

Inclusive Governance by Gender Equality: Innovative Vision to Humanize our Cities

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Abstract

This study suggests a broad approach to enhance the social sustainability through socially innovative and inclusive governance when humanizing the urban landscape. This approach requires both “top-down” and “bottom-up” strategies. Socially innovation and inclusive governance can be achieved when both genders are equally included and appreciated in shaping the future landscape of their city, as residents, planners and as decision makers. Consequently, their involvement will decrease the impacts of the proposed development or action on the social dimension.

Inclusive governance modes should base on citizens' empowerment and participation of all relevant stakeholders especially women, because there is increasing evidence that women and men experience cities in different ways. However, if women policies are put in a separate code it gives the impression to planners that woman issues are other. Therefore, this study prefers a broad approach about planning for all, rather than planning for women. Policies can never plan entirely separately for women or for men, and it is a sign of polarization to imagine so. Inclusive practice is sensitive to gender differences in using the city and consequently able to make more creative choices that assumed to fit almost everyone.

Therefore, to achieve the real meaning of socially innovative and inclusive governance, the needs and motivations for men and women should be equally considered, and they have to participate through all design stages, as planners and as users for the urban landscape.

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1. Socially innovative and inclusive governance

It is very important to govern the city in an innovative and inclusive way that increases the sense of belonging among citizens and encourages them to participate in city making. Under global capitalism, the degree of control for the powerful government has been replaced with a fragmented organizations which negatively affect the citizens well in shaping their city, thus, the “challenge for spatial planning has been to adjust to this change from government to governance, where political and economic power lies with not one powerful government but a multiplicity of agencies and interests” (Madanipour et al 2001:2). The new way of governance need to be linked to new ways of thinking in urban space and urban life, moreover, the fragmented responsibilities for administrative space and the changing nature of market relations calls for a comprehensive method in governance the space. Global capitalism has led policy makers in Europe to be concerned about the social consequences of urban transformation, especially social exclusion, as it threatens the sustainability of the European society, thus, they place social aspects very high on national agendas (Madanipour et al 2000). Therefore, this study suggests a broad approach to enhance the socially innovative and inclusive governance when planning and regenerating the urban landscape.

1.1 Social innovation by public participation

Cities play a critical role as motors of the economy, as places of connectivity, creativity and innovation, and as service centers for their surrounding areas. Cities are also places where problems such as unemployment, segregation and poverty are concentrated (EU 2011). The development of the cities will determine the future socioeconomic development, and encourage local business and partnerships between public, private and voluntary organizations. This partnership provides a powerful tool to mobilize and involve local communities and organizations, as well as citizens. They provide a more integrated and inclusive approach to tackling local challenges, with a focus on the quality, inclusiveness and sustainability of growth strategies (PPS 2012, Lin 2010). Public participation is a process that gives individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions (Grabow 2006).

The place-making approach builds on the ability of local organizations to create great community places that bring people together and reflect community values and needs. This is a traditional, organic human skill that often ignored by bureaucracies. A study conducted by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) finds that governments rarely focus on creating a successful public realm. The structure of departments and the processes they require, sometimes, obstruct the creation of successful public spaces. There is not a comprehensive approach in planning and design, between different departments, as each department focus only on its mission (PPS 2012). This fragmentation negatively affects city planning and wastes time and effort for various stakeholders.

It is not only the structure and process within governmental departments, but also governments rarely focus on public participation when creating public realms. Local government deserve opportunities to learn and develop the skills to integrate public participation within all the elements of comprehensive planning, especially if they hope to make a real difference in giving people a voice in shaping the future of their city (Grabow 2006). A comprehensive approach to developing and managing public

space requires both *top-down* and *bottom-up* strategies. Leadership at the highest level of city is essential if transformation of public spaces is to occur on a large scale, a *bottom-up* grassroots organizing strategy is also fundamental (PPS 2012). The involvement of city residents is crucial to the success of many policies, especially in a context of crisis and possible conflicts between different stakeholders (EU 2011).

Moreover, the *bottom-up* approach empowers and engages people more than the traditional planning processes. It draws on the assets and skills of a community, rather than on relying solely on professional experts (PPS 2012). Only with full public participation in the creation of public spaces can truly humanized places come into being. Building a city is an organic process; local customs must always be considered and honored (Kostof 2009). Thus, planners, designers, and administrators should not decide in a void. Professionals such as traffic engineers, transit operators, urban planners, and architects often have narrow definitions of their job. By contrast, a community has a holistic vision and should lead the professionals in implementing that vision. So, the key is to improve communication between the people and local government (PPS 2012). Dolores Hayden's in her book the "*Power of Place*" argues for more democratic strategies in urban planning. The *Power of Place* signals its own argument that:

"It is possible to enhance social meaning in public places with modest expenditures for projects that are sensitive to all citizens and their diverse heritage, and developed with public processes that recognize both the cultural and political importance of place" (Hayden 1995:9)

Similarly, Grabow (2006) states that it is highly undemocratic to plan, govern, arrange and impose programs without communication with the people for whom they are designed; it is also impractical. This requires removing bureaucratic obstacles to quickly add value to a place and clearly demonstrate future potential. Working together on short-term changes can help build bridges between city agencies and citizens, benefiting long-term implementation and maintenance as well (PPS 2012). Therefore, residents have the best understanding of the assets and challenges of a particular place. The important starting point in developing a concept for any public space agenda should be to identify the talents and resources within the community, people who can provide historical perspective, insights into how the area functions, and an understanding of what is truly meaningful to them (Greed 1994). Of course, not all citizens need to be involved in the same way, at the same time or for the same purpose. It's important to think carefully about the business of people involvement (Grabow 2006).

The first step in developing a citywide agenda is to make an honest assessment of how existing public spaces are performing or underperforming. The assessment should include every neighborhood and involve the people who live there as well as other key stakeholders. Such a district-by-district approach encourages residents and officials to look at their neighborhoods again and bring unexpected possibilities to light. Unused and underused spaces can be identified and improved in a systematic way, ensuring that the benefits are distributed geographically, strengthening the entire fabric of the city and building equity (EU 2011). Social innovation offers an opportunity to widen the public space for civic engagement, creativity, innovation and cohesion. In cities where place-making has taken hold, local government is often not

directly involved in implementation, but relies on community development organizations, business improvement districts, and neighborhood partnerships to take the lead in regenerating their communities (PPS 2012). This means that when it comes to public spaces, the community is the expert, and that local partnerships are essential to the process of creating dynamic, sustainable public spaces that truly serve people. Communities everywhere can decide what it is that makes their public spaces a destination and increases their sense of belonging.

1.2 Inclusive governance by women involvement

Inclusive governance modes should base on citizens' empowerment and participation of all relevant stakeholders especially women, because there is increasing evidence that women and men experience cities in different ways. Therefore, to achieve the real meaning of inclusive governance, gender policy should be contained within urban planning. Gender includes men and women as well, but the research is more focusing on women issues because various studies across the world show that their status is worse (Johnson 1989, Greed 1994, EU 2011, Grabow 2006). However, if women policies are put in a separate code; such as "*Women Friendly Seoul Project Guidelines 2009*"; it gives the impression to planners that woman issues are other. We all live in the same urban space, and women planning policies should not aim at building a separate women's city, away from men's needs.

The traditional planning that called for "gendered nature of urban space" restricted the women mobility: physically and socially, "physically by imposing patterns of movement and behavior based on fear and restricted access, and socially through the assumptions about women's role in urban society" (Madanipour 1996:85). Safety, transport, and wellbeing are main consideration in different women policies around the world, such as "*Women Friendly Seoul Project*" and "*UNIFEM regional program*", to name some. According to them, city planning for gender must promote safety; safety is an important aspect especially for women; to avoid problems of crime and sexual violence. Safe design includes, for example, good street lighting and parks that are overlooked, but it avoids deserted spaces or areas that are not occupied for parts of the day and places where attackers can easily hide or where women are easily trapped, such as subways and alleyways. Women are also often concerned about the safety of urban spaces for children, such as busy roads, lack of safe places to play, polluted areas and so on. Likewise, good public transport system is a fundamental aspect of urban and regional planning; as it can widen women's employment opportunities (Seoul 2009, Greed 1994).

In urban planning, everything is linked to everything else. If land-use is changed here or a transport route there the effect will vibrate through the system, and have a spatial and social implications for everyone. Greed (1994:173-192) states that "many of the problems which women encounter in the city of man are the result of a dichotomized public/private view of reality, prevalent within the planning subculture". Thus, in order to plan for women, physical divisions between perceived public and private realms manifested in land-use patterns must be dissolved. The nature of land uses must be re-conceptualized, and the likely interrelationship among them reconsidered, to reflect more realistically the way in which women use urban space. "The spatial divisions must be broken down to the advantage of women, by mixing, milling, and making new interconnections between land uses and activities, thus creating new

spaces and possibilities for women”. Therefore, to make a progress in the profession, changes are needed in the domestic sphere of home, family, with a reconceptualization of roles, responsibilities, and assumptions. Women have penetrated the public realm, but there has not been an appropriate change in man’s role in the private realm. The public/private dichotomy itself has not been broken down but is still full of power (Greed 1994).

Like other built environment occupations, the planning profession has traditionally been gender blind, and planners still lack understanding about gender issues. Greed (1994) mentioned that planners in the development control sections of planning departments in England thought gender considerations had no bearing on their work as their decisions considered only technical matters. Planners typically consult with communities, and the views expressed can influence outcomes. So, unless planners are gender aware such consultations can unintentionally exclude women in general; or particular groups of them. Therefore, gender-sensitive urban planning is needed. Inclusive gender-sensitive planning means understanding the views of women and men equally through all design stages. According to Greed (1994), “*The Royal Town Planning Institute Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit 2007*” shows how to incorporate gender into planning. It can be used at any stage of the plan-making process, as it based on a series of questions. Such as: Who are the planners? Who forms the policy team? Which groups of people are perceived as recipients of planning? How are statistics gathered and whom do they include? What are the key values, priorities and objectives of the plan? Who is consulted and who participates? How are the planning proposals evaluated? By whom? How is the policy implemented and managed? Is gender fully integrated into all policy areas?

Women planners have experimented with different ways of electing public participation and reaching women in their private territory (Johnson 1989). They also seem to cultivate wider intellectual and academic contacts and networks than men, often coming from humanities and art backgrounds and knowing people from a range of academic disciplines, so they bring with them a mix of alternative views (Greed 1994). Moreover, women planners are more familiar with informal, qualitative, and creative approaches to finding out what people want, but they still unrecognized in government policy-making. Feminist academics during the 1970s and 1980s documented the surprising extent of the absence of women in planning, history, geography and other disciplines. Louise Johnson’s pointed this out and discussed some likely consequences in her critique of Mather’s typical textbook; she highlighted that the absence of women in a book for land use means that they remain invisible and unacknowledged by decision makers when planning and shaping urban spaces:

“The greatest gap in Mather’s book is the total absence of any reference to the word, “woman”. It is not just a semantic point but one of enormous importance to future planners... [If women] are not addressed explicitly in book on land use, then they remain invisible, unacknowledged and beyond the caring of those empowered to allocate resources, shape neighborhoods, transport systems and so on” (Johnson 1989:87).

It is clear that women have been marginalized as planners and as users in the process of planning and organizing urban space, thus cities were built and managed by men (Madanipour 1996). Decision makers tended to place women outside their concerns.

Therefore, mandatory codes are needed, to enable more women to participate in urban planning, and more women planners to achieve position of seniority from which they will be able to exercise a more positive influence on urban policy for the benefit of all women in society (Greed 1994), because, neglecting women in various areas has often led to less than optimal effects of development inputs, and to worst negative impacts (Brown and Switzer 1991). Women's participation is essential during urban planning to improve the design outcome, because "woman's uses of the environment are sufficiently different from those of men to represent a distinctive habitat", thus should be more encouraged to participate in government policy-making (NPWS 2004:21).

Over the past twenty years the nature of everyday urban life has been profoundly changed, and the perceived settings has been affected by the global reconstruction of economic, political, social, and cultural processes. A study prepared by Renate Ruhne (2003) demonstrates "how the construction of urban space influences the production of the insecure woman or the self-assured man" (Low 2006:129 citing Ruhne 2003). Similarly, Martina Low (2006) finds that the gendered spaces is affected through the organization of perceptions and social order; which leads to a choice of place and a placing practice that reproduces structural principles of society. Likewise, Setha Low (2000) describes the gendering of plazas in San Jose, Costa Rica, noting that the *Parque Central* is not only dominated by men, but women who use the space come with children or male companions at culturally acceptable times. In general, when studying the perception of people who are variously read and consume urban spaces, there is a need to acknowledge that women, like men, are not a homogenous social group, but are differentiated along characteristics such as ethnicity, class, age, and ability.

As a result, it is becoming increasingly clear that gender differences and inequalities directly and indirectly affect development strategies and hence the achievement of overall development goals. Therefore, to achieve inclusive governance and social innovation both genders should be equally included and appreciated. Moreover, the traditional understanding for women role and status affect the social and spatial organization and divide the society into private/public spheres. This division still unconsciously affects the planners' perspective when planning the city and its urban spaces. Moreover, women as users are ignored from citizen participation, and they are almost excluded as planners in decision making and planning policies. Thus, to achieve the real meaning of socially innovative and inclusive government, the needs and motivations for both genders should be equally considered, and they have to participate through all design stages, as planners and as users for the urban landscape.

2. Transformation of gender's role: The case study of Amman

Feminist studies have received uneven attention in anthropology and architecture as well. Recently, researches in several disciplines realize the importance of the spatial dimensions of cultural beliefs and practices in including the description of urban landscape and daily life. Spatial dimensions were used to theorize about the differences between males and females, and asymmetries in power and authority in society. According to Setha Low and Denise Lawrence (2010:7) "gender is defined as the cultural interpretation of perceived physical, anatomical, or developmental differences between males and females", although gender elaborates in biological

attributes, it is culturally constructed, and shapes how we think about others and ourselves and also influences our behaviors (Crossman 2013).

The seed of what is wrong with cities today were planted generations ago. Assumptions about the need for the gendered organization of space to express public/private dichotomies might be so deeply embedded in people's minds. The city is the product of the reproduction over space of social relations but, once built, the physical structure can, in turn, influence its residents (Madanipour 1996). The processes of growth and differentiation in cities mean there is a certain amount of instability and change in urban living (Stevens 2007), this instability arises from the increasing conflict in females roles which occurs when they move between various social fields such as family, work and urban spaces (Adams 2006), as they "may experience conflicts between different concepts of order and ways of behaving" (Krais 2006:131). The division of a public/private domain which represents the gender inequality of power, authority and role; it is symbolically reflects the position of women in society during a specific period of time. This phenomenon was very clear in Amman where the transformation of the built environment affected the women role and her sociocultural behavior.

Amman is a multicultural community since the 1920s, people from different origins, ethnic and social background were living peacefully together in small neighborhoods situated near the water stream, Muslims and Christians; Arab, Kurds, Arminian and Circassian; were facing the same problems and looking for effective solutions (Muneef 1994:92,254) (Fig. 1; Fig. 2). This multicultural content reflected on everything in the city, and on the way people socialize with each other in everyday life. As Muneef (1994:93) described "Amman was seen by tourists as a big festival where different languages, customs, traditions and dressing easily observed, [...] and where Islam religion is a unifying factor for the multicultural community". Islam affected all sociocultural features of the daily life in the City, customs and traditions, food and drinks, festivals and activities, dressing and socializing. Islam regulations also controlled the house design to maintain privacy, and organized the public spaces to suit the conservative society.



Fig. 1 Amman in forties described as the city of hats (Source: GAM 2013)



Fig. 2 Various styles of women dressing (Source: edited by the researcher)

The multicultural background did not only influence the dress style, but also the lifestyle and socializing. Socializing for women was occurred within their private sphere, at home, especially during the day before the sunset. Rasheed (2002:268) mentions that while children were playing in the street and men enjoy being in public

cafes, women were socializing by welcoming their neighbors at houses. It was a daily rotation from house to another during the week. Bedouin women were welcoming their guests by preparing the Arabian coffee and fried wheat. Palestinian and Syrian women were offering various kinds of fruits and lemon drink to the guests. During their meeting they were communicating, singing, dancing and enjoying. The separation between men and women in everyday life led them to socialize within two different worlds; women in *private sphere* and men in *public sphere*, and consequently affect their behavior.

Another type of socializing was described by Muneef (1994:93,146) as he wrote that in spring and summer, old women distributed backless chairs, made of straw, on the public walkway near the front door, twice a day, at noon and before sun set, sitting with their neighbors and preparing their pipes to smoke *al heshi*, each pipe about one meter in length, at the same time they checked the dryness of the hanged laundry, and welcome anybody walking in the street, and start a conversation with them (Fig. 3). Only old women allowed doing so and sitting in front of their houses (Muneef 1994:145). But, young ladies were sitting in semi-sheltered balcony and observing people from distance. They were not allowed to go outside without accompanying their mothers or brothers. This sociocultural features and beliefs should be discussed by bridging urban studies with social and gender studies, and moving beyond defining the gendered space as a simple division between public and private, as it is affected by women origin, lifestyle, socialization, education, and role, and automatically reflected on architecture and the organization of public spaces.



Fig. 3 Old women socializing and smoking on the public walkway
(Source: edited by researcher)

During the 1970s and the 1980s, the society of Amman transformed rapidly from a closed conservative to a more open liberal, thus, it is becoming harder for women to know what is accepted from their behaviors in this society. Moreover, women started getting better education, going out to work, achieving more in their careers, thus, they became in more competitive situation. But still, sometimes modernization contradict with the local values, the dilemma that women faced was how to maintain an accepted moral social or religious values while dealing with the flow of the advancement of the society. The changes taking place in Amman offered options of behaviors and

worldviews that had not been available to older generations, and a growing number of women were taking advantage of these transformation despite all the disadvantages that resulted from precisely the same processes. Sometimes it was very difficult to choose the correct behavior in specific situation, which could at times bring about unintended consequences (Potter et al 2009, Rasheed 2002).

Later on, the Gulf Wars of 1990 and 2003 had a lasting ripple effect on Amman where the majority of returnees and refugees came to live. Iraqi professionals and intellectuals helped in creating Amman's new cultural renaissance, emphasizing Amman's character as multi-colored collage marked with a variety of Arabian culture (GAM 2013). This transformation affects the women role and relationship with their families. A growing number of young women enjoyed higher education and started working but they still living with their parents, and the sociocultural behavior of men and women was strictly defined and formed on the basics of custom, tradition and religious (Droeber 2005). The ways that young women in Amman view the world is significantly influenced by the roles they played or were supposed to play within society. During this era, these roles had undergone tremendous changes; and women had constantly adapted their behavioral strategies to suit the current state of affairs.

2.1 Humanizing Amman with Gender behavior

A study about "*The role of landscape architecture in humanizing outdoor spaces in Amman city*" prepared by Bushra Zalloom studying *King Abdullah Street* in Amman, revealed the relation between the physical environment and the sociocultural behavior. The studying spot located within about 1Km diameter, which is a logical distance for walking and socializing. Field observation and questionnaire analysis proved that perception and social activities vary according to gender. It found that the participation of males in the street were 76%, while females were 24%. Moreover, the physical and cultural aspects affected the gender's behavior, females were seeking privacy; by sitting in groups on ground at the round-about, hiding themselves behind planted hedges; while males were sitting on the main street's parapet, drinking shisha –smoking- and watching the pedestrian (Fig. 4). Drinking shisha was also recognized in cafes, which are already gendered spaces that only dominated by males for decades, however today; they are opened for both genders, especially in West Amman. Women and young ladies can go alone or with friends to public cafes, smoke shisha, drink juice or have snacks. This behavior is familiar now in West Amman while still not observed in East Amman where the study was conducted, as families still more conservative. However, both genders that live in east parts, usually, go with their friends to the west parts to enjoy sitting in cafes. Thus, the restriction is anchored with the location itself; it is a spatial restriction rather than behavioral one. Likewise, their attitude when waiting the bus during the day is also differs. While males sit near the shops frontage on the steps or stand individually drinking coffee and waiting the bus, females stand in front of the shops' facade under the sunshades to protect themselves from sun and rain (Fig. 5). That's ensuring that the individual's needs, perceptions and behaviors are differing by gender and affected by the physical environment surrounding them.



Fig. 4 Genders' behavior affected by the physical environment and the sociocultural context (Source: Zalloom 2010)



Fig. 5 Genders' behavior while waiting bus (Source: Zalloom 2010)

Zalloom's research approves that gender is affecting the sociocultural behavior of individuals. Although in the year 2010, females were seeking privacy within the public spaces; sitting in groups, on ground, behind planted hedges to hide themselves from others; as they did before four decades when they hide themselves in the semi-sheltered balconies. The same attitude is presented within different time and different spaces, which confirm that they still affected by the traditional division. On the other hand, males enjoy the public sphere as they usually were. Research findings confirm the importance of identifying the sensual experience and recognizing the human behavior when designing or regenerating public spaces which satisfy human needs, these needs are differ between males and females. One of the major recommendations to decision makers and designers was to humanize the city by creating urban spaces that are pedestrian friendly, suit both gender and different ages, day and night. Furthermore, the research showed that gender should be taken into consideration when designing public spaces; as females need more spaces that satisfy their needs.

3. Conclusion

Studying gendered spaces has moved away from earlier conceptions of fixed symbolic and territorial associations to consider more complex understandings. Historical studies of gender constructions over space and time reveal variability within cultures and the complex inter-linkages of gender with social, commercial, and political influences. While recent studies find that changes in gendered behaviors and

roles; may encourage more interaction between fields, between communities or ways of life, so that individuals become aware of new options. In rapidly changing societies these dimensions of gender construction appears the most challenging to understand. All these provide ample room for further explorations of the social dynamic of the gendered spaces in specific, and the urban spaces in general.

This integration between social and physical dimensions is an important step in humanizing the public spaces. The physical space that we perceive and use is embedded in our behavior, therefore, gender issues should be considered within its cultural context. This study confirms that the community is much more than its physical form; it is composed of people and places where they live; it is a social environment as well as a physical environment. Therefore, public spaces should be recognized as spaces for productive and reproductive activities of society, especially for women. Thus, terms like privacy and gender must never be used as trans-historical concept. They need to be anchored in time, space and class, they mean different thing for different people. *King Abdullah Street* is just an example which reflects Amman's need for more women friendly spaces, and more social spaces, these sociocultural issues should be considered when regenerating various urban spaces in order to enhance the social sustainability. Social sustainability should be the main mission for urban regeneration developments. Therefore, the future policies of Greater Amman Municipality's should encourage the social development, look after the local community, and care more about gender differences in perception, behavior and needs in public realm, to enhance the quality of life for all. Socializing our policies is an essential step to humanizing our cities.

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