

Inclusive city making: an opportunity, not a burden

Jacobs' *Maria Kouridou* discusses how we can take a more inclusive approach to the design of our cities to create better outcomes and value for all citizens.

Inclusive cities for people is not a new concept. Cities and places face many challenges around urbanisation, climate change, political instability, health and wellbeing, digital and physical infrastructure.

However, inclusive design has gained increasing attention recently from cities and organisations across the globe highlighting that for tomorrow's cities to provide opportunities for all, it's essential to understand that inclusive cities involve multiple spatial, social, environmental and economic factors.

Coming out of a pandemic that challenged not only our global health systems but hit the most vulnerable communities the hardest, deepening existing inequalities, now is more vital than ever to follow an outcome-based approach putting social value at the core and turn the toughest challenges into opportunities that support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and drive benefits for all.

Using evidence-based research to identify best practice from global cities and Jacobs' Inclusive City Making

framework, a strategic design tool that promotes the delivery of integrated design visions, can help us take an inclusive approach to the way we design cities.

Governance and decision making

We hear a lot about smart cities, but we need to think about kind and safe cities too. Improved gender equality in several EU countries is expected to lead to an increase in GDP of about 12% by 2050 (European Institute for Gender Equality in the EU, 2020). Ultimately, gender inclusion is not a burden or a problem. It is an opportunity.

We now know that following a holistic and integrated approach from the building to the street, the neighbourhood, the city and the region, we can drive benefits and address issues of accessibility and diversity.

Many cities are taking concrete actions, adopting gender inclusion strategies that deliver targeted measures across different scales and with a significant spatial impact, while also bearing considerable socio-economic benefits.



Taking a more inclusive approach to the design of our cities would create better outcomes and value for all citizens. Photo by Sawyer Bengtson on Unsplash.

For example, Vienna has carried out more than 60 pilot city projects that have used gender mainstreaming in urban design establishing a strong focus on quality of life and equal access to social facilities for all.

Urban design action areas and interventions

Pulling the thread from the fact that women make up for approximately 50% of the global population and that traditionally cities have been designed by men, it's critical to study how different groups of people experience the same space differently and what could be an appropriate inclusive urban form.

Realising that diverse initiatives promote inclusive design we need to take inclusive design beyond accessibility concerns to embody inclusion in its widest form in all design processes and different project stages for better outcomes for all.

Design interventions targeted to women also benefit wider citizen groups, and can be organised in seven key urban action areas:

Seven key urban action areas for design interventions.

New Ways of Living, Working and Wellbeing: Promoting healthy urbanism multi-functionality through diversity and mix of uses.

Public Realm, Accessibility and Safety: Allowing for flexibility and appropriation to tackle inequalities and social isolation.

Climate and Biodiversity: Promoting design interventions and strategies to achieve a resilient, net-zero future.

Consultation and Digital Engagement: Adapting participatory methods to be more appropriate and welcoming and integrating digital infrastructure.

Social Sustainability and Education: Raising awareness and providing access to education. Key Performance Indicators can help designers and policy makers measure the impact of design projects and guide future ones at various stages across different sectors.

Governance and Decision Making: Highlighting the importance of the process and encouraging and engaging women and girls to participate more.

Mobility Networks: Prioritising pedestrian movement and safe active travel through activating the streetscape and integrating transport networks.

Safety and participation

We now know safety and participation in all processes are crucial to gender urbanism – urban design can help ease the burden of caregiving for women and promote their safety in the public realm.

In Brazil 97% of the women said that fear of violence makes women change their routes in cities or stops them from being

able to work in certain places.

There can be no gender inclusive city without gender inclusive processes. Women have different roles in our societies and built environment design needs to consider their needs and encourage their involvement in city making.

With active collaboration and engagement, gathering data, use of technology, and putting sustainability and

resiliency at the core of design thinking, a gender inclusive city is a city that embraces diversity and difference. It's a city that offers choice and accommodates for all users.



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