The discursive uses of Jane Jacobs for the genderfying city: Understanding the productions of space for post-Fordist gender notions

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Abstract
The massive increases in women’s labour participation and the return of families with children to the city are often overlooked in understanding contemporary views on urban planning, despite decades of feminist urban theory. This article proposes to understand what is termed the ‘urban gender revolution’ through looking closely at the celebration of Jane Jacobs as the planning hero of the day. Zooming in on the city of Amsterdam, this article offers a case study of the popularity of Jane Jacobs to investigate the production of space for post-Fordist gender notions – genderfication – and to ask the question what new forms of exclusions are the result of this perhaps less sexist city (when compared to the modernist patriarchal ideal that Jacobs rallied against). In addition, it posits that the genderfication-project may help to overcome inequalities along gender lines; it underlines those along class lines.

Keywords
Amsterdam, children, creative class, families, gender, genderfication, gentrification, Jane Jacobs, planning

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**Death and Life: A genderfication instrument?**

Jane Jacobs’s *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) is one of the most cited books in urban sociology, urban planning and geography. More than half a century old, Jacobs’s work is still a reference point for many in academia, but also, interestingly, an inspiration for many in public policy. In the context of the urban gender revolution that we have witnessed in the past decades (consisting of a re-urbanisation of women and families and an increased participation of women in urban labour markets), Jane Jacobs and *Death and Life* can be seen as stakes in the reinvention of the city for a post-Fordist and differently gendered era. Jacobs’s ideas fit a post-Fordist city that *genderifies*: in which space is produced for different gender relations. In order to develop a perspective on this urban gender revolution and genderfication (Van den Berg, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, forthcoming), this article sets out to do four things: 1) it proposes to understand the perhaps surprising popularity of an early 1960s book in contemporary planning through a gendered lens, 2) it considers *Death and Life* as an instrument in processes of genderfication, 3) it zooms in on the city of Amsterdam for an empirical illustration of these processes and 4) it asks what forms of exclusions are the result of this perhaps less sexist city (when compared to the modernist patriarchal ideal that Jacobs rallied against). By genderfication I mean productions of space for different gender relations, notably post-Fordist gender notions. Building on a rich literature in gentrification, in looking at genderfication I investigate how in post-Fordism, gender is not less relevant, but is, however, reconfigured. In an era in which the sexual contract (Pateman, 1988) of Fordism is renegotiated for post-Fordism, urban space changes too. This case study of Jacobs’s discursive uses in Amsterdam can help shed light on these spatial implications of reshuffling gender relations.

*Death and Life* is a work of detailed observations and analyses of American urban life. It is also, in Jacobs’s (1993 [1961]: 5) famous words, ‘an attack on current city planning and rebuilding’. It has been heralded by many as a bold statement against what was at the time the dominant view on urban renewal. Modernists of the post-Second World War period planned ‘rational’ and ‘new’ cities on a relatively large scale. Using a ‘universal’ aesthetic, modernists wanted to build for ‘Man’ (Harvey, 1990: 40; Fainstein and Servon, 2005). Jacobs’s views on the city (however romantic they may have been according to some (see for example Harding and Blokland, 2014)) focused on learning from actual urban uses of men, women and children. Writing from New York City’s Hudson Street, Jacobs was also an activist, organising citizens’ protests against some major urban renewal plans for downtown Manhattan (Alexiou, 2006; Page, 2011; Zukin, 2010). Robert Moses, the enormously powerful NYC planner whose plans Jacobs protested against, came to be something of a personification of this modernist ‘soulless’ planning. Jacobs’s alternative involved respect for the vitality and diversity of what was already there. It also involved a truly thorough understanding of the complexity of urban life: of social interactions, safety, spontaneous organisation, informality and the uses of old buildings.

In the current millennium, Jacobs’s ideas are thus still – or rather, again – part of the repertoire of urban planners in various urban contexts. In fact, in what is often understood as a Jacobs-vs-modernists struggle, many have celebrated Jacobs as the ‘winner’. David Harvey, for example, argued already in 1990 that Jacobs’s ideas had become dominant: ‘It is nowadays the norm to seek out “pluralistic” and “organic” strategies for approaching urban development.
as a “collage” of highly differentiated spaces and mixtures, rather than pursuing grandioso plans based on functional zoning of different activities’ (Harvey, 1990: 40). And more recently, Richard Florida (2002: 43) stated that: ‘Now it appears that Jacobs’s world may well carry the day’. This contemporary popularity of Jacobs is apparent in her own gentrifying New York City (Page, 2011; Zukin, 2010) and in the UK (Urban Task Force 1999), but also in the Netherlands where Jacobs’s phrases such as ‘eyes on the street’ and ‘mixed-use planning’ are part of everyday planners’ discourse.

Many have already investigated the legacy of Jane Jacobs (Page and Mennell, 2011; Schubert, 2014), uses of Jacobs’s views in contemporary capitalist logics (see for example Zukin, 2010) or her impact on the planning profession (Campanella, 2011). This article aims to further our understanding of Jacobs’s legacy by offering a gendered perspective on urban transformations – a perspective that is lacking in the above studies of Jacobs’s legacy. More importantly, though, the aim here is to reflect on how what can be termed an urban gender revolution is translated spatially and how Jane Jacobs’s views are used for these new spatial translations. The enormous increase in women’s participation in paid labour, the rise of dual-income families and the sub- and re-urbanisation of families with children have been fundamental for urban change since 1961 (the year of publication of Death and Life). The impact of these significant changes in gender relations in the West over the past 50 years or so for urban space and planning is still seriously under-explored, as many accounts of re-urbanisation and gentrification focus on class struggle and capital flows (Lees et al., 2008; Smith, 1996). These views are limited since, as Doreen Massey (1994: 148) has noted: ‘there is a lot more determining how we experience space than what “capital” gets up to’. Jacobs’s work was not decidedly feminist, but in light of a masculinist urban studies tradition (Bondi and Rose, 2003; Sibley, 1995; Spain, 2002), the adoption of Death and Life and its perspective on actual women’s and children’s lives may open up room for a gendered view on re-urbanisation and gendered urban processes such as gentrification that is largely missing to date, at least from most mainstream accounts.

Jane Jacobs in post-Fordism

The arguments in this article build on a literature about the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism and on a literature that develops feminist perspectives on the city. Jacobs’s vision neatly fits contemporary views on what the city is and what cities should be. This post-Fordist city is in intense competition with other cities for visitors, inhabitants and especially for investors and businesses (Van den Berg, 2012, 2015, forthcoming). Fordist, industrial economies (based on manufacturing for example) were far less mobile than today’s post-Fordist service economies. Being more place-bound, cities could rely much more on companies’ presence and economic activity. Since the 1970s, we have seen something of a market inversion: cities now are competing for businesses instead of the other way around. Cities that relied heavily on Fordist industries, such as manufacturing, in particular experienced the dramatic changes of the 1970s. The post-Fordist entrepreneurial city (cf. Harvey, 1989) has consequently designed many strategies to cope with its new situation. One of the best known strategies of recent decades has become for cities to attract a certain (highly educated, ‘creative’) population because this is believed to attract businesses and thus create an overall positive effect on urban development. In such strategies, businesses are believed to follow potential employees instead of the other way around. Richard Florida’s (2002, another
Jacobs's views on the creative classes and creative cities have been tremendously influential in such theories and planning practices: the idea is that the attraction of a creative class will lead to a particular cultural climate that will attract investors and thus lead to revenue throughout the economy.

Harvey showed in his *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) how this move to post-Fordism was paralleled by a change in form: a change from modernism to post-modernism. Urban planning changed from the modernist (and for example Moses's) focus on ‘large-scale, technologically rational plans’ (Harvey, 1990: 66) to a cultivation of ‘a conception of the urban fabric as necessarily fragmented’ (Harvey, 1990: 66), mixed, diverse and organic. Jacobs's objections to the universal claims of modernist, Fordist planning can, thus, be seen as an early voice of the turn to post-modernism that was to accompany post-Fordism from the 1970s onwards. Her views on mixed-use planning, diversity and the necessity of a collage of old and new buildings are a great fit for the post-Fordist city and contemporary entrepreneurial strategies for the attraction of the creative classes (Page, 2011).

What is usually left out of accounts of the ascent of the entrepreneurial city, the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism or the postmodern city is the way in which this change was profoundly gendered. Feminist geographers and urban scholars have, of course, pointed out the important gendered aspects of the changes in the way cities are made to work since the 1970s (see for example McDowell, 1999). However, as Daphne Spain (2002: 25) argued: ‘Work on gender and urban space has remained largely isolated in a parallel world of feminist scholarship’.

**Perspective and approach**

The main aim of this article is therefore to develop a perspective on the urban gender revolution and the genderfying city. Steering clear of sweeping statements about the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, the aim is to show the importance of changes in gender notions for our understanding of the post-Fordist city. The city of Amsterdam is an excellent case for learning about the mechanisms of genderfication and responses to the urban gender revolution. This is so because the influence of Jacobs is especially apparent there (this will be analysed below), but also because, as the capital of the Netherlands, it is part of a very strong Dutch history of planning (Boomkens, 2008; Hospers, 2011). In the Netherlands and Amsterdam, Jacobs’s ideas have not led to a delegitimisation of the planning discipline, as Campanella (2011) argues happened in the US. On the contrary, Jacobs’s ideas about how to foster vital cities have become part of the set of instruments that Dutch planners use, despite her distaste for engineering through spatial interventions. In the Netherlands, therefore, it is quite possible for planners to appropriate and incorporate Jacobs’s anti-planning discourse into their arguments for engineering.

The analysis offered in this article is an intersectional analysis in the sense that it scrutinises gender dimensions, but does so while maintaining that gender intersects with other axes of domination in important ways. In the case analysed here, the intersection with class is especially important as it means asking what exclusions based on class become possible as a result of genderfication. Intersectionality is about making visible complex and combined forms of domination (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Jaunait and Chauvin, 2012; Wekker, 2016). The issue at stake here and in other intersectional analyses is how gender and class (or race, ethnicity, age etc.) are constructed and have impact only in interaction with other social constructs, as part of a cross-secting system of domination.
This article is first and foremost a theoretical exploration of the fit between Jacobs's writings and gender notions in the post-Fordist city. Therefore, much of the argument is based on arguments found in scholarly literature on both the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the city and on reshuffling gender notions in the contemporary urban. This material is supplemented by an empirical case study: Amsterdam. The empirical material presented in this article concerns discursive moments in which Jane Jacobs and her work (and in particular Death and Life) become salient. To assess the discursive uses of Jacobs for the genderfying city, moments in which she is celebrated as a planning hero or guru are especially important. In analysing these discursive moments, I was especially interested in how gender and class intersect, in how the desired city portrayed in Amsterdam planners’ discourses is gendered and classed and how Jacobs is put to work in these discourses. Rather than giving a policy analysis, then, I focus here on moments in which Amsterdam planners celebrate, use or more generally refer to Jane Jacobs in their discourse on the city. The dominance of Jacobs can be felt in actual policy documents, but is rarely explicitly there. This study therefore does not focus primarily on policy documents or documents of the Amsterdam planning bureau (Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening, DRO). Instead, the majority of the empirical material consists of public statements of two of the key figures in contemporary and recent Amsterdam planning: Jos Gadet and Zef Hemel. Both hold, or recently held, key positions in Amsterdam planning and at DRO in particular (Jos Gadet has been head planner there since 2015; Zef Hemel was deputy director of the bureau from 2004 to 2014), and both are especially active in public debate about Amsterdam public space. This public engagement is apparent (besides their work at DRO) in their writing for wide audiences in blogs, books and articles. This makes them especially suitable for a discourse analysis such as the one offered here. Both Gadet and Hemel refer to Jacobs frequently and fondly. Gadet (2011), for example, cites her as his main ‘inspiration’. He even wrote a book on Amsterdam aimed to resemble Death and Life, entitled Back to the City: A Geographical Portrait of Amsterdam (Terug Naar de Stad; Gadet, 2011). Citing Jacobs in many chapters, Gadet argues for an urban (as opposed to a suburban) Amsterdam to further facilitate the (in his assessment) already strong ‘knowledge economy’ (kenniseconomie; Gadet, 2011: 8–9):

I want to understand why the knowledge economy works best in the urban fabric: a mix of functions in a varied fabric of buildings, streets, public spaces, with public and commercial services, in which diverse social relations can develop … The American publicist Jane Jacobs wrote about this apparent chaos as an ‘organized complexity’ in which ‘a sizable number of factors … are interrelated into an organic whole’. (Gadet, 2011: 9)

For Hemel, too, Jacobs is a frequently recurring reference. In his blogposts, Jacobs makes an appearance frequently, often without particular introduction, her relevance apparently self-evident. Whether he writes about local economies, the planning profession or creativity, Jacobs is the standard reference. By analysing discursive moments in the writings of Hemel and Gadet, logics in the uses of Jane Jacobs for the genderfying city – and Amsterdam in particular – become apparent.

**Genderfying cities and the appeal of Jacobs**

The spatial is, in Doreen Massey’s (1994: 2) definition, ‘social relations stretched out’. Quite literally, patriarchy, or more precisely the sexual contract of Fordism (Pateman,
1988; compare Adkins, 2012), has taken its spatial form in the modernist city. Even though gender relations changed quite dramatically in the past decades, in part due to economic changes and the surge in women’s paid labour, the modernist spatial form endures. Modernist, patriarchal planning left its mark on most cities in the West. I have analysed in earlier work how much of what the city of, for example, Rotterdam (heavily bombed in the Second World War and rebuilt in a highly modernist fashion afterwards; Van den Berg, 2013a, 2013b, forthcoming) and its planners are doing is undoing modernist planning and its separation of habitation, consumption and production. As Liz Bondi (1999) put it: ‘when patterns of reproduction and production change, urban space changes’. On the one hand, modernist planning changed many cities in the West based on patriarchal ideas and dichotomous thinking and this still largely structures contemporary life. On the other hand, urban structures are likely to change as a result of changing gender relations. It is precisely in these changes that Jacobs’s views play an important role. I offer genderfication as a perspective on such changes.

Building on the enormous literature on gentrification, I take genderfication to mean the production of space for different gender relations. I build on Hackworth’s (2002: 815) definition of gentrification as ‘the production of space for progressively more affluent users’ to develop this concept. This broad definition of gentrification is useful because it can be used to understand the production of space beyond the change in working class residential areas. In addition, it focuses on the social production of space in a Lefebvrian perspective, outlining the dos and don’ts that space signifies (Lefebvre, 1991: 121). While gentrification research usually focuses on class-based processes (see Lees et al., 2008; Slater, 2006) or even ‘class war’ (Smith, 1996), many scholars have acknowledged the important role of gender in gentrification processes (Bondi, 1991, 1999; Fincher, 1990, 2004; Lees et al., 2008; McDowell, 1999). In fact, gentrification theorist Warde (1991: 223) argued that gentrification may be about class, but it is much better understood through analyses of gender. In what follows, I first trace what I would like to call the urban gender revolution and its spatial translations in genderfication. Second, I analyse the uses made of Jacobs in this genderfication project.

**Dual-earner families and task sharing**

An important question that is often left out of analyses of urban developments is what ‘women in labour markets’ means spatially (Fainstein and Servon, 2005: 6). This is especially surprising since, as described above, gender is such an important factor in gentrification. In Amsterdam, geographers have described how one of the reasons that gender determines residential practices to such a great extent is this participation in paid labour. In several studies by Boterman (2012) and Karsten (2003, 2007) about residential practices of Amsterdam families with young children, Young Urban Professional Parents, YUPPS (Karsten, 2003), relayed their preference for inner city life, explaining how in their experience it made task sharing and dual earning easier (compare for the US: Goodsell, 2013). Karsten builds part of her argument on that of Manuel Castells:

The structure of the household generally determines the spatial choice. The larger the role women play in the household [sic], the more the proximity to jobs and urban services in the city makes central urban space attractive to the middle class, triggering the process of gentrification of the central city. (Castells, 1993: 270; compare Karsten, 2003: 2575)

It is indeed well established in gentrification literatures that the city is an attractive place
to live for women in paid labour. In fact, many studies suggest that women are at the forefront of gentrification processes (Bondi, 1991, 1999; Fincher, 1990; Lees et al., 2008; Rose, 1984). In these studies, single women professionals, lone mothers and dual-earner couples without children play an important role. It has often been argued that the life-cycle is especially important in understanding gentrification and that families with children remain more orientated towards suburban living (see for example Bondi, 1999). In the Netherlands, too, middle class families especially show a preference for suburban living (Karsten, 2007). However, scholars have been outlining how, more recently, families with children are the new catalysts for gentrification (Goodsell, 2013; Karsten, 2003). The proximity to amenities, childcare services and shorter commutes in combination with a liberal climate for those that wish to depart with patriarchal family ideals makes task sharing and dual earning easier (Boterman and Bridge, 2015; Karsten, 2003, 2007; Lees et al., 2008; Warde, 1991).

And indeed, the urban parents in Willem Boterman’s study preferred a work-life arrangement in which both parents are involved in paid labour for four days a week and share care duties (Boterman, 2012). Reurbanisation of families is, thus, a profoundly gendered process because gender ideals of equal task sharing, the importance of paid labour for women and the departure of patriarchal ideals are central to families’ considerations.

The Amsterdam planning bureau DRO took note and in contrast to earlier planning reports, in which families were not mentioned (Karsten, 2003), the ‘Structuurvisie’ 2010–2020 explicitly identifies ‘urban families’ (stadsgezinnen) as one of the ‘demand categories’ (vraagcategorieën, DRO Amsterdam, 2011) for which to build a supply of housing and for whom to design public space. Measures and spatial interventions include the building of larger homes, homes with gardens and ‘relaxed’ and ‘child friendly’ public spaces (DRO Amsterdam, 2011: 93). Interestingly, the larger homes with gardens are built for more expensive markets as the percentage of affordable social housing is simultaneously rapidly declining. The Structuurvisie itself documents an increase of 11 to 30 percent home-owned houses in the years 1995–2009 and predicts a growing expensive private market and a decrease in the amount of affordable (rented) houses in the semi-public sector (DRO Amsterdam, 2011: 93; compare OS, 2013). This is the result of successive waves of Amsterdam policy since the 1990s aiming at the attraction of the middle classes by increasing the amount of owner-occupied dwellings at the expense of social-rental dwellings (Kadi and Musterd, 2015; Van Gent, 2013). ‘Childfriendly’ planning in practice often amounts to middle class friendly planning and to gentrification, or rather genderfication as it entails the production of space for dual-earner families with gender equal ideals: the YUPPS. This logic has become so very naturalised that Tracy Metz (2015), a public commentator on urban issues, wrote in a 2015 article (with the title: ‘A cup of babyccino’) for the progressive magazine De Groene Amsterdammer:

It is beneficial for the city if there are more children. It is good for the balanced composition of the population – a city is not attractive if it is only the domain of the elderly, the young and migrant (allochtone) families [sic] who cannot afford to leave. (Translations mine throughout, unless otherwise indicated)

Indeed, there seems to be something of a reurbanisation of higher middle class families to the city, or, alternatively, a decrease in suburbanisation (OS, 2013). The metaphor used in the Netherlands to characterise this urban presence of higher middle class families is the ‘cargo bike neighbourhood’ (de
bakfietswijk), referring to the special bikes with which the affluent transport their children. Metz speaks of ‘cargo bike citizens’ (bakfietsburgers), and Jos Gadet (the above-mentioned head planner in Amsterdam) refers to Amsterdam as ‘cargo bike city’ (bakfiets city; Gadet, 2014).

Pink collar economies

Related to gender notions around task sharing and equality is the often signalled ‘feminisation’ of urban labour markets that is part of the move towards post-Fordism (McDowell, 2009). Urban economies in the West have not just changed in terms of gender because there are more women in the paid labour market (although this has been, in fact, quite a revolution, especially when compared with 1961). As Linda McDowell has extensively shown, the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism was a move away from the patriarchal sexual contract of Fordism (McDowell, 1991; compare McDowell, 2003, 2009 and Adkins, 2012 for an overview of this debate) towards a more feminised service-based economy and more equal task sharing. In today’s urban labour market, a certain ability to reflexively play with gender performances – to have some mobility when it comes to gender – seems to be important (Adkins, 2002; McDowell, 1997). Interactive service work (dominant in post-Fordist urban economies) in particular demands differently gendered performances than manufacturing (Adkins and Dever, 2014; Nayak, 2006). While scholars agree that interactive service sector work requires more ‘feminine’ performances (such as empathy and deference) and this has led some to pronounce a ‘feminisation’ of labour, this in no way means a straightforward preference of employers for women over men (Adkins, 2002). It does, however, result in a reshuffling of (urban) inequalities: it is for example well documented that working class masculinities become displaced (Nayak, 2006) or redundant (McDowell, 2003) in post-Fordism. Amsterdam has, in fact, created many jobs in service sector employment and ‘pink collar’ as opposed to ‘blue collar’ sectors (compare Van der Waal, 2009). The creative industries, tourism and health care have largely replaced manufacturing. To slightly exaggerate, masculine muscle is replaced by more feminine human capital.

Interestingly, the consumption-based, creative, ‘knowledge’ city that many urban planners currently pursue using the ideas of Jacobs (and the interpretation of Jacobs by Florida, 2002) is thus differently gendered than was the modernist city of Robert Moses or the industrial city of the 19th and 20th centuries. While many cities in the West have been characterised as masculine, this new, creative, diverse and consumption city is arguably more feminine. Here, the city’s gender itself comes into play. Indeed, consumption, femininity and women’s emancipation became connected early on in urban consumer culture (Laermans, 1993; McDowell, 1999). Successfully establishing such a ‘creative’, ‘knowledge’-based economy therefore entails gender politics too, as became evident in the widespread use of for example Richard Florida’s ‘gay index’ to predict the attractiveness of cities to the creative class (Florida, 2002; for elaborate analyses of such gender politics in urban economies, see Van den Berg, 2012, 2015, forthcoming).

Illustrative of this relation between urban economies and gender is Zef Hemel’s response to an op-ed piece for a Dutch national newspaper (NRC Handelsblad). I wrote in which I cited the Rotterdam alderman Hamit Karakus who had proclaimed that Rotterdam needed to ‘grow tits’. I argued that for a city that explicitly wanted to become more feminine (to get rid of the masculine working class image that came with the industrial economy of the harbour)
for a future service-based economy, Rotterdam was using quite macho language and a lot of muscle. Hemel responded to this article on his blog. He used it as an invitation for him to outline the importance of gender (and sex) in urban economies. The following are excerpts from his response (translations by the author; Hemel, 2013a):

Van den Berg points out that successful consumption-cities don’t use macho language and that success demands more women and femininity. Women are a minority in Rotterdam. In Amsterdam they are the majority. This female dominance says something about Amsterdam’s success ... The fact that successful cities today are more feminine and house many gays (homofielen) says a lot about our modern economy that is more and more service based. This economy is not blue collar, but pink collar. What spatial characteristics go with such a pink collar city? Not football stadiums ... not glass towers in the city centre ... What then? Listen to women like Jane Jacobs and Marguerite van den Berg. Can a macho city reinvent itself? It seems hard. Pittsburgh did it. It attracts lots of young women and singles, but has said goodbye to its industrial image too. Maybe if Rotterdam would take the message of women like Van den Berg to heart, it would work ...

What is interesting here is, first, that Hemel links the economic success of cities (and Amsterdam in particular) to gender and percentages of women. Secondly, it is telling that he immediately associates such a feminine city with Jane Jacobs. While my newspaper article did address the pink collar debate, it did not invoke the Jane Jacobs connection. But for Hemel, this connection is self-evident.

Why Jane Jacobs appeals to the genderfying city

So why does Jacobs fit so beautifully in the genderfication project? In the following, I outline three particular ways in which this ‘fit’ becomes apparent: 1) Jane Jacobs’s gender itself is often made symbolically important, 2) Jane Jacobs’s attack on modernism signifies the departure from the ‘masculine’ planned city of Fordism to a supposedly more ‘feminine’, postmodern city of collages and fragmentation that includes families and children and 3) Jacobs’s pleas for ‘mixed uses’ in cities fit gender equal ideals and genderfication.

First, the fact that Jane Jacobs is a rare female voice in the history of planning is symbolically important. Though not a self-declared feminist, Jacobs represents something of an exception to the history of male urban theory and planning. Feminist geographers and sociologists have done much to include women in perspectives on urban phenomena and to move beyond the sexist presuppositions in planning and urban policy (Bondi and Rose, 2003; DeSena, 2008; McDowell, 1999; Sibley, 1995). The following quote of Elizabeth Wilson is indicative of this debate:

The ‘discourse’ that has shaped our cities – the utilitarian plans of experts whose goal was social engineering – has limited our vision and almost destroyed our cities. It is time for a new vision, a new ideal of life in the city – and a new ‘feminine’ voice in praise of cities.

(Wilson, 1991: 11)

Wilson’s inspiring Sphinx in the City is indeed often referred to as this ‘feminine voice’ (Bondi and Rose, 2003). But Jacobs can be regarded as an important and much earlier ‘feminine’ voice in praise of cities. In fact, in many accounts of the history of urban theory and urban studies, Jane Jacobs is the earliest included female author (compare Sibley, 1995). Jacobs is, indeed, often the exception to the rule of the masculinist urban studies field. This in itself can account for part of Jacobs’s popularity in the genderfying city. Jacobs’s gender is indeed
repeatedly made symbolically important in contemporary discourses on the city, for example in the above Hemel quote where he argues that planners should ‘listen’ to ‘women like Jacobs’ in order to be able to build successful cities. In another blogpost, in 2013, Hemel argued similarly that Jacobs can ‘stand’ for the ‘feminine side of the (planning) discipline’ (Hemel, 2013b). And:

It seems that the feminine approach has ... won. Eyes on the street, street life, street corners, less cars, more pedestrians, diversification, creativity, productivity, organically grown city, yes, the spontaneous city is up and coming nowadays. (Hemel, 2013b)

In this quote, a host of processes and phenomena are quite loosely associated with not only Jacobs, but with femininity and a feminine perspective more generally. In Hemel’s view, the contemporary dominant view on planning is feminine and this, importantly, can account for cities’ creative and productive potential. Even more extreme: the feminine ‘spontaneous’ perspective can account for economic growth and urban ‘upgrading’.

Jane Jacobs here functions as a symbol of the move away from the modernist masculine city. More important perhaps than her gender is the fact that she very much argued for this departure of modernist planning. This is the second way in which the fit between Jacobs and genderfication is apparent. In genderfication, space is produced for a specific gendered order. As much as Robert Moses was the hero of his day, he is the villain in much contemporary stories about urban development. Many cities in the West are currently looking for ways to move away from the modernist city of the 20th century. The Fordist city relied, as relayed above, on a particular sexual contract, a division of labour and a spatial separation of female and male spaces. Genderfication aims to change this patriarchal order into a new gender order in which public and private spheres are intertwined, where men care and women work in the (home) office and where children are brought up in dual-earning families and in day care facilities. This genderfying city is signified by the presence of Jane Jacobs in so many accounts on called-for urban change because Jacobs successfully stopped modernist planning in her own neighbourhoods and because Jacobs’s views on the city so strongly included women as important urban agents. Indeed, in Jacobs’s work, women and girls’ everyday uses of the city are a focus of analysis, leading her to take women seriously as agents in the production of space (Teaford, 2006: 121). The top-down masculine perspective of Moses is thus today easily discursively positioned over and against the bottom-up, supposedly ‘feminine’ activist perspective of Jacobs. Discursively important in this regard is the phrase ‘eyes on the street’, possibly the most-cited phrase from *Death and Life*. In the words of Jos Gadet, ‘the reader of this beautiful book [*Death and Life*] will add expressions such as “eyes on the street” to his [sic] standard repertoire’ (Gadet, 2006). Indeed, Jacobs’s concept of ‘eyes on the street’ is, in fact, based on a study of safety in the hustle and bustle of the pavement ‘ballet’ (1993 [1961]: 65) that includes mothers and children, and an entire chapter in *Death and Life* is dedicated to the study of the uses of pavements for the socialisation of children (Chapter 4; compare also Lofland, 1998: 232). Where feminists have argued that in many perspectives on (Fordist) cities, women and children were absent, for Jacobs they are an important and central part of city life. In fact, the modernists Jacobs rallied against argued that the street was unsafe for children. In general, they deemed the street an improper space for anybody to spend time in. In her acute style, she argues:

Children in cities need a variety of places in which to play and to learn … they need an
unspecialized outdoor home base from which to play, to hang around in, and to help form their notions of the world. (Jacobs, 1993 [1961]: 105–106).

And: ‘Why do children so frequently find that roaming the lively city sidewalks is more interesting than back yards or playgrounds? Because sidewalks are more interesting’ (Jacobs, 1993 [1961]: 112).

For Jacobs, women (as mothers and girls) were all but excluded from public life: they were among its main agents, not just ‘there’, but in fact actively involved in the everyday making of public space. She celebrates city life, including women and children, arguing for the need for a truly public sphere where strangers meet. In a city that aims to genderfy, that aims to produce space for dual-earner families and female professionals, Jacobs’s explicit reference to women and children as urban agents is very convenient. However, where Jacobs fought to include the street life of working class areas that were considered by the planners of her time to be ‘slums’, the contemporary focus on the inclusion of women and children is, as analysed above, on far more affluent groups.

The third fit of Jacobs for the genderfying city is the way in which her pleas for diversity in terms of ‘mixed uses’ and ‘the use of old buildings’ are interpreted as important for families with children that aim at gender equal task sharing. As relayed above, the structuring and restructuring of urban space and gender are usually intricately linked (Bondi, 1991). A spatial structure of a mix of shops, childcare centres, schools, playgrounds and homes works well for the YUPPs. The combination of paid work and caring for a family is, for example, facilitated if childcare facilities are located close to home or work. In Karsten’s (2007) research on the consumption of space by Amsterdam YUPPs, it appeared that YUPPs are indeed reinventing urban space and that this reinvention holds much potential for gender equality. YUPPs reinvent space in ‘the production of a new ordering, mixing and blurring of traditionally contrasted concepts such as family-city, adult-child, public-private and work-care’ (Karsten, 2007: 186). Indeed, precisely these were at the centre of Jacobs’s critique of modernist planning and this is appealing to contemporary planners and the genderfication project. When Jos Gadet argues for a mixed-uses urban space, he explicitly connects this to the aim to attract higher-educated populations and families with children. This is most apparent in his repeated pleas for gentrification. In his interpretation of Jacobs’s work, gentrification is a perfect accelerator of urban economic vitality. Gadet finds critical perspectives on gentrification to underestimate the positive effects: ‘Gentrification is a blessing. The more higher-educated residents in the city, the better for the economy’ (quoted in Bockma, 2015). And in a blog in response to critical geographers’ critique of Amsterdam public policy, ‘whatever is wrong with the influx of higher-earning new residents? To use the words of Michael Bloomberg: “they pay the bills”’ (Gadet, 2014). For Gadet, Jacobs’s work is especially useful in bringing about this desired gentrification because of her focus on mixed-use planning and diversity – this, in his view, is what creatives and higher-educated inhabitants desire. He even goes as far as placing this positive evaluation of gentrification with Jacobs (in a newspaper interview, quoted in Bockma, 2015).

Gadet connects gentrification to families with children, for example in this quote: ‘More and more young and higher educated citizens and creatives move to the city ... They are followed by young families ... All of this is accompanied by large investments in the stores, the housing, hotels and restaurants’ (quoted in Kooyman, 2015). For Gadet, it is imperative for the city to attract
young families with children and to make sure they stay. In his assessment, the urban landscape of a mix of parks, shops, day-care centres, cafes and theatres is what is attractive for young families. In order for the city to maintain the human capital needed for the ‘knowledge economy’, producing space for relatively affluent families with children is legitimate (Gadet, 2011). A concrete planning intervention in this context is the enhancement of public parks. Gadet co-authored a municipal investigation on how to do this. Here too, attractive parks are to be consumed by higher-educated inhabitants (Gadet and Smeets, 2009: 12), for example as a place to work:

Knowledge is in the heads of people, and for the first time in economic history, this human capital is the most important factor in production. This factor is oriented strongly toward the city ... Interaction creates synergy and innovation ... Parks play an important role. (Gadet and Smeets, 2009: 14)

Again, Jacobs makes her appearance to substantiate these claims when her views on urban parks are highlighted (Gadet and Smeets, 2009: 18) and to underline that: ‘the creative knowledge economy, that needs attractive mixed places in the city ... has strengthened the function of parks’ (Gadet and Smeets, 2009: 18). Using an intersectional analysis, the logic apparent in these quotes is not only that Jacobs’s ideas are used for gentrification (as has been argued before, e.g. Zukin, 2010), but that families with children are used for class upgrading too. The fact that Jacobs included mothers and children in her analyses of city life is discursively important here.

Conclusions and discussion

Significant changes that have come with a move from Fordism to post-Fordism are, I have argued above, profoundly gendered. In the post-Fordist city, the sexual contract is re-negotiated. This article aims to contribute to our understanding of how this reshuffling is translated spatially and how particular intersections of class and gender appear as important. The urban gender revolution – consisting of both the inclusion of women in the formal labour market and the re-urbanisation of families – calls for a city that is mixed-use, planned less top-down and with room for families with children. It is for these reasons, I argue, that Jane Jacobs has become the hero of the day in urban planning in both policy and scholarly circles. The genderification of the city – the production of space for different gender relations – offers an important perspective on contemporary views on urban planning. The contemporary post-Fordist city is a genderfying one. For urban planners today, Jacobs’s views offer an attractive alternative to the patriarchal modernist city and an opening for genderfication: for producing space for changed gender relations, for including femininity, women and children in daily city life.

This may all seem to be a cause for celebration. After decades of feminist urban studies, not only is a female author writing about women today’s hero, but the adoption of her views may also lead to more gender equal cities, in which girls and women have a place as agents in the production of space. In addition, it seems that the uses made of the city by the new dual-earner family classes are unsettling familiar binaries of patriarchal arrangements: private and public space may become less stringently separated, work and life less separated, public space more easily negotiable for women and families and private spaces a more natural territory for men. Perhaps, then, the city is becoming less sexist and easier to navigate for women and alternative gender roles. Genderfication could then perhaps be considered a project to make the city less divided along gender lines and perhaps, indeed, the city is becoming
less sexist as a result of post-Fordism and the use of Jacobs’s ideas. While there are opportunities to be seized here, my concern with the genderfication project is that it uses gender equality and femininity as a means or even instruments for class upgrading and the creation of revenue, as has been extensively shown in the above analysis. The access of women to public space in the 20th century marked the move from a production orientated to a consumption orientated society (McDowell, 1999), and now it seems that to further develop that consumption-based society, to boost urban service economies, the inclusion of women and femininity in views on urban planning is an important strategy. Jane Jacobs as a female exception to a history of male paradigms in urban planning is then used to symbolically reinforce genderfication. This perspective on the uses of Jane Jacobs for the contemporary city has been missing to date in work on her legacy. Jacobs’s own gender is made symbolically important in a move away from a masculinist modernist planning tradition and Jacobs’s inclusion of women and children in city life is too. Jacobs is discursively used for the attraction of more middle class families. And indeed, for these groups, the city may become more welcoming, less sexist and filled with amenities that cater to their dual-earner family lifestyles.

The problem here however is that the city then becomes a place for dual-earner higher-educated families at the cost of other urbanites, and working class families in particular. Jane Jacobs’s views on diversity and urban mix are, then, used to include middle class women and children while at the same time they result in the displacement of those that cannot afford the gender equal YUPP lifestyle. The genderfication project may help to overcome inequalities along gender lines, but it underlines those along class lines. This is especially pertinent in the city of Amsterdam, where the urban core is indeed becoming more and more upper class (see for recent work: Savini et al., 2016; Van Gent and Musterd, 2016). Zooming in on the case of Jacobs’s popularity advances our understanding of genderfying cities. Gender – femininity in particular – is discursively used to produce space for those more affluent, thereby reshaping inclusions and exclusions in post-Fordist cities.

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