

[00:00:25.410] - Amanda Aitken

Hello, and welcome to a very special episode of On The Engender. My name is Amanda Aitken, and I am joined alongside my wonderful host, Alys Mumford.

[00:00:34.350] - Alys Mumford

Hello.

[00:00:35.130] - Amanda Aitken

And we are just recording this off the back of a live event that we hosted with Leslie Kern and with Daisy Narayanan, a live event that we had online. Alys, how did it go?

[00:00:45.390] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, it was great. So Leslie Kern, author of Feminist City, and it was chaired by Daisy, who's an urbanism expert and a really nice wide range of discussion about how we can make feminist cities, how planning can work for women and what needs to change. So as always, we thought we'd grab an extra hour with Leslie and Daisy, and we're joined by Engender Policy and Parliamentary Manager Eilidh Dickson for this podcast episode, which was super fun to record. And I think we did a fairly good job of not fangirling all over Leslie, Amanda, although it was hard.

[00:01:15.990] - Amanda Aitken

Yes, we certainly went over-time but didn't fangirl too hard, held it in. I think we kept our professional hats on, which was good. But if you've not got Leslie's book yet, it's got Feminist City. You should pick it up. It's a great read.

[00:01:30.990] - Alys Mumford

You can watch the recording of the webinar on Engender's website and we'll pop a link to that in the show notes if you weren't able to come along.

[00:01:38.550] - Amanda Aitken

And so we just began the conversation after the event by asking for anyone's kind of thoughts and feedback on the event and anything that they want to pick up on that perhaps we didn't have time to during the event. So that's how we began this conversation.

[00:01:53.250] - Alys Mumford

Enjoy.

[00:02:00.490] - Leslie Kern

One issue that we maybe touched on a little bit when we were talking about gentrification was the question of safety. We didn't say too much more about that specifically, but it's definitely a topic that we could, I'm sure say a lot more about.

[00:02:18.410] - Daisy Narayanan

I think it would be nice to unpick a little bit more, because sometimes I feel when we talk about safe streets or safe places for women, I sometimes think to myself "gosh, that's a very low bar we are setting for our streets and spaces". Surely we should be talking about welcoming, joyful, delightful spaces that we own. But yes, it'd be really interesting to kind of go back and maybe discuss that a little bit more.

[00:02:48.170] - Alys Mumford

Absolutely. And it's thing that's often talked about when we do talk about public space and ideas of safety audits and things. But the sort of thought experiment, I think it was just a Twitter thread, wasn't it? That was asking: "women, what would you do if there was a curfew on men?" I think it was in response to more 'stay at home' patriarchal advice about women's safety. And the responses were depressingly banal. As you say, Daisy, very low bar. It was like, well, I'd go jogging and I'd wear headphones, or I'd not need to squeeze in all of my leisure activities with friends before the last bus home and all those sorts of things. So definitely be good to delve a little bit more into the issues of women's safety and how we navigate the world. Eilidh and Amanda, you were audience members for

the event. Was there anything that struck you in particular in what was spoken about that you hope we'll get into a bit more in this podcast?

[00:03:47.390] - Amanda Aitken

One thing that I was struck by the conversation, it was like kind of towards the end, about creating, obviously creating a feminist city or community and what that looks like and how we see examples of that. And even in your book, Leslie, you mentioned Glasgow's Kinning Park complex, for example, which is near and dear to me as someone who lives in Glasgow. But something that I often think about with these communities that are built is like, "how can we ensure that there's not an exploitation of women's unpaid care in creating them spaces?" Because so often these examples rely on people, of good will, of checking in on people, of creating these kind of voluntary communities that are beautiful but often rely on unpaid care. So I guess how do we make sure that that doesn't occur when creating these? But yeah, what about you Eilidh?

[00:04:41.750] - Eilidh Dickson

Yeah, I mean, there was so much that we could talk about that. I wrote down loads of my notes related to what you were saying about transport, Leslie, about transport. And I think we all had a bit of a moment where we were just thinking about public transport and how we would love to be able to utilise better spaces for public transit or walking. And obviously that comes back to care. And so I guess one of the takeaways for me is in addition to the specific issues around transport or care, and safety was the way in which all these things are connected. Women don't use public space for one thing, nobody uses public space for one thing. When we're in public space we are - I think when you were reading from your introduction, you were talking about kind of the way public space is a kind of tool for social, moralisation or the way we use public space is kind of something for public commentary. There's just so much. But I think that the takeaway for me is just how sometimes when we think about planning or public space and equality issues or issues, we tend to focus on safety: "how can we make spaces safe?", "accessibility in terms of physical accessibility" "How do we make sure that women have access to economic opportunities or economic development" conversations are focused on the types of work that women do. But I don't think it's possible to see any of these in isolation. So I thought that was really interesting.

[00:05:58.730] - Daisy Narayanan

Yeah. I completely agree. There was so much there. I can already feel my brain's buzzing with the conversation. And the different strands of threads that we started to explore. I agree, I think the fact that transportation - Safer walking, cycling, public transport was such a big part of the conversation just shows how much we have to do yet in making our streets and how we move and how we experience our streets and places so much better. But the other thing that really struck out to me in the conversation was Leslie, when you talked about being invited to speak at architecture schools or the academic architecture profession, the discussion around that and how people felt that they wish they'd had your book as part of the coursework as an example, and how for me that really resonated as something that I felt when I read the book. And there's something around how we teach the next generation who are going to be designing our streets and spaces, who are going to be part of this conversation, shaping it, leading it, and how we make sure that this isn't an afterthought. And this is truly firmly embedded in what everyone's learning and sharing and inspiring each other to do.

[00:07:25.250] - Alys Mumford

100% yeah, I was speaking just last week, actually an event from the Academy of Urbanism, which was being on feminist planning, and it was organised by the young urbanist sort of wing of that because they were like, we're the only people talking about this stuff. There was lots of love for your book, Leslie, at that event as well, which is very nice to see. Amanda. I think your point is really interesting, and I too very excitedly squealed when Kinning Park was mentioned and interrupted my partner's conversation to point at the words 'Kinning Park', having done many activist training sessions and

[00:08:08.130] - Amanda Aitken

Home of the Rock School for Girls as well

[00:08:11.010] - Alys Mumford

Home of the Rock School for Girls - friends of the podcast Lauren Mayberry of Chvrch's fame. Yes, but I think the point that would be really interesting to hear your views on, Leslie, about unpaid care. And I know you talk in the book about the sort of Jane Jacobs - and I love Jane Jacobs - but that idea of quite an idealistic sort of 1950s world where neighbourhoods are safe and everyone's happy and checked-in on, as Amanda says, that often happens because of women's invisible work. Have you got any thoughts on that?

[00:08:45.630] - Leslie Kern

Yes, absolutely. And I should credit my friend and fellow feminist geographer Heather McLean for introducing me to the work of Kinning Park when she lived in Glasgow for a time. She was quite involved there. I totally agree with the point that if we don't really think seriously about this ongoing division between, say, public and private and the gendered division of Labour, then even our futuristic utopian visions for the future could end up reproducing it. Part of the issue is that under what we call neoliberalism over here, and the term austerity more commonly used in the UK and Europe is that organisations like Kinning Park and women and community members have had to patch the gaps, right? Left in the social safety net from the clawing back of resources and funding from all sorts of areas, whether it's mental health care, immigration services, language training, wellness support, child care, feeding people - just like super basic human needs, right? So we've piled even more and more upon the shoulders of women and other marginalised groups to do this labour, and it's exacerbated what has already been this longstanding gender division of labour that allows capitalism to function. So what's the solution to it? Well, I think we definitely need an anticapitalist solution to it. I think spatial and design practitioners and practises can play a role, too, because as I briefly mentioned in the event earlier, we need to think about using our public spaces indoor and outdoor for care work. Part of the problem is that care work is so stigmatised, it's made invisible, it's hidden away. We have to bring it out into public in order to value it in order to get everybody involved in doing it and to see it as a collective project and as part of our interdependency. My fear is that it's going to take even greater crises than what we've just gone through with the pandemic in order for people to both realise that and want to act upon it.

[00:11:06.870] - Daisy Narayanan

It's really interesting just listening to you speak Leslie and the conversation we've just had has taken me right back to my - I mentioned growing up back home in Bombay, Southeast Asia and Bombay - but every summer I would go back to this little village, to my ancestral home where my extended family live. And I come from a line of very strong women, my grandma and my mum and gosh now my daughter. So there was something very, just picking up on this point around the collective, making it visible that the work that women do and come together and really push conversations forward. It's something that is so ingrained in me. I think in having grown up with that and having seen that around me in this small community that I used to go to every summer. And it's really interesting kind of the analogy with the work that I'm doing here now on 20 minute neighbourhoods and learning so much more about how we need to embed this thinking within the work I'm doing here, and it's all those lines that are drawn that take you back and bring you forward. And it'd be good to understand from yourself as well. I mean, what threads are there from history that you kind of take forward and say, actually, this bit would be really interesting to take forward as a city building exercise.

[00:12:36.930] - Alys Mumford

Yeah I think that's a really good point Daisy. You talk there about lessons from the past in terms of your personal history of strong women. And obviously you're continuing that trend. So yeah Leslie are there other examples of things that have either happened learning we can take from our own histories or other countries, other spaces in the world where women are claiming that space in a man made world that you sort of call us to do.

[00:13:05.070] - Leslie Kern

Well, historically, I think there are lots of examples of women and early feminists designing home cities and entire neighbourhoods in ways that are meant to address this care work dilemma. So, for example, the city of Llano del Rio in what is now known as Los Angeles in the early 1900s, was designed from a feminist point of view, and what they did was to create a system where all of the

caregiving functions were essentially pulled out of the home and made public. So everything from the meals that would happen, to childcare, to cleaning and so on was done either by like paid labour outside of the home or collectively. So it was meant to kind of begin to solve for that problem now, fast forward 100 years, and we still see this happening. But of course, care labour is so devalued that even when it's done for pay, it's done for terrible pay in most cases, and it's considered kind of dirty work, low skilled work, not very desirable work. So I don't know that their early designs could have predicted the kind of like global division of labour that we see in domestic work, although certainly they could probably look to the example of places where people freed from slavery went into domestic labour and the impacts of that. And many of them were not looking at that. They were coming from a very white, middle and upper class perspective that was not overly concerned with the conditions of black women and working class women, but just to respond to Daisy that yes, there is this long history of people taking up these questions and recognising that without doing something about this division of labour, then true gender equality is just not going to happen.

[00:15:04.230] - Eilidh Dickson

Yeah, I think I agreed everything Leslie was saying and it was actually making me think I'm sorry to mention the pandemic on the podcast so early.

[00:15:13.890] - Alys Mumford

It's ok we haven't said Brexit yet. Oh, no.

[00:15:18.130] - Eilidh Dickson

I think what we're talking about kind of lessons from history about that division of labour that still continues in the public and private divide between women and men's tasks as we prescribe them to be. Obviously, during the pandemic, we've seen that redistribution back from the state, from public life of care work into the home into private sphere. In Scotland, I was having a conversation with someone recently about the early weeks of the pandemic when we were only allowed out for leisure for 1 hour a day with 1 hour a day. And how did women and men use that differently? Something else in that time was if you can remember that far back when the local councils in many communities shut the play parks because we didn't know as much as we know now about transmission of Covid-19. And so I've always been really interested in how to disrupt that public private divide. And I am worried, obviously, that Covid-19 kind of sets us back. In that there are so many great things about softening the boundaries between work and leisure and public and private. But also, I think there are some real risks.

[00:16:22.450] - Alys Mumford

Yeah. I was very amused to see that when they closed the play parks here in Scotland and they put tape up sort of saying it's closed. And one day I was walking past the local one and the tape had been ripped down and I was like, "oh, cool, citizen action, that's great, people getting frustrated at their kids not being able to play and then looked inside and it was all men using the monkey bars to do pull ups. [laughter] And I just felt like that was indicative of several things. One thing on that, Daisy, on how we blur these lines. I was chatting the other day with someone - Fiona hi, Fiona - who does a lot of design work with Engender, and we were just chatting about local authorities. And she used to do lots of designs for International Women's Day and things in Edinburgh Council in the 90s, and she was bringing out posters and stuff, and they were incredible. And one thing she brought a poster for was creches that had been put on on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas. And it was very much "leave your kids here and go do your Christmas shopping". And I think it exemplifies what you're talking about there Eilidh, because my initial thought was like, "oh, well, we don't want to just associate women with shopping and consumerism, and we don't want to just encourage people to go and spend all this money at Christmas time". But in reality, we know that it is the women that do the majority of Christmas shopping, even - if they're in a heterosexual relationship - their male partner's family. And so it is women that are going to largely benefit from that. So yeah, I just found that fascinating. And I suppose Daisy from obviously working within Edinburgh Council, and I was quite surprised only 30 years ago this was really normal that this was happening. And now it seems like quite a radical idea for a local authority to put on free childcare so women can undertake activities. I don't know if you've got any thoughts on ideas like that, that we could be doing more of or exciting initiatives.

[00:18:19.210] - Daisy Narayanan

Yeah, I'm obviously quite new to the Council, so I've only joined a few months ago, and I'm still getting my head around my remit and what I'm meant to do. But there's so many allies and so many people within the public sector, both in the Council and my colleagues in other councils and across the third sector, everyone is working together to make this happen. And there are so many ideas out there. There's so much goodwill and enthusiasm and commitment to really make change happen. It's: Who takes the lead? What new partnerships are required to make this happen, this kind of change happened. How do we build back that trust within local government? Because I think there is definitely an issue there. We all need to work better together. And I think for me I keep coming back to the 20 minute neighbourhood because I think it's such a good framework. I hate that word, but then I'm going to use it - gosh, Monday evening. But it is a good framework to kind of have these conversations around to put that place lens and to bring innovation and innovative ideas and go back and see what's been done before and try things again because it's not just looking at transport, it's not just looking at childcare, it's not just looking at education. It does allow you to go beyond and look at that place and people as a lens. So I'm hoping because that's one of the programmes I'll be leading in the City Council, that this allows us to have these kinds of ideas and thoughts to bubble up and then find people to make it happen. One thing that really struck me is ten years ago or when I joined Sustrans as a woman in transport, it was very rare. I would walk into two rooms and I was probably the only woman in there and definitely the only woman of colour in many, many occasions. So I think there has been a shift change in how the narrative around transport has changed, and that's because there are many, many more women who are leading the way both in policy and design and community activism and making that happen channelling those three, that triumverate, I think, will be key. Yes. Exciting times. I asked Leslie, "do you feel optimistic?" And I think most days I do because you have to hold on to that. You have to look around and see how many people are trying so hard to do good work and how many allies there are.

[00:21:09.770] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, most definitely. And I think also just in general, trying to build back some kind of trust in government. Like you said, Daisy, and planning is an area of policy that Engender has been working on for a few, like a good number of years now. But Eilidh could you maybe just update us with what's happening just now in Scotland, and maybe Daisy, if any of that feeds in, as Eilidh mentions it, then please do feel free to jump in. But yeah, maybe if you could just give us an update.

[00:21:37.850] - Eilidh Dickson

Sure. So Engender's work with planning really kind of started in earnest in 2017, 2018 when we got involved in the planning act or the planning bill, as it was then that was being discussed at Holyrood. And one of the things that we wanted to see going back to the kind of conversation we were having started the podcast about how everything is connected, everything relates back to how women use public space, and we wanted to make sure that equality and nondiscrimination concerns were really integrated into how we understand planning to function and what we understand planning to be so that it was right front and centre in the purpose of planning and in the guidance that gives effect to planning decisions or the guidance that enables planning decisions at the local level in the national planning framework, which is the kind of big national statement of what we want our town, cities and countryside to look like and how we want to divide up different types of space. So we were successful in getting some of the things that we wanted into the bill in and the big thing there was a statement as part of that national planning framework about how the Government's plan or - the Parliament has to vote on the plan - but how the national plan will further equality and nondiscrimination in Scotland. And so we were really excited to see that come through when the bill was passed. Obviously it will take a huge amount of guidance and resource and prioritisation to actually embed that fully in all of the public authorities in the way in which they develop their own local development plans. We also think it needs to be front and centre of the guidance and procedures that are built around community engagement, different ways to enable women at all levels to get involved in what their local places look like. We were expecting the national planning framework to be consulted on last year because of the pandemic it's been pushed into this year and we're expecting it in the autumn. I think, despite all the optimism I think that we all share and the fact that the National Planning Framework does have to have a statement around equality, I think we are still quite a long way from actually knowing what that

means in practise for women. We haven't really seen a huge amount of new guidance being proliferated by national planning authorities, the kind of equality impacts and gender mainstreaming processes that have already been kind of been started around developing some of this guidance has not really necessarily shown itself as best practise. Data klaxon perhaps, I think we're still really struggling with the data, quality of data in Scotland to tell us how women and men use public spaces and public transport differently. We all know - Leslie, in her remarks this evening, was talking about the different ways women use public transport and the assumption that most people's primary use of public transport or any transport is to get them from kind of suburban residential areas into central business districts. And actually we know that women are more likely to make multiple journeys to drop kids off at school, to trip chain and all these sorts of things. We still don't necessarily have the data that kind of backs that up and lets us see what we want to change and how we want to maybe disrupt some of those public transport routes. For example, the Scottish Government published a statement, a position statement last year or early this year I think, outlining what it wanted to see or what it was working towards in the National Planning Framework and equality is there. I think we are seeing a lot of kind of headline commitments towards equality, but actually understanding that equality is central to some of the high level outcomes like housing needs. We talk a lot about public planning policy needing to deliver housing for the people of Scotland, particularly older people and disabled people where women are a small majority of older people and disabled people. We talk about planning needing to improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens. We know that women live longer with poor health than men do. We also, coming back to the conversation we had earlier about care and safety, we know that women use public space in very different ways, and access to leisure activities is undermined by fear of public space or fear of utilising public space in the way that we might otherwise like to. So I think drawing some of the dots is still maybe where we need to see some action.

[00:26:00.230] - Alys Mumford

I think that's super interesting, and I think speaks to the point Leslie was making about needing to bake in gender throughout these processes. And you're talking there about data collection. And there was a proposal...I was chatting to to someone and they said we need to do better at recording the purpose of journeys, so they recognise we need better data. But I sort of said, well, I don't know many women who have a journey or a reason to go to a place that is just one thing - we say we need to go out and on the way we'll pop and do this errand. And while we take the kids to school, we'll also use that time to check up, to text the neighbour and check that they're okay all these different things. So even just the very concept of what data we would collect is very coded around male lives. And I'm interested, Leslie, in the event you talked about a potential regret from the book is not talking about home. And obviously we've seen the definition and use of home change dramatically over the pandemic. When Engender talks about public space, we sort of talk around three things. We talk about planning that Eilidh's just talked about. We talk about public transport, and we also talk about the Internet as a space where all of the issues that we talk about in the physical realm also exist around women's safety, women's sense of belonging, women's unpaid work to make those spaces nice. So I just wondered, I suppose, how useful people find the framing of public space. We often say that still in society we sort of see men as belonging in the public realm and women belonging in the private. So is it a useful thing for us to be talking about public space? Should we be using different language?

[00:27:54.830] - Leslie Kern

That's a great question. Every year when I teach my urban social geography class, we have a lot of classes on public space and just asking the students, I give them examples of a whole bunch of spaces, including, like, our University campus, your front lawn, outside the houses of Parliament, a sidewalk and say, "Is this public space is this public space?" And there's literally not one single space that we can all agree on. That comes with public space. So I think that's part of it as well is that kind of in an objective sense, there actually isn't a clear understanding. So we have to look at all sorts of other things, like, what are spaces used for? How does a space come to exist and to be used by a community? And we have to get at these much more, like, sensitive and experiential definitions. So that kind of remains a question. And certainly there's been a great deal of privatisation of what was public space, even with the pandemic and the kind of like, "hey, let's have more sidewalk cafes". Well, those are private businesses, right? Taking up extra public infrastructure or what is more or less

public infrastructure, if we could agree that the pavements count as public space. So we do have to think critically about who gets to claim this space and what its legitimate uses are. And we do have to continue to raise serious equity questions about who remains excluded, not just women, but other groups as well, who are often seen as threats in public space and who experience violence at the hands of police and other citizens simply for being out in public.

[00:29:44.450] - Alys Mumford

100%. I mean, lots of calls about, "well, we need a policeman on every corner" in response to Sabina Nessa's death and the response to being like, "well-grounded Well, that is a terrifying prospect for people of colour, for women selling sex for anyone that has a legitimate and probably very well grounded mistrust of authority." My pal sent me a message, a picture the other day, because she knows I love talking about planning. And it was a printed sign that says, "Please park on the curb, delivery lorries come through here." And then someone had written, "Please don't. Buggies need to come through here". And I thought that was a very good illustration of public space for whom? Who do we prioritise, deliveries or buggies? And isn't there a way that we can sort of allow both.

[00:30:36.170] - Leslie Kern

Yes, the entitlement of cars and car drivers to take up public space has no end. And I would hazard, I guess, that it's even worse in North America than it is in the UK and in many European countries. And people kind of don't realise that car use is actually gender equity issue. Men are more likely to have access regular access to a private vehicle than women are. Women take more transit and pedestrian journeys than men. So we do have to look at that from a gender angle. And public safety is key as well in terms of the safety of our streets, for children getting to and from school, for older people, for disabled people. We don't really think about traffic as being this hazard, but it truly is for these groups. And so it's interesting because we think about the public conversation about safety is usually about safety from crime, maybe safety from terrorism, when there's sort of, kind of like, explosive event, but on a day to day basis, things like safety from cars, that is probably actually a bigger public safety issue than crime among strangers in public space. But that's kind of not where the conversation goes. And I think part of that is because we don't really want to look at car use, but also that we are... There's quite good political and ideological reasons to maintain this fear of crime, because it allows us to keep othering certain groups of people to justify harsh immigration policies, to justify extremely punitive incarceration and criminal punishment policies, even though they don't really have any connection to actual levels of public safety. But it maintains certain kinds of social hierarchies that our societies are quite invested in maintaining.

[00:32:31.910] - Alys Mumford

For sure, and in the book Leslie you talk about, I guess, the idea of safety, whose safety do we prioritise, who's do we value? Whose do we even think about when we plan these things? But one area of that sort of safety discussion, and also the safety work that women do all the time is relating to violence against women. You talk again in the book about perceived fear and how that's often brushed off as "well, that's not really unsafe. Women are making the choice not to walk down a certain way because they're scared of an attacker that isn't going to materialise". Eilidh you've been doing a little bit of work or thinking around the idea of safety audits, which is also something that Lesley talks about in the book. Can you say a little bit about what they are?

[00:33:20.630] - Eilidh Dickson

"Not really" is honestly the answer only because we had a conversation prior to the election, and as a result, we put into our manifesto this idea of safety audits with safety is quite a broad definition, as you were kind of ascribing there and then the current Scottish Government, the SNP, put into their manifesto something quite similar about physical space safety audits. So we had been talking, but they were also influenced by the murder of Sarah Everard last March. I think, so they came at it from maybe a more violence against women point of view. We weren't *not* coming at it from that point of view, but I don't think we've really necessarily had a conversation about what sort of safety we mean and how we judge that and how we give women in their own local communities power to kind of tell us what they know about their communities, if that kind of makes any sense. I think we don't want to kind of encourage, the conversation we've seen in recent weeks around how women can make themselves safer when they use public spaces. But how can we take learning from women about why

they use particular areas or don't use particular areas? What might make them feel safer in particular areas? What might help them feel safer taking their children on public highways, for example, how can we have streets that are safer for disabled people who might be navigating them with or older people who might be navigating them differently? So I don't think I necessarily have an answer for you except that there's a sort of idea out there. And as you mentioned, Leslie does talk about Toronto having piloted something quite similar in her book.

[00:35:17.310] - Daisy Narayanan

Yeah, there's so much there for me. I think there's a report called Get Home Safe, which is aimed at urban planners and transport planners that provides recommendations on how you design your spaces, right from street lighting to public toilets and all of that I think we have in terms of design, this has been discussed for so long. There are design solutions you can design out to a large extent or mitigate against unsafe spaces, but there is a perception of safety. There is a perception of being unwelcome. We have to change that narrative from being "how do you feel safe", in my opinion, to "how do you feel welcome" and how do you own the space? As a woman, I'd like to be able to cross the street, not having to hold my child's hand. It shouldn't feel like you are constantly, you've got your security switched on when you're out and about. When I was on secondment to the Council a couple of years ago a programme called City Centre Transformation in Edinburgh and part of that was the Car Free Sunday programme which was Open Streets, it's a global movement and Edinburgh joined. So the first Sunday of every month for 5 hours in Old Town in Edinburgh, which is one of the most beautiful, magnificent spaces. Streets that you could have clogged with traffic usually, and you take the traffic away and you could see people see how suddenly their relationship with the built environment - look up and look at these amazing buildings and that switch when you switch off that security switch, suddenly you have a different relationship with the environment around you, which I found really interesting. So yeah, it's about bringing back that wonder, isn't it? And joy, rather than constantly being worried about what's going to happen to you in a space.

[00:37:25.350] - Amanda Aitken

Most definitely. Yeah, I'm in complete agreement also where I live, I don't know if they've done it for a while, but they would close some of the car-free streets for a weekend and yeah, like it was car free for kids to play in, but also - not to bring it back to the pandemic again - one thing that I noticed, which I'm about to ask a question about positives. But one thing that I noticed that was a negative was when everything was in lockdown and I would be going out and having my cycle, I just felt so safe cycling around Glasgow. It was one of the most magical times to be cycling. And within the first week I think it must have been three days into the pubs opening, like a guy you know came out of the pub or whatever and shouted some homophobic slur at me. And I was like. "Whoa, I don't know how to deal with that for so long." And I was like "Of course, just the week that these things reopened and then it's back to business as usual". And I was like, horrible that this is like almost for a moment forgot about it. [laughter] But yeah, I want to stop focusing on the negatives because I'm conscious of time and I want to end on some positives. But obviously we've had a lot of really good conversation in this, but then also in the event, also between the three of you, what do you think a feminist public space could look like? So think of something positive that we could bring to end this conversation on because I'm aware that there's been a lot of focus on negatives, but there's a lot of positives to be had as well. So maybe I'll start with you, Eilidh, if you want and you can come in and we can go from there.

[00:39:08.350] - Eilidh Dickson

Sure. So I think a feminist space for me looks like one where we can use public space the way we want to for the journeys we want to make, where we have access to green space, where we have access to safe streets, where we have the ability to undertake care and paid work and leisure activities without having to constantly be transiting between public spaces. And I think this is why a lot of people are having the same thoughts. - there was a question in the event about climate change - and I think a lot of people are thinking about how can we make our local communities richer and more sustainable for women, but for all people, but for women, I do think some of the conversation around 20 minute neighbourhoods is really exciting, and Daisy obviously will probably have lots to say on that. One thing I always come back to when we talk about 20 minute neighbourhoods is whose 20 minutes? How do we make something like a 20 minutes neighbourhood aspiration really work for everybody? And how can we understand intersectionality and different needs from different groups

within our local community so that everybody is included and have the same rights and ability to access all aspects of their community and their public space?

[00:40:27.550] - Daisy Narayanan

Gosh, I'm trying to think there's nothing I would disagree with completely agree with what being said. I think from my perspective there's two things. One is, as I said before, it would be good to have a place where you can let go of your child's hand and they can just not feel scared and you don't feel scared. You're not constantly living with that worrying. I don't know if it's a feminist thing or it's just a human thing, but I think that kind of space is one that I hope we see quite soon. I think for me it's about belonging. It's a place where you feel like you belong and you don't feel like you're intruding there, you shouldn't be there. Some of the public/privatisation of public spaces that we've seen over the past few years. There's always discussion around, "oh but I don't belong there". And can a child who's 17, do they feel like they're looked down upon being in certain spaces, that kind of thing. I think belonging is big.

[00:41:41.170] - Leslie Kern

Well, I think we could start from the idea that cities are for people and that people have bodies, and that if we instead of trying to kind of gender-affirming our urban environments to get rid of all of the things that we fear. What if we thought about our urban spaces as places where people have the right to sit and rest, to shade and shelter, to food, to fresh water, to safe, adequate gender-affirming spaces for using the toilet? We too often, I think, forget about those human elements. And part of that, I think, is what both Amanda and Daisy were talking about. Kind of like increasing the space for pedestrian uses in cities, having more spaces to just be in most places. Loitering is a crime, right? Like just being in space is kind of a crime. There's an assumption that you have to be like being productive or something in order to just exist in public space. And I would like to see that shift, and I think that would be part of a move towards a feminist space.

[00:43:03.050] - Alys Mumford

Yes. I want you all to be in charge, please. I think, Leslie, we don't have time to get into it because Amanda is quite right we should finish up and we've taken a lot of your time already. But one thing I really appreciated in the book is that we often talk about planning and we have today and public space as looking at reproductive labour often. So we talk about care. We talk about violence against women, as two of the overriding things. But what I really loved in the book is that there's a chapter on protest and my background is in sort of activism, so delighted to see that. And a chapter on friendship. And I think that's really often lost. And the points you make about the reason we have stereotypes about girls in the mall - less so in the UK - but it's because where else can you go that's well lit and you don't have to pay to be there. Like, maybe you can go into shops. And it just made me think about my... Every Saturday from when I was probably first allowed to get on a bus by myself, was spent with my pals getting on a bus to the nearest town and spending all day shopping and normally not buying anything. But it was a space that we felt we were allowed to be in. It was the done thing. So yeah, I really appreciate that. The idea that we don't have to justify our existence or our bodies to be in a space because it is ours. We are going to finish up now and we always finish up with a recommendation so that could be some further reading. It can be someone great to follow, something to brighten our days. Irreverence is always very welcome as are serious suggestions. So I'm going to go to Eilidh first. Eilidh's just been on leave, so she's clearly been doing lots of reading very deep, meaningful books.

[00:44:52.010] - Eilidh Dickson

I have. I'm not sure how deep and meaningful, but Sally Rooney is a genius. I was going to actually recommend a book I read quite a while ago and I was thinking about this book when Leslie was talking just there about the ability to use spaces and not only a space we transit through, but as a space where we can be idle or just enjoy or observe. And I really recommend a book called *flâneuse*. I don't know if I'm saying that correctly by Lauren Elkin, which is sort of a book about different journeys that women through history and present life have taken on foot, wandering through their cities without necessarily a purpose. Just how lovely is just to be able to walk through cities and sort of absorb it without needing to reach a final destination on your trip. So I really recommend it.

[00:45:51.590] - Alys Mumford

Amazing. Thank you, yes. And the idea of who is able to do that and the privilege inherent in being able to wander. Brilliant. Daisy, you've got a recommendation for us?

[00:46:01.790] - Daisy Narayanan

Gosh well, can I cheat and say "buy Leslie's book" and also follow Engender, because you guys are amazing. I think there's some amazing folk on Twitter every time you need a deep breath of feminist energy, I look at Glasgow Women's Library Twitter Feed, or Talat Yaqoob, or, Louise MacDonald. So there's some amazing folk on Twitter and social media who are doing amazing work. And yeah, highly recommend that you follow them, and Engender, and Leslie.

[00:46:43.610] - Alys Mumford

[laughter] Excellent yes there are some nice corners of Twitter, it turns out. Great recommendation, Daisy. Leslie, how about you?

[00:46:52.670] - Leslie Kern

Well, I will make one kind of serious recommendation, which is to read the book *Feminism, Interrupted* by Lola Olufemi, which many of you might have already picked up. It's really amazing and her thinking about feminism in the 21st century and intersectional feminism and the relationship between feminism and the state is really key. But if you also just want to zone out a little bit, I recommend the Canadian sitcom *Schitt's Creek*.

[00:47:21.130] - All

Ahhhhhh

[00:47:25.830] - Leslie Kern

Yeah I'm hearing a few [laughter] I mean, such a great show for just kind of chilling out because the things that happen, it's really like low narrative conflict levels, which I think is really kind of what we all need right now, just like, a nice levelling out of like, "oh, things happen, but it's all going to be okay in the end". So that's my recommendation.

[00:47:44.430] - Alys Mumford

100%. I finally caved and started watching *Schitt's Creek*, having not watched it on my parents recommendation. And then I tweeted something about how I identify with David. And then I went home to see my parents after a year and a half of the pandemic and the first dinner, my mum just said, "Now, Alys I need to ask you something about something you've seen on Twitter...I mean something you said on Twitter". And I was like, "oh no, what have I said?" She was like, "Why are you David?" And then throughout the rest of the visit, I kept doing things and then mam and dad would go "ahhhh there's David, ok". So yes very delighted with that recommendation.

[00:48:28.210] - Amanda Aitken

Maybe my recommendation should be, if you've not watched it, watch the person who plays Alexis do "a little bit Alexis" with Kelly Clarkson on her TV show because it's a very funny performance.

[00:48:41.290] - Alys Mumford

Incredible.

[00:48:42.310] - Leslie Kern

Truly classic.

[00:48:43.930] - Alys Mumford

Do you have another recommendation as well? Amanda, or are you claiming that as yours?

[00:48:47.770] - Amanda Aitken

No, I won't claim that as mine. I was going to actually suggest, it's *Women's Library Related*. So Daisy had mentioned the Women's Library in general, their Twitter is great just to have a look at, like you said. But I was going to mention that obviously they have just launched on their 30th birthday, the

launch of their Women on the Wall, which is kind of like an ongoing initiative from the success of the Women on the Shelf scheme that they had. And the first person that's going to be the Woman on the Wall is Engender's Emma Ritch. And so I thought that was one nice thing. But another nice thing I wanted to mention was also they've got an event coming up on the 24 October, which I think this should be out by then. And that is the ten year anniversary of the publication that they released of "She Settles in the Shields" and that's the untold stories of migrant women in Pollockshields. And that's a really great book that you can pick up from the Women's Library. But also they're having their ten year anniversary of that release and yeah, there's going to be an event down at the Bowling Green in Pollockshields for that. So you should check out the Women's Library and get along to that.

[00:49:59.650] - Alys Mumford

Nice. My recommendation is - I thought you were going to steal it then, and I was like, "ugh, why did I go last?" also Women's Library related, but well, two things. One, if you find yourself down in London, the Barbican - it may have finished by now - but has an expression on Matrix, the feminist sort of cooperative architecture firm. They've sort of opened up their archives, and that is just incredible. You could spend days and days there reading minutes of the meetings and looking at the sort of buildings they designed to try and do feminist planning in a new way. So I highly recommend that. And the Glasgow Women's Library have also had a really good series of blogs on planning and housing as feminist issues, so we will link to them in the show notes. Do check them out and it wouldn't be On the Engender without a recommendation for Bake Off - the new series is here. By the time this comes out, you can probably watch quite a lot on catch up. So do yourself a favour and watch some people making some cakes.

[00:51:02.170] - Amanda Aitken

Perfect.

[00:51:03.910] - Alys Mumford

I think that's us. Thank you so much to Daisy and Leslie for joining us and for the event earlier - the link to the video that will be up in the show notes as well, and to Eilidh and Amanda as ever for joining us. This is On the Engender, Scotland's Feminist Policy Podcast. I hope you're all staying safe and happy.

[00:51:32.990] - Amanda Aitken

On The Engenda was hosted by Alys Mumford and produced by myself Amanda Aitken. The music featured throughout was written and performed by Bossy Love. To find out more about the work of Engender head to Engender.scot and follow us on social media @EngenderScot and be sure to click subscribe to this podcast so you don't miss an episode.