

## **ABSTRACT: Public and Private: Jacobs, Geddes and women in the city**

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A significant consequence of 19th century industrial capitalism was the growing separation of the public and private spheres: production moved outside the home to become organized by principles of the market, the family became increasingly differentiated from the economic sphere. Women, as a result, were to become more closely identified with the domestic sphere of the family, while men dominated the public world of politics and production. Janet Wolff has pointed out the “by equating the *modern* with the *public* [influential writings] have failed to describe women’s experience of modernity” (Wolff 1985, 37).

It is within this context that I reconsider Jane Jacobs’ seminal 1961 work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs claimed that the vitality of the city depends on a “most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially.”<sup>1</sup>(Jacobs 1961,14). The concept of mixed use, according to Jacobs, is one of the keys to creating diverse and complex cities.

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I argue that Jacobs' concept of mixed-use arises from a radically new representation of the city: it is not only an attack on the modernist functionalism and zoning, but is also as a challenge to the split between domestic and public life. Mixed use implicitly subverts notions held deeply since the 19<sup>th</sup> century—the home as “refuge” and its corollary, the street as “dangerous”—with all of the gender associations that have historically been imbedded in this imagery. While gender is not an explicit theme in this work, Jacobs' critique of modern planning and zoning implicitly addresses the issue of separate gendered spheres of public and private life, alluding to an alternative, inclusionary vision of public life, that recognizes the fundamental interconnectedness of the domestic and public realms, based on women's everyday experience of the city.

The questions raised by this gendered reading of Jacobs' concept of mixed use will be explored in the context of the 1925 Geddes Plan for Tel Aviv, which, I argue has implicitly recalibrated the relationship of public and private urban space. The primacy of the domestic realm of housing for Geddes' vision for Tel Aviv (Allweil 2016) can be seen in his new block type (the “home-block”) which was structured by a clearly hierarchical system of circulation (“mainways,” “homeways” and pedestrian lanes that provide access to an open space at the center of the block). The home-block was a modified superblock, with perimeter housing surrounding an interior public space intended for orchards, gardens and small public buildings. The superblock was already a common pattern in early 20<sup>th</sup> century planning in England and the United States, and would become the standard form of the Israeli *shikun*. But instead of the cul-de-sac system typical of the superblock, Geddes' residential block was

organized by a system of varying street types, and was fully integrated into the urban street grid. I will explore the ways in which Geddes' novel structure of street, block and parcel proposed a new integration of private and public realms and historically afforded a rich space for everyday interaction among women (Teneh 2013, Allweil 2017).

## References

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