Ex-Post Evaluation Framework for Intersectional Bottom-Up Regeneration Process of Public Spaces: Learning from a Youth Empowerment Experience

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Abstract. This contribution presents an ex-post evaluation of the Girls Make the City! project, an initiative launched in Brussels to explore the potential of young women's empowerment in inclusive urban regeneration. Situated at the intersection of feminist practices, participatory spatial transformation, and critical pedagogy, the project aimed to amplify the voice and agency of adolescent girls in a structurally marginalised neighborhood. The analysis employed an evolutionary evaluation approach grounded in theoretical principles of intersectionality, Theory of Change, and realistic evaluation. A qualitative framework was reconstructed ex-post by analysing the case study. Six key evaluative criteria emerged: active engagement of diverse groups, collective re-signification of public space, transferability of acquired competences, emergence of cross-group dialogues and alliances, durability of spatial transformation, and urban care practices. These dimensions reflect transformative mechanisms relevant for equity-oriented urban policies. The project demonstrates how feminist and participatory practices can serve as effective levers for urban regeneration, advancing spatial justice and inclusion. The adoption of adaptive and context-sensitive evaluation frameworks is essential to make visible the social and cultural impacts of such initiatives and to inform future urban strategies.

Keywords: Evolutionary Evaluation (EE) · Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE) · Spatial Justice · Intersectionality approach · Urban Inequalities

1 Introduction

Public spaces are not static backdrops, but dynamic arenas shaped by economic dynamics, policy interventions and lived experiences [1, 2]. As cities undergo rapid transformation, inequalities are increasing, and sustainability challenges are becoming increasingly complex. Urban planning faces the task of creating spaces that are not only safe and accessible but also genuinely inclusive, to respond to the diverse needs of inhabitants, while reducing exclusion through a lens of spatial justice [3, 4]. In this complex context, innovative evaluation frameworks are essential for capturing the intersecting factors that

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O. Gervasi et al. (Eds.): ICCSA 2025 Workshops, LNCS 15893, pp. 406–422, 2026.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-97645-2_26

shape urban experiences, including gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status (and more) and which cause a systemic invisibility of certain groups in urban spaces [5–7]. Integrating the evolutionary evaluation approach within an intersectional framework [8, 9] becomes crucial in understanding, defining and addressing this phenomenon.

This paper addresses a key gap in urban studies and the evaluation tools for sustainability: the lack of systematic evaluation frameworks that meaningfully incorporate youth experiences, especially from a gendered and intersectional lens [9]. While feminist urbanism and intersectionality have enriched critical discussions on urban inequality [8, 10–13], few studies explore how young people can shape urban regeneration through participatory, evaluative processes. By exploring these themes, the research contributes to a broader reflection on the specific tools and methods that can foster greater youth engagement in decision-making processes through an empowerment approach [14]. The overall reflection aims to understand how urban public spaces can be designed, managed, and transformed in a more inclusive and pluralistic way [15].

The theoretical foundation for this research is anchored in four interrelated frameworks: feminist urbanism, participatory design, intersectionality and spatial justice. Feminist urbanism critiques traditional urban planning paradigms that marginalise women's experiences and advocates for inclusive, equitable urban spaces [11, 13]. Participatory design, meanwhile, emphasises the democratisation of urban planning through the active involvement of community members, ensuring that those directly affected by urban policies have a meaningful role in shaping their environments [16, 17]. The intersectional approach, as defined by Crenshaw [9], allows for the examination of overlapping identities, such as gender, age, ethnicity and socio-economic status, compound experiences of marginalisation: an essential perspective to understanding the challenges faced by young women in urban contexts. Finally, the concept of spatial justice frames the discussion by focusing on how the equitable distribution of urban resources and a different way of imagining decision-making processes can either reinforce or mitigate social inequalities [4, 7].

Each of these four fields is widely recognised by the scientific community as crucial for understanding and addressing urban inequalities [10]. However, the relationships among these concepts remain complex and are the subject of ongoing debate, with no clear or commonly agreed-upon framework. Integrating these perspectives to make decision-making processes affecting urban spaces more inclusive from an intersectional standpoint is still an open challenge. The systemic nature of these interconnections is difficult to translate into effective practices, especially in the context of public policies or regeneration processes that aim to meaningfully engage marginalised social groups, especially young people [18]. To date, there is still a notable lack of evaluation frameworks specifically dedicated to these issues, capable of assessing their impact and guiding urban transformation toward greater equity.

The research centres on two key-questions: (kq1) why is it essential to address intersectionality and youth empowerment in urban regeneration? (kq2) how can evaluation practices support more inclusive transformation processes?

To investigate this, the paper examines "Girls Make the City!" (GMtC!) [19], a participatory urbanism initiative in Brussels developed in response to a municipal call to reduce gender disparities in planning. The project offers a valuable case study for

exploring how young women can become central actors in shaping public space through co-creation and empowerment strategies. In doing so, it disrupts top-down urbanism and reframes inclusion as a tool for both equity and innovation [20]. The goal of GMtC! is to cultivate environments where young women not only feel safe but also become key actors in shaping the future of specific public spaces in the city. This emphasis on inclusion and empowerment challenges traditional approaches in urban planning, opening a discourse that focuses on equity and sustainable transformation [21].

Adopting an Impact Evaluation as a learning process approach [22, 23], this research proposes an ex-post impact evaluation grounded in a concrete case study and developed in dialogue with the creators of the GMtC! project. The evaluation framework is theory-based [24, 25], focusing on reconstructing the mechanisms of change activated by the project to achieve long-term positive outcomes. Additionally, the overall methodology draws on Evolutionary Evaluation (EE) [26], which is particularly well-suited to capturing the dynamic, non-linear, and multi-actor nature of urban change.

Through this process of mutual learning [27], it was possible not only to recognise the value of GMtC! within the broader landscape of intersectionality and youth empowerment policies, but also identify the generative mechanisms that were activated and can be replicated in other contexts, and to hypothesise the potential dimensions of social and cultural impact. The framework developed aims to reflect the complexity of lived urban experiences and to highlight the transformative potential of the intersectional bottom-up regeneration process.

The paper is articulated in the following sections: Sect. 2 is dedicated to materials and methods, describing the methodology and the case study; Sect. 3 presents the results, considering the analysis of the case study, constructing an evaluative lens and mechanism, criteria and upscaling; Sect. 4 describes the conclusions and final reflections.

2 Materials and Methods

Rather than applying a predefined evaluation model to assess the program's performance, a case-based framework [28, 29] was constructed that could co-evolve alongside the analysis itself, in alignment with the principles of Evolutionary Evaluation (EE).

EE is a methodological paradigm developed to accompany the ongoing development of programs [26]. Unlike traditional evaluation models that are linear and static, EE is based on a dynamic approach of continuous learning, deeply rooted in complexity theory [30, 31]. This approach is aligned with the theoretical contributions of Funnell and Rogers [32], who integrated EE with tools from Program Theory [33] and Theory of Change [25], emphasising the need for a flexible yet specific and situated structure that still maintains internal logical coherence. By adopting a mixed-methods approach [34] to impact evaluation that integrates Theory-Based and Realistic approaches [31], it becomes possible to prioritise the identification of the impact dimensions generated by an urban process, with particular attention to CMO configurations. This involves clarifying the causal links and synergistic relationships between the operational context (C), the mechanisms (M) of change that have been activated, and the outcomes (O) observed or expected [33].

The methodology adopted proved to be particularly well-suited for evaluating interventions that are emergent, non-linear, and embedded within real-time learning cycles.

Specifically, the GMtC! case study represents a bottom-up regeneration initiative that engaged young women in a process characterised by clearly defined initial goals, but high uncertainty regarding effective outcomes. In this field-based research context, evaluation became a reflective and formative act [34, 35], more closely aligned with practices of social inquiry than with tools of accountability or metrics-based impact measurement. Given that the research focused on inclusivity and spatial justice, it was deemed essential to build a methodological process open to reflection and direct engagement with both the case context and the actors involved. This approach provided crucial insights into the complexity of the processes, allowed for a more accurate identification of the subjectivities involved, and helped avoid reproducing patterns of exclusion and power asymmetries, often embedded within evaluation practices themselves [36].

The recursive and incremental evaluation methodology made it possible to "attribute value" [37] to unexpected social and cultural dynamics - no longer interpreted as programmatic failures to be corrected, but as meaningful elements of the broader system [38]. Evaluation, when applied to complex processes that integrate goals of spatial transformation with objectives of positive social change [39, 40], can contribute to the elicitation of collective and shared values [41, 42] and the emergence of subjectivities that were previously excluded or marginalised [43]. From this perspective, the goal is not merely to determine whether a project "worked," but to understand "what works and how" [44]: the values generated through the process, the changes it initiated, and the capacities it developed within a broader ecology of transformation.

2.1 The Case Study

This research was initially developed to evaluate the outcomes and impacts generated by the GMtC! initiative as part of a thesis for the U-RISE Second-Level Master's Program (IUAV University of Venice). The project was initially launched in response to a public call by the Ville de Bruxelles, aimed at supporting youth participation in public space design. Several local associations working with young people, situated in the Marolles neighbourhood, responded to the call. The initiative brought together a diverse group of young women, aged between 14 and 18, to co-design and activate public space interventions. Their involvement reflected both a response to the structural exclusion of youth and gender-diverse bodies from urban space and an opportunity to build new narratives of belonging, visibility, and empowerment.

The ex-post impact evaluation was designed to critically reflect on a complex and evolving participatory urban process, seeking to understand how young women's presence and agency were mobilised in the public space of Brussels through this initiative. The *GMtC!* project was selected as a case study because its objectives, methods, and context aligned closely with our research questions, which explore the intersection of youth empowerment, gender, and urban transformation. The initiative stood out for its explicit focus on feminist urbanism and its attempt to challenge structural exclusions in public space through participatory design. Its open and adaptive nature made it suitable for testing an evaluative approach rooted in complexity and intersectionality. The engagement with the case began after the project had formally concluded, which shaped

both the scope and structure of our evaluation process. We approached it retrospectively, analysing its trajectory and outcomes to construct a critical and contextualised understanding of its impacts.

The case study reconstruction served as a foundational moment: by chronologically and thematically mapping the phases of the initiative, from its inception and partnership-building to the selection and engagement of participants, and finally to the public restitution of their spatial interventions, we could identify its key components and underlying goals. To reconstruct the development of the initiative and its broader context, we undertook a process of qualitative data collection and systematisation. This included an in-depth analysis of project documentation, namely official reports, public communications and visual material, as well as informal interviews with the project initiators. These materials offered insight into both the organisational dimension and the lived experiences of the young participants, allowing us to trace the project's trajectory and unpack the socio-political dynamics it engaged with.

2.2 The Methodological Workflow

The evaluative approach has been elaborated not to offer a fixed model or to extract replicable indicators. Rather, it sought to accompany the complexity of the initiative, acknowledging that its value lies as much in the process as in the results. By adopting an evolutionary perspective, we embrace the project's open nature while offering a structured yet flexible methodology to interrogate its outcomes (Fig. 1).

Starting from the above premise, the analysis proceeded through three interconnected phases:

1) *Analysis of the Case Study*: reconstructed the initiative's development through interviews and document analysis, which allowed us to situate the project within its institutional and socio-spatial context and to foreground the voices of its young protagonists.
2) *Constructing an Evaluative Lens*: articulated the theoretical framework underpinning our evaluation, drawing on four interrelated lenses: feminist urbanism, participatory design, intersectionality, and spatial justice. These perspectives enabled us to make sense of the project not only in terms of its procedural innovation but also through the power relations it sought to shift and the spatial imaginaries it activated.
3) *Mechanism, Criteria and Upscaling*: applied the evaluative framework to assess the project's capacity for transformation. Importantly, the criteria used were not drawn from pre-established models but were instead developed in response to the specific trajectory and character of GMtC! project.

As we reconstructed the project's evolution and defined its theoretical framing, key areas of analysis emerged organically, such as intersectionality, the depth of youth participation, and the spatial dimensions of transformation. These criteria were shaped through an iterative dialogue between the material collected and the conceptual lenses we adopted, allowing us to situate the project within broader discussions of feminist urban practices and intersectional empowerment.

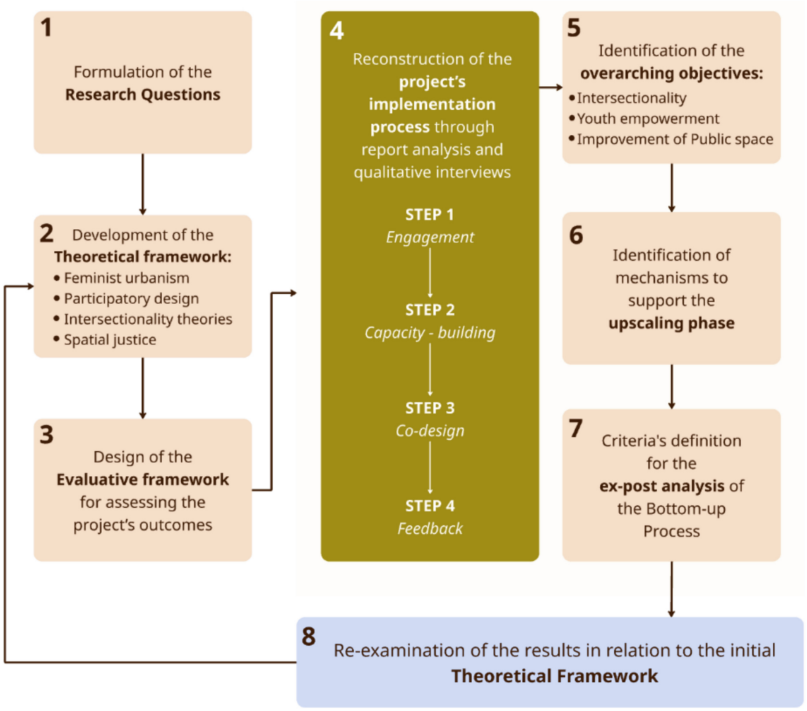

Fig. 1. The evaluation problem setting.

3 Results

3.1 Analysis of the Case Study

The evaluation started with the reconstruction of the entire project's process, both in chronological terms and its activities, starting from the municipal call to the analysis carried out by the associations at the end of the event.

The "Girls Make the City!" (https://girlsmakethecity.com/) project was conceived in response to a call for proposals launched by the Municipality of Brussels in 2021, within the framework of the "Equal Brussels" program (Fig. 2).

The call aimed to support local initiatives promoting gender equality and social inclusion through innovative approaches to urban transformation. The project, developed by the two associations of ZIJkant and Wetopia, focused on adolescent girls as both subjects and agents of urban change, intending to create a participatory pathway that linked everyday urban experiences with feminist and spatial practices. The initial design of the project reflected a deep awareness of the barriers young women face in accessing and appropriating public space. As outlined in the project proposal and reiterated in several interviews with organisers, the approach was intentionally process-oriented and grounded in feminist pedagogical principles. Rather than focusing on fixed outputs, the project prioritised relationships, collective learning, and the empowerment of participants through creative and critical engagement with their urban environment.



Fig. 2. The "Girls Make the City!" manifesto.

From this analysis, it was possible to identify four main phases of the GMtC! Project: 1) Engagement; 2) Capacity-building; 3) Co-design; 4) Feedback.

The first step involved outreach and recruitment, conducted in collaboration with local partners already active in the Marolles neighborhood. These included youth centers, schools and associations familiar with the social dynamics of the area. The goal was to create an inclusive and diverse group of adolescent girls between the ages of 14 and 18, representing a range of cultural backgrounds and life experiences. According to the facilitators, this initial phase was crucial for building trust and ensuring that the workshops would be perceived as a safe and welcoming space. The decision to work within familiar environments and to build existing relationships was seen as essential for reaching participants who might not otherwise engage in urban or civic initiatives. Once the group was formed, the project unfolded over several months through a series of weekly workshops and intensive sessions organized during school holidays.

The second part of the project sees the direct involvement of participants through different moments of activities. These workshops combined creative methods, urban analysis, and feminist consciousness-raising. Activities included collective mapping, photography, storytelling, and urban walks, through which the girls explored their everyday routes and spatial routines, identifying places where they felt safe, excluded, visible, or invisible. The practices served as a way of surfacing effective and embodied geographies, which often challenged dominant representations of public space. One facilitator described this phase as one of "mutual listening and emergence", where the adult team learned as much from the participants as the participants learned from the tools and methods provided. The data collected during this phase, including hand-drawn maps, annotated photographs, and recorded conversations, formed the basis for identifying spatial issues that mattered to the girls. These ranged from feelings of vulnerability in certain streets or squares to the lack of seating, lighting, or welcoming signs in spaces they frequented.

The third phase of the project focused on translating these observations into design proposals. Here, the co-design process was activated through workshops involving architects, designers, and artists. Participants were introduced to basic design tools and encouraged to envision how their ideas could take physical form. Instead of providing predefined solutions, facilitators supported the girls' own processes of ideation and experimentation. The co-design sessions emphasised collaboration, iteration, and play, allowing participants to explore various materials, forms, and messages. What emerged were diverse temporary and symbolic interventions, each shaped by the participants' priorities. Some proposals addressed spatial comfort, such as colourful benches or shade structures; others were more explicitly political, like signage that challenged gender norms or encouraged bystanders to reflect on the right to occupy space (Fig. 3). Throughout this phase, the girls retained a central role in decision-making. As one participant noted in a recorded reflection: "It was the first time someone asked me what I wanted in my neighbourhood and then helped me make it happen".



Fig. 3. Some photos from the event, taken during the workshop activities. Credits ZIJkant vzw (2022), "Girls Make The City!".

The final phase of the project involved realising and publicly presenting the co-designed interventions. With logistical and material support from the association and its partners, several proposals were implemented on-site in the Marolles neighborhood. These interventions, though temporary, changed the spatial narrative of the locations where they were installed. Their visibility also sparked conversations among passersby, residents, and municipal stakeholders.

The project culminated in a public event organised as both a celebration and an advocacy platform. During this event, the girls showcased their work through exhibitions, guided walks, and performances. City officials, community members, and representatives from other organisations were invited to witness the outcomes and hear directly from the participants. For many girls, this moment represented a powerful affirmation of their ability to contribute to urban life. As reflected in multiple interviews, the event was a symbolic closure and a political act of reclaiming visibility and recognition in spaces from which they often felt excluded.

3.2 Constructing an Evaluative Lens

The second phase of the evaluation process was dedicated to understanding how the theoretical framework, grounded as mentioned before in intersectionality, youth empowerment and spatial transformation, could be translated into project-specific criteria that could lead us in building an evaluative framework. This required a reflexive effort to bridge the analytical framework previously outlined with the lived, situated experience of the initiative. Rather than applying a pre-established evaluative grip, we engaged in a synoptic process, constructing our evaluative lens by closely reading the workshop dynamics, participants' outputs and our role in shaping the project's direction. Unlike traditional evaluation processes where indicators are defined ex-ante, the objective was to construct an evaluative framework ex-post, aligning the analysis with previously elaborated theoretical dimensions.

This process did not involve measuring pre-defined standard outcomes, but rather interpreting the project's goal implicitly pursued and identifying the mechanisms through which they were articulated and enacted. The work focused on critically reading the project's materials and reconstructing a coherent evaluative structure that could serve both as a tool for analysing this specific case and as a possible contribution to a broader, feminist-informed methodology for evaluating youth-centred urban projects.

The reconstruction of the actions implemented within the GMtC! project made it possible to identify three primary objectives, through which the main expected impact dimensions will be determined: Intersectionality; Youth Empowerment; Public Space Improvement.

Intersectionality emerged first and foremost in the project's attention to inclusion. The decision to work with a group of adolescent girls from diverse social and cultural backgrounds in a neighbourhood marked by structural marginality positioned the project within a logic of addressing urban inequality. While the project did not explicitly articulate an intersectional agenda, we observed how participatory mapping, photo exploration and storytelling created multiple entry points for expression. These approaches offered participants a variety of modes through which to voice their experiences and perspectives, which we interpreted as a meaningful engagement with difference.

Youth empowerment, as a second axis, was inferred through the structure and evolution of the activities. The project transitioned from moments of facilitation to more open-ended creative processes in which the girls defined themes, made collective decisions and expressed critical views on their environment. This process suggested a shift in agency from adult-led guidance to youth-led exploration.

The third dimension, Public Space Improvement, was reconstructed through an analysis of how the girls reinterpreted and reimagined the spaces of their neighbourhood. The materials reveal a shift from conventional spatial representations to personal, affective and political readings of space. These readings made visible areas of exclusion or discomfort. The use of alternative mapping techniques, creative renaming of places and public displays of critique and hope contributed to a re-signification of urban space. Our evaluative lens included a criterion related to symbolic and experiential transformation of space, as expressed through these situated practices.

In this evaluation framework, the project became a fertile site for testing the applicability of our theoretical framework. Through this ex-post reconstruction, we propose a

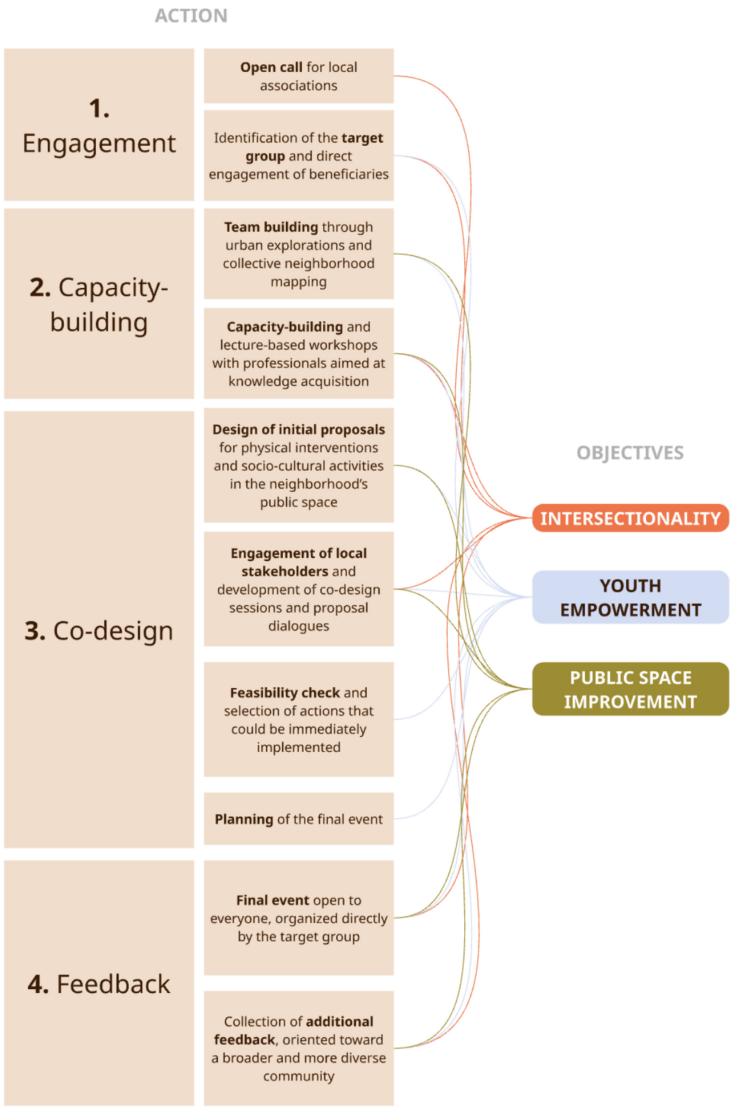

Fig. 4. Descriptive diagram of the relationship between the actions implemented in the GMtC! project and the objectives pursued.

model of evaluation that centres process, values plurality, and recognises the importance of contextual and relational dynamics in assessing urban co-creation projects involving young people. This retrospective construction of evaluative criteria required a delicate balance between remaining faithful to the specificity of the project and interpreting it through a broader theoretical lens. Our role was not to judge the project's success based on external standards, but to highlight how it enacted, consciously or not, principles aligned with feminist urban and youth-centred frameworks. By doing so, we aimed

to not only assess the project's impact but also contribute to the development of an evaluative methodology that is both critical and situated.

3.3 Mechanism, Criteria and Upscaling

Building upon the reconstruction of the project and the theoretical-practical dialogue established through our evaluative lens, this final section outlines the criteria that emerged through the analysis and reflects on their broader applicability. Rather than a discrete list detached from the lived process, these criteria are the results of a continuous interplay between the mechanism observed in the case study and the principles underpinning our theoretical framework. Their formulation is inherently situated and retrospective, constructed to illuminate how certain values and dynamics were activated throughout the project. The processual nature of our evaluation led to the identification of six interconnected criteria. Each encapsulates a mechanism observed from the analysis of the project while also pointing toward such dynamics that could be recognized, supported and scaled in future initiatives.

With reference to the previously introduced CMO configuration (CIT), the constructed framework reveals three primary dimensions of inquiry:

- Context (C): corresponds to the analysis of the GMtC! project and the identification of its key actions.
- Mechanisms (M): are deduced from the interplay between implemented actions and the identified operational contexts.
- Outcomes (O): represent the impacts directly linked to specific combinations of mechanisms and contexts.

Figure 3 depicts the relationship between the eight inferred mechanisms and the six criteria used to describe and evaluate the generated outcomes. For each criterion, the associated mechanism combinations are highlighted, and potential indicators for ex-post measurement of the GMtC! project are proposed.

Active engagement of a diverse target group emerged as a foundational dimension. The project's deliberate outreach to adolescent girls from different cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds in the Marolles neighbourhood exemplified this principle. Here, inclusivity was not only demographic but experiential, offering various modalities of expression to accommodate diverse forms of engagement. This aligns with feminist calls for plural forms of participation that recognise embodied and affective experiences [18]. The proposed indicator is a composite one: it considers not only the number and background of participants but also their active involvement across phases. From a policy perspective, this invites institutions to design programs that go beyond representation and actively cultivate conditions for differentiated participation to flourish.

Collective Re-signification of Public Space captures how symbolic and material urban transformation can be enacted through collaborative reflection and situated creativity. The project facilitated a shift in how participants perceived and narrated their neighbourhood, culminating in temporary interventions that redefined shared spaces. Indicators such as the number of micro-interventions and events can help trace the material footprint of these changes, but the deeper value lies in how participants re-imagined the urban landscape in ways that resonated with their needs and desires. This echoes

feminist urban scholarship that frames space as both a physical and political construct, constantly redefined through practices of occupation and making [1, 4]. Scaling this criterion requires supporting the use of creative, feminist and youth-driven tools that emphasise spatial narrative and agency.

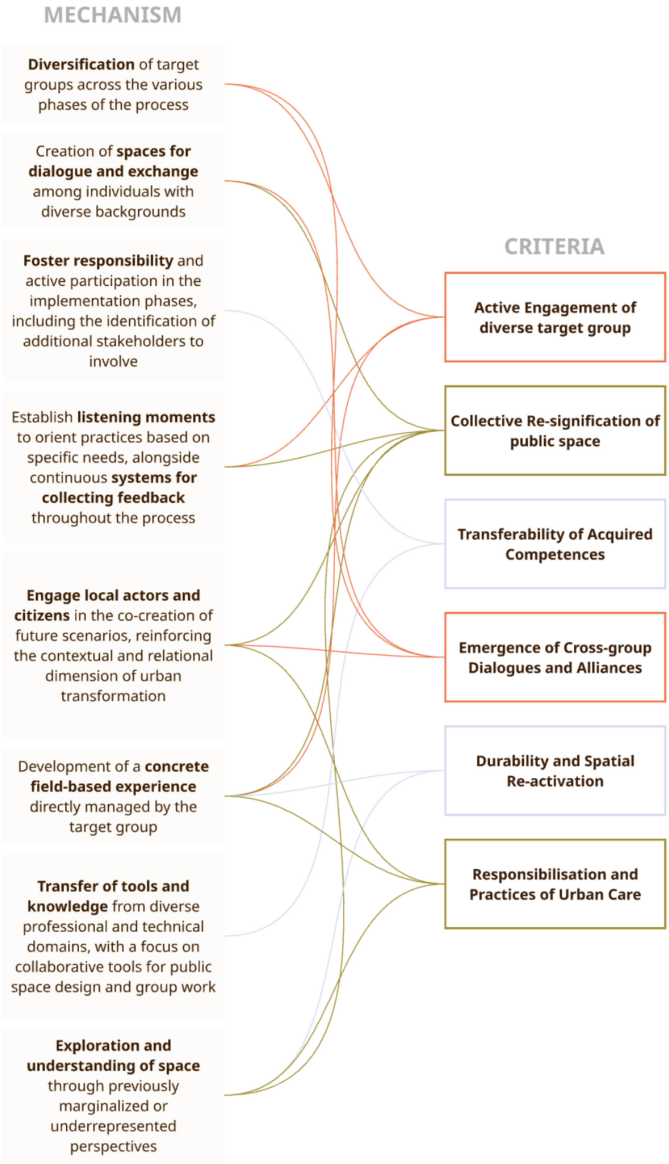

Fig. 5. Descriptive diagram of the relationship between the interpreted mechanisms of change and the six criteria identified for the ex-post impact evaluation.

Transferability of Acquired Competences points to how the project generated skills and forms of confidence that extended beyond its own timeline. Through interviews with participants, we could trace how some of the girls reactivated their learning in other contexts, be it school, civic engagement, or new creative expressions. While not all outcomes are immediately visible or quantifiable, this speaks to the potential of such projects to build longer-term capacities [18]. Institutions might consider incorporating follow-up moments into similar initiatives to track and support this diffusion over time.

"Emergence of Cross-group Dialogues and Alliances" is less a stated objective and could be more an unexpected outcome. Through shared activities and public presentation, the project fostered interactions between adolescents, community members, and professionals, some of which could led to the formation of informal networks or ongoing collaborations. This criterion emphasises the importance of relational infrastructure and the potential of temporary projects to seed more durable coalitions. Feminist and community planning literatures underline the importance of these alliances as forms of mutual learning and collective action [4]. In an upscaling perspective, municipalities could explore ways to support these emergent networks beyond the funding cycle.

"Durability and Spatial Re-activation" reflect on the legacy of the project in spatial terms: whether and how the spaces involved remain animated after the intervention. While the project's interventions were temporary by design, some sites continued to be used for informal gatherings or inspired further events. This suggests that even ephemeral acts of re-appropriation can generate longer-term resonance. Indicators might include continued activity in project spaces or new uses emerging in their wake. For future programs, this underscores the value of lightweight yet visible interventions capable of leaving an imprint on spatial practices [4].

"Responsabilisation and Practices of Urban Care" refers to the way participants engaged in direct actions of care toward their environment, from cleaning and decorating spaces to initiating conversations about their maintenance and meaning. These acts, while small, repositioned the girls not just as users but as co-stewards of public space. In terms of policy, embedding such practices in participatory urbanism can reshape the roles young people are allowed to play within governance frameworks, moving from passive recipients to active city makers [18].

While these criteria were constructed ex-post, their clarity and relevance highlight the potential of employing such a framework from the beginning. An ex-ante application, co-developed with participants, would allow future projects to align intentions, adapt methods, and reflect more systematically throughout their development. This would not only support more responsive evaluation but also deepen participants' agency in shaping the project itself [18]. In terms of generalisation, these criteria are not presented as universal metrics, but as generative heuristic tools to support reflection and adaptation across diverse contexts. Their strength lies in their openness and rootedness in situated practices. As such, they are particularly suited to contexts where urban interventions are shaped by complex social dynamics and where participatory processes aim to foreground the voices of marginalised youth.

4 Conclusions

This work has explored the "Girls Make the City!" project through the lens of an ex-post evaluation, highlighting its capacity to foster inclusive urban regeneration by centring intersectionality, youth empowerment, and participatory spatial transformation. Although the absence of an ex-ante evaluative framework presents limitations, the criteria constructed during the analysis, derived from the project documentation and participants' narratives, enabled critical reflection on the outcomes achieved. The Brussels iteration of the initiative demonstrates how targeted, community-driven actions can stimulate both symbolic and material change in the urban landscape, empowering young women to co-create futures. The project affirms that investing in the voices and agency of youth, particularly young women, is not only a matter of inclusion but also a strategic entry point to rethinking the city as a space of equity, identity, and collective belonging. In this sense, it directly answers our first research question (kq1): addressing intersectionality and youth empowerment is essential in urban regeneration because it fosters more grounded, transformative, and socially just spatial practices.

This research also offers actionable insights for policymakers and urban practitioners by critically reviewing and reconstructing evaluative criteria. It reinforces the idea that gender-sensitive urban regeneration is most effective when developed as a situated process, responsive to the unique socio-spatial dynamics of each place. The evaluation does not attempt to universalise its model but instead illustrates how feminist and intersectional approaches can be locally rooted while maintaining a transferable methodology. The cautious optimism around generalizability stems not from assumptions of scalability but from the replicability of its core values and tools, particularly the participatory methods that encourage deep engagement between youth, institutions, and urban space.

Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of establishing an adaptive evaluation framework from the outset. Participatory design is already widely recognised and applied in urban practice, and its inclusion here further supports its validity. However, our findings emphasise that the ability to assess the effectiveness, especially the transformative potential, of such interventions depends on the early definition of evaluative criteria. This directly addresses our second research question (kq2): evaluation practices can support more inclusive transformation processes when they are co-constructed, iterative, and sensitive to context. Ex-ante evaluation frameworks would enhance the ability to track impact over time and provide clearer indicators for replication and upscaling in future projects.

"Girls Make the City!" thus serves as a compelling case for how inclusive, feminist practices can act as a lever for urban regeneration. While further testing and adaptation are necessary to explore its broader applicability, the project exemplifies how youth empowerment can be meaningfully integrated into urban strategies. The small scale of the intervention and reliance on self-reported data constitute limitations, but the results already indicate a hopeful trajectory, one in which inclusive design and evolutionary evaluation frameworks become foundational to urban transformation. As cities continue to evolve, the lessons drawn from this initiative underscore the potential for participatory evaluation not only to measure change but to actively shape it.

Acknowledgements and Contributions. This research is an advancement of the master's thesis developed by Renata Boeri within the Urban Regeneration and Social Innovation (U.RISE) program at IUAV University of Venice, in collaboration with the independent research collective "Sex and The City. The research was subsequently further developed in collaboration with the Department of Architecture at the University of Naples Federico II.

The research was jointly framed and developed by the authors: Conceptualisation, R.B., P.Z., and M.C.; Methodology, P.Z. and M.C.; Fieldwork and Data Collection, R.B.; Formal Analysis, R.B.; Original Draft Preparation, R.B. and P.Z.; Review and Editing, R.B., P.Z. and M.C.; Supervision and Final Review, M.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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