

A
Manifesto
for the
Just City



Edited by
Roberto Rocco & Caroline Newton

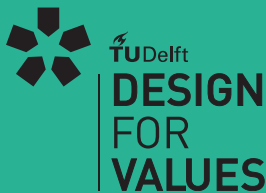


**A
MANIFESTO
FOR THE
JUST CITY**

COLOPHON

02 // - A MANIFESTO FOR THE JUST CITY 2021

EDITED BY ROBERTO ROCCO & CAROLINE NEWTON.



This workshop and lecture series took place online over four days in October 2021. Representatives from 106 universities around the world took place in the discussion. 256 students from 48 universities submitted a Manifesto.

This activity was supported by the Delft Design for Values Institute (DDfV), the TU Delft platform discussing values in design and engineering.

<https://www.delftdesignforvalues.nl>

This is the second **Call for a Manifesto for the Just City** organised by **TU Delft**, now joined by the **Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS)** of the **Erasmus University Rotterdam**, the **Winston-Salem State University** of North Carolina, US, the **University of Illinois at Urban Champaign**, US, the **Morgan State University** of Baltimore, US, and the **Cape Peninsula University of Technology** of Cape Town, South Africa, and a host of universities around the world who took up this exercise as a course exercise. The results of the first Call for a Manifesto were published by TU Delft OPEN and are available at: <https://books.open.tudelft.nl/>

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A RADICAL MANIFESTO

ASMA MEHAN

UNIVERSITY OF PORTO, PORTUGAL

BOUCHRA TAFRATA

WILLY BRANDT SCHOOL OF

PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF

ERFURT, ERFURT, GERMANY

SALMA TABI

KEIO UNIVERSITY, TOKYO, JAPAN

VLADAN KLEMENT

CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

A Radical Manifesto

"الحنين [...] أنينُ البيوت المدفونة تحت المستعمرات"
(محمود درويش، في حضرة الغياب، ٢٠٠٦)

"Longing [...] is the groaning of homes buried beneath settlements"
(Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*, 2006)

Radical Prompts



For a long time, academic institutes stigmatized activism and dissociated it from academic practice. It was looked down upon and considered to be disruptive and western institutes continued silencing critical thinking and practice, and encouraged what they named 'critical distance'. These practices of exclusion must push us, city inhabitants, to ask: what is the point of excluding activism from academic practice? How can we bridge between theory and activism? How can we decenter city planning? If cities belong to the people, why are public authorities trying to erase the public's print in the urban realm? Who gets to speak and why?

In our group as the 'Radicals', we discussed the gap between urban theory and practice, while encouraging the audience to reflect on how urban concepts adopt multiple definitions within different geographies and communities.

Our discussion on the heterogeneity of the public space, particularly in the global south, shed light on how the diverse public interactions and multiculturalism compose the urban environment. Besides, these discussions that take the shape of urban narratives, remind us of the importance of the socio-spatial and cultural elements that compose and affect various communities' lives. Thus, cities in the true sense are radical; which reflect on the local and its interdependence with the global (Glocalisation). Now, how can we build a just city where we celebrate heterogeneity, diversity and radical inclusivity?

Excerpt from *In Praise of the Margin* Podcast. Ruminations on the Built Environment and Modern Heritage with Asma Mehan:



We should understand the colonial past, the dominant groups and the cultural differences. To be able to understand how citizens use the public space differently. The notions of 'visible/invisible' have a different meaning in non-western contexts. This allows us to question the usefulness of the western theorization of 'public space'. There is a need to employ a different set of references and language to be able to analyse the spaces and potentially other non-western cities. However, these are just initial steps towards decolonising our thinking.



Authors

Asma Mehan, CITTA Research Institute, University of Porto, Faculty of Engineering (FEUP), Portugal.

Bouchra Tafrata, Independent Researcher, Berlin.

Vladan Klement, Czech Academy of Science, Prague.

Salma Tabi, Keio University, Tokyo.

Acknowledgement

This Manifesto was initially part of the larger group at the TU Delft Workshop including the two groups of *The Informals* (El Ghamari, Khodabakhsh, Belkadi, Cheddadi, and Ray) and *The Radicals* (Mehan, Tafrata, Klement, and Tabi).

من أجل مدينة متاحة للجميع

For a Just City

Asma

I think the just city is **Radically Inclusive**. Radical inclusivity assumes an infinity of the universe; it assumes progress and constant change—also a change of hierarchies. There is a horizon of the whole, but there is no process of unification. On the urban scale, the city is the best environment to test the notion of radical inclusivity, since its space is 'naturally' used by a diverse range of people. Thinking about diversity of lived experiences and therefore intersectionality which aims to further define the human experience as a product of identity is an integral part of understanding radical inclusivity.

A just city is based on **equity**, providing fair opportunities for the marginalised and unprecedented communities to foster a socially diverse and inclusive society in different sections such as education, governance and industry. Considering the dominant Western hegemony in different fields especially in the humanities and social sciences, it is difficult to make sure that both researchers and the research outcomes are **decolonized**. I would like to consider the decolonizing approach as an 'ontological turn', one that relies more on the materiality of knowledge where my argument is not so much about hedging the decolonial as methodological but as an empirical exercise, with a greater bearing in generating '**knowledge as practice**'.

Za spravedlivé město

Bouchra

In this era of constant commodification of space, housing, amenities, and the urban experience, where can we find places in the city which can function outside of this growth-driven system? Where is the social and the human element in cities? Where can we build communities and how can we build and organize communities in cities?

I believe a just city is **collaborative** and **communal**. The constant commodification of experiences in cities is turning the urban realm into a market space, where monopolies, real estate speculators and repressive authorities continue to shape the urban experience.

The heterogeneity of cities enables community-building. As an immigrant in the West, I longed for community, a sense of home and familiarity. The exclusion of individuals from the public space and the restrictions in regards to private gatherings during the current COVID-19 pandemic amplified the alienation of individuals in the city. Humans need each other to survive. Care is not an optional element. It is crucial for a healthy well-being. **A just city is planned with empathy and accommodates all bodies and their needs. A just city is built around solidarity.**



Vladan

City as a built environment is not a vacuum, a morally empty space. The way how cities are planned, designed and ruled is determined by the morality of those in power. The city of the future should not be divided into two antagonists - those who rule and those who are being ruled.

Because those in power transmit their morality on all citizens, there is need for the first imperative:

The citizens should be informed all the time about the actions made by the rulers when they project their morality into the city design. This means – it is absolutely inappropriate for the rulers to set “invisible” barriers, which are about to change the moral and political behavior of the citizens.

The future city should be shaped by citizens in favor of all citizens. To ensure that all citizens can benefit from the city life, the planning and design should all the time be focused on the weakest in the city. Once the weakest are doing well, everyone less weak is doing well as well. In the context of cities, there is need for the second imperative:

The city should change that way that the weak, poor, disabled and marginalized citizens are in the center of planning. In praxis it means pedestrian city without level barriers for disabled – this means the city can be used by everyone. For further routes there should be free, reliable and accessible public transportation. The public space should be designed that way so that it is focused on children, women and marginalized people. Once those groups feel comfortable and safe in the public space, everyone in the city feels safe.

City of the future is not just a city. It is a Just city.

Salma

The following is based on my personal experience of being an international student residing in Japan for four years. Japanese society is rather homogeneous, and urban spaces are designed according to codes of behavior proper to Japanese culture. However, I have never felt excluded or marginalized. It feels natural and easy to be in Japanese public spaces. Although I can identify several social and cultural factors beyond space design that contribute to shaping such an experience, I think that designing and managing urban spaces in a way that satisfies basic human needs such as safety, accessibility, cleanliness, and convenience, naturally invites people of diverse cultural backgrounds. **Creating multicultural spaces is a fundamental condition for a just city**, because it is an indication that human beings are respected in all their forms of existence.

Indeed, I find that a just city is one that **respects your time, your independence, your needs, and your limits**. Accessibility is at the core of designing shared spaces and public transportation, making movement and participation in public life seamless and easy, whether you are dragging heavy suitcases, using a cane, riding a wheelchair, or six years old. Accessibility is freedom. I do not presume to fully grasp what it takes to realize a just city, but perhaps Japanese cities are a valuable model to learn from.



AN ONLINE EXPERIENCE



A SMALL SILVER-LINING

At the time of edition of this book, the pandemic was still a concern, but many countries seemed to be emerging from two dark years of lockdowns, masking and vaccination campaigns, botched by disinformation and a growing “freedom of choice” movement, which sees interference by the State as a threat to individual freedom, even when this interference is connected to public health and the common good. Paradoxically, the United States Supreme Court seems poised to overturn “Roe versus Wade”, the landmark legal decision which ensured the right of access to abortions and reproductive rights in the US, imposing a state ban on women’s individual right to control their own bodies and their own reproductive rights. China is still battling the pandemic, after largely having contained it. North Korea is facing its most disastrous public health crisis, thanks to a virtually inexistent public health service. The eyes of the world have largely turned to the war in Ukraine, unjustly and unjustifiably invaded by Russia on the poor pretext of “liberating the country from Nazism”. In all these topics, the issue of TRUTH seems to be central. What is truth, and can we get to it? Most crucially, can we get to some sort of collective or shared truth? This workshop was an exercise in vision-making and consensus-building across cultures and political realities, seeking an answer to the question: What does the Just City look like? Thanks to our new found eagerness to connect with people across the world using communication platforms like Zoom, we are able to work on building consensus and imagining a different world together.

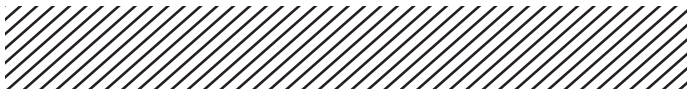


“YOU HAVE STOLEN MY DREAMS AND MY CHILDHOOD WITH YOUR EMPTY WORDS. AND YET I’M ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES. PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING. PEOPLE ARE DYING. ENTIRE ECOSYSTEMS ARE COLLAPSING. WE ARE IN THE BEGINNING OF A MASS EXTINCTION, AND ALL YOU CAN TALK ABOUT IS MONEY AND FAIRY TALES OF ETERNAL ECONOMIC GROWTH. HOW DARE YOU!,, *UN CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT, NEW YORK, 23 SEPT 2019.*



GRETA THUNBERG’S MURAL IN SAN FRANCISCO (USA), BY ARGENTINIAN ARTIST ANDRÉS IGLESIAS

PHOTO BY ASLIHAN ALTIN ON UNSPLASH,
[HTTPS://UNSPLASH.COM/PHOTOS/V17XPPUKRBY](https://unsplash.com/photos/v17xppukrby), UNSPLASH LICENCE



THANK YOU.



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CONTACT

Address

**Faculty of Architecture & the Built
Environment/ TU Delft**
Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL, Delft,
The Netherlands

Email

Spatialplanning-BK@tudelft.nl

Online

Websites: <http://www.globalurbanlab.org>
<https://just-city.org>
<https://spatial-justice.org>
