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Inclusive Cities, Women-friendly, Gender-sensitive, Gender Mainstreaming

Inclusive Cities: Towards Gender-Sensitive Urban India

Sudnya Mahimkar and V.A. Gokhale

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Sudnya Mahimkar is an architect and a town planner. She is a research scholar pursuing PhD from University of Pune, India. Her areas of interest include gender studies and architecture, urban design and

planning. She has three research papers published in refereed journals to her credit and presented papers in one international and three national conferences.

Currently she is an Associate Professor in MES's Pillai College of Architecture, New Panvel, affiliated to the University of Mumbai, India.

✉ soodnya@gmail.com



Dr. V.A. Gokhale is Professor & Head of Research Cell at Dr. B.N. College of Architecture, Pune, India. After obtaining PhD from IIT Roorkee, she has been researching in the areas of Disaster Management particularly in

'Earthquake Resistant Architecture' and also 'Sustainable Architecture'. She has more than 60 published research papers to her credit.

✉ gokhale.va@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Cities world over are predominantly planned and built for men, gender friendly cities still remain a utopian concept by and large and hence call for adequate attention and consideration. This study attempts to explore the concept of Gender-mainstreaming in city planning. Gender-sensitive cities reflect a society's diversity; they are barrier-free, have well developed infrastructure, are interconnected and offer spaces that can be interpreted and utilised according to diverse needs. Today, Indian cities need a paradigm shift towards gender equality in spatial planning with respect to the visualisation, deconstruction and redefinition of social values and norms in urban planning procedures and policies. This paper attempts to understand the different spatial perceptions and specific needs of women. The paper looks towards planning of 'inclusive cities' worldwide and in India and attempts to provide directions to suggest guidelines from the lessons learnt, for planning of inclusive cities in Indian context.

Introduction

“Women’s experiences of city life are affected by gender-based discrimination and abuse in public and private space, including exclusion from political and socio-economic participation, limited access to essential services and infrastructure.” (The Delhi Declaration on Women’s Safety, Government of India, 2013) .



Figure 1: A German Tourist at Gateway of India, Mumbai, India. (Source: Shankman, 2013)

Most of the Indian cities have earned the status of “Women-unfriendly cities” with ever-increasing rate of crimes against women in public spaces. India has been ranked world’s fourth most dangerous country for women (Chowdhury, 2011). (Figure-1). According to Global Gender Gap Report, out of 135 countries, India has been ranked 113th during 2011 (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2011).

Gender equality and equity need to be achieved through introducing gender sensitivity at policy and physical planning levels to address the gender gap. The concept of ‘Inclusive Cities’ looks at the environment where both men and women will have equal rights and access to the city. Gender Inclusive Planning, as stated by Urbspace – European Regional Development

Fund, benefits whole society because “A city safety for women takes care of all other weak categories: elder, children and disabled” (Lamoro, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

‘Gender’ refers to expected social roles within society, for women and men, whilst ‘sex’ refers to biological differences, and sexuality relates to personal identity and relationships.

“Gender’ embodies the acceptance of varying gender identities, differential levels of power, and differing roles for women and men, which result in them using space differently, both inside and outside the home (...). The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women’s subordination to their anatomy.” (CSSS, 2011)

Gendered ideology is often described in terms of gender roles of different sexes. Gender role theory describes the way in which individuals are socialised into gender roles, prescribing different conducts, attitudes, and values for women and men (Hoven and Horschelmann, 2002). Gender Sensitivity is the ability to recognise issues and problems related to gender roles constructed by the societies. It particularly looks at how women act, are treated and the different ways that women understand their roles.

“Gender-sensitive planning uses specific methods and tools to provide women and girls more opportunities for their participation in the development process and to measure the impact of planned activities on women and men.” (Gender Sensitivity, Sachet Pakistan, 2013)

In India, women are encumbered with various family expectations and responsibilities such as house chores, child and senior care that many a times conflict with their career decisions. Design of our cities make their lives even more difficult. Gender sensitive planning takes into consideration how a city or community might differ if designed with women's needs in mind (Kail & Irschik, 2007).

“Gender planning requires that planning processes and the resulting built results are qualified in a manner that takes into consideration the varying patterns of usage of spaces, space requirements, resources and abilities of all those who may potentially be affected and should be involved.” (Women's Advisory Committee of the Senate Department for Urban Development, 2011).

To understand how women's needs are different and more complex than men's, one can have a look at women's daily lives where they have to deal with– Care-giving role towards children, seniors, disabled and other family members; less access to private vehicles hence dependence on public transport with more number of trips, more movements on foot or bicycle (Greed, 2004); the sense of insecurity and negotiating her way to safeguard herself from sexual harassment and molestation at public spaces (Ranade, Phadke, & Khan, 2009); need for toilets and sanitation facilities in public spaces (India Sanitation Portal, 2014) and less access to economic independence, health facilities and other infrastructure (Women's Advisory Committee of the Senate Department for Urban Development, 2011). While dealing with multiple responsibilities, many a times they

run out of time. Negotiating public spaces also becomes a challenge due to certain cultural or bodily limitations such as traditional wear, pregnancy, carrying a child on lap/hip, etc.

The concept of inclusive city addresses these special needs and provides spaces for all to move freely in safe and comfortable environments with equal opportunities (Geldermalsen, 2005).

Methodology

This paper attempts to understand the different spatial perceptions and specific needs of women while traversing through the public

Negotiating public spaces also becomes a challenge due to certain cultural or bodily limitations such as traditional wear, pregnancy, carrying a child on lap/hip, etc.

spaces of city. The study also explores efforts in gender sensitive planning of cities worldwide as well as in India through extensive literature survey. The paper endeavors to provide further directions to suggest guidelines from the lessons learnt, for planning of inclusive cities in Indian context.

Initiatives worldwide

Improving the quality of life for women has become an international concern. In 1994, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) brought together for the first time delegations from twenty seven countries to examine the theme, Women in the City: Housing, Services, and the Urban Environment. Approach of gender inclusive planning to address urban issues is considered

as an imperative approach towards efficient city planning and management. Devoid of such approach can lead to poor decisions on policies and ineffective execution of action plans (Sustainable Cities Programme, 2000).

The Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) has started a movement for 'reinventing planning' (Farmer et al., 2006) to render the planning process neutral which is predominantly gender blind which reflects the Commonwealth's strong commitment to gender equality (UN-Habitat, 2006). The role of gender in urban environment was addressed by a number of North American scholars in the mid-seventies. Many cities in Canada set institutionalised mechanisms such as the Safe City Committee in Toronto, Femmes et Ville (Women in the City) Program in Montreal and in Quebec. The Norwegian Government has carried out a pilot project designed to improve the integration of women into municipal life by including their point of view in urban planning and design. In Madrid (Spain), Generourban, a Web site and discussion forum has been set up on the subject of women in the city, gender and urban planning (Michaud, 2004). The City of Barcelona has set up a citywide Council of Women under the jurisdiction of the Social Development Commission to integrate women into all the activities of urban life (Mujeres, 2015).

RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute) Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit suggests guidelines for incorporating gender into planning. One of the tools of collecting information is Women Safety Audits to evaluate security levels in cities. UN Habitat initiated 'Safety Audit' surveys in major cities of various countries including India, leading to the formulation of guidelines for safe

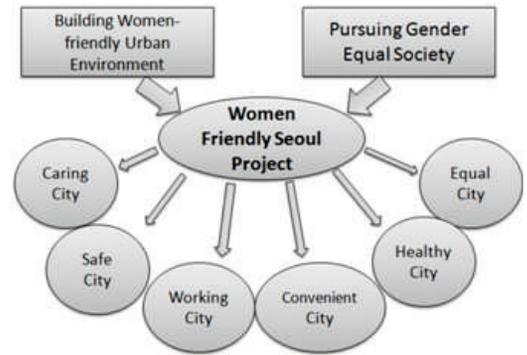


Figure 2: Women Friendly City Project, Seoul
(Source: womenfriendlycity.org, 2009)

cities. Berlin's 'Gender Mainstreaming' pilot projects were initiated in urban open public spaces which pinpointed the areas where measures are needed to be taken for holistic development (Women's Advisory Committee of the Senate Department for Urban Development, 2011).

BIAAG UP (Because I Am A Girl Urban Program, 2012) is introduced in 5 cities: Cairo, New Delhi, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima to increase safety and access to public spaces for girls and improve their mobility through the city and encourage their participation in planning process.

Women Friendly City Project, Seoul

'Women Friendly City Project' Seoul, is a policy aimed to encourage social participation, establish a woman-friendly socio-cultural environment, and ultimately pursue happiness (womenfriendlycity.org, Dynamic Cities Need Women, 2009). Strengthening child care responsibilities, making women economically independent, providing cultural and leisure opportunities and accessibility to public spaces by improving mobility are the basic focus tasks



Figure 3.1:
Women-friendly restrooms



Figure 3.2:
Women-friendly parking lots



Figure 3.3:
Women-friendly sidewalks



Figure 3.4:
Women-friendly parks restrooms

Figure 3: Women-friendly city Project, Seoul (Source: Park, 2011)

of this project. As a part of the project, 1933 restrooms (**Figure-3.1**), 35,494 parking units (**Figure-3.2**), 100 km sidewalks (**Figure-3.3**) and 33 parks (**Figure-3.4**) are designed that are women-friendly. (**Figures-2, 3**)

Gender Mainstreaming in Vienna and Berlin

Gender mainstreaming efforts addressing public space and women were initiated in Vienna since 1991. About 50 gender mainstreaming pilot projects were executed. 'Fair Shared City' concept was implemented with systematic evaluation and aggregation of experiences for planning and executing. Contemplating 'All life phases of a woman', points of consideration were housing, park design and playgrounds, public space, traffic and transportation planning, public buildings and in general urban development.

Competitions were floated for park designs to increase participation of girls and to encourage gender sensitive design. Gender sensitive traffic and transportation design considers women's everyday life mobility, understand complexity of journeys, and accordingly Traffic Master Plan

of Vienna was prepared in 2003. Considering all above aspects, a master plan of gender sensitive urban development was proposed for Flugfeld Aspern and Nordwestbahnhof (Irschik, 2008).

As a part of Gender Mainstreaming campaign, various signage all over the city were used to change people's outlook towards socially constructed gender roles and gender equality (Gender Mainstreaming Campaign In Vienna, 2007) (**Figure-4**).

Gender mainstreaming in all aspects of urban development including physical planning (transportation, housing, public and recreational spaces) is being a main focus of city planning in Berlin, Germany (Women's Advisory Committee of the Senate Department for Urban Development 2011). (**Figures-5, 6**).

In Philadelphia, US, it has been identified that city planning has its impact on health of people particularly women. Health scientists are joining hands with urban planners to identify the effects of street design, housing and transportation on women (Boghani, 2012 and Nasser, 2007).



Figure 4: Attempts towards gender mainstreaming by changing society's mindset through signage in Vienna (Source: Wien International, 2010)



Figure 5,6: Gender mainstreaming in spatial planning, Berlin (Source: Women's Advisory Committee of the Senate Department for Urban Development, 2011)

India with its own different socio-cultural background needs to follow these footsteps towards women friendly city planning for its all inclusive development.

Indian City Planning and Women: Current Scenario

India witnesses a considerable negligence towards the basic needs of women in the city. Their sense of security, comfort and convenience still remains a dream unrealised. As per UN Women reports, in urban areas of developing countries, women experience violence twice as men (unwomen.org, Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women,

2014). City planning and public services are responsible for urban women suffering from violence and intimidation in public spaces (Figure-7). Poor transportation, street-lighting and inadequate sanitation and toilet facilities make urban women vulnerable (Kelly, 2013). Women have less access to private or own transport and hence tend to depend largely upon public transport (Figure-8). In many Indian cities, poor execution of law and order leaves a few facilities reserved for women to be disregarded and abused by men (Figure-9). A good system of public transport hence remains a critical need for women. Taking care of family members, accompanying them to public spaces is



Figure 7: Banner questioning women's safety in India
(Source: instablogs.com, 2013)



Figure 8: Bus stand at Cochin, Kerala flooded with female travellers
(Source: Petrini, 2010)

still a woman's responsibility in the Indian context.

According to a 2009 study by the Centre for Civil Society, Mumbai has only 132 public toilets for women, many of which barely function, compared with 1,534 for men (Figure-10). The scenario is similar in most other Indian cities. With this background, "Right to Pee" campaign incorporates demands for 3 basic rights of women: pee for free, provision of sanitary towels for women and changing rooms in the toilets (Ralph, 2012). The basic infrastructure provisions for women are often considered less important by the urban planners.

The unstructured survey conducted previously by us in Mumbai, reveals that loneliness, overcrowding, absence of women, social construction of risk perception, media, late night hours, lighting conditions, familiarity, etc. are few of the reasons why women feel insecure in public spaces (Mahimkar and Gokhale, 2013b).

Apart from facing numerous challenges in everyday life, urban women have to face the

insolence and inequality in India. Not only physical planning but also inculcating gender sensitivity and awareness in the citizens can address this issue.

Initiatives in India

To attain equitable development, Indian government has initiated various policies for economic and political development with the aim of inclusion of women in the development process as per 11th Five year Plan of 2007-12. (Planning Commission of India, 2007). 'Kerala Model' gender mainstreaming approach in Urban Development and Planning include reservations for women in local governance and decentralisation of development planning, training program for participatory process, housing allotments by government in the names of women and bottoms up approach for local area development. UNICEF, UN-Habitat and UN Women in 2011 launched 'Safe and Friendly Cities for All,' in few Indian cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Thiruvananthapuram; a five-year program that aims at making women and children feel safer in their local neighbourhoods, while improving their quality of life.



Figure 9: Women-only metro compartment used by men
(Source: Bhuyan, 2011)



Figure 10: Inadequate public toilets make women vulnerable and expose them to risks
(Source: indiasanitationportal.org, 2014)

JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission) dealing with reform and good governance suggests guidelines for gender mainstreaming into planning and decision making process, transportation and crime prevention through environmental design.

All above attempts in India are at policy levels overlooking the physical planning solutions to a large extent.

Discussion

The study deals with two aspects of Gender Inclusive Cities. First part deals with understanding needs of women while negotiating in public spaces and second part with the efforts worldwide and in India to address these special needs through policy and physical planning. Understanding of needs leads to laying down the guidelines for women-friendly city planning. Exemplary projects such as ‘Women Friendly City Project’ of Seoul and ‘Gender Mainstreaming Project’ of Vienna, address women’s needs by defining and applying women-specific data to urban planning or by attempting to change the social approach towards gender through planning. In

Indian context, planners need to learn from these examples and integrate the three step design process – data design, policy design and physical design by Indian Women-specific data building, studying and designing policies to address Indian social gender structure and then applying the outcome to physical planning process (Mahimkar & Gokhale, 2013a).

Future Directions for formulating guidelines for inclusive cities

“Policy makers must rethink the landscape of the city itself encouraging a vibrant and varied street life with a mix of residential and commercial activity, which puts pedestrians on the street who can respond to untoward activity. Infrastructure like proper lighting along sidewalks and bus stops is also critical.”
(Gillies, 2013)

Various gender criteria considerations in physical planning interventions provide directions to formulate guidelines for gender inclusive cities. These criteria are – security, reconciliation of professional and family-work, participation, diversity and flexibility of space, options of social usage, and space for

communication and interaction (Women's Advisory Committee of the Senate Department for Urban Development, 2011).

While dealing with the criterion of safety, Jane Jacob's theory of "eyes on the street" states the importance of existence of more people and openness of the space supported with maintenance, improved visibility and good lighting on streets and all public spaces. Overlapping it with flexibility criterion, the mixed use zones to be designed with spaces that are continuously used throughout the day for various purposes so as to avoid dead urban spaces where crime and vice proliferates. UN Women suggests conducting Gender Audits where participation of women in public spaces is evaluated and they are encouraged to participate in the planning process. The public spaces when designed to encourage social interaction and usage promote further participation of women. Provision of services and infrastructure is the key criterion, of which provision of good, secured and clean toilets made accessible to women is one of the most important services particularly in the present Indian scenario. Adequate transportation facilities will help improve their mobility in the city. Access to affordable housing for women is also the crucial need to achieve women's valiant, wholehearted participation in public realm.

Conclusion

Aiming at equitable, efficient and productive physical environments in the city for men and women, it is necessary to study their differential needs and usage patterns in public realm. India proves itself to be one of the worst countries for women may it be in private or public realm. All over the world, various nations are moving a step towards gender

sensitive city planning addressing these differential needs.

In India, development agenda has to be based on the concept of gender mainstreaming to plan cities and infrastructure. Urban planners, designers and decision makers must take steps based on in-depth analysis of gender based inequalities in the local context, while designing strategic interventions considering their causes and effects. An efficient system of monitoring frameworks to ensure accountability, and creation of capacity and commitment is to be developed for gender blending in Indian cities. ■

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