GENDER JUSTICE & URBAN PLANNING

A Compilation of Insights from the MGI Women's Day Roundtable

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BEFORE YOU START: ABOUT MGI AND THIS PUBLICATION

The Morgenstadt Global Smart Cities Initiative (MGI) is a project coordinated by the University of Stuttgart in cooperation with the Fraunhofer IAO in Germany. Our mission is to **promote sustainable urban development and urban resilience** for future climate change adaption and mitigation in cities of middle- and low-income countries. The project entails three pilot cities: Kochi in India, Piura in Peru, and Saltillo in Mexico. For more information visit our website www.mgi-iki.com.

Considering the aspect of **gender and gender inequalities is vital for the successful adaption of cities to climate change** and to ensure a long-lasting effect of urban transformation measures. However, there is still little regard for this importance in urban planning practices.

This is why the 08th of march 2023, MGI gathered an interdisciplinary group of experts in an online roundtable to discuss why gender matters when it comes to sustainable urban development. - **This publication is an attempt to summarize the key learnings from this discussion**, give background knowledge about the issue, and make it available to other city planners, city administrators, architects, and generally anyone involved or interested in sustainable urban development.

As such, **this document is to be regarded as a work in progress with no claim to completeness**. Gender is a complex and intersectional issue, and surely we have not achieved to include all aspects, opinions, and experiences in this publication.

Content

CHAPTER 1:

The Basics

Gender & Gender Inequalities

Sex and gender are two different concepts. A person's sex is determined by biology, but does not always correspond with their gender. Gender refers to the behaviors, personality traits, and social roles that are attributed to a person because of their biological sex by society. In many cultures, a person's sex determines that they are read as either male or female, and expected to behave accordingly to the social attributes assigned to their sex. This often influences their opportunities and position in society.
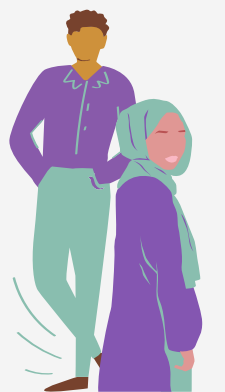
Just think of a person working as a manager of a big international firm. – What sex does this person have? Now think of a person taking care of an elder family member. – What sex does this person have? **Gender binaries are very unconscious and implicit.** None of us is free of them. In traditional gender roles, male persons are expected to behave dominant, not show emotions or wear skirts, to bring the main income to the family, be rationale and intelligent, and therefore entitled to positions of power in society. Female persons however are expected to act submissive, take care of the house and family, are stereotyped as emotional or even hysterical, therefore not considered apt for ruling or being the boss. We learn and internalize such stereotypical behaviors and roles through socialization: our upbringing, school, friends, mass media, etc.

So, this binary view of gender is historically rooted in many cultures and societies. It has been the cause and justification of inequalities between genders and the discrimination of people who do not behave in compliance with the stereotypes associated to their biological sex. **Discrimination and inequality based on gender persist until today**: from violence against women and the LGBTQIA+ community because of their gender or sexual orientation to differences in salaries in the same work position between men and women. But this also includes more subtle and structural forms of inequalities, such as less access to education, health care, economic resources, and more.

Feminist and LGBTQIA+ Movements

Feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements have different histories and exist today all around the world with different structures, topics, obstacles and objectives depending on the region where they are active. What they have in common, though, is their goal to put an end to oppression and discrimination due to a person's sex or gender and achive full equality in law and practice for men, women, trans, gay, lesbian, queer, asexual, intersexual persons, and all other sexual and gender identities.

The feminist and LGBTQIA+ movement is NOT about fighting against heterosexual persons and men! In fact, being heterosexual and/or male is not an argument against being a feminist and support the claims of the LGBTQAI+ community. In general terms, the common objective is granting women and LGBTQIA+ individuals the same rights and access to resources, opportunities, and positions in society a male and/or heterosexual person has.

In the end, it is about creating a more equal and egalitarian society in which everyone can live up to their full potential, regardless their gender and sexual indentity. This means that **ultimately, achieving gender equality is something everyone in society can benefit from**, because if everyone has access to the market, politics, education, etc., everyone can contribute.

Despite the centuries of effort to end gender inequality, **women, feminists, and LGBTQIA+ members all around the world still face discrimination, oppression, and persecution**. - Many of them risking their lives in their fight for their rights and a more inclusive society. There is sill a lot of work to be done!

Gender, Climate Change, and Urban Planning

Gender inequalities entail all areas of society and are very intersectional. This means that they overlap with other dimensions of discriminations (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, etc.). Climate change and urban planning are just two of the many areas of society where gender inequalities can be found.

LGBTQIA+ individuals and women have different needs to urban spaces and move within them differently. For example, most public bathrooms are designed and labeled after the binary division between male and female. - In which bathroom would a trans-gender or trans-sexual person go? Also, women and LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to be harrassed, aussaulted, or threatened in public space than men or non-LGBTQIA+ members. - Improvement in lightening and the structure of public transportation can decrease the possibility of being attacked for those persons.
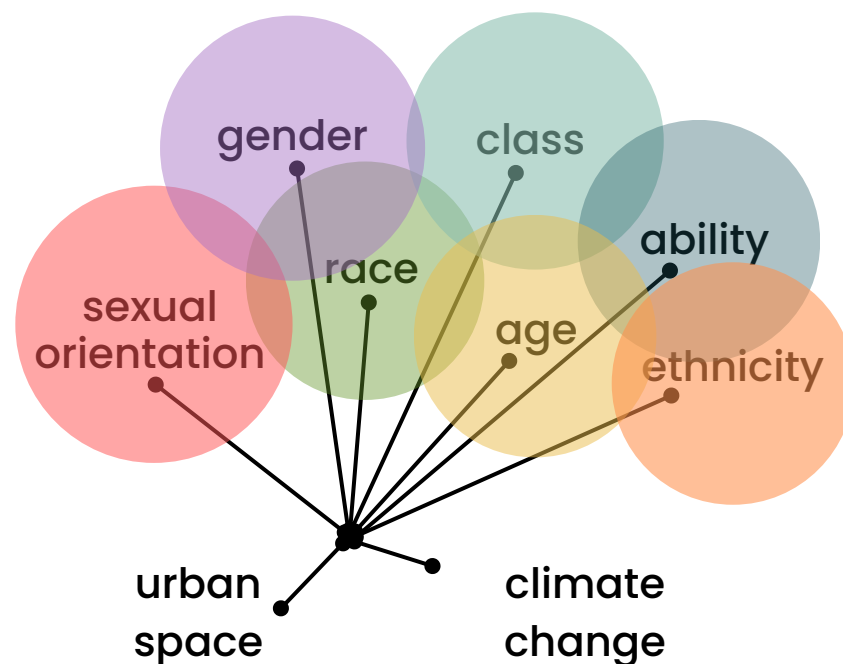
At the same time, **climate change and its consequences affect women and LGBTQIA+ members more severly**. Country-specific factors like the prevalence of informal settlements or the disproportionate amount of women doing domestic work makes them more physically marginalized and vulnerable to natural disasters. Also, they have less access to financial resources, health care, infrastructure etc. that would help them to cope with the consequences of climatic events or prepare for them. **Climate change, gender, and urban planning are all interconnected.** Climate change affects cities, urban infrastructure are still built without considering the needs of gender minorities and women, and so on.

If we want to built cities that are inclusive and resilient at the same time, **gender matters.** - We have moved beyond the fact *why* a gendered perspective should be included in urban planning to the question of whose voices are heard and *how* to include them.

CHAPTER 2:

Barriers

Barriers to Including Gender in City Planning

Subtility

- Inequalities are becoming more subtle.

- They are less visible or not visible at all.

- The less preceivable, the more difficult inequalities are to identify and to contest.

- It is difficult that people become aware of something they cannot preceive or understand.

Biases in Research

- Women and researchers with a gender background are still a minority in science.

- Research is often conducted without considering the context of women and gender-minorities or addressing related questions.

- Women and gender-minorities are not sufficiently represented in data. Policies, innovations, etc. are consequently not designed for them.

Lack of Perspective

- Often, city planners and administrators do not have sufficient understanding of the needs of women, the LGBTQIA+ community, and marginalized groups.

- This may be because they have no insight in others' perspectives, no interest, or no awareness that there is a problem.

- Gender issues in planning are then simply overlooked in design and approval processes.

CHAPTER 3:
Solutions

Solutions: Pathways to Including Gender

Also Interesting: Genderd Innovations

✅ Training & Education

- To avoid discrimination in planning, conduct gender-focussed trainings for city administrators and city planners.

- Such trainings promote understanding and sensitivity for gendered problems.

- They are a guidance to reflect unconscious gender biases and stereotypes.

✅ Gender Officers

- Every institution and entity should have an appointed officer for gender equality who has expertise or a background in gender issues.

- They can double-check proposals for urban transformation on whether gender aspects are considered adequately.

- You can also consult them in case of questions and insecurities on how to adequately address gender-inequalities.

✅ Gender Budgeting & Gender Data

- Gender budgeting is an effective mechanism that specifically grants funding to women and LGBTQIA+ researchers and their questions.

- Doing statistical research that includes gendered data helps to uncover gender differences in user needs.

- City planning that is based on gender-sensitive data and research addresses the needs of women and minorities more successfully.

Solutions: Pathways to Including Gender

✅ Codification

- Often, the effective execution of gender strategies depends on the individual in charge and their ability to codify them into local laws.

- Local authorities frequently do not get all the information or interpret them differently.

- Handbooks with action guidelines that are tailored to the specific circumstance on the local level would help to condify gender action strategies directly into local city law.

✅ Participation

- To get an insight into the realities of women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and marginalized groups, consult with them directly.

- Base city planning projects and laws on their insights, opinions, and perspectives and adopt an intersectional approach.

- Promote citizens' participation in urban planning and transformation projects.

✅ Communication & Representation

- Communicating gender-sensetively is key to motivate marginalized and unheard groups to participate.

- Make sure to represent women, LGBTQIA+ people, and marginalized groups adequately and with respect in your communication. Do not exclude them or reproduce stereotypes or biases.

- If your communication is appealing, then the citizens are willing to open up and share their perspective.

CHAPTER 4:

How to Unite

How to Unite: Communication is Key

Some individuals or social groups reject the ideas and values the feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements are promoting. **Certain persons may feel threatened or feel afraid of change and the loss of their privileges.** This can go back to a variaty of reasons and experiences or is simply a misunderstanding about what these movements really want to achieve.

Whatever the reasons are, it is important to **enter into a dialogue** and to be open to listen to the concerns they express:

- Even though this might be difficult: Do not judge.
- Ask what they are afraid of and why.
- Try to understand where they are coming from, what their reasons are.
- If you feel that they are open to it, explain what feminism and gender equality is about.
- Make clear that the goal is to create a more equal society for everbody, and not to fight against men.
- Communicate how achieving an equitable society is something everyone will benefit from.
- Give them the opportunity to participate in the process of change and feel included.

However, it is equally important to feel save and to know your own boundries. **You do not have to put yourself up to being attacked, insulted, disrespected or threatened.** Communication and dialogue depends on both parties being willing to listen and meet one another half way!

CHAPTER 5:

Excursion

Leadership Should Not Be About Gender!

Imagine a person in a leadership position? Who do you think of?

For many of us, automatically a male person would come to mind. This is because **our idea of what makes a good leader is very gendered**, historically and culturally. We have been thought to think that a good leader it to be dominant, show strength, guided by rationality etc. - Characteristics socially encoded as 'typically male'.

There are very high expectations to a leadership role that creates enormous pressure on people in leadership positions. Women and minorities in particular face **significant pressure to perform well in leadership positions in the attempt to fulfill traditional, stereotypical images** of a leader. There are even courses that intend to teach women how to 'behave like men' so to be successful in their job.

BUT IT IS NOT PEOPLE WE HAVE TO FIX. WE HAVE TO FIX THE SYSTEM!

When it comes to choosing what to do in life, none of us should even have to think about whether it is appropriate for our gender or not.

To make leadership more divers, **it is crucial to question such gender-stereotypical leadership models** and ask us "What do we need and want from a leadership position?". We should not put all this pressure on one person. Instead, let's give people a chance to switch from being led to leading, to adapt to a certain aspect of a leading role without having to fulfill all expectations at once.

Consulted External Sources

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IMPRESSUM

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Design and Illustrations with Canva

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