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by S S

PES7052: SUSTAINABLE CITIES – ASSESSMENT

DOCUMENT

ESSAY – PART A

2. The gendered city
Introduction

The Gendered City implies the concept that determines how gender shapes the use, experience, and design of urban space. However, the term reflects the ways in which public and city spaces are often developed to privilege the experiences and requirements of men over those of women and other marginalised genders. This in return can lead to a range of issues comprising exclusion from public life, unequal access to public resources, and gender-associated violence. Hence, by understanding and dealing with the gendered dimensions concerning urban spaces, better equitable and inclusive cities can be created that help to serve the experiences and requirements of their residents. The provided essay evolves to mainly focus on the difference between girls' and women's experiences from boys and men in accordance with leisure aspects. The essay commences to discuss and provides various ways concerned with the experience of the city "gendered". Furthermore, adequate examples are included in the paper to effectively fulfill the core purpose of the essay.

The difference in girls' and women's experiences from boys and men in relation to leisure

Leisure activities signify to be an essential portion of an individual's life offering opportunities for recreation, socialisation, and relaxation. Moreover, the leisure experience can significantly vary based on gender, with girls and women experiencing unique barriers and challenges that limit their access to leisure opportunities. As understood by McGroarty *et al.* (2020), over the years, leisure time activities have been extensively studied and hereby it is well identified that there exist gender differences in the context of experiences, types of activities, and participation rates. As opined by Lyttelton *et al.* (2020), historically, girls and women have faced several issues concerning participation in leisure activities, including cultural norms, societal expectations, lack of resources, access, and safety concerns. In context to this, the significant city "gendered" experience difference between girls and women and that of boys and men with a major focus on leisure aspects.

As identified by Codina and Pestana (2019), research has indicated that men are more likely to participate in outdoor and sports activities, while women prefer various indoor activities such as arts, socialising, and reading. Moreover, this specific gendered

pattern of leisure engagement can be observed in Kinshasa as well. For instance, men in Kinshasa were more preferable to participate in outdoor leisure activities such as running, basketball, and football, whereas women like indoor activities such as watching television, sewing, and cooking (Suka and Alenda-Demoutiez, 2022). Furthermore, these gendered patterns of leisure engagement are shaped partly by cultural norms and societal expectations that dictate what is considered relevant leisure activities for women and men.

As highlighted by Ravensbergen *et al.* (2019), one of the most crucial barriers to girls and women's participation in leisure activities is the cultural expectations and social norms that restrict their access and mobility to public spaces. Girls and women in several cultures are expected to prioritise their household responsibilities and family over their leisure activities. As judged by Lane *et al.* (2019), this expectation in return limits their ability to participate in recreational and social activities outside the home including cultural events, and going to gyms or parks. In Kinshasa, for instance, women are generally expected to prioritise their duties at home and also care for their children and thereby leaving them with little free time to participate in any leisure activities (Suka and Alenda-Demoutiez, 2022). However, girls and women usually experience additional safety concerns while participating in leisure activities in public spaces. Gender related violence, for instance, sexual assault and harassment is referred to as a crucial threat to their well-being and safety. As per the report published by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, girls, and women remain at higher violence risk while accessing public scenarios such as recreational areas and parks (World Health Organization, 2021). Additionally, the fear of harassment and violence can further create barriers to girls' and women's mobility and thereby prevent them from leisure access opportunities. In contrast to this, boys and men tend to have greater access to leisure activities and public space as they are less likely to experience restrictions relative to their mobility and are generally less vulnerable to gender associated violence. As exclaimed by Codina and Pestana, (2019), boys in context to several cultures are motivated to participate in physical activities such as sports which are mainly considered unfeminine or inappropriate for girls. This gendered expectation can cause limitations to girls' opportunities to participate in physical leisure activities and subsequently to create their confidence and physical skills.

The socioeconomic position of women and girls is referred to as a crucial element that influences their access to leisure options. As presented by Ravensbergen *et al.* (2019), women and girls often have limited access to recreational amenities including sports facilities, swimming pools, and cultural venues in low-income communities. Additionally, they might not have the money to pay for extracurricular expenses like admission fees or equipment rentals. As identified by Suka and Alenda-Demoutiez, (2022), for instance, a Kinshasa study discovered that low-income women's access to leisure activities was constrained by a lack of funds. In addition, the opportunities for leisure time for women and girls may be constrained by their caregiving obligations. As preferred by McGroarty *et al.* (2020), considering how frequently women are needed to care for children, the elderly, and other family members may not have much free time for leisure pursuits. For instance, a study carried out in India discovered that women's caring obligations restricted their involvement in leisure activities, especially those that required them to travel a great distance (Yerkes *et al.* 2020). In contrast, men and boys typically have more free time and less responsibility for caring for others, which allows them to engage in leisure activities more regularly. As highlighted by Lane *et al.* (2019), furthermore, boys are frequently encouraged to pursue leisure pursuits that foster independence, such as taking part in outdoor activities or traveling, whereas girls may be expected to give priority to household duties.

As visualised by Su *et al.* (2020), it is crucial to develop policies and programs that give women's and girls' access to leisure activities a top priority in order to alleviate these gender disparities in leisure possibilities. For instance, as recognised by Faiz *et al.* (2020), programs like Women on Wheels, which was introduced in Pakistan in 2016, seek to boost the mobility and accessibility of women by giving those bicycles and providing them with road safety education. Similar to this, programs that offer free or inexpensive leisure activities to women and girls can aid in addressing the financial barriers that prevent them from making use of leisure opportunities. In context to this, it is regarded as critical to question and change the cultural and social assumptions that prevent women and girls from participating in leisure activities. This can be accomplished through community related initiatives that support gender equality and dispel gender stereotypes. For instance, a program called Skateistan uses skateboarding as a way to empower girls and dispel gender stereotypes. As commented by Hayhurst *et al.* (2021), this program Skateistan especially runs in

Afghanistan, Cambodia, and South Africa. Besides, the program also offers girls a welcoming, safe environment where they may participate in physical activities and grow in confidence and leadership.

Hence, it can be exclaimed that societal norms, safety concerns, socioeconomic status, cultural expectations, and caregiving obligations all play a significant role in how women and girls enjoy leisure in comparison to men and boys. As referred by Havronska *et al.* (2021), these obstacles restrict their access to leisure activities and may be harmful to their physical and mental wellbeing, social relationships, and general well-being. As undertaken by Su *et al. (*2020), it is crucial to develop policies and initiatives that prioritise women and girls' access to leisure activities, combat gender norms and stereotypes, and advance gender equality in order to resolve these inequalities. By doing this, more equal and inclusive environments can be developed for everyone to enjoy themselves.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the term a gendered city in accordance with leisure is a multifaceted and complex challenge that poses crucial implications for urban planning and design. However, gendered expectations and norms usually shape the path that individuals experience and interact with urban spaces, causing the development of gendered leisure spaces. Historically leisure places such as beaches, sports facilities, and parks have been developed with a male-centric ideology, resulting in the marginalisation of women including other marginalised groups. Furthermore, recent efforts have been demonstrated to develop more diverse and inclusive leisure spaces that evolve based on the preferences and requirements of every individual irrespective of gender.

Hence, developing gender inclusive and neutral leisure spaces is significant for promoting social equity and also ensuring that every individual can fully engage and benefit from urban living standards. This specifically needs an understanding commitment and dealing with the diverse experiences and needs of varied communities and individuals and actively working towards acquiring a more equitable and just urban landscape.

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