

The Genesis of ‘Othering’: Examining Public Spaces for Women

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ABSTRACT

Public spaces in urban areas are settings for a myriad of social interactions. Across many contexts, men and women navigate cities in fundamentally different ways; influenced by elements of urban planning and design such as accessibility, location, amenities, and perceived safety. These spatial dynamics are further embedded within patriarchal ideologies that extend beyond the private sphere into the public realm, including the physical planning and organization of the built environment. As a result, public spaces often inadvertently privilege stereotypical male behaviors and uses, while marginalizing the everyday needs and experiences of women. This gendering of public space is not merely the result of intentional exclusion, but emerges from deeply ingrained social conditioning that links certain places with specific gender roles. Moreover, gender does not operate in isolation; it is interwoven with other socio-economic factors such as age, income, education, and occupation. These intersections influence how public spaces are accessed or experienced, creating a dynamic that both constrains and enables different users in complex and unequal ways.

The objective of this study is to examine the processes through which women are ‘othered’ in public spaces by exploring the role of spatial design, social norms, and intersecting socio-cultural and socio-economic factors. The study adopts a critical, comparative approach examining societal norms, theoretical frameworks of space, case studies, and urban policy frameworks across the Globe to explore how gendered exclusions are produced and sustained in public space. It seeks to uncover subtle mechanisms of exclusion and identify opportunities for more inclusive and equitable urban planning.

Keywords: *Urban planning, public space, public infrastructure, social norms, societal pressures, women empowerment, women safety, rights for women, active participation of women*

1. INTRODUCTION: URBAN PUBLIC SPACE - BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE

Cities are more than physical structures, they are social environments where people move, work and build community. Urban planning plays a critical role in shaping these environments by determining how space is organized, accessed, and experienced. Urban public space has long been such a foundational element of city planning, often conceptualized primarily in terms of physical infrastructure

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to facilitate movement, recreation, or circulation. However, such a narrow perspective overlooks the complex and multifaceted roles these spaces play in shaping urban life. Public spaces function not only as spatial frameworks but also as social constructs, imbued with cultural, political, and symbolic significance. It is within these shared environments that collective memory is formed, civic identity is expressed, and democratic engagement is enacted. Therefore, urban public spaces need to be understood not merely as physical infrastructural artifacts but as contested arenas that propagate social interactions, support diverse forms of public life; reflecting broader processes of urban transformation.

2. FRAMING INCLUSION AND BELONGING IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Inclusion and belonging are closely related, but they are not the same. Inclusion refers not just about being physically present, but the **ability to access and participate in a space**, to use infrastructure, and to benefit from services without discrimination. Whereas, belonging goes deeper. It is the **emotional and social acceptance that makes someone feel valued, respected, and "at home"** in a space. It is about having the freedom to simply be, without being judged, policed or questioned. A person may be included in a space but still feel like an outsider. For example, a park may be made "inclusive" through ramps, lighting, or reserved zones for women, but this does not automatically create a sense of welcome or comfort. This shows that **inclusion is structural and governing, but belonging is relational**; it is about how people experience and are received in space. True spatial justice, therefore, goes beyond just structural inclusion. It requires nurturing environments that promote relational belonging, where all individuals are not only permitted to exist but are actively embraced, respected, and empowered to shape the space according to their own terms.

2.1 UNSPOKEN SOCIAL NORMS: INTANGIBLE GENDERED EXCLUSIONS IN THE PUBLIC REALM

While public spaces are often portrayed as neutral and open to all, the reality is more complex; deeply influenced by cultural and social norms. These norms significantly influence the everyday use of public space, shaping who is seen as a legitimate presence and how individuals are expected to behave. With urban planning being predominantly ruled by male perspectives, little attention is paid to the specific needs and experiences of women. For women, such social norms often regulate and control their presence, behavior, and movement, especially in public spaces. The policing of women's bodies in public; through judgment, harassment, or social scrutiny clearly reinforces traditional gender roles; limiting their freedom. Women are frequently made to feel that their visibility in public must be justified, especially if they deviate from expected norms of dress or

conduct. This contributes to a gendered fear of violence, where women are taught to anticipate danger in public spaces and adjust their routines accordingly avoiding certain areas, dressing conservatively, or limiting time spent outside. In addition to social norms, women's access to public space is also shaped by safety concerns, limiting their freedom of movement and active participation in urban life.

2.2 PRESENTING 'UNIVERSAL USER' AS A MYTH

Despite growing awareness of these challenges, urban design still largely relies on a "universal user" model that assumes all citizens interact with the city; in this case - public spaces in the same way. These assumptions are often centered on the needs of a narrow group; typically, able-bodied men overlooking the everyday realities of many others: women, children, older adults, and people with disabilities with different movements, mobility paths as per respective need. When planning begins to ignore these differences, cities become less inclusive and less functional for large parts of the population. As a result, public spaces become sites not of equal access, but of negotiated and often restricted presence for women.

3. DEFINING AND ANALYSING OTHERING:

Othering in public spaces is not merely a social bias, it is spatially produced and maintained. Urban design, governance, and everyday practices often encode systemic inequalities, rendering women and gender-diverse individuals as out of place. This spatial exclusion is deepened by intersectional identities such as caste, class, religion, occupation, or migration status which create invisible yet powerful barriers to access and participation. The fear of violence, moral judgment, and constant surveillance results in a gendered geography of fear, restricting not just movement but also presence, expression, and the right to simply exist in public.

3.1 SUPPORTIVE THEORIES/ LITERATURE REVIEW:

- A. **'The Production of Space' (1974) theory by Henri Lefebvre:** Far from being neutral, public spaces are shaped by social relations, power structures, and dominant gender norms that often exclude or restrict women's presence. Lefebvre's framework helps decode the disconnect between how space is conceived by planners and how it is lived by women. Intersectional factors such as caste, class, and sexuality further complicate this access, with marginalized women facing compounded spatial exclusions.
- B. **'Muted Theory' (1975) by Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener:** Muted Group Theory explains how dominant groups (typically men) shape the planning discourse, silencing or marginalizing others, especially women. This means

that these marginalized sections often have to communicate using systems that don't truly reflect their experiences. Because of this, their voices are often left out or misunderstood.

- C. **'Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge' (1993) by Gillian Rose:** She emphasized that geography is not only about physical terrains but also about how space is represented, narrated, and symbolically constructed through cultural, academic, and visual practices. These representations often privilege male perspectives and reinforce gendered power relations, shaping who is seen as belonging in public space and who is othered. In the context of women's access to public space, her work underscores that exclusion is not merely physical but also epistemic; embedded in the ways space is imagined, mapped, and theorized, making it crucial to interrogate how spatial knowledge itself contributes to the ongoing marginalization of women in public life.
- D. **'For Space theory' (2005) by Doreen Massey:** Applying the idea of 'power geometry' to women's access to public space, this theory reveals how spatial experiences are deeply embedded in power relations that privilege some bodies over others. Women's movement and presence in public spaces are thus shaped by intersecting structures of gender, class, and race, which influence their ability to claim visibility, safety, and belonging. Her framework also helps decode how space becomes a site of othering, where women are often positioned as peripheral or out of place, reinforcing their exclusion from full spatial citizenship.

3.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Are all public spaces in urban areas inclusive?
2. Can one be included in public space without truly feeling a sense of belonging?"
3. Do inclusion and belonging differ in thought? How does the concept of "belonging" in public space differ for men and women?
4. What social or cultural factors contribute to the exclusion of women from public areas?
5. How does governance and design influence feelings of inclusion and belonging in the urban public realm?

3.3: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

1. Building the Premise for Debate: Understanding significance of public space, defining aspects of 'inclusion' and 'belonging'

2. The Debate between 'inclusion' and 'belonging': Spatial and social realities
3. Defining Othering and 'Conditional Belonging' Theories and Case Studies with comparative analysis and inferences
4. Relationships of Gender and Space: A Critique on Policy Frameworks (Global South v/s Global North)
5. Discussions and Conclusions on Inclusive and Sustainable Futures

4. MAPPING AND UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND THEIR JOURNEYS IN SPACE; DECIPHERING PATTERNS OF OTHERING:

Women navigate cities differently from men due to their roles in both paid and unpaid labor, caregiving responsibilities, and heightened vulnerability to harassment and violence. Their daily routines often involve complex travel patterns such as trip-chaining to schools, markets, healthcare centers, and workplaces which are rarely considered in traditional transportation and spatial planning. To analyze these theories further, it is important to understand basic cases to bring about the relevance of women in public spaces in multiple urban contexts across the globe.

4.1 RELEVANT CASE STUDIES: GLOBAL SOUTH - INDIAN EXAMPLES

a. Azad Maidan, Mumbai, India: This open space is a historic open ground in South Mumbai and has long served as a space for public protests, sports, and political gatherings. While men have continuously occupied it for informal play, activism, and daily leisure since the early 20th century, women's presence remains rare, restricted, and often questioned. Over time, especially post-independence and into the 21st century, the space has become emblematic of how public access is gendered, with women either absent or hyper-visible, subjected to surveillance, judgment, or moral scrutiny. This exclusion, despite no formal restrictions, reflects how timeless male dominance and normalized loitering shape the very terms of spatial legitimacy for women in urban areas.

b. Connaught Place, New Delhi: This public space; though being a central commercial and cultural hub, exemplifies how seemingly open spaces are subtly exclusionary. While men occupy benches, corridors, and open plazas freely, women sitting alone or loitering without purpose are often stared at, questioned, or policed. The space is highly surveilled, yet this surveillance often reinforces gendered scrutiny rather than safety. Women's movement here is shaped by time, dress, and perceived intent, making casual or purposeless presence uncomfortable.

c. Marina Beach promenade, Chennai: Marina Beach, Chennai, though a vast and iconic public space, reflects subtle gendered exclusion. While men occupy the space freely at all hours, women's presence is often limited to early mornings or family outings. After dark, the beach becomes male-dominated, and women alone face moral scrutiny, policing, or harassment. Surveillance by authorities often reinforces control rather than protection, discouraging unaccompanied or purposeless female presence. Cultural expectations dictate that women must have a 'reason' to be there; leisure without function is seen as inappropriate.

d. Park Street, Kolkata: Park Street, Kolkata, a prominent commercial and nightlife district, exemplifies the gendered nature of urban visibility and access. Despite its cosmopolitan identity, women occupying the space alone, especially after dark, often face moral judgment, unwanted attention, and surveillance. Social norms around respectability dictate that women should be accompanied or have a clear purpose, making solo or leisure-based female presence appear deviant. Policing and societal gaze combine to regulate behavior, reinforcing spatial boundaries for women. As a result, Park Street remains a space where freedom of movement is granted unequally, and women's autonomy is subtly constrained through social and symbolic exclusion.

e. Cubbon Park, Bangalore: Cubbon Park, Bangalore, a central green lung of the city, reveals the layered dynamics of gendered access in recreational public spaces. While the park appears open and inclusive, women's presence; especially alone or after dusk, is often met with suspicion, discomfort, or surveillance. Social norms discourage women from loitering or resting alone, and reports of harassment and voyeurism contribute to self-regulated behavior. The presence of male-dominated groups and inadequate lighting further exacerbate feelings of vulnerability. Though physically accessible, Cubbon Park exemplifies how invisible social codes and safety concerns subtly affect other women, limiting their full and free occupation of urban green spaces.

f. Sardar Patel Stadium Area, Ahmedabad: This stadium, though designed for public gatherings and sports, reflects gendered patterns of spatial use and exclusion. While men freely occupy the open grounds for play, leisure, and socializing, women's presence is minimal and often limited to morning walks or family events. Those who visit alone report staring, discomfort, and social judgment, discouraging independent use of the space. The lack of women-friendly amenities and passive surveillance further reinforces their marginality. This case highlights how even recreational public spaces, when shaped by male dominance and societal norms, contribute to the subtle yet persistent othering of women.

g. Charminar Area, Hyderabad: This represents a bustling historic and commercial hub, presenting a vivid example of how cultural and spatial dynamics

contribute to the othering of women in public spaces. Though heavily frequented by women for shopping and festivals, their presence is largely transactional and purpose-driven, with minimal room for loitering or leisure. The dense, male-dominated street life, combined with narrow lanes and a highly visible gaze, discourages solitary or non-utilitarian female occupation. Traditional norms further restrict women's spatial behavior, reinforcing their role as visitors rather than equal claimants. The space, while physically accessible, remains socially and symbolically restrictive for women, reflecting deep-rooted gendered exclusions.

4.2 RELEVANT CASE STUDIES: GLOBAL SOUTH - INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

a. **Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt:** Tahrir Square, Cairo, globally recognized as a site of political revolution, starkly illustrates the gendered dynamics of public space. While it symbolized civic empowerment during the 2011 protests, women faced widespread sexual harassment and assault, making their participation fraught with risk. Despite being physically present, women's bodies became sites of control and violence, reflecting their contested legitimacy in such spaces. The lack of institutional protection and normalization of harassment reinforced their symbolic exclusion. This case exemplifies how even spaces of collective resistance can reproduce gendered othering, denying women equal claims to public visibility and agency.

b. **Trans-Milenio Bus Rapid Transit System, Bogotá, Colombia:** This area in Colombia presents a critical case of revelation of deep gendered disparities in urban mobility. Despite its efficiency, women frequently face sexual harassment in crowded buses and poorly monitored stations, making every day commutes unsafe. The lack of gender-sensitive design such as inadequate lighting, absence of panic alarms, and insufficient security contributes to their discomfort and avoidance of certain routes or times. As a result, women often adopt self-restrictive strategies or opt for costlier alternatives. This case highlights how infrastructural success can still perpetuate spatial othering if safety and inclusion are not central to transit planning.

c. **Mirpur and Gulistan Market Areas, Dhaka, Bangladesh:** Both these market Areas in Dhaka, Bangladesh, are vibrant commercial hubs where women visit these markets for essential shopping. Their movement is often constrained by persistent verbal harassment, crowding, and lack of safety infrastructure. The highly male-dominated environment discourages women from loitering, lingering, or visiting during peak or late hours. Many adopt avoidance strategies or require accompaniment, reinforcing their conditional access. This case illustrates how routine public spaces, though essential, become sites of spatial othering when women's presence is tolerated only within narrowly defined social roles.

d. Praça da Sé, São Paulo, Brazil: A historic civic square and transit hub, illustrates the gendered nature of safety and access in public spaces. Despite its central location and symbolic significance, women often report feeling unsafe due to harassment, poor lighting, and the presence of loitering male groups. Their use of the space is often hurried or strategic, avoiding certain paths and times of day. Attempts to increase security have not fully addressed the underlying social dynamics that discourage female presence. This case highlights how public visibility does not equate to public belonging, reinforcing the spatial othering of women.

e. Malls in Lahore, Pakistan: Malls in Lahore serve as modern, enclosed public spaces that offer a seemingly safe environment for women, yet still reflect subtle forms of gendered othering. While women frequent these malls for shopping, socializing, and leisure, their behavior is often shaped by expectations of modesty, surveillance, and social scrutiny. Security checks, dress codes, and male-dominated staff subtly regulate women's movement and visibility. Unaccompanied women or those loitering without purpose may face uncomfortable stares or judgment. This case reveals how even sanitized; privatized spaces can reproduce patriarchal control, reinforce conditional access and limit women's autonomous spatial presence.



Fig.1: Azad Maidan, Mumbai
 Source:<https://www.contemporarynomad.com/>



Fig. 2: Connaught Place, Delhi
 Source:<https://tse3.mm.bing.net/>



Fig. 3: Marina Beach, Chennai
 Source:<https://a.travel-assets.com/>



Fig. 4: Park Street, Kolkata
 Source:<https://www.holidify.com/images>



Fig. 5: Cubbon Park, Bangalore
 Source:<https://www.oyorooms.com/travel-guide>



Fig. 6: Sardar Patel Stadium, Ahmedabad
 Source:<https://bhakatipedia.blogspot.com/>



Fig. 7: Charminar, Hyderabad
Source: <https://images.trvl-media.com/media/>



Fig. 8: Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt
Source: <https://heroesofadventure.com/wp-content>



Fig. 9: TransMilenio BRTS, Bogotá, Colombia
Source:
<https://www.worldbank.org/content/>



Fig. 10: Market Areas, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Source:
<https://c8.alamy.com/comp/JD0PNP/>



Fig.11: Praça da Se, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Source:
<https://tourb.com.br/img/lugares/sao-paulo>



Fig. 12: Malls in Lahore, Pakistan
Source:
<https://c8.alamy.com/comp/JDENCg>

List of Figures: Case studies of Public Spaces in the Global South

4.3: FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS OF CASE STUDIES:

Qualitative parameter	Indicators of Spatial Exclusion	Mapped Quantitative Parameters
1. Spatial Legibility vs. Social Legitimacy	Women's presence is seen as out of place or illegitimate.	Moral Policing & Respectability
2. Purpose-Driven Presence vs. Loitering	Female leisure or idling seen as deviant or suspicious.	Transactional Use vs. Leisure
3. Surveillance as Control, Not Safety	Surveillance reinforces scrutiny rather than offering protection.	Surveillance and Visibility
4. Temporality of Access	Women avoid public spaces after dark or at certain times.	Temporal Constraints
5. Gendered Access and Dominance	Male presence is normalized; women need justification.	Spatial Access and Power
6. Infrastructure and Safety Gaps	Inadequate amenities or poor design hinder women's comfort and use.	Infrastructural Deficits

Table 1: Perception to Pattern Table: Findings on Women's Spatial Exclusion (Theory and Case based)

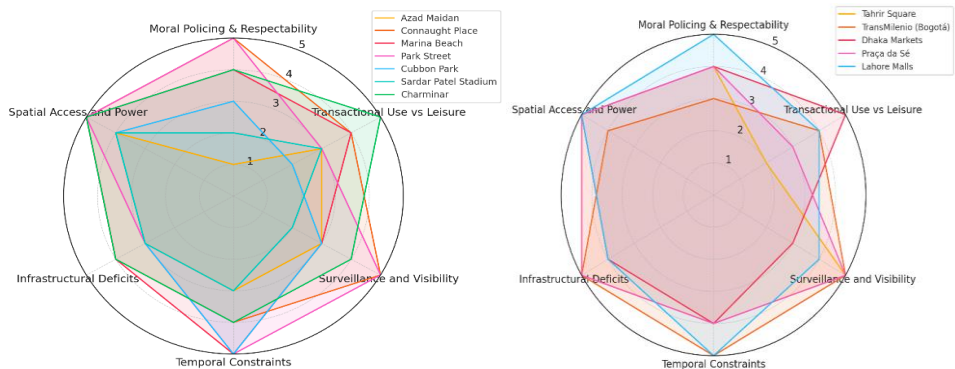


Fig.13 & 14: Visualizing Gendered Urban Inequities: Radar views of Women's urban experience in the Global South

5. IDENTIFYING POLICY CONTRASTS: GLOBAL SOUTH V/S GLOBAL NORTH

Policies shape how public spaces are planned, accessed, and experienced. By comparing the two contexts, the research can highlight how different policy environments either reinforce or dismantle gendered norms that lead to the othering of women. **It shows that othering is not just cultural or social; but also, institutional and spatially governed.**

5.1 POLITICAL FRAMEWORKS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH:

In addition to informal mechanisms of control that discuss societal judgements, cases in the Global South are also subjected to formal mechanisms of control and surveillance. These do not merely aim to ensure safety; they reinforce compliance with patriarchal norms, limiting women's freedom of movement and discouraging behaviors seen as "unfeminine," such as loitering, pausing alone, or occupying space without a defined purpose. These exclusionary patterns of control operate across three interlinked sub-mechanisms of exclusion:

Mechanism	Nature of Exclusion
Institutional	Law enforcement often reinforces moral codes, resulting in surveillance, not protection.
Symbolic	Place-naming, monuments, and signage are dominated by male figures, reinforcing spatial masculinity.
Material	Poor lighting, inaccessible toilets, lack of seating or rest zones limit women's ability to inhabit space freely.

Table 2: Inferences of Parameters/ Mechanisms of Control in the Global South

Apart from such formal mechanisms of control, there are additional intangible controls that are intersectional. For many women, especially those who are trans, queer, migrants, domestic workers, or from marginalized caste and class backgrounds, being in public is not just about physical presence, but a constant negotiation for legitimacy. Their right to the city is questioned based on what time they are out, who they are with, or what they are doing, whether they are working, resting, or simply existing. This conditional access to public space is shaped by moral policing, gender norms, and societal expectations that continue to privilege dominant groups. As a result, public spaces become sites where belonging is not guaranteed, but constantly negotiated, deepening feelings of invisibility, fear, and exclusion. This exclusion is further reinforced by institutional inertia, patriarchal governance structures, and the absence of participatory planning; limiting the translation of feminist urban discourse into actual spatial policies. While smaller steps towards achieving gender parity are on the rise, policies such as the Delhi Master Plan 2041, the Safe Cities Programme, MoHUA guidelines and the latest, the Revised Draft DP 2034 (Chapter 22: 'Gender, Special

Groups and Social Equity’); these interventions often remain superficial in protectionist thinking than true empowerment. Instead of fostering long term systemic and inclusive change, they tend to rely on surveillance in the form of symbolic and token gestures. ‘Reactive’ fixes like the pink buses, pink booths, CCTV cameras, or women-only zones only ensure women’s temporary and limited presence, they do not support their right to fully occupy, use, and shape public space. Most of these measures treat safety as a checklist item, focused on technology or visibility, without addressing deeper structural issues. Furthermore, they are often limited to a single chapter or section in policy documents, rather than being integrated across planning processes. Crucially, questions of accountability like who monitors these efforts or how they evolve are rarely addressed.

5.2 POLITICAL FRAMEWORKS IN THE GLOBAL NORTH

Cities in the Global North increasingly adopt structural approaches to spatial equity, recognizing that true access means not just presence, but autonomy, comfort, and belonging; rights that must be intentionally protected and planned for.

a) Since the 1990s, **Vienna city in Austria**, through its gender planning unit, has systematically incorporated gender audits into its housing, transport, and public space policies under ‘Fair shared city’ initiatives. Projects such as **Frauen-Werk-Stadt** (Women-Work-City) reimagined residential design through the lens of women’s daily experiences; considering proximity to schools, transit, childcare, and green space.

b) Acknowledging that women’s access to the city changes drastically after dark, the **London’s Women’s Night Safety Charter** requires businesses, cultural

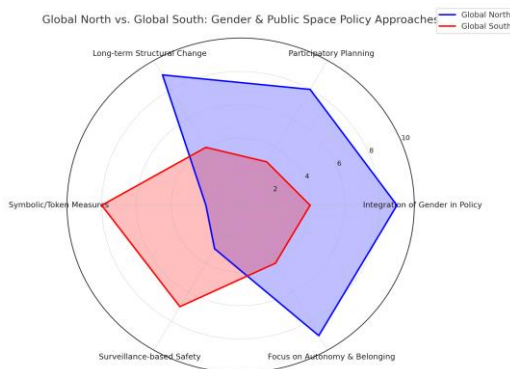


Fig.15: Global North v/s Global South: Policy Approaches

venues, and transport services to commit to measures that improve women’s safety at night. This includes staff training, better lighting, signage, and transparent reporting systems. Rather than segregating space or restricting time-based access, this temporal equity strategy aims to make the city equally habitable across hours and demographics, challenging the idea that public space naturally becomes unsafe at night.

c) **Barcelona's Superblocks (Superilles) initiative** provides another important model by transforming traffic-dominated streets into walkable, mixed-use public spaces. By prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists over cars, the city has created environments that are not only safer, but also encourage casual, unstructured use; a critical factor in women's visibility in public space. These interventions foster inclusive street life by combining spatial redesign with participatory governance, ensuring that residents including women, children, and the elderly have a voice in shaping their environments.

What connects these examples is their focus on making gender a core part of how cities are planned and governed; not just as isolated or special projects, but as part of everyday decision-making and planning. This approach creates a public realm where women and gender-diverse people can be visible and feel free to use the city without being watched, judged, or restricted. In doing so, these cities challenge conventional practices and promote spatial justice by revising governance frameworks and reimagining urban narratives, moving beyond outdated models of planning. They show that real, lasting transformative change is possible when gender is not treated as an afterthought, but as foundational to how space is planned, governed, and inhabited.

6. DISCUSSIONS: REFRAMING THE ROLE OF DESIGN AND GOVERNANCE

This research traces how public spaces become sites of gendered othering where they are excluded not just through absence, but through design, policy, and power. What becomes clear is that public space is not neutral; it is socially constructed, and often reflects the interests of dominant groups. Studies from examples from both the Global North and Global South demonstrate how gender can be made central to urban planning, not as a one-off concern or protectionist add-on, but embedded into everyday decision-making. However, while there are shared intentions, the **processes, priorities, and constraints differ significantly**. In the Global North, inclusive urbanism often emerges through **strong policy frameworks, grassroots feminist advocacy, and stable civic institutions** that enable long-term planning. These interventions tend to focus on **redesigning infrastructure, revising governance structures, and enabling visible and unregulated use of public space** by women and gender-diverse people. In the Global South, however, the challenges are more layered. Issues such as **informality, class hierarchies, patriarchal governance, institutional inertia, and lack of participatory mechanisms** often hinder systemic implementation of feminist urban ideas.

a) Transformative change requires a reframing of public space as a right, not a privilege. Access must be redefined to include not just physical presence, but

comfort, safety, belonging, and freedom to linger or participate without surveillance, stigma, or moral judgment.

b) This involves applying gender sensitive and inclusive design principles, rethinking infrastructure, and enabling participation of all marginalized sections that are not just merely allowed to be, but are welcomed, seen, and empowered to shape space on their own terms.

c) The role of policymakers, urban planners, and civil society is extremely vital in shifting towards such systemic transformations. The path forward lies not in control, but in co-creation, redistribution, and recognition; that are possible hallmarks of a truly inclusive urbanism.

7. CONCLUSIONS: FROM 'OTHERING' TO 'BELONGING'; TOWARDS INCLUSIVE FUTURES

To shift from othering to belonging, we must adopt an inclusive planning lens that works at both the **macro** and **micro scales**. At the **macro level**, this means embedding gender equity and intersectional concerns into urban policy, land-use planning, transport frameworks, and infrastructure investments not as separate chapters, but as guiding principles across sectors. Strategies could include participatory processes, mandating gender audits of city budgets, awareness campaigns and integrating care infrastructure into planning norms. At the **micro scale**, urban design placemaking interventions such as sidewalks, toilets, lighting, signage, benches, ensure they support the diverse rhythms, movements, and needs of women and other marginalized users. This includes inclusive zoning, 24x7 mixed-use areas that support safe loitering, street-level informal economies, and support infrastructure for caregiving roles. Spatial interventions should foster visibility without surveillance, access without restriction, and comfort without compliance.

What emerges clearly from these discussions is that transformative change is possible only when **gender is no longer treated as peripheral**, but as central to how cities are imagined, planned, and governed. Aligning with **SDG targets** (especially SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG: 10.2: Promote social, economic and political inclusion, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities), cities must work towards structures that enable **recognition, redistribution, and representation** by co-creation and not as add-ons, but as foundational principles. Urban spaces must evolve from environments of conditional inclusion to sites of **shared ownership and plural engagement**. Only then can we truly rewrite the grammar of exclusion into a **language of equity, dignity, and feminist possibility**; suggesting sustenance in the long run.

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