

# The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life

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**ABSTRACT** *The purpose of this paper is to discuss new forms of citizenship in globalized cities from a gendered and feminist perspective and to connect them to women's everyday life and to cities' planning and governance. In doing so, I challenge the Lefebvrian notion of the right to the city using a gendered and feminist critique by arguing that the identification of the right to the city lacks sufficient attention to patriarchal power relations which are ethnic, cultural and gender-related and as such it doesn't produce a practical standpoint. I will develop this critique by looking at women's everyday experiences and their reflections regarding their sense of comfort, belonging and commitment to the city they live in.*

**KEYWORDS:** Gender, citizenship, the right to the city, city governance, gendered exclusions, fear

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss new forms of citizenship in globalized cities from a gendered and feminist perspective and to connect them to women's everyday life and to cities' planning and governance. In doing so, I challenge the Lefebvrian notion of the right to the city using a gendered and feminist critique by arguing that the identification of the right to the city lacks sufficient attention to patriarchal power relations, which are ethnic, cultural and gender-related and as such it doesn't produce a practical standpoint. I will develop this critique by looking at women's everyday experiences and their reflections regarding their sense of comfort, belonging and commitment to the city they live in.

Some of the current discussions on citizenship in the era of political and economic restructuring indeed point to re-constructions of new forms of citizenship. While traditional definitions mention equality, communality and homogeneity as part of what citizenship means, new forms of this notion incorporate issues of difference and cultural, ethnic, racial and gender diversity. Nevertheless, still one of the most used interpretations of citizenship is the one Marshall defined (1950, 1975, 1981) as 'full membership in a community', encompassing civil, political and social rights. Critiques on this definition are lately viewed as outcomes of political and social crises, wherein the exercise of power is challenged. Thus, these widely used definitions have shifted to a more complex, sophisticated and, for some, less optimistic interpretation of exclusions especially on

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a gendered base (Kofman, 1995). Also, current literature on citizenship show how women have been the subject of citizen discrimination in numerous cultures and political contexts at all scales and sectors; from the private – the home, to the public – the city and the state, in economic, social, welfare and political contexts (Yuval-Davis, 1997; McDowell, 1999; Lister, 1997; Young, 1990).

As we can see most researches analyse notions of citizenship as referred to the state rather than the city. The purpose of this paper is therefore to shed a gendered light on the discourse around citizenship in the city rather than in the state. In particular it looks at the Lefebvrian notion of citizenship that is, the right to the city. This notion connects the everyday life of the individual to local governance activities and as argued in the paper, is blind to the effects of gendered power relations on the fulfilment of women's right to the city. The paper demonstrates how, in fact, the denial of the right to the city is a daily practice for many women and men as it is expressed in their narratives.

The paper begins with a brief contextualization of the notion of the right to the city within the discourse on new forms of citizenship. It then analyses the right to the gendered use in the city by showing the tight links between the discussion on the right to use in the public – the city, and the right to use in the private – the home. This is followed by a discussion on everyday belonging and gendered practices and gendered exclusions from the right to the city caused by issues of fear and safety and the practices of sacredization of public spaces. In the last part of the paper the right to participate is discussed with connection to urban planning and local governance.

### **Citizenship and Belonging in the Era of Globalization**

As Purcell notes, radical reconstructions of citizenship are expressed in three main changes (Purcell, 2003): *rescaling* citizenship so that the former hegemony of the national scale is being weakened by the creation of other scales of reference. This change works in two directions: either upscaling, such as EU citizenship which results in new forms of cosmopolitan citizenship and global democracy, or downscaling citizenship, which refers to shifts to subnational scales such as municipalities, neighbourhoods, regions, and districts, especially in global cities. The second change involves *reterritorialization* of citizenship so that the tight link between the nation state territorial sovereignty and political loyalty is now questioned. Such situations follow redistribution of authority to the local – to the city. The third change entails *reorientation* of citizenship, far away from the nation as a predominant political community and from citizens as homogenous entities. Here the notions of differentiated citizenship introduced by Iris Marion Young (1998), or multi-layered citizenship, introduced by Nira Yuval-Davis (2000), replace the ideal of universal citizenship of the liberal democracy approach. As Purcell (2003) argues, this reorientation of citizenship leads to the proliferation of identities and loyalties to multiple political communities. The arguments developed in the paper are contextualized within these three changes so that the city rather than the state becomes the relevant scale for discussion on the different formations of belonging in everyday life.

One of the alternative voices in such increasing discourses around traditional and new forms of citizenships is the notion of the right to the city developed by Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991a, 1991b; Kofman & Labas, 1996). Lefebvre's right to the city constitutes a radical rethinking of the purpose, definition and content of belonging to a political community. Lefebvre doesn't define belonging to a political community in the terminology of formal

citizenship status, but bases the right to the city on *inhabitation*. Those who inhabit the city have a right to the city. It is earned by living in the city and it is shared between the urban dweller and the citizen.

The concept of right to the city evolves within its two main rights (Purcell, 2003):

- *The right to appropriate* urban space in the sense of the right to use, the right of inhabitants to ‘full and complete use’ of urban space in their everyday lives. It is the right to live in, play in, work in, represent, characterize and occupy urban space in a particular city. The city for Lefebvre should be thought of as a work of art. The artist is the collective daily life routines of urban dwellers and inhabitants. It’s a creative product of and context for everyday life of its inhabitants.
- The second component of the right to the city is *the right to participation*. The rights of inhabitants to take a central role in decision-making surrounding the production of urban space at any scale whether the state, capital, or any other entity which takes part in the production of urban space. As Dikec points out, it entails the involvement of inhabitants in institutionalized control over urban life including participation in the political life, management, and administration of the city (Dikec, 2001).

These specific sets of rights to appropriate and to participate are part of what Purcell terms as citizenship – the right to the city. These rights are earned through meeting particular responsibilities and obligations in which each person helps to create the city as artwork by performing one’s everyday life in urban spaces.

However, the first question that comes into one’s mind is to what extent this notion of the right to the city is sensitive to individual and collective difference. Lefebvre indeed includes the right to difference as complementary to the right to the city (Dikec, 2001). In this he relates to: ‘the right not to be classified forcibly into categories which have been determined by the necessarily homogenizing powers’ (Lefebvre, 1976, p. 35 in Dikec, 2001). However, as Dikec notes, Lefebvre’s emphasis was on the ‘be’ of the right to be different rather than the ‘different’. As such, his definition doesn’t relate to the notion of power and control, which are identity related and gender related. Therefore, his definition doesn’t challenge any type of power relations (ethnic, national, cultural) let alone gendered power relations as dictating and affecting the possibilities to realize the right to use and the right to participate in urban life. The gendered aspect is not the only one absent in Lefebvre’s model. Other identity related issues and their affect on the fulfilment of the right to the city seem to be missing as well. Mitchell (2003) for example, examined how homeless people were excluded from using public spaces by regulating them so that aesthetics is elevated over the needs of people to survive. Anti-homeless laws, he argues, undermine the very right to the city.

My aim in this paper is, therefore, to emphasize how patriarchal power relations are the most affecting elements in abusing women’s right to the city in different ways than those of men. To support this argument I use the different formations and expressions of belonging in women and men’s narratives of their everyday life in the city. In doing so I link between the notion of the right to the city and the different interpretations formulated by residents of London and Jerusalem as to what it means to belong to the city.

This analysis is based on a research project carried out between 1999 and 2002 in which residents of London and Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> were interviewed regarding their everyday experiences as related to three notions: comfort, belonging and commitment as elements

which consist of quality of life. They presented their interpretations to these three notions with regards to the different scales, which are part of their daily environment: home, building, street, neighbourhood, city centre, city, urban parks (Fenster, 2004a). The research is based on a qualitative, content analysis methodology. People told their stories about their lives in the city as related to these categories and from their daily experiences we drew out our own understanding on the gendered aspects of belonging in the city. The people interviewed represent both the 'majority' hegemonic, that is, the Jewish secular in Jerusalem (except for one ultra-orthodox woman) and the white middle-class English in London and also the 'minority', the 'other' whether Bangladeshi immigrants in London or Palestinians in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> This wide range of cultural dimensions and ethnicities enabled exploring the multi-layered expressions of belonging as connected to new forms of citizenship on the one hand, and to feminist critique of the Lefebvrian right to the city on the other hand.

In what follows, the different engagements of comfort, belonging and commitment as expressed in women and men's narratives illustrate how their rights to the city, that is, their right to use and their right to participate, are in fact denied. In addition, the dominance of patriarchal power relations is demonstrated as a major cause of this restriction at all scales either the private – the home, or in public – in the city.

### **The Right to Gendered Use in the City**

#### *The Private and Public in Lefebvre's Argument*

A great number of works have been dedicated to the different definitions and perspectives of the 'private' and the 'public'; their cultural orientation (Charlesworth, 1995; Fenster, 1999b); their associations (at least the public space) with the political sphere (Cook, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997); their roots in the Western liberal thought and different forms of patriarchy (Pateman, 1988, 1989); and their feminist perspectives. In this context, Lefebvre's right to the city clearly refers to the public – to the use of public spaces, those, which create 'the oeuvre' – a creative product of and context for the everyday life of its inhabitants. However, the oeuvre – the 'public' is perceived by some feminist critiques as the white middle-upper class, heterosexual male domain. This sometimes means that women in cities, both of Western and non-Western cultures, simply cannot use public spaces such as streets and parks, especially not alone (Massey, 1994) and in some cultures could not wander around at all (Fenster, 1999a). They belong to the 'private'.

However, what women's narratives show is that even in 'private' their right to use is denied. This shows that we must look at the right to use from both private and public perspectives in order to fully understand the roots of the restrictions of the right to use. Therefore the discussion around the right to use public spaces and the right to participate in decision-making must begin at the home scale. As the narratives in the paper show, in spite of the idealized notion of the 'home', the 'private' – the women's space, the space of stability, reliability and authenticity – the nostalgia for something lost which is female (Massey, 1994), home can be a contested space for women, a space of abuse of the right to use and the right to participate. Here are two narratives, which represent how the right to use and participate at the home level is denied when women talk about their feelings of comfort or sense of the uncomfortable:

I feel very uncomfortable and I don't belong to the home because I live with my partner and he has his own needs and his own taste which are different from mine. The way the house is arranged is not exactly how I would have arranged it. It is too arranged, I don't like the furniture . . . it makes me feel less belonged. Belonging for me is that it is my own space and that I decide what will be in it. A total control.

[Amaliya, thirties, married with one child, Israeli (living in London), London, 22 August 1999]

Comfort at home for me is about freedom, that everything is in my control, that there is nobody which can suddenly disturb me and tell me what to do and where to be. This is in contrast to my childhood when home was a difficult place for me with a lot of control of my Dad . . .

(Mary, forties, single, Israeli–Ashkenazi–Jewish, Jerusalem, 4 August 1999)

These are only two examples of narratives that illustrate the extent to which the right to use and the right to participate is sometimes abused at the home level because of patriarchal domination, which for many women around the world becomes a daily routine. For Amaliya, the order and arrangement of space at her home which was made without her participation is what makes her feel discomfort and a lack of a sense of belonging, and Mary achieved her own right to use by living on her own, away from her childhood memories of lack of use and a strong patriarchal control over her life. These narratives perhaps reinforce the feminist critique of the division between the 'private' and the 'public', which are inherent in Lefebvre's ideas. As they argue, these divisions are invoked largely to justify female subordination and exclusion and to separate the abuse of human rights at home from the public (Bunch, 1995). By isolating the discussion on the right to the city from the right to the home Lefebvre creates a rather neutral 'public' domain which is sterilized from any power relations and by that has no relevance to the realities of many women in cities. Obviously, this doesn't mean that women who experience strong patriarchal control at home suffer also from restricted use of the city, but it is important at the outset to highlight the strong relationships between the 'private' and 'public' in looking at Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city.

Perhaps Fatma's narrative presents a stronger example of how gendered power relations at the home scale affect feelings of comfort and belonging at the city scale. In her case, because the control at home is very restricted the city becomes a liberated space:

Home – prison! Although in my room I have all I need to 'get out' – computer, Internet, video, TV Cables of fifty channels . . . I have everything but this is not it.

City – freedom, personal freedom, atmosphere, spring.

For Fatma, an unmarried Muslim woman in her forties who lives with her mother, the home is a place with no rights whatsoever. It is a culturally constructed space of strong patriarchal control while the city is where she feels liberated. It almost seems as if the city becomes her 'private' or 'intimate' space where she could be herself. 'These cities', writes Elizabeth Wilson in her book *The Sphinx in the City* (1991), 'brought changes to the lives of women. They represented choice' (p. 125). There she refers to the new colonial cities in

West Africa, but the role of cities in women's lives as providing choice seems relevant to women in other places as well. When Fatma speaks about what makes her feel a sense of belonging to the city she actually refers to choice and the freedom to use the cityscapes. She says:

I feel a sense of belonging in any place where there is something that is connected to my life. In Jaffa St. (West Jerusalem) it is my bank, fashion shops especially healthy food shops and pharmacies. I feel a sense of belonging to the shopping mall near my village because I can get what I need there. In East Jerusalem I feel a sense of belonging to the university, the post office, the fashion shops there, I know people there . . . .

These examples emphasize the necessity to discuss the right to use at the home scale as part and parcel of the discussion of the right to the city. The narratives reveal that most women, even those who identify themselves as 'Western' or part of the majority, experience gendered controlled power relations at home. Such dominance of patriarchal power relations at the very private domain obviously affect the different ways women fulfil their right to the public – the city. These connections may be implicit and not clearly connected even in women's minds but it seems that the construction of patriarchal powers at the home level effect, even subconsciously, women's sense of freedom of movement and use of public spaces. Moving onwards in the discussion, let us now explore the right to use the city and the different formations of belonging.

#### *Everyday Belonging and Gendered Practices*

The right to use the city and the right to belong are mixed up. In fact, the possibilities of daily use of urban spaces are what create a sense of belonging to the city. de Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) connects between these two elements of 'use' and 'belong'. Belonging for him is a sentiment, which is built-up and grows with time out of everyday life activities and use of spaces. de Certeau terms it: 'a theory of territorialization' through spatial tactics: *space is a practical place*. Thus, the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers' (p. 117). For de Certeau, the corporal everyday activities in the city are part of a process of appropriation and territorialization: 'The ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below", below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmanner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it' (p. 93). This 'text writing' is similar to Lefebvre's vision of collective daily routines as art work and this everyday act of walking in the city, of using its different parts is what marks territorialization and appropriation and the meanings given to the space. What de Certeau constructs is a model of how 'we make a sense of space through walking practices, and repeat those practices as a way of overcoming alienation' (Leach, 2002, p. 284). de Certeau actually defines the process in which a sense of belonging is established by repeated fulfilment of the right to use. Belonging and attachment are built here on the base of accumulated knowledge, memory and intimate corporal experiences of everyday use, mainly by walking. Use of public spaces creates informal claims, which take place as part of the casual daily encounters between people or groups. It usually takes place when individuals wish to appropriate sections of public settings for various reasons,



sometimes to achieve intimacy or anonymity or for social gatherings, mostly temporary. Claim and appropriation of space are a construct of everyday walking practices that de Certeau notes. These practices, which are repetitive, engage what Viki Bell (1999) defines as 'performativity and belonging'. Performativity as a replication and repetition of certain performances, which are associated with ritualistic practices with which communities colonize various territories. These performances are in fact the realization of the right to use in certain spaces and through them a certain attachment and belonging to place is developed (Leach, 2002).

Using urban spaces as a practice of belonging is expressed in the development of special knowledge that women and men experience in their environment:

I know the street, I live here, I know the building – every stone of it. I know it more and more. A very intimate knowledge.

(Susana, thirties, married with one child, Jewish–Israeli, Jerusalem, 13 July 2000)

Knowing the streets makes me feel belong . . . knowing shortcuts – it shows I know the neighbourhood.

(Robert, thirties, single, British–white, London, 1 September 1999)

This construction of belonging, which is based on everyday ritualized use of space, has a clear gendered dimension as usually daily use of space is connected to gendered divisions of household duties. Women around the world are those who are responsible for the caring of the household members' needs, either by themselves or with the help of other women. To realize these duties their rights to use must be maintained so that they can go to work, do their shopping, take their children to education and health services and fulfil their social and family duties. Here the right to use public spaces engages 'fundamental human rights' – to food, shelter, health and peace, the basic necessities of human survival (Kaplan, 1997).

The changing roles and duties of women in their lifecycle change expressions of belonging and patterns of use of cityscapes. Of course it must be emphasized that gender roles intersect here with cultural and ethnic identities. The roles and duties of women are taken differently in different cultural and ethnic settings. Several women I talked to said that they felt much more attached to their environment after they became mothers. As young mothers who have the reproduction responsibilities in the household (Moser, 1993) they began to use the environment near their home more intensively than before, especially for shopping or taking the children to school or walking with their baby stools. Their role as mothers is one of the significant aspects of their embodied knowledge of belonging. Their daily household gendered duties made their attachment to the environment stronger than for their partners. Indeed, most men I talked to didn't mention their fatherhood as a significant indicator of increased sense of belonging or different patterns of use of their environment.

### *Gendered Exclusions from the Right to the City*

So far, the narratives presented above have exposed everyday practices in which the right to use has been fulfilled and engaged a sense of belonging and attachment to the environment. However, as already emphasized at the beginning, there are other

experiences when the right to use and belong to the city is abused by patriarchal, cultural and religious powers constructing public spaces as forbidden.

Legitimized forms of exclusion are usually associated with traditional definitions of citizenship. Many critics from both left and right recognize that citizenship by definition is about exclusion rather than inclusion for many people despite the common definitions of the term (McDowell, 1999). Thus, these definitions are identity related in that they dictate which identities are included within the hegemonic community and which are excluded. These definitions could have negative effects on women, children, immigrants, and people of ethnic and racial minorities, gays and lesbians and sometimes on elderly people too. In this respect, the radical definition of the right to the city seems to be inclusionary with regards to marginal groups such as transnational migrants or people of different identities living in the city and also towards women. However, these inclusionary practices are not always fulfilled precisely because of the dominance of patriarchy in the different living scales: the home and the city. In the last section we have seen how the dominance of patriarchy abuses the right to use at the home scale. At the city scale such patriarchal practices are expressed in issues of fear and safety and gendered exclusions from public spaces because of religious norms. Both practices create 'forbidden' spaces for women and abuse their rights to the city. As shown below, these expressions are connected to city planning and governance.

#### *Fear, Safety and the Sacradization and Gendered Exclusion*

Fear of use of public spaces, especially in the street, public transportation and urban parks is what prevents women from fulfilling their right to the city. Fear of harassment in public spaces cuts across women's everyday life experiences both in London and Jerusalem. It cuts across other identities such as nationality, marital status, age, sexual preference, etc. Fear and safety can be seen as a social as well as a spatial issue connected in many cases to the design of urban spaces:

The Avenue in my street is scary because there is only one exit to it, you can't leave it from everywhere. And there are benches where weird 'creatures' can sit and molest you and you feel trapped . . . so it is not so pleasant. If you get into the avenue you are lost . . . it is really a male – planning, 'they' did it because of the transportation but it prevents me from walking in the avenue.

(Rebecca, thirties, Jerusalem, 3 February 2000)

Rebecca expresses an experience common to many women when their daily use of the city is sometimes disrupted because urban spaces are designed so that they become a 'trap' for women, unpleasant and thus unused. They become 'a planned trap' that is, planners created or designed those spaces without paying enough attention to gendered sensitivities, again creating unused spaces in the city.

Urban parks have the same association. Some women perceive parks as 'male hostile areas': 'they are "conquered" areas. I feel angry that I can't use them' (Aziza, thirties, single, Palestinian, Jerusalem, 7 August 2000). What Aziza expresses here is mostly a sense of exclusion from public spaces because of fear and concerns about her safety but perhaps also she expresses her anger at the misuse of public spaces in a way that prevents her use of them because they are controlled and dominated by men. Eleanor talks about her sense of fear in urban parks. She says:



Comfort in the park . . . depends on what time. At dark I wouldn't go there. During the day I would go near where I live. Only there I feel safe. I wouldn't walk in the park in the evening.

(Eleanor, forties, British–white, English, London, 1 September 1999)

It seems that fear is a feeling that transforms urban parks into forbidden spaces after a certain time in a day. Most women in both cities avoid using this space at night. Indeed, other researchers (Madge, 1997) show that fear in urban parks, especially at night, is the main denominator for not using it not only by women, but also by men.

Public transportation is another space which is sometimes not used by women living in London because of a sense of fear and insecurity. Such was the experience of Suna:

Public transportation is full of gangs of kids, people are drunk especially after football matches. When men are together they become aggressive and late at night when trains are empty it is scary.

(Suna, forties, Egyptian–Mediterranean, London, 29 July 1999)

Here, again, this sense of fear was mentioned also by men, but it has been more dominant in women's narratives.

What are safety spaces then? Or which spaces allow the fulfilment of the right to use? Aziza's narrative on her embodied knowledge of what is, for her, comfort in her neighbourhood emphasizes the characteristics of such areas:

I feel most comfortable in this neighbourhood because it is the most beautiful place in the city of Jerusalem. I am a person of constraints: I am a woman, Palestinian, alone, (this neighbourhood is like) a microcosm – it reminds me of London; a variety of people . . . In such places I bloom, like a fish in the water, this is my sea. I feel very protected because this neighbourhood is on the border between West and East Jerusalem and it is the ideal place for me. I lived once in Rehavia (a Jewish neighbourhood) and felt suffocated. Here I can get easily to the old city.

[Aziza, thirties, single, Palestinian (Citizen of Israel), Jerusalem,

7 August 2000]

What Aziza expresses here is precisely what is incorporated in the notion of the right to the city. For her, a safe space is an urban space, which allows her to live as an anonymous person. This is a space of comfort for her. As a single Palestinian woman she acknowledges the constraints that exist for women in her culture, and also for people of her nationality in the current political situation of occupation in Israel. As a Palestinian Israeli, Aziza refers to the fact that her right to use in the city (rather than the neighbourhood) is denied not only on a gendered basis but also as part of the hegemonic Jewish control over Palestinian free movement in the city (see elaboration in Fenster, 2004b).

The right to the city is therefore fulfilled when the right to difference on a national basis is fulfilled too and people of different ethnicities, nationalities and gender identity can share and use the same urban spaces.

The second example of gendered exclusions in the city is expressed in the cultural and religious norms of the body and representations. The 'cultural guards' of society, i.e. men or elderly women, dictate the boundaries of sacred spaces and privatize them so that only those who follow the restricted rules of clothing can use them (Fenster, 1999a). Such symbolic spaces are often the symbol of a particular national collectivity, its roots and spirits (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Therefore, women's spatial mobility is very much dictated, if not controlled, by these cultural symbolic meanings of space. In this way, cultural and ethnic norms create 'spaces of belonging and dis-belonging' which then become for example forbidden and permitted spaces for women in certain cultures (Fenster, 1998, 1999b). Already in 1999 I wrote about the cultural construction of space of Bedouin women living in the Negev, south of Israel (Fenster, 1999b, 1999c). There I mentioned the construction of public/private dichotomy as forbidden/permitted cultural constructs of space, which become restrictions for Bedouin women's movement in their towns. The narratives of women living in Jerusalem and London reveal that these terminologies are relevant not only for Bedouin women but for women in many cities around the world. Most women I talked to in Jerusalem, either Jewish or Palestinians, mentioned the ultra-orthodox *Mea Shearim neighbourhood* as an area which is associated with discomfort, an area they avoid walking in or don't use because of the sense of threat there. The reason why women do not use the main street of Mea Shearim, which is located near the city centre, is because of its ghettoized gendered character which is expressed in big signs that are hung at the two main entrances to the neighbourhood in the Mea Shearim Street and also in the entrances to the small alleys within the neighbourhood. These signs pose a clear request in Hebrew and English to limit the use of the public spaces in the neighbourhood by women unless they are dressed as required on the signs (see elaboration in Fenster, 2005).

One could argue that the ultra-orthodox neighbourhoods in Jerusalem can be seen as another type of ethno-town like Banglatown, which is a reflection of a sense of belonging. However, walking in the Brick Lane area in London one can notice the mixed nature of women's clothing. Some Bangladeshi women are dressed traditionally but other women are dressed in Western style. It is the same as in other public spaces such as Hyde Park in London, which is used by a mixture of people of different identities such as the Arab Muslim population, which lives nearby, and people of other identities who equally share the use of these public spaces. Patriarchy exists in both places in Jerusalem and in London and is visible in the streets of the two neighbourhoods, both in women's traditional clothing and head cover. However, such patriarchal norms don't seclude women of other cultures in London and don't enforce their norms and traditions as much as the ultra-orthodox people do in their neighbourhood in Jerusalem.

### **The Gendered Right to Participate: Urban Planning and Local Governance**

The right to participation includes the right to take an important role in decisions regarding the production of urban spaces at any relevant scale: the state national, provincial or local; corporations (global, national and local); and local governance (Purcell, 2003). It is the right entitled to each dweller to have a key voice in defining urban spaces. Here, too, the dominance of power in dictating who participates is evident. Reality shows that in many cases where 'the public' is involved, women, blacks or other people of colour, working-class people and poor people tend to participate less and have their interests represented

less than white, middle-class professionals and men (Young, 1998). This is so, argues Young (1998), when participatory democratic structures define citizenship in universalistic and unified terms. They then tend to reproduce existing group oppression, what Young calls: 'the paradox of democracy' by which social powers make some people more powerful citizens than others (Young, 1998). Her suggestion is to provide institutional means for the explicit recognition and representation of oppressed groups, including women. In this respect, the right to participation entails the right to make a choice, to vote. Here too, the private and the public should be investigated as a whole. The connection between taking part in decision making, participating or making a choice at home engages the notion of belonging at the private, as much as in public:

The choice of the house makes me feel a sense of belonging and also the ritual of cleaning it when I first move in which makes me feel that it belongs to me. Without it I wouldn't feel comfortable at home.

(Linda, forties, single, Israeli – 'Nomad' – Western, London, 30 July 1999)

What makes me feel a sense of belonging to my home? Everything! I choose everything! Choice! That what makes me feel belong to my home.

(Judith, thirties, married with two children, Israeli–Swiss, English–Jewish, London, 2 September 1999)

The more choice people have the stronger their sense of belonging becomes. The power to decide and the power to choose both in private and public are in fact one of the basic expressions of citizenship formations. These practices are actually one of the major expressions of gendered power relations and control. The higher the level of control and opportunities women have, the more possibilities of choice making that exist for them. Obviously the lesser the scale the more choices people potentially can make so that they usually choose the area they wish to live and to belong to, when they purchase a house or a flat and they choose how to design their home (although this practice is power related, too, as seen in previous sections). This process becomes more complicated when we deal with choice and participation in decision-making at greater scales especially regarding the design of urban spaces. We have already seen how spaces are becoming unsafe because of lack of gendered participation in the design of urban spaces. Here too we can learn a lot from the narratives of women regarding their sense of belonging which engage the notion of choice and participation with the notion of belonging:

I don't feel a sense of belonging here because the house is not arranged as I want, until things in the house will be my own taste and in their right place I will not feel belonged.

[Aliza, thirty-eight, single, Israeli (Jewish), Jerusalem, 23 April 2000]

What makes me feel a sense of belonging to my home is the ability to have piles of stuff like books or magazines and I know exactly where they are and why they are there . . . other people may think it's a mess . . . I put it deliberately! I am marking my territory.

(Robert, thirties, single, British–white, London, 1 September 1999)

Both Aliza and Robert associate the notion of belonging with the choice to arrange their home space. The power to control, to arrange the home space according to their own needs is what makes them feel they belong to their home and what makes people feel more involved in public spaces. Here belonging is about being involved in decision-making, it is about the territorialization and appropriation of space by being involved in designing it. This connection between the right to participate and the notion of belonging and commitment is connected in people's narratives to city planning and governance:

Commitment to my neighbourhood is that I want it to be improved. The library, the cinema. If I could do it I would do it because I am committed. I could go to the planning committee but I don't think I am qualified.

(Stuart, thirties, British–Ghanaian–Afro Caribbean, London, 6 August 1999)

I would fight to keep buildings and against the MacDonald's invasion.

(Janet, forties, British–Jewish, English, London, 19 August 1999)

People in Jerusalem mentioned the association between commitment and old building preservation or preservation of green areas. Some people in Jerusalem mentioned the actions taken to protest against the municipality's intentions to build houses in part of the Jerusalem Forest as an example of their commitment to preserve green areas. Lately, several developers initiated plans to construct housing units in the forest area with the support of the municipality. Liat and Neta associate commitment to the city with their actions against such projects:

I would object to the city plans. I am committed to city life . . . to quality of life in the city: the buildings, green areas, the maintenance of the city . . .

(Liat, forties, single, Israeli–Jewish, Jerusalem, 31 July 2000)

I feel committed emotionally (to the city), to read and to know what's happening, to appeal to plans to destroy the forest of Jerusalem . . . not to let it be destructed.

(Neta, fifties, married with three children, Israeli–Ashkenazi, Jerusalem, 11 June 2000)

Women and men associated the notion of commitment with public action. They would fight against any changes in their near environment that would have negative effects on their lives. This is related to citizen action and has been seen as part of the 'contract' that person has with her environment. The fulfilment of this citizen contract is part of citizenship – of the right to shape urban spaces and of being part in the work of art – the everyday life in the city.

The gendered dimension of this aspect of the right to the city – the right to participate – is again connected to the different access that women and men have to decision-making processes. As Young (1998) argues, the 'public' doesn't include women, black or other disadvantaged groups although these groups are equally concerned and affected by the design of urban spaces, which doesn't meet their needs and aspirations.

## Conclusions

This paper exposes the multi-layered nature of the everyday gendered belonging engaged with the Lefebvrian right to the city and presents a feminist critique to this notion. The paper highlights the extent to which the right to the city, that is, the right to use and the right to participate are violated because of gendered power relations, which intersect with ethnic and national power relations. These violations are expressed in women and men's daily life in Jerusalem and London when they talk about their sense of comfort, belonging and commitment to their cities. Obviously, these violations have different expressions for the Palestinians in Jerusalem than for Bangladeshis in London as the politics of formal and informal belonging in the two cities are different (see elaboration in Fenster, 2004a, Ch. 4). However, what this paper emphasizes is how violations of the gendered right to the city, which intersect with ethnic and national issues, closely link to city planning and local governance especially by abusing the right to participate in decision-making and citizen action.

The analysis of women and men's narratives show that the right to public spaces is closely linked to the right of private spaces, especially from a gendered perspective, and the analysis of the two cannot be separated. In many cases the right to the city is indeed denied by patriarchal power relations either at the home scale or at the city scale.

A gendered sense of belonging is very much connected to control and access to resources even in intimate and private spaces such as the home. The larger the category of space the more effective is the role of power relations on one's feelings of belonging. In public spaces power relations are identified as 'claim', 'appropriation', 'exclusion', 'discrimination'. Power relations also dictate 'the boundaries of belonging' for women and people of diversity. They are formed by the hegemon and exclude the 'other': those that are not considered by the hegemon as part of it.

To conclude, 'The right to the gendered city' always intersects with other identity issues such as ethnicity, nationality and culture. Within this context, the right to the gendered city means that the right to use and the right to participate must engage a serious discussion of patriarchal power relations, themselves ethnic and culturally related, both at the private and at the public scales and the extent to which they harm the realization of the right to the city for women and people of diversity. Such a discussion is missing in Lefebvre's current conceptualization of the right to the city, which makes this concept rather utopian.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The reason for choosing these two cities is because they reflect contrasting images and symbolism. Jerusalem is home for people of diverse identities, especially in the light of its image as one of the holiest cities in the world, a place of symbolism for Muslims, Christians and Jews. Also, a city which is associated with rigidity, perhaps fanatics, strict rules and boundaries which sometimes find their expressions in spaces of *sacred belonging* which sometimes exclude women (see Be'tselem, 1997; Bollens, 2000; Cheshin *et al.*, 2000; Romann & Weingrod, 1991; Fenster, 2005). London is a city famous for its globalization impacts and its images of cosmopolitanism, openness, and tolerance but also for its negative and depressing connotations especially for non-English and other types of aliens (see Fainstein, 1994; Forman, 1989; Jacobs, 1996; Pile, 1996; Raban, 1974; Thornley, 1992). Comparing the narratives of women and men living in these two cities helps to expose the multi-layered nature of gendered belonging which is constructed in urban daily practices.

<sup>2</sup> A qualitative-structured method of interview was used in order to establish an in-depth understanding of people's narratives. The interviews were based on a structured method where questions are identified and phrased in advance. All interviewees were asked the same questions in the same order. Altogether,

sixty-six men and women were interviewed, thirty-four females and thirty-two males. Most people represent middle-class status and have higher education (high school and university). This sample is not meant to be representative but to introduce the local knowledge of everyday life which is identity related and subjective and to suggest a tool to further investigate other clusters of identities.

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