Jönsson, 2010; Mabala, 2006). The intersection of gender and age, highlights the disempowerment faced by girls and young women who occupy an ambiguous position between childhood and womanhood.

Lastly, territorial stigmatisation, a concept related to spatial marginalisation, is integrated into the intersectional analysis. When marginalised urban areas become stigmatised, it creates and preserves stereotypes that devalue the identities of their inhabitants (Wacquant, 2007). Understanding how territorial stigmatisation shapes identities is crucial in comprehending the experiences of girls participating in urban development processes.

2.1 Methodology

Feminist research is guided by the recognition of gender as an overarching social category influencing individuals' experience within a patriarchal society (Listerborn, 2008). This research approach informs the study, which focuses on the experiences of girls and young women in urban public space and their involvement in the #UrbanGirlsMovement project. Qualitative research, aligned with feminist geography, enables the exploration of power dynamics and intersectional spatialities. Marginalised voices are amplified, and the hierarchical dichotomy of expert knowledge and lived experience is challenged (c.f. Listerborn, 2008, p.62; Cope 2002, p.45; Snyder, 1995, p.100).

A comprehensive understanding of #UrbanGirlsMovement and its social processes was sought by employing a multi-method approach, utilising qualitative methods such as interviews, participatory observations, and analysis of workshop materials, from the perspective of the girls participating in the project. Reflexivity played a crucial role in ensuring the reliability and validity of qualitative research.

2.2 The case study - #UrbanGirlsMovement

#UrbanGirlsMovement was a research project initiated and led by Global Utmaning and carried out in the suburb Fittja in Botkyrka, south of Stockholm between 2017-2019. Fittja is an area classified as vulnerable by the police. The project explored how feminist urban development techniques could improve living conditions for all groups in vulnerable areas. The project was co-financed with the Swedish innovation agency Vinnova together with the municipality of Botkyrka UN Habitat, Mistra Urban Futures, and Changers Hub, a local NGO. Changers Hub helped recruit and support the girls participating in the project. As a result of the financial support, the girls could be hired and paid per hour for their participation. The objective of the project was to develop new methods for urban development that integrated feminist perspectives and could be applied more broadly. This case study examines the experiences of the girls in the project and evaluates the transferability of the process used in #UrbanGirlsMovement. The study was conducted according to the ethical standards and procedures of the author's institution. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

2.3 Interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted to understand girls' perspectives of being part of a local planning process, their identification towards Fittja, as well as their experiences of embodying a young girl in the urban public space. Semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted with 11 out of the 16 girls participating in the #UrbanGirlsMovement project. The girls were between 16 and 23 years old and all of them lived in Fittja or an adjacent area. All were born in Sweden, but a majority had non-Swedish parents and/or were non-white. The interviews were audio recorded and translated from Swedish to English. Pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity.

2.4 Observation of workshops

'Workshopping', a participatory research tool, was used in #UrbanGirlsMovement to gather data and identify urban challenges and opportunities in Fittja. The project consisted of six workshops conducted between September 2018 and June 2019. The workshops involved a mixed group of local girls, adult professionals working in urban planning, researchers, political representatives, and various stakeholders. The workshops included activities such as place analysis and brainstorming sessions. Through the workshops the girls analysed the area, identified challenges and opportunities, and visualised their ideas of redesigning the urban public space around Fittja main square using Minecraft. The girls then got the opportunity to pitch their ideas to the local authorities.

During the workshops, I kept fieldnotes to document my reflections and experiences during observation sessions. Participant observation is an ethnographic method that is particularly useful in geography to analyse spatial concepts and processes. By immersing myself in the girls' reality and actively participating in the workshops, I gained a deeper understanding of their experiences.



Figure 1. Example of method used during workshop two, where the girls together with adult professionals identified challenges and opportunities for Fittja's public spaces. Source: Global Utmaning

3. Findings: Participatory urban planning as a meaning-making process

Through an analysis of the data collected from interviews with girls and workshop observations, three themes emerged: identification, spatiality, and participation. The first theme, identification, explores how the girls express their connection to Fittja and their experiences of being in and out of place. The second theme, spatiality, focuses on the girls' urban design proposals and how they connect to their intersectional identities. Their redesigns reflected their strong connection to the place and sought to enhance what the girls liked about it. The redesigning process positively impacted the girls' place connection, understanding of Fittja and the meanings it holds for them. The third theme, participation, discusses the participation process of #UrbanGirlsMovement and its impact on the girls' identity formation. It provides key learnings from the girls' perspectives that can be applied to other spatial contexts and planning processes.

3.1 Identification: The definers of space

The theme 'identification' explores how the girls express their connection to Fittja and their experiences of being in and out of place. The landscape of Fittja underwent significant changes during the development of the Million Dwellings Program between 1965-1975, resulting in the construction of new housing units and the integration of green areas and lakes into the urban structure. Since then, Fittja, like other Million Dwellings Program areas, experiences housing, socio-economic and ethnic segregation and has a high crime rate (The Swedish Police, 2023). Due to this, Fittja is often stigmatised as a dangerous place by the media, which predominantly focuses on crime-

related stories (see for example Molina 2005; Ericsson et al. 2002; Pripp and Ramberg 2002). Stigmatised areas are produced through societal and medial discourses that diminish the inhabitants of the area, which is an important part of what Waquant (2007) refers to as ‘territorial stigmatisation’.

During the first and second project workshops, the girls discussed the negative portrayal of Fittja in the media and how it influences both outsiders’ and their own perceptions of the place, which they felt contributes to a territorial stigmatisation of the area and its residents. One of the girls, Belle, tells me that she feels like media has deceived her to look at Fittja negatively. She explains that even if she lives there, media has planted a bad image of the place in her head which she has come to believe. Hence, the girls believe that media coverage has affected outsiders’ understanding of Fittja, creating a common negative image of it and its residents. This is exemplified by 17 years old Leona as she says:

“I constantly need to keep my head high to prove that I’m not some weak ass... well, I guess immigrant, even if I’m born here... It doesn’t matter where I go, I will always have to prove myself either because I’m a woman, or because I’m an immigrant, or because my family is from the working class, in some way I always need to prove myself. It’s a preparation for the future.”

The quote suggests that the stigmatisation affects the girls’ self-perception and identity formation. The stigmatisation of Fittja and its residents is a form of “othering” that reinforces stereotypes (see Molina, 2005). Numerous girls tell me about being denied access to societal resources, such as school and job opportunities. They feel the need to constantly prove themselves, especially in terms of their identities as Swedish as many of the girls interviewed had another ethnic heritage. Additionally, the girls’ narratives reveal that the residents of Fittja have inherited a shared identity that comes from inhabiting an area constituted of various oppressive power structures, shaping their understanding of both the self and the community.

As a result, within Fittja, the girls feel a sense of community and togetherness. They appreciate the multicultural background of the residents and the caring nature of the community. Despite the negative portrayal of Fittja, the girls express a deep connection to the area and a desire to challenge outsiders’ perceptions. They believe in their own opportunities for social mobility and see Fittja as a place where they can be themselves and support one another.

Overall, the girls’ narratives reflect their desire to challenge the negative perceptions of Fittja and its residents, emphasising the complexities of identity formation in a stigmatised area. The girls enhanced how they, as a group, never have been the definers of place.

3.2 Spatiality: Design can be used to enhance and share spatial identity

During the third and fourth project workshops, the girls identified opportunities for Fittja to thrive and brainstormed how the build environment could be improved to enhance what girls liked about Fittja, visualising their ideas in the data program Minecraft. Figures 2-4 provide visual images of Fittja before and after its re-design.



Figure 2. Overview of Fittja main square from. Source: Google Earth, 2019

The girls' redesign (see Figure 4) illustrates the contradiction between how they see their environment and how others perceive it. One girl, Nova, mentioned that she overheard some of the adult professionals talking negatively about aspects of the built environment in Fittja. From another interview, Belle had a similar experience and put it this way:

“It is good that they ask us who knows all the places and have a larger knowledge of what is needed and what is available than someone who doesn't live here. Someone who comes from a completely different municipality, who doesn't live here, shouldn't come here with their opinions and say what's right and wrong”

Here, the duality of expert knowledge and lived experience present in feminist urban theory becomes relevant. The modern planning practice of The Million Dwellings Program is characterised by the divide between the planning practice and lived reality (Lilja, 2000). Expert knowledge of the planner has often greater weight in the planning process than lived experience (Lilja, 2000). In the narrative above, Belle accentuated the importance of local knowledge when conceptualising change in a local urban area. During the redesigning process, the girls used the built environment as a tool to express and visualise their social relationship with the space. They aimed to reshape outsiders' perception of Fittja by highlighting its positive aspects. The girls' designs included elements of beauty, such as colours, creative lighting, and greenery. They believed that improving the physical appearance of the area would counter parts of the negative media image. They also highlighted the need for social meeting spots and places to hang out in Fittja, as these were lacking in the area. So, they included places for games, reading and art, as well as different kinds of seating. They also created architectural structures such as a glass greenhouse with a cafe, radio station, and rooftop terrace (see Figure 4).

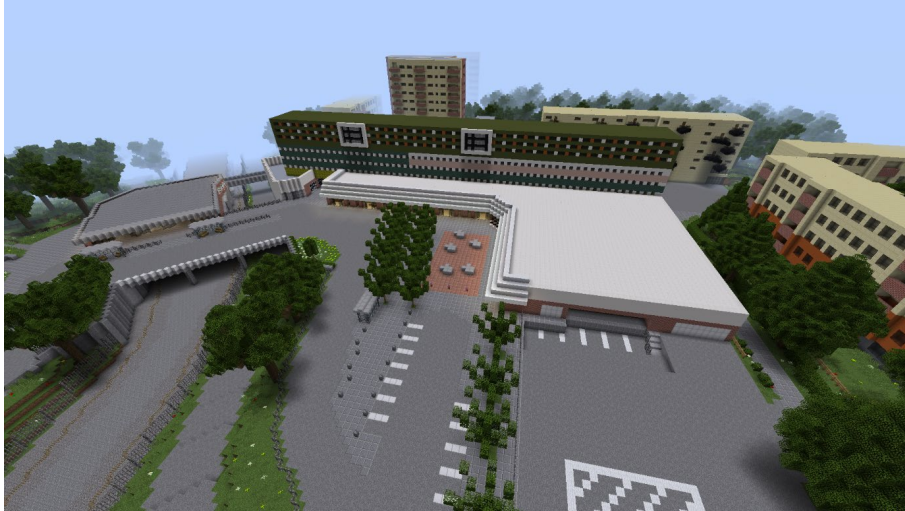


Figure 3. Overview of Fittja main square in Minecraft before redesigning. Source: Mojang 2019 [screenshot from play 2nd-3rd of February 2019]



Figure 4. Overview of Fittja main square in Minecraft after redesigning. Source: Block by Block, 2019

The radio was added as the girls believe that music, particularly hip hop, is a community builder and an important part of Fittja's social identity. They feel a strong sense of togetherness through music and art. By integrating elements of local culture into their designs, the girls aimed to enhance the communal feeling and intertwine the social and spatial identities of Fittja. The girls believe that when a place's identity is integrated and valued, it can challenge dominating power structures and stigmatisation norms. This is exemplified by the sign Fittja = Home on the rooftop of Fittja mall. When the girls presented their designs during the 4th workshop one of them said:

“It is also said that the sound from helicopters is the national anthem of Fittja, because police helicopters are always soaring above Fittja main square and Fittja in general, so when they do, they will know that Fittja is home and there will always be love here”

Due to this, the design proposals may be described as efforts to break norm barriers created between Fittja and other parts of Stockholm. The girls have, through their designs, made it possible for residents of the area to spontaneously socialise, as well as invited outsiders to visit Fittja and re-evaluate their objective image of the place formed by the dominant media discourse. These efforts have socio-economic benefits as they enhance social cohesion both within the area and between Fittja and the rest of Stockholm, which in the long run may have the possibility to break segregation patterns. The designing process allowed the girls to challenge stigmatisation and power structures through their design ideas. The use of Minecraft as a method helped them visualise and materialise their meaning-making strategies for Fittja. This approach to placemaking challenges the negative stereotypes associated with Fittja and promotes a sense of belonging and openness amongst the participating girls. Observing the built environment from the perspective of the girls challenges planners to think about the concept of architecture and planning to be more than just material (c.f. Jarvis et al 2009). While their design solutions are specific to Fittja, the process used by the #UrbanGirlsMovement can inspire other urban development projects.

3.3 Participation: Meaning-making in participation processes

The design proposals developed by the girls in #UrbanGirlsMovement symbolises and enhances the spatial identity of Fittja as experienced by the girls interviewed. Therefore, the actual designs are highly contextual and should not be generalised to how suburban areas should be renovated. However, there are aspects of the applied process in #UrbanGirlsMovement that could be generalised to other geographical and social contexts. According to the interviews, being part of an urban development process generated a positive set of values and meaning for the participating girls due to three aspects: (1) how the process was facilitated; (2) that they were only young girls participating; (3) and that they got to collaborate with adult professionals working with urban planning.

First, many of the girls were surprised by the attention they received during the workshops. One of the girls expected to be a listener rather than a speaker. This reveals a power asymmetry between speaking and listening, which can be related to gender and age categories, but also positions of power between planners and communities. Active listening, however, can challenge these power dynamics and empower marginalised communities (Wiberg, 2018). Wiberg (2018, p.28) stresses in her study of the practice of listening in urban consultation processes that:

“...by giving residents the opportunity to participate in political conversations, knowledge of democratic processes is developed, which can lead to residents gaining stronger political self-confidence and starting to engage and organise themselves”.

Due to this, the girls felt important and part of something bigger, which can be described as empowerment (Ortiz Escalante and Valdivia, 2015). Empowerment involves recognising and utilising women's capacities and providing platforms for decision-making (Ortiz Escalante and Valdivia, 2015). Hence, how the workshops were facilitated to put the girls in the forefront of urban development was a successful tool. It acknowledged and empowered the girls, allowing them to express their knowledge and experiences.

Second, the gender separation aspect of the #UrbanGirlsMovement had an empowering effect. By only including young girls from marginalised positions, the girls felt like the project provided them with a platform that was safe, without fear of judgement or criticism. The girls described that the project encouraged them to utilise their own power and challenge societal gender roles and expectations they had upon themselves. Third, the collaboration between young girls and adult professionals had transformative effects. The presence of adults from various companies and organisations inspired the girls and made them feel heard and acknowledged. This collaboration with adults gave them a sense of legitimacy and allowed them to develop their own abilities. The transformative impacts on power structures created by the age difference between the girls and the adult professionals were identified as long as the adults had an indicative role.

The facilitation, gender separation, and adult collaboration aspects of the process complemented each other and had a cohesive relationship. The girls believed that the #UrbanGirlsMovement could inspire other places to implement similar processes, as it empowered them and made them feel heard. One could argue that their participation in the process has societal values beyond the project itself, including developing political self-confidence and encouraging younger generations to make a difference in society. One of the girls, Princess, points to one of several positive externalities created involving girls in an urban development process:

“I also think that there are other younger people who check this out and think that these are suburban girls who try to make a change - if that does not happen then they will not try. If they see that we are trying to change something and notice that it is working, others may follow and try to improve society.”

Princess expressed that citizen engagement may encourage the next generation to engage in societal change. Many hoped that their participation in #UrbanGirlsMovement will make younger girls realise that it is possible to make a societal difference when and where needed, creating citizens that are aware of their democratic rights and have the power to use them. This would be a socioeconomic benefit for society as a whole in the long run.

The #UrbanGirlsMovement serves therefore as an example of gender-inclusive urban planning. However, such tools and techniques tested during #UrbanGirlsMovement are not without challenges and limitations. For example, these techniques require significant time and resources built into the processes of urban planning. According to Cornwall (2003), analysis and tools alone are insufficient; rather, successful gender-transformative planning necessitates advocacy, persistence, and influence. Gender and power structures should be addressed early in the urban development process and carried through to the final stage. To do such, strategic work that considers power dynamics

and agency is deemed essential. The combination of facilitation, gender separation, and adult collaboration may prove inadequate in effectively transforming intersectional structures and enhancing the experiences of girls and young women in socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods. Strategic advocacy that considers women's unique experiences and knowledge of urban livelihoods is also crucial.

4. Conclusion

The outcome of #UrbanGirlsMovement may not be generalised to other spatial contexts, albeit aspects of the process have the possibility to be universalized and normalised in planning processes. Based on observations and analysis of #UrbanGirlsMovement as a case, an urban development process including girls and young women creates meaning and empowerment to those participating in the process. For the girls in #UrbanGirlsMovement the process enabled the girls to recognise their own abilities. Additionally, redesigning a familiar place made it possible for the girls to regenerate the meaning of the urban public space around Fittja main square to mirror their own subjective spatial identities and connections to Fittja. Hence, planning policies and practices can impact the identity formation processes of young women if they facilitate a platform to re-define the meaning of space and express their own subjective spatial identities, leading to empowerment. This in turn, challenges set norms of gender, age, class, and space.

Due to this, #UrbanGirlsMovement shows that a planning process is more than the physical designs of the built environment, it is as much a tool for enhanced democracy, equality, and justice in cities. Nevertheless, for planning processes to be used as a vehicle for enhanced social and spatial values, there is a need for intersectional planning tools that transform spatial power and oppression. Awareness of normalised power structures forming young girls' ever-day lives should be a requirement for all actors involved in urban development processes, as it enables them to target this specific societal group tactfully. There are aspects used in #UrbanGirlsMovement that are important to highlight in this regard: facilitation, gender separation, and adult collaboration. These aspects are cohesive as they have proven to challenge inherent gender and age power structures when applied in conjunction with one another. This article has contributed perspectives and insights of how a gender-inclusive urban planning approach positively impacts girls inhabiting an especially vulnerable area. These insights are particularly valuable in contemporary Sweden, when large building complexes produced towards the end of the 1900s are in dire need of renovation. Through implementing a clear gender perspective founded in the local social and cultural context throughout the planning processes, these renovation interventions have vast opportunities to facilitate a much-needed transformation towards a more socially sustainable Stockholm. We have an opportunity to not only renovate the built environment and ensure adequate housing for all, but to challenge gendered power structures oppressing and excluding women from many of our cities' services and decision-making arenas. Involving women in urban development converts the city to a support system, instead of a barrier.

However, supplemental research is required to fully comprehend the impact of policy and planning in identity formation processes and how a transformative change of the planning discourse might positively impact society at large. Longitudinal research of this

sort will most likely show behavioural changes within areas implementing gender-inclusive urban planning techniques. The girls showed signs of increased societal trust as a consequence of taking control over their ambient environment. This might lead to socio-economic benefits of increased educational levels and better work opportunities, as well as reduced mental illness and societal exclusion. This increases the economic value of the area, enticing businesses to settle, as well as increasing the revenue of the properties. Hence, this would not only positively influence girls and women of the area, but there are clear signs indicating that the type of planning process declared in this article would benefit all parts of society. However, additional projects implementing a clear gender perspective are necessary, and they need to include a comprehensive follow up and evaluation. At the moment we lack methods to efficiently calculate both the business values and socio-economic benefits of a more equal and just urban planning process. Further multidisciplinary research needs to be conducted on how alternative values in the urban planning process can be quantified and incorporated into the planning processes already in place, as they are regulated by political and economic policies. Deeper knowledge of how to ensure social sustainability is crucial if we are to achieve international goals of e.g. the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, as well as the Paris Agreement – we have the possibility to ensure a sustainable development right here and now by questioning the planning discourse and implementing alternative gender-transformative urban planning techniques on a large scale.

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