

Where Planning Meets Gender: Planning Policy from a Gender Perspective

Compilation of Articles

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Where Planning Meets Gender: Planning Policy from a Gender Perspective

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Abstract

The series of discussions **“Where Planning Meets Gender: Planning Policy from a Gender Perspective”**, on which this publication is based, was initiated with the goal of defining gender-related needs in the context of the development of planning policy, which by its nature influences the spatial design of the everyday life of every woman and man.

Under the heading gender and planning, the following key questions were examined:

- What is the nature of the space in which we live?
- To what extent is the design of this space influenced by different elements that reflect our needs? How are our needs reflected, if at all, in the space in which we live - both private space (home) and public space (the neighborhood or city)?
- What are our needs? Who defines them?
- Does our gender identity change the definition of our needs?
- Do we feel part of this space? Are we comfortable in it? Do we have a sense of belonging? Do we feel committed to this living space?

In their own way, each of the writers in this publication attempts to answer these questions, and to present actual or desirable planning policy in different areas of life relating to spatial planning and management. The central question raised during the sessions was whether the distinction between men and women is significant in designing the space where we live our everyday lives. Our title **“Sex”** relates to the distinction between sexes, as a biological distinction,

and “gender” - a socio-cultural distinction between the functions performed in society by men and women. In the sessions, we sought to emphasize a gender perspective on planning policy, identifying those aspects that relate to socio-cultural patterns in the lives of women and men.

What Is Planning Policy?

Planning policy delineates and shapes the space in which we live. The word **policy** implies that this delineation pertains to public space - the neighborhood or city. In fact, however, planning policy also delineates private space - the apartment or house in which we live, and in a broader circle, the building, street, and so on. Planning policy impacts the lives of women and men differently, and the question is **how** precisely it impacts the lives of each.

Planning policy effectively determines the environment in which we spend most of our lives, including our most intimate and personal dimensions. For example, planning policy can influence the noise level in our bedroom, whether or not our neighbors can see into our living room, the quality of the air we breathe, how far we must walk to the nearest corner shop or greengrocer, and the distance our children walk to kindergarten and school. Since a distinction between the roles of women and men is found in most cultures, planning policy has a different impact on the everyday lives of women and men.

Planning policy is a powerful tool. It is developed by policy makers, some of whom are public officials, elected through a democratic process. It is also developed by professionals - urban planner and geographers. Given the enormous power of planning policy in shaping our everyday lives, how do planners and policy makers know how to develop this policy? What guidelines inform the drafting of planning policy? What is its goal? These are some of the main questions that have been raised in the field of planning in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Israel is an immigrant society, and its fundamental approach has long been to eradicate the “other” - firstly, after the establishment of the state, to eradicate

the Palestinian spatial past through a process of “Judaization;” and later - to eradicate non-Western identities - of the Mizrachim, the Arabs, and of immigrants who arrived with distinct cultural identities. Above all, however, the state sought to eradicate gender identity. Contrary to the myth that the period of Jewish immigration and the early years of the state were marked by gender equality (and the proud mention of the fig leaf of one woman prime minister), in reality Israel ignored the different ways in which policy, planning, and development influence women and men, due to their distinct social roles. Planning policy required that all sections of the population follow what was perceived as progressive Western planning, as manifested in policies relating to housing, employment, and cultural and social services, among other areas. I must emphasize that this approach was not uniquely Israeli; essentially, it is a Western approach. The State of Israel did not invent gender discrimination, it merely copied and elaborated it.

On the global level, this approach began to change in the 1960s, in keeping with the transformation in political, social, and cultural discourse in the West from the hegemonic control of the state over different aspects of life to a discourse that also took into account human rights, relations between the citizen and the state, and the political and social struggles of various groups representing the “other” against overriding Western hegemony. This discourse also influenced the world of planning, and voices began to be heard among planners and researchers calling for an end to the hegemony of Western professional knowledge, and arguing that culture, society, and gender be perceived as part of a legitimate and valid identity that constituted a body of knowledge in the planning process. We term this knowledge **local knowledge**.

What Is Local Knowledge?

Local knowledge is the intuitive knowledge that is present within each and every individual. This knowledge is accumulated through our daily experiences; it is not conditional on prior study, and forms part of our lives, culture, and identity. Accordingly, **local knowledge** can also have a gender-based aspect. This, too, derives from our daily experiences, and is fashioned by the roles we play as

women and men, as mothers and fathers, and as daughters and sons in society. Planning traditions reflecting different types of knowledge began to emerge in the 1960s, and include advocacy planning, radical planning, connective planning, and so on. It is important to note, however, that not all these traditions addressed the question of gender difference.

It must be emphasized that **local knowledge** is conditional on gender or other aspects of identity; accordingly, our spatial experience is also dependent on identity. For example, our age is of considerable importance in the context of the experience of the way we walk in space or use space. The spatial needs of young people differ from those of older adults. If our culture differs from the dominant culture, our needs may also vary. For example, we may require a different kind of venue for cultural encounters, consume different foods, and perhaps require apartments of a different size and with a distinct pattern of internal planning. If we are religious, for example ultra-Orthodox Jews, we will have different needs than secular people. If we have different physical abilities, we will perceive space in a different way - and so on.

What Is the Gender Perspective?

Our gender identity is extremely dominant, transcending and overriding other identities. For example, Bedouin women in Israel face a double oppression - firstly within their own society, and then as part of the Bedouin community, which faces discrimination in Israel. The same principle applies to women from other communities.

A gender perspective is aware of the socio-cultural differences between women and men in terms of the functions they perform in different societies. It addresses the functions and needs of both women and men - not just those of women. This is a gender perspective, not a feminine perspective. Attention to the socio-cultural differences between women and men means recognizing the fact that in almost every human society - Western or non-Western, developed or developing, modern or traditional - social functions are not distributed equally between women and men.

Format of the Compilation

This publication presents some of the issues raised during the sessions, from three perspectives: **theoretical aspects, practical aspects, and testimonies from the field.**

The first section presents **theoretical aspects** of gender relations in space, and the planning dimension of these aspects. This section presents various theoretical connections used to analyze gender and spatial relations as a function of planning policy. Orit Kamir's article presents a feminist perspective of what she defines as "women's space" and the dignity of women. Kamir's starting point is that dignity is the key value through which Israeli Jewish society should be analyzed. Her article focuses on the question of dignity and women's space in Jewish culture and in the Zionist movement. Kamir presents an approach that argues that feminine thinking in the spatial arena, as in the legal arena, should contribute to flexible spatial planning, avoiding the planning of fixed, inflexible, and long-term spaces in order to enable constant flux.

In his lecture, Yaacov Garb presents the relationship between gender and spatial mobility. His study is based on two aspects: the gender-based division of labor, and the division of labor between the "functional" arena, i.e. production for salary, which is perceived as "masculine," and the "emotional" arena, which relates to activities essential for daily existence that are unpaid, and are considered "feminine." The distinction between these two arenas relates to patterns of mobility and travel, spatial organization, and access to means of transportation. Garb's conclusion is that a more gender-based approach to planning will address not only travel, but also the customs created by travel. This approach will challenge categories and gender norms that form the foundation of existing arrangements.

This section closes with the article of Martina Löw, who analyzes the structuring and development of borders and walls, both physical and symbolic, and the way these influence everyday life and the genderization of space. Löw focuses on the manner in which women perceived the Berlin Wall in Germany, drawing

on Lefevre's characterizations of space as "perceived" and "conceptualized." Through these concepts, Löw analyzes aspects of the production of space in the construction of the wall that have ramifications for the everyday lives of women. Martina Löw's conclusion is that the construction of the Berlin Wall, and indeed of any wall, does not merely restrict possibilities of movement, but also replicates powerful images of separation based on ethnic, racial, national, and gender "purity." The construction of the wall is not a one-time action, but a process that accompanies everyday life and was experienced by women in Berlin as the restriction of their ability to develop their potential freely.

The second section of the publication presents the **practical aspects** of planning policy from a gender perspective, focusing on local examples of planning, and with an emphasis on gender relations involving different populations. Amalya Rimalt's article describes failures in local planning in Yesod Hama'ala, Daburiya, and Yokneam Elite, manifested by a failure to consider gender needs, particularly mobility and access. Rimalt specifies the needs that were not met in the local planning of each of these communities, such as the class-based lack of access to private vehicles in Yokneam Elite, and sport walking in Daburiya as a subversive spatial manifestation. Rimalt's conclusions identify six causes for this failure, including: low public awareness, limitations in locating local knowledge, and its marginal status in planning documents.

The lecture by Rami Ziv, the city engineer in Modi'in, presents a municipal and institutional perspective on the subject of gender difference as an aspect in planning. In some respects, Ziv's article creates an interesting dialogue with the article by Amalya Rimalt; to a certain extent, it can be read as the establishment's reply to the failures she raises, although the article does not discuss the same communities or specific issues. Rami Ziv admits that gender difference is not one of the factors addressed in planning the city of Modi'in. Indeed, he mentions various everyday problems encountered by the municipality that may be due to the lack of prior attention to gender difference, such as vehicular access and traffic (problems that were also mentioned by Amalya Rimalt), the composition of the population, employment, and so on. This article is effectively the only

one in this publication that expresses a voice of the establishment, and its importance lies in the emphasis on the need for further public dialogue relating to the key issue addressed by these sessions.

The lecture by Anat Barkai-Nevo presents two planning projects in which the involvement of Bimkom focused mainly on identifying gender needs. The first of these projects was in the Florentin neighborhood of Tel Aviv, which suffers from a lack of infrastructures suitable for the needs of families and women, following the closure of the community center building, the shortage of crèches and kindergartens, and so on. The second project is a planning workshop for the residents of Bir Hadaj, an unrecognized Bedouin community in the Negev, as part of the Community Empowerment for Planning Involvement project. These two activities emphasize the potential for identifying the distinct planning needs of women and men based on the distinct gender-based roles in households. The project also highlighted the high level of heterogeneity in women's groups. These projects illustrate the strength women acquire when they come together as a group to reshape space in a manner that is suitable for their needs, and not to accept planning and design by others as an accomplished fact. A similar picture is painted by Kaukab Yunis, director of the pedagogic center Dar Al-Tifl Al-Arabi (the Arab Child Center), which runs crèches and kindergartens and organizes training courses for childcarers and consultation services for parents. The Center's activities are adapted to meet the needs of children and their mothers. In her lecture, Yunis described the process of constructing the new building as a space adapted for parents, and, in part, for women (such as the swimming pool). The building reflects Islamic architectural principles and seeks to integrate into its environment.

The lecture by Yosseph Shilhav described the gender relations in ultra-Orthodox society, whose main characteristics are the rejection of modernity and secular education. In this society, the traditional role of women was in education, firstly ultra-Orthodox and then general, and in administration, computers, communications, economics, etc. This led to a widening gap between women and men within ultra-Orthodox society in terms of general education and

employment opportunities; Shilhav describes the situation as one of sharp dissonance. In general, he identifies a process of empowerment among ultra-Orthodox women based on economic independence and their influence within the family. Another distinct cultural group of women living in Israel are migrant workers, although this group is far from homogenous. In her lecture, Sigal Rosen presented cases illustrating the particularly vulnerable situation of women migrant workers who face the infringement of their rights. Rosen notes many cases in which male migrant workers have been expelled while their wives and children remain in Israel. As a result, the woman becomes the sole breadwinner and her status rises considerably, helping strengthen her self-confidence and encourage independence and initiative.

This section closed with the lecture of Shuli Hartman on the subject of the separation barrier being constructed in order to prevent suicide bombers entering Israel. The connection between the barrier and gender is that a fence always defines and separates between those who belong and those who do not. The barrier has a gender-based impact, as noted in Martina Low's article on the Berlin Wall. Here, however, the barrier creates a physical divide, restricting the spatial mobility of men and women, with a greater impact on women, who need to maintain contact with their parental home. The checkpoints, with the close proximity between women and male strangers, also leads to restrictions on the mobility of Palestinian women.

The third and final section presents **testimonies from the field**, focusing again on gender relations in space and their planning context. Here, however, the focus is on different events. Claris Harbun, for example, from the Community Legal Aid Program in Jaffa, presented its program for assisting men and women in various fields, such as their dealings with the Executor's Office, public housing, mortgages, evictions, and squatting. The project focuses both on providing workshops and structured efforts to solve problems and on filing Supreme Court petitions when necessary. Most of the complainants are women who come because of problems that are not actually their own, such as debts, but who feel responsible for maintaining the family unit. Harbun argues that current

discourse, both feminist and legal, has a universalistic and Ashkenazi character, and hence excludes and leaves no room for these women.

A similar type of exclusion is experienced by Palestinian women in Israeli space, who experience three levels of discrimination and oppression: Firstly, as part of the group of women in the State of Israel; secondly, as Palestinian Arab women who form part of the Palestinian Arab population; and thirdly, as women living in a conservative and patriarchal society. In her comments, Aida Toma-Suleiman illustrated the presence of these three levels of oppression and discrimination in the lives of Palestinian women in the spatial context. She began by focusing on the lives of women in unplanned and undeveloped cities characterized by overcrowding and a lack of parking, and where public and private space does not belong to the women. Women Against Violence, the organization Toma-Suleiman heads, aims to help women who suffer from violence, and as part of its activities it established the first shelter for battered Palestinian women. Suleiman concluded her lecture by noting that the most prominent characteristic of women in general, and of Palestinian women in particular, is the daily attempt to replan their space - to open and break down walls, as she puts it.

The experience of 'breaking down walls' was also noted in the comments of Lubna Masarwa and Nuha Musalah. Masarwa discussed her own sphere of mobility, emphasizing the sudden checkpoints established around Jerusalem as a traumatic feature of her everyday life. Her lecture described in detail the experience of crossing the checkpoints, and the questions she faces given the response, or absence of response, of women's organizations to the presence of these checkpoints, which restrict Palestinian women and prevent them meeting their basic needs. Nuha Musalah, a teacher-turned-journalist, also expressed in her lecture the everyday frustrations due to the checkpoints and the separation barrier. Her lecture offers a vivid description of the restrictions facing Palestinians due to the construction of the separation barrier, and the economic, social, and psychological impact of the barrier and the checkpoints on the Palestinian population. This section also ends with a field testimony

relating to the checkpoints, this time from an Israeli activist, Lia Nirgad, who is a member of the Machsom Watch organization and regularly visits the Kalandia checkpoint. Her comments seem to underscore the inhumanity of the checkpoints and the human problems they create. Nirgad describes the checkpoint as an encounter between three groups of women: the Palestinian women, whose behavior is very proud; the women soldiers, who adopt a tough stance in their encounter with the Palestinians; and the women from Machsom Watch, who bring “a different kind of femininity” to the scene.

In conclusion, this collection of articles reflects, above all, the goal of the sessions, which was to draw attention to various aspects, approaches, and events that emphasize the need to adopt a gender-based perspective in order to strive to develop planning policy (as well as social, economic, and cultural policy) that will reflect the different needs of men and women, and thereby ensure the development of policy that addresses the needs of different populations.