

Gender mainstreaming in the urban space to promote inclusive cities

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The roles of urban spaces in promoting people's social experiences and interactions, and access to green spaces, are critical for long-term community building. While gender balance occurs in the use of metropolitan spaces, the urban environment can still be considered as a mostly masculine sphere. Women are still marginalised and unsafe in urban spaces. Gender mainstreaming is used to plan and design a gender inclusive city, which includes all women in decision-making processes and helps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 11. The exclusion of women and girls from the urban planning process generates a knowledge gap, resulting in public spaces that exclude them. There is a clear planning gap: women are excluded from urban planning and design procedures. The research study developed from the urge to examine if gender mainstreaming is used in the design of urban spaces. Data for the study were gathered using qualitative method. Primary data was through interview while secondary data includes policy and research focus documents. The study revealed that women's experience and understanding of urban spaces varied from men's, and that these differences must be considered when planning and developing urban spaces. The solutions to establishing inclusive urban public spaces that are accessible and safe for everyone in the community include good design and community dialogue. According to the research evidence, professionals in the built environment must be gender conscious when designing and creating urban spaces. Warwick Market, a public urban location in Durban, South Africa, was chosen for the study.

Keywords: city; gender mainstreaming; inclusion; urban spaces; Warwick project; women.

Introduction

A city that is inclusive appreciates all of its residents and their needs equally. The awareness of how urban spaces in developing and developed inclusive cities are gendered is tenuous with a small amount of data collected on how women and girls are affected by urban planning decisions. Understanding the meaning of urban or public spaces is critical for this research study because it necessitates the search for relationships between urban structures and space usage norms. There are three major difficulties that need to be addressed in this context: physical characteristics, such as the distribution, shape, and size of forms defining the space, as well as the distribution and behaviour of users, which indicate social order and flows of human mobility, and which are reflected in the perceived social layout of a specific site. Larsson and Jalakas¹ reported that urban spaces seem to be more masculine designed than feminine. According to Kneeshaw² the lack of participation of women and girls in urban planning produces an awareness gap, following this group's public space rejection. Women are afraid to visit public parks because they have become crime hotspots. Inclusive public spaces are intended to foster a sophisticated cosmopolitan urban community, but they have historically excluded or made women feel unsafe. Baboun,³ asserts that inclusive cities are places that are gender conscious and promote gender equality. Without a more profound perception of the socio-spatial needs of women, cities will prevail as the domain of men. The relationship between gender and urban space is a contentious debate around the world which is influencing the design of living space from different social, cultural, and economic aspects. Women's experience in urban life is different from that of men, as women use the artificial environment differently as they have several forms, traditions, roles, and responsibilities.

Men have historically and extensively been conceptualised in urban and public spaces studies. Although both men and women now use public areas, the urban environment can still be regarded as a masculine realm in which women feel uneasy, undesired, or excluded.¹ The gender-sensitive urban space is a space that supports both men and

women's mobility, access and take into consideration their urban life behaviour and experience. However, the city peculiarities suggest urban restriction (for women) which incorporate some social norms, limiting responsibilities and feelings, and limited sources of space for the use of women. Women and girls' absence from the urban planning process generates a knowledge gap, resulting in public areas that exclude them.² Women are being overlooked in urban planning. Unequal city planning is making women feel insecure. Public parks have transformed into places of crime, and therefore women are apprehensive to visit such places. Inclusive public spaces are meant to encourage a refined cosmopolitan urban culture that promotes men and women's safety and inclusion.

To create a safe and inclusive city, there is a requirement to reveal the gendered power relations in planning. Gender-friendly cities remain a 'utopian concept' as these sorts of cities are diversified, barrier-free, have well-developed infrastructure, are connected, and propose spaces that can be understood and employed according to different needs. South Africa needs a paradigm transformation towards gender equality in spatial planning concerning the visualisation, deconstruction, and redefinition of social values and norms in urban planning methods and management. Gough⁴ postulated that when cities become increasingly feminised, gender equity measures to optimise their economic, social, and environmental sustainability become more significant.

The need for this study stemmed from the necessity for a conceptual and project-linked gender balance in the advocacy for inclusive communities within urban planning to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 (sustainable cities and communities). The view is that despite the existence of policies and initiatives aimed at urban gender mainstreaming, literature gives little indication of a sustainable transformation of the role and status of women and girls. This research aims to examine how gender mainstreaming strategies have been applied to achieve equality in urban spaces and uncover why they have failed – as women and girls still feel unsafe in many urban spaces.

Theorising city spaces through the feminist planning perspective

Globally, the importance of including women and girls in the architecture of urban spaces has been recognised. This study applied the feminist perspective and the women in development approach as one of the main theories that can be used to understand planning concerning gender mainstreaming of urban spaces. According to Meller,⁵ feminist scholars have identified the cultural idea of two domains of planning theory and women's position in the community. Many feminist historians recognised that the 'world is split into two to balance the two sexes' – the male division included public relations, trade, and industry, while the female division included home, family, and children.

Many cities recognised the challenges that women were experiencing in the 19th century and proposed alternatives for women to live in cities that did not adhere to a strict interpretation of the two spheres.⁵ The 1890s saw the emergence of a new town planning movement in the United Kingdom and other countries, with the aim of rethinking the usage of urban spaces and the interaction between social structures and spatial structure. Feminist theory operates in a number of fields, arising from feminist movements and incorporating general ideas on the causes of oppression and, in some ways, the social construction of sex and gender. Feminist philosophy is the expansion of feminism into analytical or intellectual debates, with the aim of comprehending the essence of gender inequality. According to Harrison and Boyd,⁶ feminism theory:

[A]ttempts to analyse the social platform of women, explain their apparent subsidiary role in history, and offer the basis for reform and the advancement of women in all areas of society.

Burton⁷ adapted a feminist paradigm that allows for solutions at the client, programme, and institutional levels. A feminist paradigm should help women and children recognise their own talents and endurance, encourage egalitarian and mutual partnerships, provide a broad critique of institutional frameworks for the treatment of society's most needy members, help women balance their rights with the wishes and needs of their children, and provide a solid justification for civic and cultural activism. According to Andrews,⁸ feminist urbanism theorists perceive built spaces to be hostile to women. Feminist urbanism is a philosophy and social movement that addresses the effect of the built environment on women. Feminist urbanism seeks to position people's lives at the centre of urban decisions. Aldana⁹ referred that feminist urbanism means incorporating and considering everyone's interest. As common in Africa, it advances a critical view on patriarchal political and social systems that has limited female participation in urban development.¹⁰ Scholars have iterated these dimensions of non-participation of women to include historical exclusions,^{11,12,13} and loss of authority and limited inclusion^{14,15} of women in the built environment.

Milward, Mukhopadhyay and Wong,¹⁶ critique the theory for promoting gender roles with respect to the urban environment, especially when preparing for the reconstruction of urban spaces. According to Zapata and Bates,¹⁷ planners need to advocate for policies and resource allocation to obtain socially just outcomes and break the segregation barrier.

The South African perspective of gender mainstreaming

South Africa has a long history of gender inequality. Aside from the overall marginalisation of people, Akala¹⁸ claims that the suffering of South African women is caused by several subtle variables. These variables – racism, social class, and sexism – are what Hassim¹⁹ refers to as the 'triple

tragedy'. Akala¹⁸ argued that the South Africa's altering of gender relations are riddled with contradictions centred on a contentious connection. Explaining the contentious experience of women in the country, studies^{20,21,22,23} have reported that women are more exposed to femicide, rape, sexism, and domestic violence in the country.

The continued female negative exposure and shocks have been attributed to weak legislative implementation.^{24,25} Akala¹⁸ pointed out that South African women have suffered significantly in the past, and a reform strategy is required to alleviate gender disparities. Gender mainstreaming in South Africa is meant to take place within the Gender Policy framework which instructs South Africans to take action to correct the historical legacy by establishing new frames of reference for interaction in the public and private spheres, and it proposes and recommends an institutional framework that promotes equitable access to goods and services for both men and women.

Setting: Warwick junction market project

The Warwick Precinct is the dominant public transport node within the eThekweni Municipality. The vigour of Warwick's trade, its variety in goods and presentation, its unique products, spaces, smells, and sounds combine to generate a vibrant multicultural space with an African heart. The development of the Warwick Junction as a public space is based on the Public Space Framework. The public spaces of the Warwick Junction area form part of a wider inner city public open space structure. The Warwick precinct supports and facilitates various functions such as the Berea Station, Market areas, bus and taxi ranks, etc. Since the majority of the precinct area serves the public, it is viewed and administered as a public space. Furthermore, the unique character of the area, the need to upgrade the precinct and the tourism value of Warwick necessitates the proper functional and aesthetic design and street scaping within the public key trade areas and intermodal transport facilities.

According to eThekweni Municipality,²⁶ four types of public space that exist in Warwick project are the following:

- Active open space – active recreation and sports facilities such as the Greyville Racecourse and the sports facilities attached to Durban University of Technology.
- Passive open space – parks, beach front areas, cemeteries including the Botanic Gardens, the West Street Cemetery, the Albert Park, the Old Fort, the beach front, the Victoria Embankment.
- Urban open space – paved hard open spaces such as the City Hall Square, the Warwick Junction and so on.
- The street as a public space – recognising that although streets may primarily be considered as corridors of movement, they accommodate a great variety of activities associated to movement, adjacent development, high visibility and so on and therefore represent probably the most significant public space area.

Following apartheid plans, Warwick Junction served as the black Africans' entry point into an all-white African metropolis. The Warwick neighbourhood was designed with the goal of discouraging free-flowing mobility, and black informal vendors faced intimidation and relocation. Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) has been at the forefront of improving public space at Warwick Junction and assisting markets in surviving redevelopment threats. According to Huber²⁷ who performed study on Warwick Junction Market, three main strategies are used to protect and improve the livelihoods of informal labourers (many of whom are African black people). These are an inclusive policy, an inclusive urban planning approach and the organisation and involvement of informal communities. An 'inclusive planning requires considerable appreciation that space matters and involves planning with, rather than for, someone'.²⁷ It must be concerned with how space can provide livelihoods for both men and women and is based on an awareness of the functionality or mode of operation and requirements of the informal sector. In support of Huber's declaration is that 'traditional tools' used by architects and planners must be altered to better understand the functioning demands of the informal sector.

Methods and material

The study examined as to how gender mainstreaming was implemented in a public urban space in Durban, South Africa. The study focused on gender mainstreaming in urban spaces and how it promoted inclusion. The research focused on examining theoretical assumptions behind gender mainstreaming. The thematic discussion was centred on global and national examples of gender mainstreaming, resulting in a discursive examination of gender mainstreaming challenges, legal frameworks, and strategies in each case. The study examined current gender mainstreaming national and international case study literature to identify issues and opportunities for women and girls. The literature identified successful gender mainstreaming implementation in urban spaces around the world and how South Africa can bridge the gap and have inclusive cities. Qualitative methods were used in the process of data collection. This method was chosen because it is well-known for providing a unique depth of information. Through this study approach, interviewees are free to openly discuss their experiences and feelings. As this study adopted a qualitative research design, all interviews took place synchronously using online platforms like ZOOM conferencing. Study respondents were selected purposively. The research study required the investigation of persons engaging in the Warwick upgrading and inclusive cities project's impressions of gender mainstreaming from the general community; consequently, a small sample size was adequate for this research study. Among those that were interviewed were Warwick Project Manager, Architect, two Town Planners and one representative from AeT (a non-profit making organisation focused on promoting and developing good practice and process around inclusive urban planning and design).

Findings

The solution to creating inclusive urban public spaces that are accessible and safe for all members of the community is good design and community dialogue. In order to promote inclusive cities, this study looked at gender mainstreaming in urban environments. The study was motivated by the need to comprehend the nature of gender mainstreaming, explore its implementation, and devise solutions to improve gender mainstreaming in South African urban settings. Literature confirms that while designing urban places, specialists in the built environment must recognise and accommodate the unique requirements and experiences of various demographic groups.

Women's experience and understanding of urban spaces varies from that of men, and these disparities must be considered when planning and designing areas. In the framework of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project, the project's informal merchants, the majority of whom are women, were involved in the planning and design of the project. Using an intersectional gendered perspective, the market area's conception and design were informed by women's distinct experiences, needs, and concerns. Women's requests enabled the development of restrooms and storage facilities.

To establish gender equal spaces and cities, women must be included in the decisions about urban design. A gender balance is required to develop gender equality and establish inclusive, safe urban places that represent the needs and desires of not only women but the entire community.

Historical perspective and case studies to women in urban spaces

Urban spaces were designed incipiently through the contingent arrangement of buildings and homes. Women's freedom has been progressively expanding since the 1950s, yet deeply established gender norms continue to dictate how women and men go about their daily lives within the urban environment.²⁸ The evolution of the idea of gender mainstreaming can be traced to both the First World Gender Mainstreaming Conference in 1975 in Mexico and the United Nations Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya.^{29,30} The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)³¹ identified gender mainstreaming as a technique for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment by government and other actors through policies, programmes, and choices that promote gender analysis, equality, and women's empowerment.

Gender mainstreaming was created to directly address organisations' opposition to social change. It was viewed as a technique of correcting the uneven allocation of development resources by requiring development organisations' personnel to assess the effects of external programmes and projects, internal management structures, and policies for men and women. Studies^{32,33,34,35} alludes that gender equality challenges

in metropolitan areas exhibited in several ways impact on women's involvement and development. This includes gender bias in urban economies, poor infrastructure, violence against women in public spaces, and insufficient representation of women.

World Bank³⁶ reported that examining gender equality in cities can be traced to the 'inclusive city' agenda and the SDG 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and women and girl empowerment. Gender mainstreaming in urban planning, is a process-oriented strategy to ensure excellence in planning³⁷ and city system. An example of such city that embraces a female face is Vienna in Austria and Whittlesea in Australia. Vienna is accorded a top position at the European level concerning both the conceptual depth of its activities towards gender mainstreaming.³⁸ Gender mainstreaming is the activity of ensuring equitable treatment of men and women in policy, legislation, and resource allocation across the globe (Table 1).

Discussion: Warwick project-planning as an instrument

Conceptualising gender mainstreaming

The authors recognise the plurality in the definition of gender mainstreaming. The argument is along the project applicability. In summary, the interviewees recognised that gender mainstreaming entails the collective involvement, participation, and incorporation of gender (most especially women) in developmental planning projects and programmes. Iterating this, an interview reported that identifying with the needs of gender groups is crucial to space design. It was alluded that:

[...E]nsuring that different genders are targeted within your development, understanding the different needs of each gender group... with the view that ...understanding the sensitive nature of women and considering that some women have kids and will need creches or places to leave their kids when they are working... are essential to project designs (Warwick area)' (Interviewee, Project Manager, Warwick Urban Renewal Project)

Therefore, the perception is a technique that is aimed at achieving gender equality and to bring women's experiences and expertise and shape development accordingly. Thus, allowing for an equity-conscious planning said an interviewee.

Recognising the theme of conscious gender planning, the 'why' of women involvement in urban design ranges from the safety concerns, space demands and experience, social roles, capacity, and need for city rebranding away from the masculine dominance. One of the respondents who is an architect responded that '... Architects have a tendency to look from the outside in rather than asking people, particularly women, what they want...' The proposition was that women have a wide range of themes, such as caregivers, mothers, sisters, and urbanists. Because women perceive and use cities differently, they must actively engage in urban

TABLE 1: Global case studies of women in urban spaces.

Variables	The City of Vienna, Austria	The City of Whittlesea, Australia
Principles of gender mainstreaming in planning	Gender mainstreaming in urban planning is continuously evolved by the City of Vienna. The implementation of gender mainstreaming in Vienna is based on the European embodiment of equality and equal opportunities for women and men in all activities and areas of life. Vienna's urban planning activities take targeted account of the different needs and interests of distinct user groups and differentiate by life realities, and phases, social and cultural backgrounds. The city embraces the blending of open spaces with a hierarchy of accessibility, competencies and control ranging from totally private to totally public engenders quality. Barrier-free planning and construction allows all user groups to enjoy the city and constitutes a central strategy of the City of Vienna. From a gender mainstreaming perspective, barrier-free design not only means supporting persons with reduced mobility but also facilitating the lives of persons with caregiving and family tasks and impaired mobility. Barrier-free design makes everyday trips easier and safer for all. The safety and security of public space are central concerns of gender-equitable planning. The key point of departure of all related efforts is the subjective feeling of safety in public space. The principle of 'seeing and being seen' aims at promoting (desirable) social control, providing effective guidance in the neighbourhood, and ensuring visibility without blind corners and with efficient illumination of streets and footways.	The City of Whittlesea recognises that women and men have different access to resources, power, responsibilities, and life experiences. The city recognises that a poorly considered design can disproportionately impact women and girls by either directly or indirectly encouraging their exclusion from community spaces and activities. Poor design can contribute to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and can therefore directly limit the facility use and functions. A successful design enables engagement and participation for all genders and age groups. The City of Whittlesea in Australia developed a 'Gender Equity in Design Guidelines' to provide direction on creating gender equitable urban designs in three areas of site planning, concept design, and detail design and documentation. The two other crucial design guides released by the Victorian State government – 'Design for Everyone' and the 'Female Friendly Sports Infrastructure Guide'. These guidelines have influenced the structure and content of the City of Whittlesea Gender Equity in Design guidelines and should be considered as complementary documents that supports women and girl accessibility.
Gender mainstreaming project	The Austrian capital, Vienna, has been a pioneer in gender mainstreaming for about 30 years. The gender mainstreaming plan was endorsed in Vienna in 1995, 10 years before it was incorporated in the United Nations worldwide plan for gender equality. The city has evaluated over 1000 gender sensitive pilot projects and executed about 60 gender sensitive pilot projects. Example of such project is the 1997 <i>Frauen-Werk-Stadt</i> (Women-Work-City) project – a 357-unit complex made by women. These units were designed for flexible use and could be adapted to the varying requirements of different life phases – specific to the needs of women. From pram storage to large stairwells to foster neighbourly interactions, to adaptable flat layouts, and to the building's height, which was maintained low enough to ensure 'eyes on the street', this construction was defined by a feminine perspective on every level. ³⁹ The project also incorporated complementary facility needs such as on-site kindergarten, and nearby public transportation to ease commuting.	Urban spaces in Whittlesea such as community centres play a vital role in bringing local communities together and delivering important local services. They act as a central hub for the community, a place to make connections, to access support or simply to enjoy oneself. The City of Whittlesea buildings and urban spaces allow for mother-child expressions which accommodate breastfeeding friendly space that provides some level of privacy without being segregated or set far away from communal areas.
Legislative framework	The Article 7(2) of the Austrian Constitution includes a commitment to gender equality to foster equality between men and women with the primary goal of eliminating existing imbalances. Other measures include the establishment of the Austrian Ministry of Women's Affairs policies, and the Department for Women in Austria was established in 1997 under the Federal Chancellery.	Australia released the first National Plan on Women, Peace, and Security for the period 2012–2018 in 2012, outlining five primary pillars: Prevention, Participation, Protection, Relief, and Recovery and Normative. The plan was developed to empower women and girls.
Thematically deductive lessons for South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the needs of women creates a more liveable city for all as the city of Vienna displays that a focus on the needs of women can create a more liveable city for all. • Designing for female needs increases the variety of activities and infrastructure that policymakers plan for and prioritise and creates more extensive public benefits. • Gender mainstreaming is an approach centred on preventing gender inequalities in the long-term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value women's participation and representation. The project supports gender equity within leadership groups and in strategic decision-making processes. • It is achieved through promoting economic, social, or political power disparities between men and women in order to gain enhanced, safe, and inclusive access to public facilities, programmes, and services.

planning design. This perception is embedded in the space safety, sense of comfort, security experience and accessibility. Recognising the importance of giving women a voice and incorporating their opinions into urban planning design gets us one step closer to attaining future equality. The advocacy is that professionals must face the urban future with all of humanity's capabilities, including the contributions and experiences of women.

The Warwick project: The ideology and basis

The Warwick Junction region is a relatively new occurrence. Warwick Junction Market is a one-of-a-kind location in Durban, South Africa, with significant economic importance. According to Huber,²⁷ the market is an 'informal commercial and transit center with about half a million customers passing through on a daily basis'. Towards ensuring livelihood security of informal traders, the Warwick Junction Market project was based on three key techniques: an inclusive policy, an inclusive urban planning approach, and the organisation and involvement of informal communities. The inclusive thinking of the project is embedded in the quest to reshape the apartheid footprint within the city centre. An interviewee (urban planner) pointed out that the space was subjected to urban renewal due to its configuration of being characterised as unsafe and unsanitary despite its role as a key transportation hub in Durban, South Africa. Buttressing this, Huber,²⁷ stated that 'inclusive planning requires considerable appreciation that spacematters and involves planning with, rather than for, someone'. It must be concerned

with how space can provide livelihoods for all and is based on an awareness of the functionality or mode of operation and requirements of the informal sector. Aligning to Warwick as a 'livelihood space', an architect posited that the project goal was to '... improve the livelihoods and capacities of informal workers while also making the environment more responsive to its inhabitants...' this she mentioned was achieved through the '... use of inclusive urban design to bring together local, public, and informal organizations to co-create a safe, inclusive, and accessible public space...'. The study interviewee recognised the project was inspired by urban management and design issues that arose because of increased taxi and street trade activity. The project manager recognised an opportunity to include local street vendors in the remodelling process. The initiative planned to take a sector-by-sector approach. This further iterates the argument of the city for all.

This was supported by Huber,²⁷ who recognised that 'traditional tools' used by architects, planners, and built environment practitioners must be altered to better understand and incorporate the functioning demands of the informal sector within the urban space. The capacity to incorporate and integrate informality is embedded in the urban plans and developmental policies to be inclusive. The planners narrated that the project was part of a larger city-wide experiment with integrated area-based development. This means that public resource planning and management would be decentralised to a geographical area, and that the various departments in charge of managing the area would

collaborate rather than work in isolation. Area-based development also allows citizens to participate in all aspects of development planning. Arguing for a 'city for all', Onyemenam et al.⁴⁰ posited about the spatial exclusion that characterises urban spaces. The argument went further to present the view that urban socio-spatial segregation remains a major hindrance to both functional urban development and the inclusive vision of cities we need. Various studies^{40,41} argue for urban transformation that promotes community (formal and informal) participation. Dobson and Quazi,⁴² pointed out that the initiative was built on two pillars of area-based management and inter-departmental coordination, and a commitment to participation and dialogue. Citizens' participation in the Warwick Junction Project led to somewhat success and transformation of a once congested and filthy area into vibrant, interconnecting markets and an informal retail mall. In 3 years, the initiative transformed Warwick from a notorious centre of 'crime and squalor' to a thriving area of the inner city.

Aligning to citizen participation, the project manager mentioned that the need to incorporate informal traders in the renovation, renewal and reconstruction process was targeted at ensuring an inclusive urban area through the incorporation of traders' multiple spatial desires. It was recognised that the plurality of stakeholders necessitated integrated, area-based development with decentralised administration and planning. The initiative took a sector-by-sector approach, allowing residents from all sectors and stakeholders (such as street traders, tax collectors, landowners, religious groups, formal shops, storage firms, cardboard recyclers) to participate in all elements of development planning. The initiative attempted to establish a more participatory environment that worked with, rather than against, the interests of traders.

Success factors of the Warwick project

The study recognises contextual and organisation factor in project deliverable to be essential in the success of the Warwick project.

Contextual considerations include informal labourers at Warwick Junction who trusted AeT to defend their interests. Relationships with stakeholders were also mentioned as one of the most important contextual factors. Due to AeT's extensive understanding of Warwick's informal merchants, stakeholders were able to get credible information on an otherwise inaccessible section of the community, which eventually led to the acknowledgement of the requirements of informal workers in the development and planning process. The decision to cultivate connections with individual stakeholders rather than institutional ties meant that roadblocks in certain areas could be avoided; for example, barriers imposed by an official in one municipal department may be avoided or overcome by establishing as many positive connections with municipal authorities as possible. When development initiatives endangered portions of Warwick

Junction, strong historical links and affiliation with built environment professionals and other community members or stakeholders bolstered lobbying efforts.

Organisational factors: Team dynamics – The team's integration in project work and the collaborative character of progress were identified as critical success factors. The plethora of professionals (planners, gender activists, architects, and other built environment professionals) allows for creative team thinking and viewpoints. This allows for the gender mainstreaming process to be done along an organisational culture that supports a rethinking process towards gender conscious planning. Cavaghan⁴³ has reported on the role of experts' opinion and multiple professionalism in gender mainstreaming. It emphasised that robust gender knowledge from policy and programme planning actors often results into collective dynamics and deeper analysis and deconstruction of a gender bias. As a result, gender expert engagement will aid in translating gendered concerns into more equal possibilities appearing in project organisational outputs.⁴⁴

Challenges experienced during the Warwick project

The view of an interviewee was that the work of advocating for a truly inclusive environment has never been easy. The interviewee noted that it is the joint responsibility of stakeholders to respond to project difficulties in the best way possible in order to achieve long-term success. The AeT,⁴⁵ reported the apartheid planning that separated the different race groups devising the area with a poor design as a key challenge in the project process. Dobson and Quazi⁴² stated that the project grappled with environmental (hygiene, sanitation and safety) challenges. To increase safety, the project team used 'targeted measures', such as lowering congestion, removing canyons, minimising concealed places, boosting street lighting, enhancing police presence, and investing in community policing. Key to this process was advocacy mechanism through the formation of the 'Traders against Crime' volunteer association and the consideration and action on funding or economic sustainability early in the planning process. In this advocacy programme, the city's health department worked with the street vendors towards healthy city agenda. However, achieving this is limited by the plurality of urban space groups needs and spatial demands. Two interviewees had this to say:

'... When we first learned of some of the traders' needs, we attempted to plan for them without involving them in the planning and design process. The traders were dissatisfied and petitioned the city ...' (Interviewee, Male, Town Planner)

'... Stakeholder relationships were also among the most important. For the project, better communication and gap analysis were required. Practitioners worked tirelessly to foster relationships and involve traders in decision-making. We build and maintain bridgeheads in a variety of communities and professions, and we use those bridgeheads to facilitate effective negotiations among the various key stakeholders ...' (Interviewee, Project Manager, Urban Renewal Project)

Despite the challenges, an interviewee put that the key to achieving sustainable development in the project process is to establish an inclusive process.

Women involvement in the Warwick project: Efforts towards implementing gender mainstreaming

The authors recognised that women's involvement was achieved through communicative, collaborative, gender equality and empowerment and bottom-up planning approaches and process. The project manager iterates that communication with all stakeholders about the importance of creating a comfortable and welcoming public space to all, along with an effective communication strategy helped to support and raise awareness of our project's efforts. The need for the communication was to promote collaboration said an interviewee. It was argued that collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders were critical to the success of our projects. The project practitioners anticipated collaboration within a gender focal point. This was done by planning with a gender focal point to build capacity in mainstreaming gender equality and to ensure that the traders' skills and knowledge fed into our design plans.

Studies^{46,47} mentioned that it is critical to integrate the viewpoints of women and gender minorities in the design of cities and communities because it will allow women to have equal access to the advantages of the city. Many people believe that urban design is an important tool for reducing gender inequities in society. This was why one of the interviewees was of the notion that Warwick project is a place of opportunities for unemployed and vulnerable women. The argument was the project promoted collaborations with stakeholders, many of whom had their own strategies, processes, and resources for gender equality and mainstreaming. Thus, advocating for everyone to think about gender equality and collaborating to find solutions. The achievement of collaborative solution is derived from the development of a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist. As a result, the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives was influenced by this information and was based on a deep awareness of the internal capacities of the stakeholders. Understanding the internal capabilities can further be maximised by enhancing a bottom-up approach. Zachariassen⁴⁸ emphasised that bottom-up approach in gender mainstreaming is key to a long-term transformative agenda. The study respondent alluded to this when it was said that bottom-up approach which empowered the informal workers with knowledge and skills was key in the space users' ability to challenge and question the project process and development. Asserting this, studies^{49,50,51} voiced that gender in power and decision-making promotes cooperative action, dialogue, gendered resonances, women empowerment sustainable and flexible decision structure, and collaboration, which nurture shared meaning and norms.

Towards gender mainstreaming: The concluding argument

Women's experience and knowledge of urban spaces are different to men. These differences need to be considered when planning and designing spaces. In the context of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project, the project's informal merchants, the majority of whom are women, were involved in the project's development and design. The evidence of the involvement of women were the measures put in place to accommodate gender equality in the access to urban space. Responding, the interviewees stated thus:

'... The project team designed interconnected trading spaces to ensure that traders can move safely from one space to another. Plans and designs are solely for the benefit of the traders ... To ensure space safety and ease of mobility, accessibility and usability, ramps and elevators were provided close to the elderly and women traders with children' (Interviewee, Project Manager, Urban Renewal Project)

The interviewed town planners stated that:

'... We were aware that we needed a broader understanding of different market segments to plan and achieve an inclusive public space. Our main planning tool was gender sensitive planning, which aided in creating positive experiences for female traders – it was recognized that female traders' experiences and needs were not homogeneous ... We attempted to create an inclusive approach in which traders were included in the strategy formulation process. ... We knew that women's capacity to fully utilize public places was reliant on their access to transportation and their perceptions of safety ... We planners considered the readability of the area as well as the safety element, and we planned appropriately'

The interviewed gender advocate – Asiye eTafulweni representative asserted that the project approach was designed to be 'all-inclusive'. It state that:

'... We wanted the Warwick area to be a location that has been created in such a manner that it covers everyone – the traders agree, as when we met with one of the trade leaders, he stated that the site must be for everyone – the citizens, the visitors, and the traders'

This explained that along the intersectional gendered lens, women's specific experience, needs and concerns informed the development and design of the market area. The facilities (ablution and storage facilities) were constructed for women to be gender conscious. The Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project combines adequate and appealing infrastructure with an innovative approach to urban management concerns, presenting a unique paradigm of how inclusion could be included into urban design. The initiative resulted in a sustained and continuing participation of informal merchants in conversations regarding their needs and priorities. To build an inclusive urban area, the Warwick project listened to informal merchants and included their demands into the design.

Evidence from the study emphasised space comfortability and safety to be key to gender mainstreaming. The view is that when creating spaces for women, the need to keep women safe, typically by crime-prevention design methods

or by enabling women's usual patterns of mobility and utilisation of the city is considered important. Women's engagement in public life is contingent on these improvements. It was established that the fear for personal safety prevent women from travelling in public places, and innovations to keep women secure might 'paradoxically' make women feel less protected. Women form predicted mental images of hazardous areas based on current news; as a result, their perception of safety is dependent on visuals rather than statistical proof or ideas supported by evidence.

In summary, the study recognises that to create gender equitable city spaces, women's voice in decision-making and their involvement in the designing of urban spaces is critical – in order to promote gender equality, balance, and inclusive safe urban spaces that represent the needs and desires of all community genders. However, the authors, through field observation forwards improved space lighting towards achieving gendered 'safer' spaces. We also further iterate owing to the limited project success that, professionals in the built environment especially planners who design the use of spaces need to encourage social interaction in their designs.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

K.R. was the project leader responsible for project design, data capture, and co-wrote the manuscript. H.M.-C. performed the draft review, provided technical guidance, co-wrote the manuscript, and was involved in the conceptualisation of the study.

Ethical considerations

This study is approved under the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, reference number: HSSREC/00002456/2021.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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