

Gender Perspective in Urban Planning and Design

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Date & Time

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02:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Speakers

Dr Taibat Lawanson- Associate Professor of Urban Planning, UNILAG.

Catherine George- Director, Spectroplan Konsult Ltd.

Rebecca Plumbly- Researcher, University of Cape Town.

Sara Ortiz Escalante- Urban Planner, Collective Punt 6.

Moderator

Dr Nnezi Uduma-Olugu- Head, Department of Architecture, UNILAG/ Director, Designedscaped Ltd.

Discussion Goal

The discussion is to engage urban planners, designers, developers, the Government and the general public about putting into consideration the needs and safety of women when designing spaces. Also, LUDI aims to implement ways in which we can create an environment that is safe for women, an environment that is gender inclusive and also show the benefits of designing a city from a female perspective.

Highlight: Panellist Presentations

Mrs Catherine George

Female, Places and The City

- Women make up a larger percentage of the informal sector; petty trading is an aspect of the informal sector and will always be an important part of our residential development all over Africa.
- There is a great need for convenient stalls with conveniences and source of potable water for the women in the market as they are in the market all day long.

- The daily activities of the urban adult female originate from residence, to work, market, business pleasure and family/home-oriented activities. Each of these activities is related to a space factor so we should have functions of spaces satisfying the needs of people.
- Parents should speak their mother tongue to their children, to foster community relations. This also makes it easier to communicate with people in the community and get their opinion on how to make living better.

Social Survey

Mrs Catherine George carried out a survey and highlighted the needs of women in different social spheres and different age groups.

- Women interviewed at Mende Market in Mende, Lagos suggested for markets to be safer and asked for more spacious grounds with parking facilities at an accessible location.
- Other women suggested that crèches should be incorporated into the design of offices for the benefit of nursing mothers, that security is increased and street lights are placed on the road and in public places particularly for females returning home from work at night.
- Need for more recreational facilities
- Solve the flooding issues in Lagos, reduce the cost of transportation and give loans to women to boost their businesses or start a business.

Rebecca Plumbley

Impacts of COVID-19 on informal workers in Warwick Junction, Durban.

- Warwick is an established trading space and an important transport interchange. It is known for its diversity like street trading with designated markets spaces, many of which are dominated by women.
- COVID-19 and its preventive prevention measures impacted informal workers and their livelihoods.
- Ways in which women in Warwick were specifically impacted
 - COVID has posed a risk to the health of informal workers who operate in public spaces.
 - The lockdown resulted in reduced or no earnings.
 - There was a noticeable increase in the gender gap. The South African Government placed a special COVID-19 relief grant provided that you did not receive a child support grant or any other grant. By excluding child support grant recipients, 67% of recipients to the relief grant were men the requirements to receive the grant became gender-biased against women.

- Increased burden of children due to the closure of schools during the lockdown. Women, being the primary caregivers, the closure has impacted them more.
- Intervention by Asiye eTafuleni
 - Utilise and modify an existing trade asset, e.g. wooden storage containers. This will allow toddlers to have proximity to their mothers and keep them out of harm
 - This idea has evolved into different iterations, one of which is to create a pop-up micro child care facility.
- Designers need to recognise the specific challenges women face in public space to develop adaptive solutions for people to navigate many other complexities including navigating the balance between livelihood and child care, safety and transportation.

Sara Ortiz Escalante

Gender Perspectives in Urban Planning

- More cities around the world have been taught with the conception that growth doesn't have limits, and it was positive to grow. However, these types of cities reproduce inequalities. They are patriarchal and sexist because they have been designed by and for men who are middle class, fully abled, and have a good job and this has reproduced social inequalities.
- In response to that, women and feminists have tried to implement a feminine perspective in urban planning. This means changing the priorities and putting the lives of people at the centre of urban planning decisions.
- People who live in a territory or city are experts of the place, and their participation is essential. The knowledge and expertise of the locals within a particular territory is needed because they know their community better and women should participate.
- Using the Everyday Life concept involves activities+space+time. Activities happen in a particular space at a particular time. In an ideal society, planning would be done, thinking of four spheres (productive, reproductive, personal, community/political sphere) equally. In contrast, in a patriarchal city, the major sphere puts more focus on the productive sphere and all other spheres suffer.
- Feminist urban planning incorporates ecofeminism to connect the global environmental crisis with the global care crisis. A city of care would be ideal as it allows you to take care of others, take care of yourself, take care of the environment, and it takes care of you.
- Women's safety is an essential issue. Safety is approached beyond crime because violence against women is not included in safety policies. Women's safety is important in planning activities.

- In public spaces, diversity of uses and people should be promoted.
- Care support should be provided e.g. benches, public toilets, promote the autonomy of dependents, accessibility, safety perceptions like lighting, public transportation stops, signposting.
- Women have more sustainable, complex and diverse mobility than men; therefore we should plan with that in mind.

Dr Taibat Lawanson

Navigating the Gendered Terrain in Nigerian Built Environment

- Women tend to get the short end of the stick and so often employed in the informal economy. As much as women get the short end of the stick, the reality is that both women in low income and high-income communities share certain characteristics with regards to the design of the urban space and the reality of urban life.
- Cities and public spaces are not created with women in mind, and this may be because the preponderant amount of professionals in the built environment are men and so when designing and conceptualising, it is usually from a position of their own experiences and the concerns of the needs and experiences of women and children are often forgotten.
- Women are systematically disenfranchised.
- Women suffer from significant time poverty because they have multiple responsibilities. The realities, opportunities and tension of men and women are very different, and women tend to have to navigate these multiple responsibilities across multiple time scales.
- Being one of two women among 23 men in over 15 years, she has learnt that; Women have to wear two hats i.e. represent the voices of women and then the professional

Considerations when designing urban spaces and infrastructure.

- Is it a safe space for women to thrive?
- Is it a multifunctional space that recognises the multiple responsibilities that women have per time?
- Is it an inclusive space, does it allow the woman to be a mother, a professional per time?
- Is it an empowering space?. Is it a space that allows women to attain their full potential?
- What extent does it align with SDG 11 and SDG 5?
- Designs that centre on the needs and concerns of women tend to be more inclusive, safe and fit for purpose.
- She concluded that the solution needed for women is Gendered Urbanism.

Discussions

Role of Politics

It will be helpful to get a legal framework on gender and urban planning/design but it doesn't mean that if the legal framework is present, it will be applied. If the political framework is in use it is because there have been women advocating for it. Politics is planning and planning is politics. To get anything done, one needs to leverage on politics, because decisions are made from the political level.

Empowering women and making impact

To do this, we need to get more women in decision-making positions, get more women in political power and also, empower women. We need to have allies amongst the men who understand that an equal society is a better society for all. Women need to be assertive and firm about getting these concerns addressed. Unfair situations should be called out. Recognise and emphasise the effort of women who are doing good work and are trying to make things better.

Gender Reconciliation

There has to be a willingness from both genders for there to be reconciliation. They need to be willing to give a space for women to be leaders and occupy leadership roles. The problem is that the men don't see anything wrong, and they operate from a space of privilege, and no one gives up power without a struggle.

We can not come to the point of reconciliation if we don't even realise that there is something wrong. We need to recognise that systemic injustices are being done and start to dismantle those types of structures. The two parties have to realise that there is a problem before you can get to reconciliation.

Different Context of Women

Women all over the world are in different contexts, and it is important to do a context-based assessment to analyse the needs of women in these contexts. Gender inequality is a worldwide issue, but the way it is materialised is dependent on each context, and if not, we would be making wrong transformations.

Transportation



Some of the ways ITDP (Institute for Transportation and Development Policy) is enhancing the safety of women and preventing harassment in public transport is through reducing crowding by providing a women-only section in public transport and encouraging more women to join the public transport industry (e.g. having women drivers).

A large percentage of women use public transport; therefore, the infrastructure needs to address their needs. The mobility of women is more diverse; therefore, all modes of transportation, including bicycle infrastructure, need to be well connected. Pedestrian bridges should be located close to the market for ease of movement.



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