

Gender Conscious Cities Preferred Practices for Gender Inclusive Public Space Design

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ABSTRACT: Urbanization is happening at a rapid pace in many parts of India and is posing many new challenges. Passing through a public space, which is supposed to be accessible to all, is a cause for great anxiety for many women and girls in urban areas. Gender-inclusive urban design is important because it deals with creating public spaces that enhance the feeling of safety and detract from features that cause the feeling of insecurity. The paper is a review of the academic research analysing the inclusiveness of cities based on the varying theoretical and practical methodologies in order to make public spaces more accessible and explore-able with a special focus on India. It dwells into the different approaches taken worldwide in order to achieve a gender consciousness. It documents the results of various steps taken regarding urban design and planning to improve women's conditions who are one of the most vulnerable groups of humankind, as identified by the United Nations. The global south can learn how to create or renovate places to gender inclusive spaces from the best efforts done in the western world. The paper summarizes the social, spatial and economic aspects of women's rights and accessibility to the city and on a conclusion enlists different approaches taken on a global level to make the cities inclusive and gender conscious as a whole while planning and designing.

Keywords Urbanization, Public Space, Perception of safety, Gender Inclusive Cities, Right to the City, Gender Equity, Safe Cities, Cultural Uses of Space.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid rate of urbanization is one of the biggest challenges of contemporary societies. The consequent growth of the economy and urban population generates the need for good urban

design and planning. Unplanned sprawl of the city and decades of car-centric urban design have resulted in spatial inequality and segregated communities in many contexts. Urban public spaces have an important role to play in urban development programs.

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

- **Jane Jacobs**, The Death, and Life of Great American Cities.

[16] The vision of UN-Habitat III aims for cities and settlements that promote civic engagement, participatory planning, engender a sense of belonging and possession among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and quality public spaces, cultural expressions, and political participation and foster social cohesion, inclusion and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met, recognizing the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations such as women, children, elderlies, etc. (“Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for all,” 2016)

[20] [6] Early approaches to urban planning and design have always been dominated by the male society, and all the decisions were taken for the healthy white male individuals making patriarchal suppositions about the women (Woodsworth, 2005). The basic unit for policies and urbanism was a family which was stereotyped where the private realm was made for the female members and the public realm was designed for men as they were the foremost bread earners of the family. This approach in the western world remained till the 1960s when the ‘second wave’ of

feminism came and started playing a role as well (Greed, 1994).

This review paper will summarise the different methods and approaches taken by urban designers, planners, architects, philosophers and artists in order to understand the different ways in which different genders use public spaces and the plight of the vulnerable gender in terms of accessibility and valiant maneuverer. Thereafter, an analysis of the distinctive successful approaches taken in order to take care of everyone's demands irrespective of caste, creed, age, Gender ethnicity, religion or gender. On reading the paper, one will have an unblemished picture of the methodologies and tools that are to be adopted in order to understand the urban fabric in terms of gendered usage.

II. BRIEF HISTORY REVIEW

Women have been one of the most vulnerable groups irrespective of the caste, creed, religion and location. A brief review of history and excerpts define how gender inequality in public spaces and otherwise has been an issue world over for years.

[7] The paper, "What a non - sexist city would look like?" published in 1980 stated how women started leaving homes in the United States to join the economic workforce, which accounted for approximately 38% in 1975 (Hayden, 1980). The number went up to 60% in 2014 which has led them to search for family caretakers which is one of the possible solutions for this problem. Old grandparents taking care of the kids, while the young generation is a part of the economic workforce is a trend which is noticed over the years in the United States.

[13] Even in the United Kingdom in the mid-1960's an economic reform shook the stability of all the jobs where jobs were decentralized and were now being overpowered by the women. The basic reason of this occurrence was that the female group constituted cheap labour and part time availability suited them and officials of the companies as well. In the book Space place and gender, Doreen Massey has tried to configure about A Woman's Place and the economic structure which was the main reason why the whole United Kingdom was talking about relationships between men and women. It was basically studying about how the regional planning affected employment sector, and jobs were transferred from one section to the other. Questions were being raised upon the old patriarchal form of domestic production which was torn apart (Massey, 1991).

[10] Despite comprising almost 50% of the world's population a general mind-set highlights men as the owner, worthy and to be awarded as accentuated by Dorte Kuhlmann. A very explanatory example of this is given in the book Gender Studies in Architecture when in 1991 Robert Venturi was awarded a Pritzker prize which is the most highly valuable award in Architecture based on the designs which were a contribution of his wife Denise Scott Brown as well. This decision was appreciated and condemned at the same time by Robert Venturi himself in his speech. This small example in the world of art and architecture unfolds a side of inequality which is evident even in the most developed world (Kuhlmann, 2013).

[19] Talking about gender inequality and safety is still a major issue. In the developed countries it is more about the economic disparity in the workforce while in developing countries it is about the minimal rights to the women to access public spaces and to be a part of them. Their safety in terms of sexual violence, rape, and molestation, is the key subject to be resolved not just by social reforms but by providing a suitable infrastructure and built environment to them. Basic facilities and necessities like public toilets, safe parking areas, proper sanitation, safe public transport, accessibility to public spaces and no to sexual violence are the basic human rights which they should be able to access (Whitzman et al., 2013).

III. INDICATORS FOR GENDERED USE OF SPACES

Different countries have different Gender planning and design approaches. The reason being the varying degrees of freedom and the right to use the city for women. They influence the steps that need to be taken and are dependent on factors like the social and economic status of women in different countries.

Cultural

women is still not considered ethical and if they are out and about, then it is only because of a purpose. Phadke in her paper writes about how a girl illustrates her purpose by using a cell phone, carrying babies and parcels or a handbag. Hindu unmarried women often wear traditional markers like sindoor in hair or engagement rings or the customary necklace to demand respectability and be safe. She gives an overview of how girls are considered anti- social if they are returning late at night because they were working, partying or socialising (Phadke, Ranade, & Khan, 2009). Most of the criminals accused of indecent acts against women have given statements that they did it because the women were in inappropriate clothing

or because they thought that the girl was not decent as she was outside on the roads in the night.

Socio-economical

[7] The parity of participation in workforce between American women and Indian women is 58% over 12% respectively. There are different barriers for different countries which affects the level of participation. The economic status is one of the reasons of participation of women in paid labour force. Hayden had identified that in the machine age after the home was equipped with latest machines like a washing machine, home blender, etc. women had to go out to earn to pay for these additional loans even when these machines actually helped them with the household works (Hayden, 1980).

[3] Also, talking concerning India, \$2.9 trillion may be added to India’s GDP by 2025 if it improves Gender Parity as explicit during a report from McKinsey. One of the factors involved in reduction of women in labour force is their safety on streets and public spaces as recognized by them and many other organizations. The results of the analysis titled as ‘The power of Parity: How advancing women’s equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth’ represents that India would be the main beneficiary of the efforts to improve gender parity. This is because the nation wants to take advantage of almost a quarter of the full monetary potential of \$12 trillion that can be acquired by collecting gender equality at the global level. The study’s findings shows that refining gender parity and safety in public spaces will almost double the contribution of the women workforce to the GDP for the next decade (Dobbs, Manyika, Chui, & Lund, 2015).

Spatial

[18][4][12][8] In spatial terms, gender equality can be gained by equal rights in private, and public spaces that are in the reach of people. They mainly are the houses people live in and the outside environment. The definition of the public space is based on the nature of its use in terms physical, social, cultural and political dimensions. The notion of public space presumes a public sphere with cooperative social use and a diversity of functions. It is a site for relating to and identifying with others, political protests, contact among people, urban activities, and jargons of the community (Viviescas, 1997). The quality of a public space is closely linked with based on the strength and the value of the social associations it enables, its capacity to welcome and inspire a

mixture of diverse groups and behaviours, and its potential for promoting mutual connection on a symbolic level, cultural expression and integration (Falu, 2009). Women in these public spaces can feel insecure because of a lot of reasons which includes poor design and infrastructural facilities, behavioural patterns of society, etc. The type of public spaces in India are streets, railway stations, parks& gardens, streets, roads, highway, cinema halls, malls, plazas, bus stops (Mahadevia, Lathia, & Banerjee, 2016). As previously mentioned, Jane Jacobs’s statement “Cities have the capabilities of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody” (Jacobs, 1961), clearly signifies that the cities have to be designed taking care of needs and desires of all the inhabitants.

These many factors like culture, socio-economic status and freedom of genders to use public spaces define how we can change the usage of space due to planning policies and change in urban structure.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Issues can be resolved in different layers and through different kind of scales. Specially, for the gendered use of spaces, it is not just about feminism but about different uses of spaces by different deprived groups. Varied systems and methodologies have come up in the past clearly stating knowledge of the problem recognition and steps taken at different scales like planning, theories on researching to collect data and information, practical methods to gather records and the rules and regulations that are made at the government level and authorities envisioning better future for the deprived part of the society.

Theoretical Approaches

[11] In Right to the city by Henri Lefebvre, he mentions taking different approaches in lieu of the old practices. He gave a general theory of urban time spaces that includes the old practices of including humans that can be seen as a new theory in which philosophy and science come together. Transduction is a practice that can be methodically carried out and which differs from classical induction methods (Lefebvre, 1996).

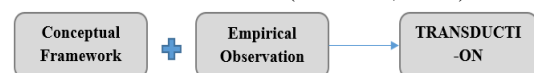


Figure1: Abstract explaining transduction theory
 Source: made by author

He stated right to the city as a necessity that can be translated as the right to urban life. On a concluding note, he stresses on understanding the daily life and movements of the people. That's the key, and it has to be included in the science and art of the city. Centralizing is not the solution, understanding people's behaviours and their response towards cities in terms of their movements is the need of an hour.

National University of Cordoba and the Coordinator of the UN-Habitat UNI Gender Hub's Ana Falú, in her lecture says that the women are slotted by differences of class, income, education, sexual option, race, ethnicity, place and territory we live in. She insists that the main factors for designing a women-friendly city are localization, proximity, participation and resources. Localization in terms of the services, proximities according to the movement of different genders, participation at all the levels from high government politicians to the citizens and resources in the form of geo-referenced violence, statistics, and data. Abandonment and fear of spaces is a vicious circle, according to her, that is created by the social construction of public and so-called protected spaces.

Practical Approaches

[14] METRAC (The Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children) was the first ever safety audit method and was used in Canada. It has been efficaciously used throughout Australia, North America and Great Britain, to measure ostensible danger in the urban setting (METRAC, n.d.). These safety audits are a mapping tool to study an area in terms of crime and to recognize the problems.

[17] Identified by Akkelies Van Nes, space syntax is a method and a tool that can be used for the analysis of the streets through visual sight lines to calculate the spatial configuration of built environments. It is able to categorize the streets spatial features for vital shopping areas, crime distribution, various social classes spatial preferences, etc. (Van Nes, 2011).

A sociologist and NGO worker, Kalpana Viswanatha, started Safetipin, an application which collected the data from a number of cities and a number of points from a varied database provided by different user groups including men and women. This database now signifies the safe and unsafe places in a few metropolitan cities of India and also provides a function of emergency calling. In this world of computer and tech-savvy lifestyle most of the low-income countries are still inaccessible to computers but Smartphone technology has reached

hands of many Indian citizens who can avail the opportunity to contribute and access data and services including banking, payments, market intelligence for business and other amenities. A report estimates that smartphone usage in 2014 is 1.76 billion and it is estimated that one in three persons will have a smartphone in India by 2017 (Vishwanath & Basu, 2016).

Public wireless network and extension of CCTV cameras are the ways that are undertaken by the government of India to ensure the security of women after the brutal rape in public transport in 2012 but critically reviewed this method is proving more to be moral policing and capturing the young couples on the road under the law of spoiling culture and obscene acts in public rather than paying attention to safe built environment. Hence, these methodologies are a great way to make a framework for the survey of a gender conscious city or area.

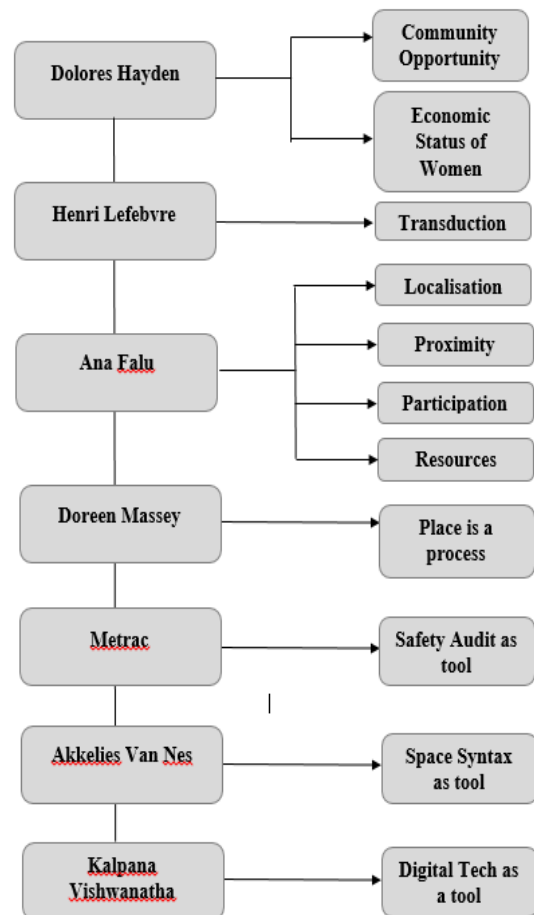


Figure 2: Different Methodologies & tools used to study gender inclusiveness of a city

Source: made by author

V. PREFERRED PRACTICES

[18] Preferred practices are the initiatives taken in India and abroad in order to improve the living environment with a gender lens and also how they proved to be a boon for the vulnerable section of the society.

Social Practices in India

[15] Pukar Organisation in Mumbai initiated gender and space project that focused on gender as a class to scrutinize the scaling and know-how of the city and its sundry spaces, especially talking about the public areas. Public spaces in relation to the research area range from public toilets, streets and marketplaces to the recreational areas including transportation mediums. The project is located in and focuses on the city of Mumbai in particular (Phadke et al., 2009).

[2] In Mumbai, a group of young women is trying to change the concept of Why Loiter as they feel they should be able to use public spaces with no apparent reason, but simply because they want to hang out just like all the boys and men who roam around, sometimes doing nothing but staring with those unwanted gaze or chit-chatting, meeting up with friends, and just having fun being outside. This cluster of women is part of a small but growing movement called Why Loitre (Chatterjee, 2015).

[9] NGO Jagori works for the women empowerment and has been working on the many issues that are faced by them. They focus is the underprivileged section and have worked on a number of surveys which showcase the disparity of the services used by women in slums and relocated colonies by Delhi government (Jagori, 2010). In the year 2009, Jagori in corporation with the UN Women and Department of Women and Child Development started the 'Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative.' The goal of the initiative is to achieve cities where women and girls are able to move around freely without the fear of violence and harassment at all times and so as to enjoy all what the city has to offer."

[9] JAGORI undertakes action research that serve as the basis for focused backing and women-led involvements in the society. These studies raise critical questions regarding the centrality of women centered views that need to be brought to the attention of policy makers and the

ones involved at the implementation stage. These studies are aimed at supporting the struggle of the community to claim their rights and entitlements as citizens of Delhi; the studies are further used as reports and safety audits to be submitted to the local government in order of the actions to be taken (Jagori, 2015).

[1] Blank Noise is a volunteer-run organization and has been working against street harassment since 2004. In June, it started a campaign – #WalkAlone – to inspire women to regain public spaces. Women were encouraged to visit never seen places, or the ones about which they have been warned for some time. The campaign is counselling women to undertake the challenge at any time of the day, for at least three weeks, buzzing a song, daydreaming, with hands unclenched, shoulders relaxed, until they get back their right to walk without fear (Agarwal, 2016)

Spatial Practices (Urban Design & Planning)

Globally, there have been many spatial and planning practices that have been done over years in order to change the vision of the residents and force them to think. Gender disparity perspective is taken into account, and thought is given to realize and consider gender inclusive spaces. In 1974, The Cuban's Family Code mentioned about Men's participation in the domestic work which marked the importance of unpaid labour.

[5] Vienna, Austria began redesign of two parks in its fifth district, in 1999. Addition of footpaths facilitated the parks and made them more accessible. Badminton and volleyball courts were installed to allow for a variety of actions. Landscaping was done to segment large, open areas into semi-enclosed pocket parks. Almost immediately, city officials observed a change. Groups of people girls and boys began to use the parks without any one group over-running the other as they all had spaces for their own activities and a sense of privacy. In 2008, the United Nations Human Settlements program incorporated Vienna's city planning strategy in its records as one of the best practices in improving the living environment. Vienna's other project was about generating a gender mainstreamed pilot district, and it included a courtyard park so that the mothers could view their children playing. It also had a day care centre in the society and a general store in the vicinity. A public transport station was also planned nearby so

that the commuters do not have safety and dragging issues (Foran, 2013).

Seoul, South Korea created policies to achieve Women friendly cities where they aimed to refine the city urban spaces by showcasing women's perspective in all the city policies so as to improve their daily urban life. They worked on solving the issues that cause trouble, uneasiness, and inconvenience for women. They worked in the subprojects of parking lots, parks, roads and built environment which includes CPTED, Crime prevention systems, like windowed transparent elevators. It is also about building childcare facilities along with female bathroom facilities. Subway ticket gates and bus stops are modified for stroller use.

Spatial practices (Architecture)

[7] Dolores Hayden talked about the special housing facilities provided for working women and their families in Copenhagen by Oho Fick in 1903 and focused the Scandinavian solutions of the problems faced by these women. This was carried on by Sven Ivar Lind and Sven Markeliuch in the 1970s who designed Marieberg Collective House in Stockholm, Sweden. In 1970 Steilshoop Project in Hamburg, Germany facilitated public housing with supporting services. In 1972, Nina West homes in London designed an iconic project in the name of Fiona House which provides Day Care centres, collective babysitting and created jobs for single parents. All these examples are successful real experiments done to reach a gender conscious environment (Hayden, 1980).

A review of these practices creates a clear picture that gender spatial interventions and inclusive cities are a responsibility of an urban designer/planner while designing a space to facilitate the needs and desires of all the sections of the society equally.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Hence, the minimal role played by governments to uplift the fundamental rights of women and lack there off gets highlighted. The countries who have followed the best spatial, urban design and planning practices have improved the position of woman to an exceptional level in comparison to other countries where basic rights to the girls are still desired.

If the steps taken at the planning level are the ones which should be adhered to when designing at a smaller scale is still remains unanswered. A gap between various barriers of

gender inequality and the best spatial gender inclusive practices emerge needs to be bridged.

The methods undertaken to study gendered spaces and cities can be used to study a place, but then design interventions need to be location based and tailor made. As cultural usage of place and space is diverse.

Designing a gender-conscious city is not only about spatial interventions but also understanding the social, economic and cultural prospects of a place. On a conclusion methodologies and tools like safety audits, space syntax, transduction and more are to be taken for studying the site. Spatial interventions and planning policies undertaken in Vienna and Korea impacted different set of cultures.

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