Rethinking Urban Landscapes:
Women's Spaces and the Dynamics of Third Places

Ghada A. Yassein

Department of Architectural Eng., Faculty of Eng., Menoufia University, Shebin El-Kom, Egypt.

ABSTRACT
The paper examines the role of women-only parks (WOPs) in urban settings as a means of asserting women's right to the city. Drawing on a combined qualitative content and sentiment analysis approach, the paper analyses literature and documents related to WOPs in addition to an exploratory collective case study in Egypt. The analysis highlights the ways in which these parks can serve as a "third place" for women, offering a safe and welcoming environment for socializing, exercising, and engaging in various activities. The paper also explores the challenges and controversies surrounding WOPs, including concerns about exclusivity and potential backlash. The paper concludes that a more effective approach to creating inclusive public spaces for women is to incorporate gender mainstreaming principles into the design and management of public parks, as well as engage women in decision-making processes to ensure that their needs and perspectives are taken into account. Addressing the root causes of harassment and violence against women in public spaces is also crucial, by providing education, awareness-raising, and prevention programs. Additionally, parks should be accessible and welcoming to everyone, and community engagement and participation should be promoted to foster a sense of ownership and belonging. To enhance safety and security, adequate lighting, signage, surveillance, and security measures should be provided. Lastly, the ongoing maintenance and monitoring of public parks is essential for their continued success and sustainability.

Keywords: *Public Space, Safety, Empowerment, Women-Friendly space, Right to the city*

1. Introduction
Urbanization poses challenges in terms of inequality, particularly for girls and women. They face insecurity, exclusion, and various barriers such as violence, poverty, and limited control over assets in urban areas. Intersectional factors further compound these vulnerabilities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, but the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered progress. UN-Habitat actively promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in urbanization policies [1]–[3].

The Right to the City highlights the need for equal and inclusive access to urban spaces, yet women continue to face obstacles such as gender-based violence, social exclusion, and limited access to public spaces. The concept of the Third Place, pioneered by Ray Oldenburg, signifies social areas that facilitate social interaction, community building, and cultural exchange outside of home and work [4].

Women-only parks (WOPs) have emerged as potential Third Places, aiming to provide secure and inclusive environments for women to engage in activities and socialize without fear of harassment or violence. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of WOPs in advancing women's right to the city remains subject to debate. This research seeks to address this gap by exploring the potential of WOPs as Third Places in urban settings.

2. Research Problem
This article aims to explore the use of WOPs as a means of asserting the right to the city in urban environments. Through a qualitative content analysis of literature, and an exploratory collective case study in Egypt, the research seeks to investigate the history, benefits, limitations, and challenges of WOPs. The paper also explores the potential implications of promoting women-friendly open spaces as an alternative approach. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of designing and managing public spaces to address the needs and preferences of women. The following are the inquiries to be addressed in this research.

1. Why have WOPs developed historically, and what is their contemporary significance as a tool for asserting women's right to the city?
2. What are the unique features and benefits of WOPs that may contribute to their effectiveness in creating safe and inclusive public spaces for women in urban settings?
3. How have WOPs been received by the general public, and what are their limitations and challenges?
4. What are the implications of the research findings for policy and practice in urban planning and design, and how can these be used to inform and guide future efforts to create safe, inclusive, and women-friendly public spaces in urban settings?

3. Research Design

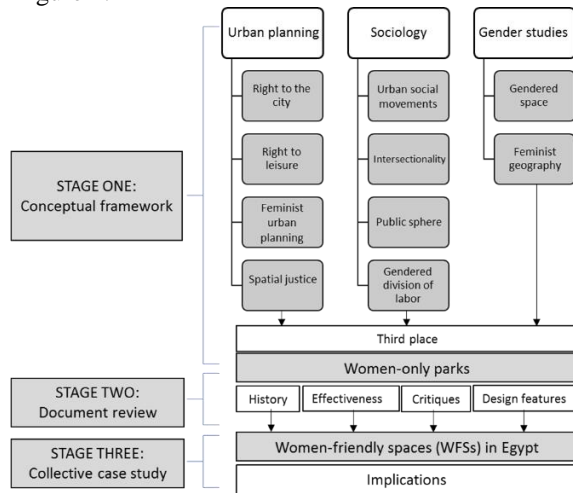The paper follows a three-stage process, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Three Stages of the Study

– Stage One: The conceptual framework, drawing upon essential concepts and perspectives from urban planning, sociology, and gender studies, provides a comprehensive lens for approaching the study.
– Stage Two: The document review provides insights into the historical context of women-only spaces and parks, their effectiveness in promoting women's safety and empowerment, and the associated critiques. It also explores the design features of women-only versus women-friendly parks, crucial for evaluating their impact on gender equity and social inclusion.
– Stage Three: The exploratory collective study analyses multiple cases to identify recurring patterns in the findings [5]. This study focuses on two projects in Egypt under the UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces program: the Imbaba women-friendly space in Giza (2018) and the Izbat al-Burg women-friendly space in Damietta (2021).

4. Materials and Methods

– Data collection: The researcher will collect data by conducting a comprehensive literature review on WOPs, urban spaces, and the right to the city. This process will involve sourcing information from various materials such as academic articles, books, policy documents, government reports, and United Nations reports. Data collection for the case study will include analysing social media platforms, news websites, and relevant commentary.
– Data analysis: Content and sentiment analyses will be used to code textual and visual data in accordance with the research questions. The ATLAS.ti software will be utilized to manage and organize data, develop codes and categories, and visualize relationships between themes or patterns [6].
– Data interpretation: The researchers will describe the significant findings related to the identified themes and patterns, providing explanations of their meanings and drawing conclusions based on them.
– Data validation: The following procedures ensure that the findings are accurate and reliable: First, methodological rigor is maintained by employing a systematic and rigorous qualitative content analysis approach, enhancing the validity of the findings. Second, transparency is upheld as the study explicitly outlines its research questions, methods, and analytical procedures, facilitating replication by other researchers. Lastly, triangulation is employed by incorporating multiple data sources, such as academic articles and reports from international organizations, to validate the findings.
– Limitations: Despite its strengths, qualitative analysis has some limitations. For example, the process of coding and categorizing the data is subjective, which means that different researchers may interpret the data differently. Also, the results may not be generalizable to other contexts.

5. Conceptual Framework

This cross-disciplinary study incorporates key concepts and perspectives from urban planning, sociology, and gender studies (see stage one in Figure 1). These concepts are interrelated and can overlap with each other, highlighting their interconnected nature.

5.1. Urban planning

The right to the city is central to the paper's argument. Henri Lefebvre introduced this concept in his1968 book "The Right to the City". It refers to the right of all citizens to have equal access to the benefits and resources of the urban environment, including housing, employment, education, and public space. Women frequently encounter obstacles in accessing and enjoying public spaces, as gender-based violence

and discrimination persist in urban environments. These factors hinder women's mobility and their active participation in public life [7]–[9].

The right to leisure is often overlooked, despite its importance for promoting physical, mental, and social well-being. WOPs play a crucial role in this regard by providing a secure and welcoming environment for women to engage in leisure activities. Through this provision, WOPs contribute to the establishment of inclusive and equitable cities that afford individuals the necessary resources and opportunities for a satisfying and fulfilling life [10]–[13].

Feminist urban planning seeks to incorporate a gender perspective in the planning and design of urban spaces. WOPs exemplify feminist urban planning and can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for other urban planning initiatives striving to establish inclusive and equitable cities that cater to the needs of all individuals [14]–[16].

Spatial justice refers to the idea that everyone should have equal access to the benefits and opportunities of urban space. WOPs promote spatial justice for women, who may be excluded or marginalized in other public spaces. They can contribute to the creation of more inclusive and democratic cities [17], [18].

5.2. Sociology

WOPs are an integral aspect of a broader social movement dedicated to reclaiming public spaces for marginalized groups, particularly women. They can be attributed to grassroots activism and community organizing, reflecting their emergence as significant sites of resistance against patriarchal norms and gendered violence [19], [20].

Intersectionality emphasizes the importance of considering multiple dimensions of social identity, such as race, class, and sexuality, in understanding social inequality. The experiences of women in urban spaces are shaped by multiple intersecting factors. WOPs can provide a safe and inclusive space for women from diverse backgrounds to come together and build solidarity [21], [22].

The "public sphere", as defined by Habermas (1991), is a social space where individuals can come together to discuss and debate issues of common concern. This space has historically been dominated by men, with women often excluded or marginalized. WOPs can challenge this exclusion by providing women with a space where they can participate in the public sphere on their own terms contributing to a more democratic and inclusive society [23], [24].

The gendered division of labour refers to how work and caregiving responsibilities are often divided along gender lines. WOPs could be seen as a way to challenge this division of labour by providing women with a space where they can engage in physical

activity and leisure time, which is often limited by their responsibilities at home and work. they can contribute to a more equitable distribution of leisure time and promote women's well-being [25].

5.3. Gender studies

Gendered space refers to how the design and use of urban space are often shaped by gender norms and expectations. WOPs could challenge these norms by providing a space designed for and by women, which offers a different set of social and cultural norms to those that may be present in other public spaces [26]– [28].

Feminist geography highlighted the ways in which women's experiences of the city are often marginalized or excluded. WOPs can provide women with a space where they can meet and socialize with other women, away from the male-dominated public spaces that could be intimidating or uncomfortable [26], [29], [30].

5.4. Third place

Third Places are informal public spaces that serve as gathering spots outside of the home and workplace. Coined by Ray Oldenburg in his book "The Great Good Place" in 1989, these places play a vital role in fostering community engagement and social interaction. Third Places are characterized by their accessibility, informality, and inclusivity, and can include venues like cafes, bars, parks, and community centres [31]–[35]. The following paragraph elaborates on the relevance of the concept of Third Places in the fields of urban planning, sociology, and potentially anthropology.

Urban planning entails leveraging Third Places to establish vibrant and liveable communities, where spaces for social engagement and community development are fostered. Urban planners consider how to design and incorporate Third Places into urban landscapes to enhance social connectivity and promote community cohesiveness [4], [36], [37]. From a sociological perspective, Third Places serve as avenues for building social capital and nurturing a sense of belonging and community. Sociologists delve into the social dynamics within Third Places, exploring how they facilitate social connections and shape individual and collective identities and networks [38]–[40]. Lastly, anthropological investigations of Third Places revolve around understanding their cultural and social significance as institutions that are influenced by and contribute to the cultures and communities, they exist in. Anthropologists explore the roles of Third Places across different societies and examine their variations across cultures and historical eras [29], [41], [42].

6. Document Review

6.1. History and initiation

Women-only spaces are designated areas exclusively for women, providing a space where they can avoid interaction with men. This form of sex segregation includes facilities like women-only public toilets, women-only passenger cars, and women's parking spaces. Some cultures have a tradition of separate living spaces for women, while certain societies segregate most public facilities based on their interpretation of Islam and gender segregation [43], [44].

The first women's park, initially a resting spot for women after shopping in downtown Helena, Montana, was established in 1913. The land was donated to the City of Helena by James and Mary Hill, with the park later split into Hill Park and Women's Park due to the construction of Fuller Avenue in 1918. In 1916, the Women's Park Association was formed to raise funds for park beautification, leading to the addition of benches and other improvements. The efforts of the association, along with contributions from the men of Helena and support from city officers, transformed an unsightly section of the city into a beautiful spot with grass lawns, flower beds, walkways, trees, shrubbery, stone benches, drinking fountains, and artistic garden furnishings [45].

6.2. Effectiveness of women-only parks

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of WOPs in providing safe public spaces for women. Asifa (2018) conducted a study in Karachi to evaluate users' and nonusers' perceptions of safety in women's open spaces and investigate the design features that contribute to this perception. The research found that women generally felt safer in WOPs that incorporated standard Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) components, including entrance control and target hardening measures. These design elements, such as gates, gatekeepers, locks, fences, and walls, created a sense of territoriality and control in the parks. Additionally, the study revealed that WOPs users had a higher perception of safety compared to nonusers, indicating that these spaces can provide a sense of security for women. However, the research also highlighted the potential trade-offs between safety and aesthetic quality [46].

Mehrnaz and Farshd (2021) conducted a descriptive-analytical study in Iran to examine the influence of WOPs on women's quality of life and their association with environmental quality indicators. The research utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, employing a questionnaire distributed to 150 women of all ages who frequented a women-only park in Tehran's district 15. The findings revealed that WOPs had a significant positive impact, accounting for a 16.6% improvement in women's quality of life in the studied community. These parks were found to provide a sense of security and freedom, enabling women to engage in sports and social interactions. However, the study also emphasizes the importance of avoiding the perception of women as a minority group in need of assistance, instead advocating for women's access to safe and inclusive public spaces as a fundamental human right [47].

In her study, Nazanin (2014) explores the rise of WOPs in Iran and provides an in-depth analysis of the establishment of Tehran's first women-only park, known as Mothers' Paradise. The author challenges the notion that gender segregation in public spaces is solely a result of Islamic state policy, arguing that this perspective overlooks significant changes in the state's attitudes towards women's participation in public life. The study highlights how Iran, which only three decades ago considered women's outdoor exercise to be a problem and contrary to Islamic values, now encourages it as a solution to women's health issues. This shift in the state's approach to women's physical activity and participation in public spaces represents a transition from a policy of prohibition to one of production [48].

6.3. Critiques of women-only parks

WOPs have emerged as a strategy to create safe public spaces for women; however, they have faced criticism for perpetuating gender segregation and failing to address the underlying issues. Critics argue that these parks may reinforce patriarchal norms and exclude men, who also face harassment and violence. Moreover, they may not effectively address the root causes of violence against women or provide sustainable, long-term security. In response to these concerns, there is a growing emphasis on promoting women-friendly parks that are safe and inclusive for everyone. These parks involve women's input, tackle the underlying causes of violence, and integrate with the urban fabric to foster social inclusion and community. While WOPs may offer a temporary solution, long-term progress necessitates addressing root causes and creating inclusive public spaces that uphold social inclusion and gender equity. Urban design and planning should prioritize principles of inclusivity and diversity to ensure the safety and accessibility of public spaces for all [49].

6.4. Design features of women-only vs women-friendly parks

WOPs incorporate various design elements to create safe and comfortable spaces for women. These features include: (a) Exclusivity, allowing access only to women and children, ensuring a space free from men where women can relax, exercise, and socialize. (b) Enhanced security measures, such as female

security personnel and surveillance cameras, contributing to a safer environment for women. (c) Gender-sensitive design, considering women's specific needs and offering amenities like private changing rooms, nursing facilities, and feminine hygiene products. (d) Acting as community hubs, WOPs promote engagement and empowerment by hosting workshops, events, and resources focused on women's health and well-being. (e) Tailored programming, including activities like yoga classes, self-defence workshops, and mother and child programs, catering to women's interests and requirements. (f) Thoughtful landscaping, incorporating gardens, benches, and seating areas that prioritize women's preferences for privacy and shade. (g) Ensuring accessibility for women of all ages and abilities through features like wheelchair ramps, accessible restrooms, and designated parking spaces. One example of a women-only park is Mother's Paradise (Behesht-e Mâdarân) in Abbas Abad Hills of Tehran, Iran,[1] illustrated in Figure 2.

Women-friendly parks (WFPs) are designed with specific features to ensure safety and inclusivity for all park users. These features include: (a) adequate lighting, (b) clear sightlines, (c) visibility, (d) proximity to amenities, (e) clear signage, (f) maintenance, and (g) security measures such as surveillance cameras and personnel. WFPs are strategically located, well-maintained, and monitored to create a safe and welcoming environment for all members of the community. By incorporating these design features, WFPs address the root causes of harassment and violence against women and promote social inclusion and gender equity. One example of a women-friendly park is Rose Red Carpet (Rosens Röda Matta) in Malmö, Sweden,[2] demonstrated in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Location of Mother's Paradise in Tehran. The red arrows indicate the entrance gates. Source: adapted from [50].

Figure 3. Location of the Rose Red Carpet park in Malmö. Source: [51]

7. Exploratory Collective Case Study in Egypt
7.1. Contextual setting

Women in Egypt often encounter obstacles when accessing public spaces, including harassment and inadequate amenities. Despite the prevalence of patriarchy in Egyptian society, the criminalization of sexual harassment in 2014 is considered an initial step toward addressing this issue[3]. Other initiatives have been undertaken to foster more inclusive and secure public spaces for women, such as the introduction of women-only subway cars and the establishment of private beaches exclusively for women[4] [52], [53].

Egypt, as a pilot country for the Global Programme to End Violence Against Women (VAW), implemented the Safe Cities Programme to address sexual harassment and promote gender-sensitive designs in infrastructure projects. This initiative aims to establish safe public spaces, enhance services for survivors, and cultivate legislative and institutional frameworks to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (UN Women Egypt, 2019).

The Imbaba Women-Friendly Space (WFS) project, established in 2018, is a collaborative effort between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Egyptian Ministry of Local Development, and the Giza Governorate. Located in Imbaba, a densely populated area in the west of Giza Governorate, the WFS aims to provide a secure and supportive environment for women and girls, offering them a space free from harassment and violence [54], [55].

Similarly, the women-friendly space (WFS) in Izbat al-Burg, Damietta, Egypt, is part of the UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme. The WFS, completed in 2021, serves as a venue for women entrepreneurs to showcase and market their products to the community and visitors of the Misr Public Library. It provides women and girls in Izbat al-Burg

with resources and opportunities to enhance their lives and contribute to the community [54], [56].

Both WFS projects aim to empower women and girls socially, economically, and promoting their well-being and inclusion. Despite being labelled as "women-friendly," these projects are designed exclusively for women.

7.2. Imbaba women-friendly space

A.   Background: Imbaba, a district in Giza, Egypt, has established in 2018 a distinct area exclusively dedicated to the welfare of women and girls, facilitated by financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Egyptian National Council for Women. The primary objective of this endeavour is to equip them with the necessary tools to effectively address and counteract instances of harassment, thereby fostering safer public spaces

B.   Design Features: The WFS design entailed active consultation with women from the local community to ensure that the design elements accurately reflected their preferences and needs. The area encompasses a playground, a seating area, and newly landscaped surroundings. In addition to this, the adjacent area underwent structural modifications to improve pedestrian walkways and circulation patterns, with a focus on enabling accessibility for individuals with disabilities or limited mobility. The design deliberately integrates bright and colourful flowers and plants throughout the space, and a multi-coloured fence was installed to provide privacy and facilitate regulated access through the presence of security personnel, Figure 4.

Figure 4. Imbaba women-friendly space. Source: Compiled from multiple online news websites

C.   Activities: The WFS includes a permanent exhibition of handicrafts for women, an art workshop to develop glass drawing skills for children, awareness seminars, and theatrical performances aimed at raising awareness about forms of violence against women and girls.

D.   Users' experience: Manal Afifi, a woman in her mid-40s, says: "Since I learned about the park's opening, it has become my only destination for me and my children to spend enjoyable time with my friends, and the place makes us feel satisfied, and we have relaxing outings similar to men with their friends" [57]. Samia Hassan Aly, the Field Coordinator of the Safe Cities programme and manager of the WFS, affirms that the space has made a significant difference in the lives of women. According to her, "The women say that this is the only place where they can enjoy themselves and let go. They are very happy with it" [58].

7.3. Izbat Al-Burg women-friendly space

A.   Background: The project implemented in Izbat al-Burg, Damietta in 2021, is a collaborative endeavour spearheaded by the National Council for Women, the Damietta Governorate, and UN Women Egypt. The primary objective of the initiative is to develop a 2,000 square meter open space adjacent to the Public Library, affording a panoramic view of the Nile. The Takween Integrated Community Development (TICD) conducted a comprehensive study, involving women and children from different localities, to create a gender-sensitive design that is also eco-friendly. The participatory meetings revealed that women and young people had limited opportunities for economic and recreational activities. The newly created open space is intended to cater to these requirements, serving as a women-centric location that not only caters to local demands but also enhances library activities.

B.   Design Features: The development of the open space was undertaken through a gender-sensitive approach that aimed to accommodate cultural, educational, and recreational events. The design team incorporated low-impact development (LID) principles to facilitate infiltration and limit impermeable surfaces. This included the use of permeable paving and natural landscaping. The choice of Cyperus papyrus, a plant species with historical significance and ecological relevance, was deliberate. The selection of materials was also sensitive to the local architectural style of Damietta, with locally sourced rope dividers utilized for social control and visibility, and exposed brickwork added for texture and visual cohesion. The pavilion was designed with inclined sandwich panels to enable rainwater flow and to provide protection from external environmental

conditions, rendering it a secure and inviting space for women and girls to enjoy the sweeping views of the surrounding area, Figure 5.

C.   Activities: The WFS offers a broad range of activities and services aimed at promoting the well-being and empowerment of women and girls. These include counselling and support services for individuals who have experienced violence or abuse, training workshops that enhance employability and foster skill-building, cultural and recreational activities such as music and art classes, sports, and dance, reproductive health education and screenings, and legal aid and guidance for women and girls who require protection from violence or are seeking justice.

D.   Users' experience: Hanady Awad, an exhibitor in the WFS, considers this project to be a significant addition to Egyptian women, providing them with ample opportunities for creativity and production, thanks to the presence of marketing opportunities. Before participating in the exhibition, she relied on online marketing, but the tangible value of handmade products can only be appreciated in person, and interactions between seller and buyer offer insights into market needs. Awatef El-Bayaa mentioned that she has received training through the Set El-Dar initiative launched by the National Council for Women, which has equipped her with the skills to recycle any material and mould it into a product, including shells, which she transforms into works of art [59].

Figure 5. Izbat al-Burg women-friendly space. Source: Compiled from multiple online news websites

8. Data Processing and Findings
8.1. Review criteria

Review criteria include three levels of rigor: review, study, and analyse. (a) Review is a high-level examination looking for required content. (b) Study is a more in-depth examination for greater evidence to support a determination of whether the document has the required content. (c) Analyse is an examination that includes the intent of both "Review" and "Study" and adds a thorough and detailed analysis for significant grounds for confidence in the determination of whether required content is present and the document is correct, complete, and consistent [60].

8.2. Qualitative content analysis

To conduct the document review, I employ qualitative content analysis. It involves a systematic and iterative process of identifying patterns and themes in the data, which can generate rich and nuanced insights into the research questions being studied. Both inductive and deductive methods were employed. I first utilised inductive content analysis, which creates categories and topics directly from the data derived from academic articles, books, policy documents, government and UN reports. Second, I employed deductive content analysis, which includes using pre-existing categories to direct the analysis of the online photos of the collective case study.

I used ATLAS.ti to analyse a diverse set of documents, including policy reports, articles, and social media posts. The integration of the software facilitated the organization, categorization, and visualization of voluminous data, enabling the researchers to identify meaningful insights and correlations across multiple data sources. The extracted themes are "Critical Race Theory", "Feminist Urban Planning", "Gendered Space", "Postcolonial Urbanism", and the "Right to the City". It also highlights unique features such as "Community Building", "Intersectionality", "Place-Making", "Safety and Security", "Social Inclusion", "Spatial Justice", "Third Places and Community", and "Women's Empowerment". However, limitations and challenges include "Cultural and religious considerations", "Intersectionality", "Economic and class-based barriers", "Sustainability and environmental factors", "Impact on surrounding neighbourhoods", and "Evaluation of effectiveness". The implications for policy and practice include "Participatory Planning" and "Urban Commons", which stress community engagement, legal considerations, inclusive design, collaboration, innovative financing, technology, and sustainability, Appendix A.

8.3. Visual content analysis

I collect a sample of 35 photographs of the inauguration of Imbaba and Izbat al-Burg WFSs available online on news websites[5]. For the visual content analysis of online photos, I developed a coding

scheme with the following categories: (a) participants (e.g. government officials, community leaders, WFS visitors, WFS staff); (b) activities (e.g., ribbon-cutting ceremony, speeches, WFS tour, cultural performances); and (d) features: (e.g., playground, seating, landscaping, walking trail, water feature, art installations). The analysis revealed that the most common participants were government officials (58%) and community leaders (26%). The most common activity was the ribbon-cutting ceremony (64%), followed by WFS tour (30%). The most common park feature was the seating area (48%), followed by the playground (28%). The content analysis revealed that the inauguration of the WFSs were generally portrayed as a positive and progressive development for women's rights in Egypt, Appendix B.

8.4. Sentiment analysis

I employed ATLAS.ti and exportcomments.com to conduct sentiment analysis on social media comments related to Imbaba and Izbat al-Burg women-friendly spaces. Captions and headlines associated with photos were also analysed using natural language processing. The findings showed that the majority of comments were positive (60%), while 10% expressed negative opinions. Neutral comments (30%) focused on describing the WFSs' features and activities, providing valuable insights into public attitudes towards these projects.

9. Findings Interpretation

In this section, I interpret the data collected to answer the four research questions related to WOPs, as well as examine the state of women-friendly spaces in Egypt, Figure 6.

– RQ1. History and evolution of WOPs

The history and evolution of WOPs as a tool for asserting the right to the city in urban settings is a complex and multifaceted topic that involves several intersecting themes and codes. One important aspect is the historical and cultural context of women-only spaces, which reflects the ways in which gender has been constructed and enforced in public spaces throughout history. This includes an examination of gender-based discrimination in traditional parks, which have historically been designed and managed with the needs and interests of men in mind, often to the exclusion of women and other marginalized groups.

Another crucial aspect is the global perspective on WOPs, which has evolved over time to encompass a range of political, social, and cultural contexts. This includes a consideration of the role of critical race theory in shaping the understanding of the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and other forms of social difference, and how this perspective can inform the design and management of WOPs.

Feminist urban planning is an important theme that has emerged in the context of WOPs, emphasizing the need to challenge traditional planning paradigms that have historically marginalized and excluded women and other underrepresented groups from the planning process. This includes a focus on creating gendered space that reflects the needs and interests of women and other marginalized groups, and that fosters a sense of community, safety, and empowerment.

Postcolonial urbanism is another key theme that has been explored in the context of WOPs, highlighting the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have shaped urban spaces and contributed to gender-based discrimination and exclusion. This perspective emphasizes the need to decolonize urban space and to recognize the agency and autonomy of women and other marginalized groups in shaping their own environments.

– RQ2. Unique features and benefits of WOPs

WOPs offer unique features and benefits that contribute to their effectiveness. Safety and security measures, such as adequate lighting, surveillance systems, and security personnel, are crucial for the well-being of women based on CPTED. Women's preferences and park use patterns are also important considerations, including the provision of amenities such as seating, shade, and restrooms. Third places and community building are important aspects which can promote a sense of belonging and social connection among women. Inclusivity and accessibility for women with disabilities are crucial for ensuring that WOPs are truly inclusive.

These parks can also play an important role in promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles, which can improve overall health and well-being. Social and psychological benefits, including empowerment and increased self-esteem, are also important outcomes of WOPs. Intersectionality is a critical consideration, as women from different socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds may have unique needs and experiences in public spaces. Place-making, safety and security, social inclusion, spatial justice, third places and community, and women's empowerment are all key themes that contribute to the effectiveness of WOPs.

The right to the city is a fundamental aspect of WOPs, reflecting the broader struggle for social justice and equality in urban spaces. This includes a focus on their role in empowering women and other marginalized groups to assert their right to the city and to reclaim public space as a site of community, identity, and belonging.

– RQ3. Reception, limitations and challenges of WOPs

WOPs, while providing safe and inclusive public spaces for women, also face a number of challenges and limitations. One key challenge is the cultural and religious considerations surrounding the creation and use of these spaces, which can lead to resistance and opposition from some members of the community. Additionally, the diversity of women's experiences and identities, including intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, can create barriers to access and engagement in WOPs. Economic and class-based barriers, such as transportation and entrance fees, can also limit the accessibility of these spaces for some women. Environmental factors, such as poor maintenance and lack of green space, can further impact women's park use. The impact of WOPs on surrounding neighbourhoods, including gentrification and displacement, is another concern .

Finally, the evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of WOPs is crucial in determining their success in promoting safety, inclusivity, and community building.
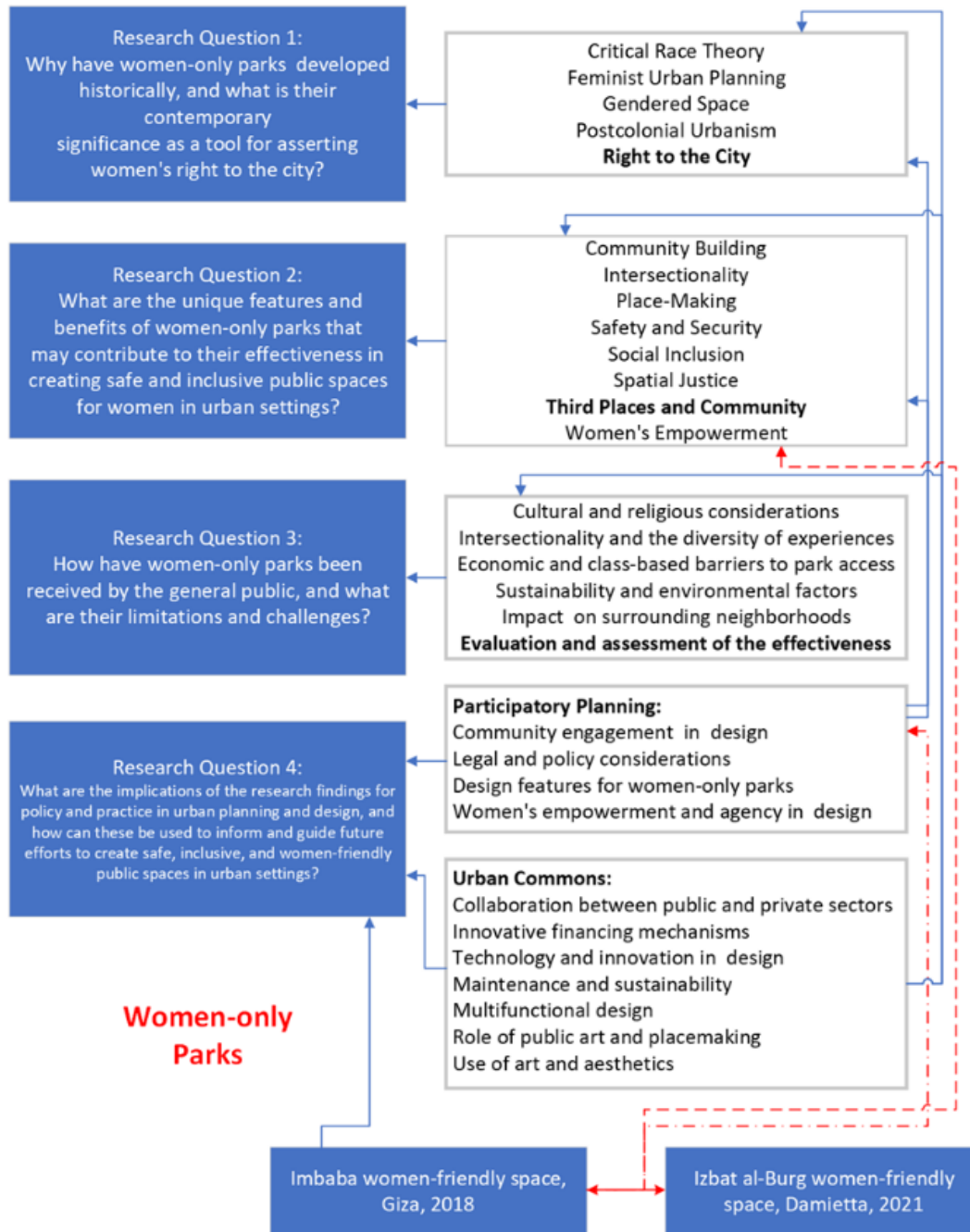
Figure 6. The research findings

− RQ4. Implications for policy and practice

The research findings have significant implications for policy and practice in urban planning and design, particularly with regard to creating safe, inclusive, and women-friendly public spaces in urban settings. Participatory planning can be used as a tool to engage communities and increase their participation in park design, which can ensure that women's needs and preferences are adequately addressed. Legal and policy considerations for WOPs should be examined to ensure that these parks do not perpetuate gender-based discrimination or violate any laws or regulations.

Design features for WOPs should be carefully considered, taking into account safety, accessibility, and the specific needs of different groups of women, such as those with disabilities. Women's empowerment and agency in park design should also be promoted, enabling women to have a say in the design and management of their own public spaces.

The concept of urban commons can also be explored to promote collaboration between public and private sectors in park design and management. Innovative financing mechanisms for women-only park projects can be explored, including public-private partnerships, crowdfunding, and impact investing. Technology and innovation can be used in park design to promote sustainability, safety, and accessibility.

Maintenance and sustainability of WOPs should be considered to ensure their long-term viability, including the use of multifunctional design that promotes a variety of activities and experiences. The role of public art and placemaking in WOPs should also be explored to enhance their aesthetic appeal and create a sense of community. Finally, the use of art and aesthetics in women-only park design can help to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all women.

10. The State of Women-Friendly Spaces in Egypt

In Egypt, the establishment of WFSs explicitly designated for women has gained momentum as part of the broader initiative known as Safe City for Women. These spaces, designed to ensure safety and accessibility for women, aim to enhance their physical and social well-being. WFSs offer a sanctuary for women to relax, socialize, and exercise without the fear of harassment or discrimination, fostering a sense of community and empowerment. The analysis of WFSs reveals the following key findings.

Firstly, the positive sentiment expressed by visitors in online photos, coupled with the pride and satisfaction conveyed by government officials and community leaders, suggests that WFSs are likely to be well-received by the community. Moreover, the absence of negative sentiment in the photos further supports this notion.

Secondly, the diverse participation of women of various ages in activities and amenities suggests that WFSs have the potential to promote both physical and social well-being. The availability of amenities such as playgrounds, seating areas, and theatres encourages physical activity and improved health outcomes. The social interactions observed in the photos can also foster social connections and enhance mental well-being.

Lastly, the sense of community and connection expressed by visitors in online photos indicates that WFSs could positively impact community development. These spaces can serve as venues for community events and gatherings, nurturing a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

It is important to acknowledge that the research findings are based on a limited sample of online photos and may not represent the experiences and opinions of all visitors. Furthermore, content and sentiment analysis have their limitations. Therefore, caution should be exercised in interpreting the findings, and further research, including surveys and interviews with WFS visitors, is needed to validate and expand upon these findings.

However, the analysis suggests that women-friendly spaces in Egypt primarily focus on promoting community engagement and social cohesion rather than functioning solely as recreational parks for women. These spaces are typically smaller in size and serve as community hubs where women can socialize, learn new skills, and participate in diverse activities. The Safe City for Women initiative aims to create safe and inclusive spaces that empower women. These women-friendly spaces provide a platform for women to connect, share experiences and concerns, and contribute to building a more equitable society. Despite their smaller scale, these spaces can play a significant role in advancing women's empowerment.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study draws upon a theoretical framework and a collective case study to explore the role of physical design in WOPs as a form of Third Place and a means of asserting women's right to the city. The research examines the key features that contribute to the success of WOPs in attracting and accommodating women, including community engagement, programming, landscaping, accessibility, lighting, proximity to amenities, clear signage, maintenance, and upkeep, as well as surveillance and security measures. Furthermore, the study acknowledges potential challenges and limitations associated with WOPs, including concerns of discrimination and reinforcing gender segregation. It addresses these

criticisms by exploring strategies for designing and implementing women-friendly parks in a manner that fosters inclusivity and caters to women from diverse backgrounds, emphasizing their role as part of a broader strategy to promote gender equality within urban spaces. The study presents several specific recommendations based on its findings.

1. Incorporate gender mainstreaming principles into the design and management of public parks to ensure they meet the diverse needs of all users, including women, men, and other marginalized groups.

2. Engage women in the decision-making process for the design and management of public parks to ensure that their needs and perspectives are taken into account.

3. Address the root causes of harassment and violence against women in public spaces by providing education, awareness-raising, and prevention programs.

4. Ensure that women-friendly parks are accessible and welcoming to everyone, regardless of gender, age, ability, or socio-economic status.

5. Promote community engagement and participation in the management and programming of public parks to foster a sense of ownership and belonging.

6. Provide adequate lighting, signage, surveillance, and security measures to enhance the safety and security of public parks.

7. Ensure that public parks are well-maintained and regularly monitored to ensure their continued success and sustainability.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes:

[1] Tehran's Mother's Paradise is a park for women only. Women's parks are defined by the Tehran Municipality as green, secure public spaces that allow for leisure activities and social interactions for women.

[2] Rosens Roda Matta park has been designed with and for girls. Surveys showed that leisure activities are mostly used by young men and boys. An advocacy group was formed to enhance local young women and girls' participation in the design process.

[3] A new law was passed on June 4th, 2014, criminalising sexual harassment for the first time in modern Egyptian history. Sexual harassment that is verbal, physical, behavioural, phone-based, or online

is punishable by a prison sentence of six months to five years and a fine of up to LE 50,000. Sexual harassment is a serious and pervasive issue in Egypt. While patriarchy permeates society, this law is considered as the first step towards addressing the issue [61].

[4] For example, La Femme Beach Marina North Coast is a private beach for ladies made specifically for them. It is located at Al-Alamin, near the 98 kilos, and is more than a beach. It is available for ladies to come any time they want to enjoy their time and opens from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. The policies of the beach include no pictures, bags searched at the gate, and male children with a maximum age of 8 years, over 8 years are not allowed to maintain privacy. It is considered one of the beaches in Egypt that helps women enjoy the sea in freedom and have fun as much as possible. (La Femme Beach - Perfect Destination for Ladies Only - Visit Guide, 2021).

[5] Āḫbār Ālywm (Akhbar Elyom) is a daily Egyptian newspaper and news website.
Ālbwābï (Al Bawaba) is a news website that covers news and events in the Middle East and North Africa region.
Ālāhrām (Al-Ahram) is a daily Egyptian newspaper and news website that is state-owned.
Ālmṣry Ālywm (Al-Masry Al-Youm) is a daily independent newspaper in Egypt.
Ālwfd (Al-Wafd) is an Arabic-language daily newspaper in Egypt.
Āldstwr (Dostor) is a daily independent newspaper in Egypt.
Mṣrāwy (Masrawy) is a news website that covers news and events in Egypt and the Middle East.
Ālywm Ālsābʿ (Youm7) is a daily Egyptian newspaper with an online presence.
Egypt Independent is a weekly English-language news website based in Egypt.
Note: The Arabic names of the newspapers and news websites have been transliterated using the system of the International Journal of Middle East Studies.

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Appendix A

Themes and codes extractions from dataset using ATLAS.ti
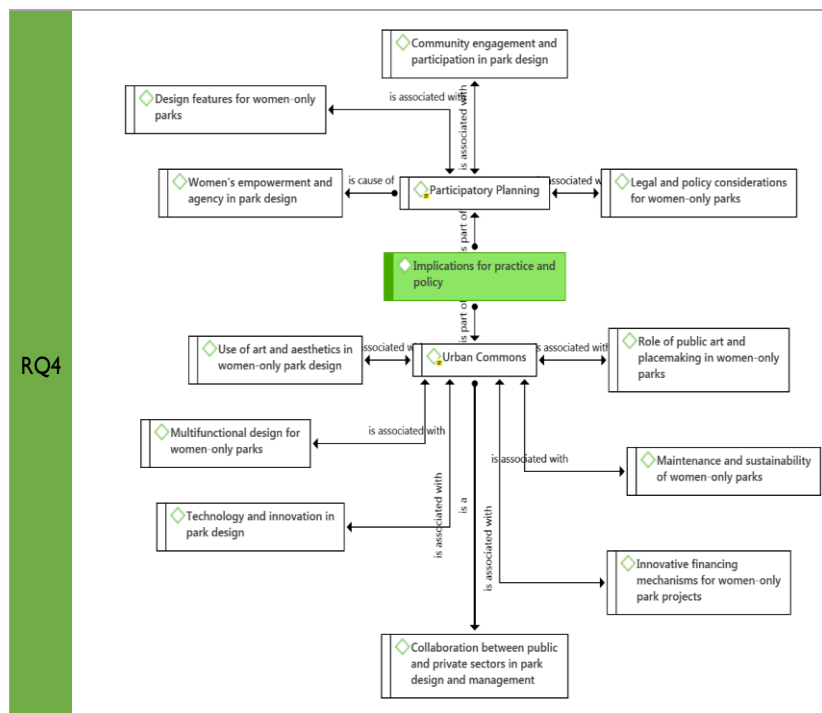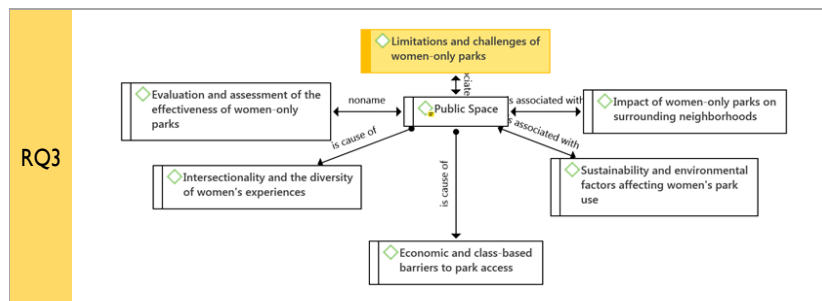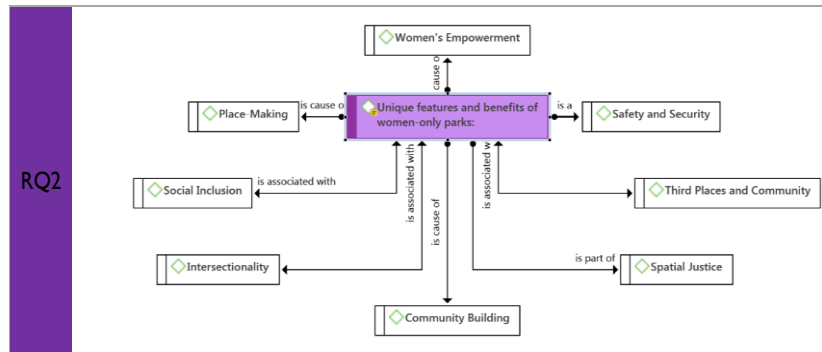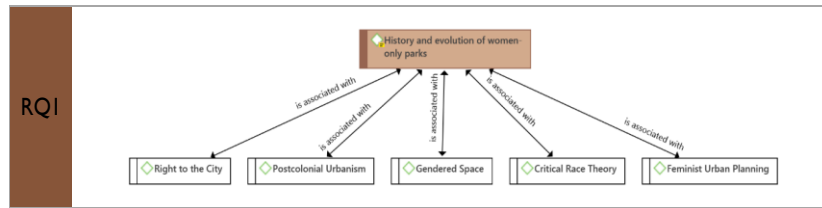
Appendix B

A composite image of the visual content analysis using ATLAS.ti