WOMEN AT THE TABLE

Gender & Cities
The smart feminist city
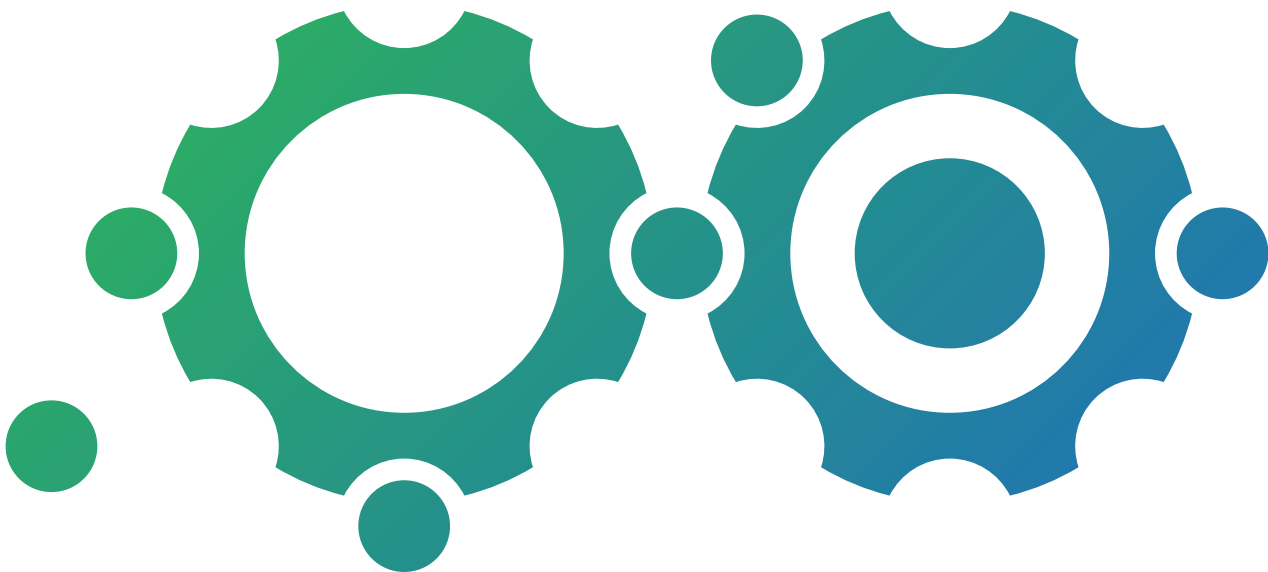
WOMEN AT THE TABLE

Women At the Table is global civil society organization based in Geneva. It's the first organization to focus on systems change by helping feminists gain influence in sectors that have key structural impact: economy, democracy and governance, technology and sustainability.

Further information about Women At the Table can be found at **www.womenatthetable.net**
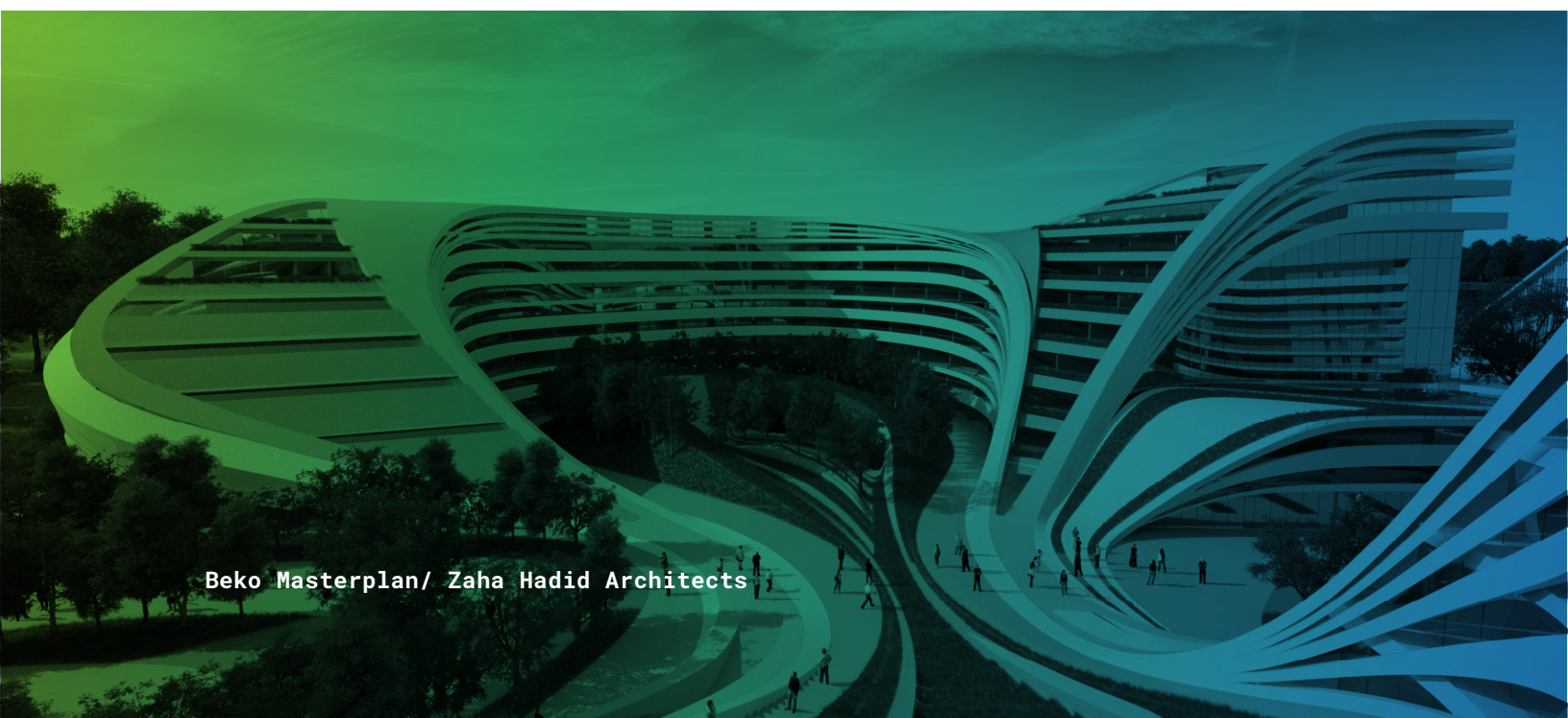
Gender & Cities
< The Smart Feminist City >

This policy brief addresses the core question of how to unite the "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and settlements" of Sustainable Development Goal 11 with the vision of gender equality depicted in SDG number 5.

It explores ideas on how to catalyse sustainable 21st century 'smart' humanist cities that have gender equality, climate change resilience, and democratic values at the core of their creativity and governance.

Its ultimate goal is to enhance the influence and impact of frontline feminists in order to catalyze the creation and build of The Smart Feminist City of the future. A gender transformative city is not a city built just for women, it is a city focused on the design and practice of inclusion and accountability.

A gender transformative city
is a Smart Feminist City.

Beko Masterplan/ Zaha Hadid Architects

The front line agents of change

The gender transformative potential of human settlements & cities

Context

Cities have complex relationships with women and gender equality prerogatives. An intrinsic lack of planning, layout and management of both formal cities and informal settlements can undermine or challenge women's abilities to manage domestic and paid employment demands, especially when women and women's groups have not traditionally been involved in decision making processes and planning.

Large numbers of people from differing economic, cultural and political strata that interconnect in poorly planned, unimaginative or non-existent public facilities, exacerbted by insecure environments have the effect of often making cities spaces of discomfort and sometimes fear for women. Yet, cities can also be sites of liberation and independence, where expectations of greater equality are forged through access to education, employment, child-care, housing and transport. The inevitability that settlements transform as they morph into and about formal cities creates a moment of challenge and opportunity.

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Issues

> More women are needed both making policy, and engaging with those who make policy. Sharing and scaling of structures for this engagement is critical.

> Infrastructure development needs a gender lens at conceptual phase. P .ex. redesign of public toilets to include mechanisms for menstrual waste, public transportation systems that accommodate multiple linked trips, design of inclusive public spaces, consultation on what new infrastructure a community actually needs.

> Battles for individual rights can be merged with collective right. P .ex. feminist collectives fighting multiyear battles for individual women's land titles have wound up changing larger structural frameworks and reformed municipal processes.

> Design of legal frameworks to accommodate, support and protect informal workers and livelihoods. Existing legislation and enforcement are biased towards the formal economy, frameworks often criminalize or exclude informal workers', (in large part womens') activities.

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Opportunities for paradigm shift

> **Systematic + Structural inclusion of a gender lens in community decision-making and budgeting:**

> **Inclusive Planning** mainstreaming gender analysis in conception, funding, and construction of public infrastructure could include: low cost multi-purpose housing; public transportation; local community social audits that focus on essential services; public space and safety fixes that allow for freedom of movement for all.

> Sharing of time-tested **organizing tactics, and experiments,** are necessary at scale so that **systematic integration of a gender lens** is incorporated and socialized into all community decisions and budgets and becomes the new municipal norm.

> **New conception of legal rights in the informal economy:** Fair and equitable laws are essential to improving informal livelihoods. Corruption is a systemic barrier for many women and families. Which are new frameworks that blend informal and formal? Which tax regimens are most efficient and gender just?

> **Access to land titles for women:** Housing is a fundamental security issue, and an inter-generational and transformational gender asset. Land titles are hotly contested in informal settlements, even more so as informal settlements become formal cities and scarce land ever more valuable. Are there land rights lessons to be learned across geographies, or pressure brought to bear at an international level using UPR, TPR or CEDAW frameworks?

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Climate justice / Feminist catalytics

Incorporating A Gender Lens Into Climate Justice & Climate Change Movements.

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Context

Climate Change is not felt equally. Women are at the frontlines of climate impacts around the world and are impacted disproportionately, generally having more limited access to resource, restricted access to rights, constrained mobility and less voice in shaping decisions and influencing environmental (and other) policies. Women have played a pivotal leadership role in protecting their environments, denouncing both the consequences of climate change and a dominant model that disregards an intrinsic value of nature and the centrality of care. Yet the climate change / environmental movements and feminist movements do not always act as one. It is necessary to find better ways to work with synergy across both social movements.

Clearly, those most affected by environmental changes must be genuine partners in all efforts and gender dimensions must be recognized.

Issues

> **Lack of integration between the climate change and feminist social justice movements.**

> **Different policy approaches** from different schools of thought. P .ex. waste management. In the past, it was nearly impossible to bring together a template merging waste management literature with social inclusion literature.

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> **Fundamental differences between how climate movements and feminist movements are funded.** The climate movement tends to be funded by big technical organizations. These funders are basically European, American and other international funders. Meanwhile, funders of women's movements are more grassroots based. They fund from the bottom-up, not top-down. This conversation needs to be pushed with donors as it gets little attention.

> **Globally different movements are intersecting,** coalescing and working together. This ethos must underline feminist movements and climate justice movements too. Better integration of climate change and feminist movements entail providing spaces for both groups to collaborate. Feminist organizations often work on climate and environmental issues, but often do not recognize themselves as key actors in the climate justice movement. They tend to see themselves only as feminists. So there is a real need to help women strategize in order to build a common agenda of collective activism AND to provide spaces for collective activism.

Opportunities for paradigm shift

> **Provide grants for joint action:** Coordinating organizations can curate one or two topics around which feminists and climate activists can convene.

> **Vertical coherence:** Integrating transnational feminist movements around climate change with local movements and voices in today's political ecology debates.

> **Demystification of knowledge** and the political education of frontline women: Capacity building for feminist groups to build partnerships with businesses, governments, and international development actors, particularly on issues such as disaster management.

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Technology with gender at its core

Smart Cities Enabling More Connective Human Experience

Context

The world is being reshaped by technology and our cities reshaped along with it. However old biases are being hard wired into new technology sets. At best the technology is 'gender neutral' – a neutrality that research in other technical fora (trade, standards, law) has proved to translate to non-equitable playing fields for women, and women being actively left behind. For many, SMART Cities have come to mean simply more efficiency as opposed to a better quality of life for all citizens. But technology can, and should be leveraged to tackle problems that affect the life of the city itself, at operations level, street level and delivery of services, all of which women experience differently.

Policies that are technology-driven in 'smart' cities must be holistically balanced by inclusive/bottom-up approaches that leverage local people's knowledge and needs and re-invent public spaces and services, particularly for women. **Gender-responsive urban technology is needed.**

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Issues

> **Technology must respond to concrete issues that affect women on a daily basis.** Concrete tools beyond the mapping of the 'un/safe' must be designed by, and for, women to enable them to reclaim their cities.

> Electronic platforms for 'participation' often attract more men than women, as there is a **differential in internet access** between men and women.

> There is **too little awareness,** deliberation or citizen involvement regarding **data policies in the new digital economy.** Surveillance control culture should not be masked as 'protection' of women.

> Urban innovation relies more and more on urban open data analytics, therefore the lack of **gender/sex disaggregation in data collection** and analysis risks leading to gender blind/neutral/exclusive smart city policies.

> **Technology is more than the internet and apps**. Technology and its use run the gamut from toilets to community radio, telephones to bank cards, computers to big data. It is necessary to assess which technologies can best be used in different environments. For example 'technologies' include conferring bank cards and smartphones to refugee and displaced populations. **What does it mean to live in the not-SMART** quarter of a city or settlement.

> **Human biases are har wired into black box algorithms** that have potential to make huge impact on women, negatively or positively.. Algorithms making decisions on vital things such as job advertising, salary offers, credit history, loan eligibility can + recently have been used in ways that discriminate against women. Proprietary algorithms make it impossible to know why or how results were created. We are left to discover bias only after it has had deleterious effect.

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Opportunities for paradigm shift

> **More feminist creators of technology and innovation.**

> **A 'new deal' on data:** More women needed to generate and control data— this includes protecting women's privacy as women may be most affected by data extraction apparent in ever more expansive collection of data.

> **Creation of urban data sets:** To track and trend data on gender differentials in order to develop infrastructure programmes that factor in gender-responsive needs.

> **"Automated Decision Systems"** municipal task forces: To examine city's "automated decision systems"— computerized algorithms that guide allocation of varied resources (from health services, to street lighting, to bail) —with a lens of equity, fairness and accountability. This is one step towards ensuring that municipal governments both examine black box algorithms and explore how to unwire bias. Gender-responsive, even corrective, public procurement policies are another vast opportunity for transformation at the municipal level.

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Democracy

Bringing Women Into Decision-Making Fora

Context

Representation is at the core of the power and agency to control and improve one's environment. It is key to making a sustainable structural change in urban and human settlement governance. The contribution, influence, and impact of front-line feminists in the creation and build of SMART cities is critical.

Achieving greater equity in city planning begins with understanding what women need. This requires greater women's feminist representation in local governments, as well as feminist influence in urban planning from conception to build. The incorporation of women's insight, creativity and knowledge in policy and planning is essential for building cities that allow all urban inhabitants to thrive equally.

Issues

> **Realpolitik is connected to representation.** Political parties exist powerfully at the local level and conversations are often divided along party lines. Therefore, real questions exist as to whose voice is being highlighted, including which women's voices count and get heard.

> In some countries decades of progress have been reversed in a single stroke through the election of a right-wing **government unresponsive to gender concerns.** It is necessary to analyze how reversals can occur so quickly.

> **Strong structural + social impediments** are still profound for women to believe they will make a difference with engagement at a formal political level.

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Opportunities for paradigm shift

> **Innovative representation making new rules:** An innovative collective candidacy of nine activists for one State Deputy seat was successful in the São Paulo Legislative Assembly in 2018. The Bancada Ativista, an independent movement focused on electing activists now holds 2 seats in 2 bodies + serves as an experiment in how structures of traditional representation + accountability might change.

> **Innovative representation rules:** Kenya's 2010 Constitution includes a two-thirds gender rule—meaning the National Assembly and Senate require at least one-third participation from the unrepresented gender. This rule also applies to all elected bodies. However, it has failed to take effect due to lack of implementation guidelines. Both carrot and stick incentives need to be built into innovative representation rules and established at all governance levels. Municipal government can be a laboratory for this.

> **Community Mapping exercises / Tapping Women:** Community women leaders need to serve as formal leaders of the larger community. Issue mapping and power mapping often heighten advocacy understanding + bring community women into formal decision-making fora. Feminist leaders, current legislators, colleagues, family must 'tap women' who would be great leaders in community organizing or more formal government work. Research has shown that many women need encouragement from their community to step forward to serve. It is possible to 'tap someone' for representation, not only for elected and formal politics.

> **National annual training:** Huairou Commission members in Honduras and Nicaragua, are trained each year on assessing proposed national annual budgets and laws that may have high impact (p.ex. land rights). The women leaders in turn are accountable to share their high level training with their local constituents.

> **International conversations:** Vertical integration in a virtuous circle is critical from the local to the global to the local. Women who go to global spaces must be enabled to share their innovations at global fora. Conversely the sharing of knowledge gained on innovative international policy frameworks, as well as the innovations (and failures) of others should be reported back in a systematic way to create more robust networks of knowledge, influence and power.

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New alliances, new leverage

#Smart Feminist City

Collaboration, coalition, and voice across a new network of SMART city designers, frontline feminists, democracy activists and climate change activists will allow for further and potentially faster more innovative action on the transversal issue of gender equality. Coalitions must be forged for integrated movements advocating responsive governance, climate change resilience, inclusion, accountability, and feminist policy in the cities of the future. New alliances will allow us to work across a broader global canvas and perhaps eventually at scale.

Opportunities

> **Institutional networks already exist:** Leverage larger coalitions, such as Huairou Commission, Slum Dwellers International, WEDO. There are entire movements of women focused on insurgent planning which could be further linked to other movement makers.

> **Youth focus:** Young women, the most marginalised in terms of traditional power, are the future/present with innovative ways of engaging and mobilizing movements.

> **Alliances across different areas:** In addition to other social justice movements, alliances across unexpected areas from religious groups, to the media, to formal political parties should be built.

> **Infrastructure focus:** Change the frame and conversation away from violence to a humanist data-driven debate on effective services to combat violence, and the transformative benefits of inclusive planning

> **Structural Change: Ensure reforms are cemented and not easily reversible.** Change the structures and the rules before our coalitions leave the planning table.

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The Gender & Cities convening was hosted by Women@theTable
4-5 December 2018 at the Maison de la Paix/ Graduate Institute of International Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

#SmartFeministCity

Experts included:

> **Jane Anyango –** Founder/ Director, Polycom Development, Kibera, Kenya

> **Renata Avila –** Ciudadanía Inteligente, Executive Director, Santiago, Chile

> **Cristina Bueti –** Advisor of ITU-T Study Group 5 "Environment and Climate Change" at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

> **Anne-Claire Blok –** UN Women, Geneva, Switzerland

> **Domenica Carriero –** UNECE, UN Economic Commission for Europe, Smart Sustainable Cities Project Manager

> **Dr Beth Coleman –** City as Platform Lab, Director, Ontario, Canada

> **Enzo Tabet Cruz –** Plan International, Girls in Crisis, Policy & Advocacy Officer, Geneva, Switzerland

> **Suneeta Dhar –** Senior Advisor, JAGORI Women's Training & Resource Center., New Delhi, India

> **Gisela Duetting –** UN Women, Senior Specialist Gender and Livelihood Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response Office-Geneva

> **Sophie Eberhardt –** Lépac, Research Institute Researcher; Paris, France

> **Amie Figueiredo –** UN Economic Commission for Europe, Land Administration + Management

> **Caitlin Kraft-Buchman –** Women@theTable, CEO/Founder, Geneva, Switzerland

> **Esteban Leon –** UN-Habitat Chief a.i. Risk Reduction Unit - RRR Branch Head, City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP),

> **Roshni Menon** – SOAS, PhD Candidate, London

> **Professor Caroline Moser,** University of Manchester Emeritus Professor, London

> **Mariana Duarte Mutzenberg –** IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union Gender Programme Officer

> **Dr Catalina Ortiz –** WEDO Board Member; Co-director MSc Building Urban Design in Development, Bartlett Development Planning Unit University College London

> **Chirley Pankara –** Bancada Ativista, Deputy, São Paulo, Brazil

> **Safak Pavey –** UNHCR, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Senior Advisor, Resilience and Solutions

> **Gulnara Roll –** UN Economic Commission for Europe Head, Housing and Land Management Unit Forests, Land and Housing Division

> **Nandita Shah –** Akshara, Co-Director, Mumbai, India

> **Sri Husnaini Sofjan –** Huairou Commission, Senior Advisor, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

> **Karen Suassuna –** Oak Foundation, Programme Officer Climate Change & Energy Latin America

> **Margrethe Tingstand –** WILPF, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, Board Vice President

> **KaKa Verdade –** ELAS Fundo de Investimento Social, Executive Director, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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