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Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Involvement in Urban Planning Strategies

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Executive Summary

Women almost constitute half of the world's population. Mathematically, this ratio means that equality is the common value in society, and together with men, they create a comprehensive and successful community. However, the real situation is not very similar. Although women work hard to attain a high amount of scientific and professional advancement and compete with men, their condition has not changed much. Some women still face obstacles concerning their education and career, offered limited options due to political, cultural, and social constraints, or confront gender bias. Thus, women's current situation is being considered and mentioned in the most important debates and general issues around the world. As a result, the research study focuses on women and aims to study the influence of their participation in the decision-making process of urban planning strategies. Within this broad aim, it seeks to understand the impact of gender mainstreaming on the relationship between gender and strategic urban planning, study the issue of women's empowerment and encouraging their participation in decision-making, and recommend strategies and guidelines for policy-makers that ensure an effective and comprehensive participation. In order to achieve these objectives, an analytical-deductive research method is used along with quantitative and qualitative research tools.

Cities, where everyone should live together in a complementary way, are found designed with a masculine vision and built with patriarchal policies. However, women and men have different basic needs in urban public spaces, both practical and strategic gender needs, all of which must be taken into consideration. Basically, providing these needs is the responsibility of decision-makers to translate them into legislation and laws that meet women's needs and rights. Therefore, urban legislation is introduced through a gender perspective that takes into account all women, despite their age, educational level, social background, abilities, etc. The problem lies in women's loss of their rights in urban strategies, thereby limiting their presence in urban public spaces and their participation in decision-making. There are some factors that contribute to women's disappointment in being a part of their community, which affects their everyday life experience and decisions. Among these factors are the poor urban infrastructures such as dark and weakly lit public spaces, abandoned and badly maintained spaces, inadequate services and nightlife activities, etc. The situation of women in such places leads to their lack of comfort, safety, and belonging. Add to them the limited available urban public spaces, especially in Egypt.

The development of a gender-based perspective in urban planning policies has led to the introduction of gender planning to guide land-related decision-making. It's integrated in Egypt through public-private partnership (PPP) which has been introduced in the past decade to promote community participation in the policy-making process. Correspondingly, planning policies would take the gender dimension into account, as well as the diverse groups of women. It helps in developing a city that accommodates women and all human groups and offers them the right to the city equally which depends on their ability to feel free and enjoy the city. It also depends on the quality of urban public spaces and their uses, in addition to their lighting, accessibility, visibility, security, etc. However, the development of such spaces has led to the introduction of gender planning for the first time in Vienna in the 1990s, where they redesigned public seating and widened sidewalks to accommodate all groups of people in a comprehensive universal space, despite their different patterns of use. Thereafter, the gender-based perspective has been adopted all over the world, using new urban infrastructure systems, formulating new planning policies, gathering all women-focused public services, modifying public spaces, encouraging women's participation, etc.

As mentioned earlier, gender-sensitive urban planning policies greatly depend on the participation of women. Therefore, the study reviews the situation of women regarding their participation in decision-making on three levels: the international level, the continental level, and the national level. Correspondingly, the case study aims to examine the facts about the status of women in Egypt at the workplace level, the occupation level, and the state level. Women themselves have an essential role in gender mainstreaming and advocating out loud for women's rights. Nevertheless, the PPP has a great influence on this issue. The private sector constantly supports women around the world, propped by governmental entities. It calls for equity, women's empowerment, the discussion of gender-sensitive agendas, equal opportunities, the equivalent contribution of both genders to participate in decision-making, raising awareness of women's rights, etc. Yet, political will is not enough unless it's translated in the form of legislation. At the international level, women suffer from their underrepresentation, as in the case of urban planning and urban design conferences where their panels are likely male-dominated. At the continental level, a limited progress of women's situation in the Maghreb is observed and translated into political, legislative, and constitutional repairs. However, it's improving due to the support and efforts of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As for other African countries, many of them have a ministry dedicated to women, such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Zimbabwe.

Egypt's big steps towards gender equity and women's empowerment reflect the country's orientation of Egypt's Vision 2030. It's achieved in the Council of Ministers and legislation to increase women's participation in corporate organisations in both public and private sectors. At the national level, this vision ensures providing equal opportunities for both genders, it prohibits discrimination against women in occupying key political positions, and works on preparing them to lead and succeed in these positions. It has started in Egyptian Ministries since the last century but these positions were restricted to ministries familiar with the traditional role of women imposed by society. Lately, the country moves forward, improves the previous situation, and provides new leadership opportunities for women to prove themselves, such as Hala Al-Saeed, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, who has been recently classified as the best minister in the Arab world. Thus, there are multiple ways to encourage the participation of women like observing successful female figures, in addition to being supported by private sector organisations, country, and even social media platforms. Despite half a century of feminism and claims for equality, women still face gender-related barriers and discriminatory practices.

Regarding the case study, a selected sample has contributed to investigate the situation of women's work life and the impact of their empowerment on the previous matter. This sample constitutes 38 per cent of males and 62 per cent of females with a high level of education, and working in the public sector, governmental entities, and the private sector in various fields of work. Almost 40 per cent of the participants state that the average percentage of females in their workplace ranges from 25 to 50 per cent, while only 25 per cent or fewer of them reach leadership positions. Nearly 60 per cent of them tend to believe that women influence the shape of the city by taking into account the different gender needs, and that they are naturally aware of the future generations' needs, which makes their participation essential. Both public and private sectors support it by providing all possible ways of encouragement. More than 60 per cent of the respondents share an affirmative opinion about the positive impact of Egypt's orientation towards women's empowerment concerning the previous matter. In addition, the PPP works on raising awareness of gender equity. Nevertheless, the results also contribute to giving an indication of the main obstacles that women face with regard to their participation in decision-making.

To conclude, the evolution of women's position in society makes them face fewer challenges than their peers in the past. They still confront gender bias and stereotypes, but they manage to develop, lead, and reach senior positions. Their main aspiration is gender equity because the roles of both genders are complementary. The study indicates that urban planning strategies do not adequately consider the gender dimension, which makes urban public spaces, the available ones, not suitable enough for the different women's needs. Accordingly, gender mainstreaming and the participation of women, from the public community and not just specialists, in the decision-making of urban planning strategies contribute to achieving the optimum outcome that gives women the right to the city and encourages them to interact and feel a sense of belonging in urban public spaces. It also relies on raising awareness and engaging men to be part of this process. In addition, the study highlights the significant role of the private sector in protecting women's rights and encouraging their involvement in land-related decision-making and controlling their lives. Since 45 per cent of the respondents agree with the previous statement, they contribute to the suggestion of several leading NGOs for women's issues in Egypt such as the National Council for Women, the Arab Women Organisation, and the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women.

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1. Introduction

Research on gender in architecture was mostly written by women from a political feminist perspective and first appeared in the late 1970s. Women have since reached an amount of scientific and professional progress that has set them on a scale to compete with men, and they have sought – and largely succeeded – in attaining their rights for equity in various fields (Rendell et al., 2000, p. 7). Moreover, urban planning strategies should aim to fulfil the aspirations and needs of all culturally and linguistically diverse genders and ages in both mono and multicultural societies (Fenster, 1998, p. 4). Although planning trends emerged in the seventies in parts of the world to accommodate cultural diversity, research has suggested that there are some obstacles that have historically contributed to women's loss of rights in urban legislation. For example, the previous matter is reflected on the situation of women lacking a sense of belonging in urban public spaces. They have fears of encroaching on societal caveats or taboos related to their use of these spaces, and fears of harsh criticisms that may cause them physical harm or damage to their social standing. These kinds of obstacles place emotional and psychological pressure on women and reduce their presence and participation (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 119).

Strategic urban planning in Egypt is introduced using the public-private partnership (PPP), a strategy developed in the past decade to encourage community participation in the land-related decision-making process. Nevertheless, policy-makers do not adequately take into account the gender dimension or the diverse groups of women in creating urban planning policies. Cities are supposed to be planned to include everyone, but unfortunately, it's not happening. All cities around the world were designed and built by great male architects and planners, with their masculine vision. This is how it has been over the past times and still happening until now (Greed, 1994, p. 88-92; Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017; Kneeshaw, 2018). The surrounding urban environment should have been different due to the disparity between the basic needs of men and women especially in our modern era, corresponding to modern terminologies such as women-friendly cities, cities that women participate in designing, planning, and building. This is simply because they are more aware and understanding of women's language. In addition, when women are taken into account, it's limited to the breadwinner woman and the labouring class without taking gender as a common perspective or a comprehensive approach in response to the various needs and abilities. Therefore, there must be an opportunity for the political, economic, and social empowerment of women (Awaad, 2018; UN-Habitat, 2013).

2. Methodology

This research paper is conducted in the context of urban planning, and in particular its methodology. Within this topic, there are diverse aspects (social, economic, political, etc.) interacting together, all are important and should be taken into consideration. However, this research focuses on how gender mainstreaming benefits both women and men equally, taking into account gender differences and needs, by influencing strategic urban planning policies and prompting the private sector and community engagement in order to create a gender-equal inclusive urban environment. It aims to study the influence of women's participation in strategic urban planning. Within this broad aim, this study attempts to achieve a number of objectives. It seeks to understand the gender mainstreaming process in urban planning strategies and study the development of women's empowerment and their participation in land-related decision-making. It attempts as well to recommend strategies for the policy-makers that involve the diverse range of community members.

In order to achieve the previous aim, the paper uses an analytical-deductive research method, supported by qualitative and quantitative research tools presented through a case study. This paper is specifically concerned with women. It starts by describing the relationship between gender and urban planning and how it's inspired by the various gender needs. Then it discusses the importance of taking women into account and encouraging their participation in the decision-making process. Concerning the basic literature, the primary sources of this research are two books that have contributed to shaping its focus. The books are *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (Rendell et al., 2000) and *Gender Planning & Development: Theory, Practice & Training* (Moser, 1993).

3. Gender Mainstreaming

Gender, as a term, when used in the context of this research paper indicates men and women, and the mutual relationship between them within the same society. It has become mentioned in the most important public issues and debates in contemporary time. Thus, it leads to the issue of women's rights and the feminist movements that seek equality in all directions of life. Gender is not just a biological classification but a social structure, and various gender behaviours are shaped by physical, social, and cultural determinants (Carmona, 2003, p. 136; Eveline and Bacchi, 2005, p. 496-502; Rendell et al., 2000, p. 15).

Why Women?

Women, as an integral part of society, occupy (on 1 January 2020, at 12 a.m.) a population of 3,847,299,480 females, according to the world population counter, which is considered almost half the world's population. The closest figure that fulfils women's rights is Prophet Muhammad's words. He resembles women to be precious foundations, where women are the pillars of the nation and the cornerstone of the authentic society. The education of generations on the right principles and faith is part of their responsibility (Zohair, 2016). The roles of women are endless and have no boundaries. Together with men, they create an inclusive, comprehensive, and successful society. In recent years, the world has gone through great changes, but the status and condition of women have not changed much. Constraints of the past are deeply rooted. In some parts of the words, women are mistreated and face domestic violence. The current situation seems to be a semblance of equality but is fictitious. Some women are deprived of an education or job opportunity or offered limited choices due to social and cultural constraints and inherent gender biases in the labour market. As a result of discrimination, their role is low-paid and leads to a lack of potential upward mobility (RTPI, 2020; Zohair, 2016). Women find themselves suspended between real self-consciousness and the conditioning of a society that wants women adhering to the idea this society has made of them.

The Relationship between Gender and Urban Planning

The issue of employing a gender-based perspective in urban planning is related to the question of how the city contributes to supporting and organising gender roles and stereotypes. It's about inverting urbanism that has been designed by and for men in order to develop a city that is also for women and all human groups, to be experienced in a gendered manner. It includes the segregated labour market, modes of transport, gender-based violence, responsibility for unpaid labour and caregiving, and the use of free time (Kneeshaw, 2018). For more than three decades, ending violence against women has been the key aim of the international feminist movements but the outcome is insignificant. Women often experience different forms of violence and harassment in public spaces.

Unfortunately, provocations such as threatening, staring, and passing comments have come to be recognised as a part of a woman's urban life. An international online survey proves that almost 60 per cent of women feel unsafe in urban spaces (Bhatt, 2018).

Research on strategic urban planning has been increasing but almost does not consider gender differences. As a result, a gender-based perspective in urban planning has been developed to examine decisions in the context of women's rights (Livingston, 2019). It's able to offer a safe city for women, a city where women can enjoy open public spaces without fear of harassment. It's also where women do not face violence in either the home or the street. It's also where discrimination is not practiced against women and where their social, political, and cultural rights are taken into account. Besides, the participation of women in making decisions affecting the community they live in is valuable. In parallel, local governments take action to guarantee equality and provide punishment for violence against women (Bhatt, 2018). Throughout history, women were confined to private places such as the home, and they were not active in the public domain. That is why planning strategies should not be neutral but rather a reflection of the daily life of every person in the city, in order to promote resilient vitality, cultural diversity, sustainability, inclusivity, and balance between the public and private sectors (UN-Habitat, 2013).

There is a relationship between gender and urban planning, where urban planning strategies are concerned with individuals' safety, comfort, and sense of belonging (Carmona, 2003, p. 136). Yet, many factors contribute to a woman's disappointment to be a part of society, forcing her to stay at home and give up determination for herself' sake and her future. These factors are found in a city with poor urban infrastructures such as dark or weakly lit streets, abandoned parks and empty lots, badly maintained public spaces, inadequate signage, lack of public toilets, etc. It's also a city that lacks adequate public transport with empty streets at night because of the early closing of shops and businesses or the weakness of street nightlife. As well as the insufficient presence and unresponsive or aggressive behaviour of police and civic authorities or isolation from neighbours and lack of community life (Bhatt, 2018; Carmona, 2003, p. 136; Livingston, 2019).

Therefore, gender planning has been introduced, it refers to the process of planning and designing from a gender-based perspective. It's employed to meet the needs of women within the urban environment in which they live and experience during their everyday life and prop it with a sense of comfort and safety. Gender mainstreaming in urban planning is concerned with giving rights to both genders equally to create an inclusive society, in parallel with the increasing global awareness of rights and duties (Foran, 2013; Moser, 1993, p. 1). It's accomplished by observing the behaviour of women and their ability to interact positively and effectively with the surrounding urban environment (Fenster, 1998, p. 4). Despite the progress in the issue of women's rights, women remain unequal in society as in the labour market as well as in their representation in key political positions.

Introducing Gender Urban Planning

A women's right to the city depends on her ability to have freedom and enjoy the city. It's also dependent on public spaces and their land uses, in addition to lighting, visibility, transport, etc. Yet, the desired city does not only rely on safety. Gender planning has been adopted in Vienna in the 1990s. Redesigning public seating in parks has been one of the policies since its exploitation by homeless people. Besides, sidewalks have been widened in order to facilitate mobility for those using wheelchairs, scooters, or even slow walkers (Livingston, 2019). In 1999, a questionnaire about how people in the city use transport has been introduced by the officials in Vienna. Within a few minutes, it's filled out by male

participants, they simply go to work in the morning and come home at night. In contrast, female participants do not stop writing. They drop the children off at school on their way to work or take them to the doctor some mornings. They help their own elderly parents, buy them groceries, or pick the children up from activities (Apolitical, 2017). It's an extremely different pattern of use that needs more walking and public transport. Such a daily pattern affects the city's infrastructure. Hence, the city should be a truly inclusive universal space where everyone feels comfortable (Kneeshaw, 2018).

The gender-based perspective has become considerable around the world. A request stop system has been used in Toronto to help women to get off buses closer to their homes late at night. Women-only buses and subway cars are found in Mexico City. New developments in Bordeaux are adopted in order to consider gender in the model of environmental certificates. Sweden has encouraged women's participation in consultations on urban innovations in female-dominant places. Besides, centres, called *Ciudad Mujer*, are found in El Salvador to gather all women-focused public services like day-care centres, violence protection, healthcare services, etc. (Apolitical, 2017).

Women mostly combine work with family commitments. Accordingly, many cities, such as Berlin, are trying to integrate residential and commercial facilities. It's realised by combining the suburb and the office in order to create more mixed-use districts. Additionally, Latin American cities have made some modifications in public spaces for women. Argentina has adjusted its squares from young drug users by enhancing them with good lighting, seating areas, playgrounds for children, and soccer goalposts. A project to switch genders on subway signs is introduced in Vienna, so a figure of a man holding a baby appears on the please give up this seat signage. Japan has an extraordinary recent experience by announcing new policies to force men to take time off when children are born. Similarly, in Sweden and Norway, 90 per cent of men now take parental leave. It's about offering women more time and economic freedom (Apolitical, 2017).

4. Gender-based Planning Strategies Translating Women's Needs in Urban Spaces

Urban planning strategies should encourage the participation of women and consider their needs in urban public spaces according to some criteria, such as urban safety. This consideration is especially required in centres of gathering that lack comfort or moral and physical security due to the existence of spatial barriers and social standards that determine their behaviour in public spaces (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 120; Kuhlmann, 2013, p. 5-7). An additional issue affecting women is the shortage of available public spaces and facilities, especially in Egypt where this research paper is authored. During a city walk, a pedestrian would note the lack of public parks, green spaces as well as public squares to practice various social and recreational activities. This shortage is likely due to a variety of factors like political, economic, geographical, demographic, land encroachment, and other factors that affect all groups of society (Zohair, 2016).

Needs from a Gender-based Perspective

There is a difference between gender interests and women's interests that depend on other factors like age, social class, or level of education. In 1985, Maxine Molyneux mentions that women probably share the same interests and calls it gender interests. They are needs or concerns developed by women or men, according to their social status and through their gender characteristics (Moser, 1993, p. 37). They might be either strategic or

practical. Molyneux believes that gender needs must be considered in planning. She proposes that gender needs do not only depend on their belonging to the same gender biologically but relies more on the similarity in the social situation within their community (Eveline and Bacchi, 2005, p. 496-503; Moser, 1993, p. 38).

Strategic gender needs are the needs demanded by women as a result of their position regarding dependency on men within society. They vary according to the particular context and include issues such as employment discrimination, domestic violence, legal rights, and others. This type helps women to achieve the equality they seek and improve their role in society (Moser, 1993, p. 39). While practical gender needs are the needs identified by women within the context of their accepted social role they play in society. They come as a result of obvious and urgent reasons within a specific context. It's not concerned with issues of subordination of women in society, but rather with the shortage of basic living such as lack of water, health, and employment conditions (Moser, 1993, p. 40). In other words, unlike the strategic needs, they have emerged as a result of the harsh conditions experienced by women, and not the result of any external intervention. It does not inherit strategic objectives such as the emancipation of women or equality, nor challenging subordinate forms of sovereignty (Moser, 1993, p. 39).

In the beginning, women just ask for the basic needs of life within the family environment, such as food, drink, and shelter. The current role of women outside the home has shown their interest in other needs corresponding to this new position in society (Moser, 1993, p. 39). Therefore, women's claim to these needs ensures that they play their dual role in a consistent way with their aspirations and future expectations. Basically, the provision of these needs is the responsibility of decision-makers at the local level in particular, and at the state level in general. Whereas, legislation and laws guarantee women the fulfilment of their demands and needs (El-Mostafa, 2017, p. 400; Moser, 1993, p. 41).

Since gender planning depends on the context as well, there are certain principles that can guide the decision-making process. These principles include the need for streets that facilitate walking, cycling, and green public transport, the investment of land and transport to provide various services, etc. (Little, 1994, p. 44-57; Livingston, 2019). With the difference in basic needs between men and women, it's expected that it would be reflected in their urban context. A study demonstrates that women prefer cycling as their mode of transport for their daily tasks. It's due to the bicycle's relatively low cost and easy repair compared to driving, as well as its ability to hold more weight and its higher speed than walking. Unfortunately, one of the outcomes represents the poor coordination between the cycling infrastructure and the location of many services that women need every day. These daily services include day-care services, healthcare facilities, and public transport stations. In addition, fewer women choose to ride the bus at night due to the lack of safety when walking from stops. In response, night lighting between the main stops is improved (Apolitical, 2017; Livingston, 2019).

Consideration of Women's Needs in Urban Public Spaces

Urban public spaces should be characterised by openness, democracy, and equality to meet the various needs, both physical and spiritual, of a diverse population and encourage inclusivity. The assessment of a typical public space depends on different elements such as lighting, landscaping, visibility, motorised traffic, pedestrian traffic, urban furniture, potential hiding spots, signage, security personnel, nearness to other public places, provision of nearby emergency services, and easy access to public transport. Each of these elements should be given a particular consideration from the perspective of women

according to their needs and responding to other different specific circumstances (Livingston, 2019; UN Women, 2010). It's a participatory process by community members especially women to create that desired pubic space that fits all and everyone – women, men, children, young people, and people with disabilities. It depends on how they express themselves in and interact with urban public spaces (Beall, 1996, p. 9-13; UN Women, 2010). Gendered city planning requires constant observation of actual day-to-day uses, social interactions, safety, and economic vitality (van den Berg, 2017, p. 23).

Against the post-war intellectual orientation, Jane Jacobs, a well-known urban activist, has influenced urban studies. She highlights how cities differ from suburbs because, by definition, they are full of strangers. For city streets to be prepared to handle strangers safely, there must be continuous observation and use at all times (Greed, 1994, p. 125,156; Rendell et al., 2000, p. 193). However, a dark abandoned public space feels unsafe for everybody, but for women and girls in particular. Wherefore, urban safety needs should be taken into account in urban planning strategies (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 120; UN Women, 2010). Addressing women's safety is important because they have a right to the city. To summarise it, the insurance of their safety is key to have a successful and healthy city (Bhatt, 2018).

An inclusive urban public space requires multiple characteristics of spatial determinants such as accessibility, safety and security, as well as providing areas disparate in privacy. Creating a welcoming public space with signs for easy wayfinding, good lighting, close to different means of transport and gratis entry is a right for everyone (Kneeshaw, 2018). It's clean with a high ratio of greenery. In addition, it includes mixed uses for diverse user groups at different times of the day. It has other advantages such as providing a female workers group. These needed characteristics vary from a woman to another, according to her abilities, age, social situation, level of education as well as her cultural background. For example, a mother needs to have a close vision of the playground area, unlike an elderly woman that will not have the same needs but wide sidewalks for slow-moving traffic (UN Women, 2010).

5. Women's Participation around the World

A discussion organised by the International Knowledge Network in 2009 on women shows that creating gender-sensitive policies depends on women's participation. They have a fundamental role in gender mainstreaming in strategies. For example, they defend women's issues among their co-workers to create balance (ESCWA, 2019). It might seem that women are well-represented and largely visible in civil society, but in reality, they are vastly underrepresented in local and national government institutions. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm and efforts made by some local civil society organisations have led to the achievement of equity, non-discrimination, equal opportunities, citizenship, the equal contribution of both genders to participate in decision-making, the empowerment of women, building relationships and establishing alliances with women's civil society organisations, and developing gender-sensitive agendas (Hamadi, 2017, p. 424).

Learning about Others' Experiences around the World

The private sector plays a great role in providing a different perspective for youth, women, and all other stakeholders, and contributes to increasing the wisdom in urban planning strategies as well. It calls for the inclusion and empowerment of women in the decision-making process especially in urban planning and the urban economy policies (UN-Habitat, 2013). However, political will is insufficient unless it's translated into legislation.

Despite the presence of a political will, women should take charge of matters and become more effective. In addition, all opportunities must be exploited to ensure the engagement of women. It's not about the number of women in decision-making positions but rather the provision of opportunities, capabilities, and the essential power and authority. Yet, urbanisation and prosperity do not guarantee gender equity. Cities must ensure the existence of an infrastructure: social, cultural, urban, etc. (UN-Habitat, 2013).

Women's lives are affected by the clear gap in representation, recognition, and leadership. Therefore, there is a need for closing the gender gap in urbanism policies and encouraging women to participate in decision-making (Little, 1994, p. 77-82). As a reflection of the previous case, urban planning and urban design conferences likely have a male-dominant panel. A study by Katrina Johnston-Zimmerman presents a chart showing the percentage of female participants on panels and keynotes at 10 major urbanism conferences during 2017 (Figure I). It highlights that the ratio of men on the urbanist circuit is roughly 6 out of every 10 public speakers (Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017). Consequently, the real question is what is missing by having fewer participated women? Increasing diversity in the conversation leads to the development of the surrounding urban environment. Looking forward to the evolution of the urban future, humanity's full potentials should be exploited, thus adding women of all ethnicities and experiences is a must. They are half the species, after all (Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017).
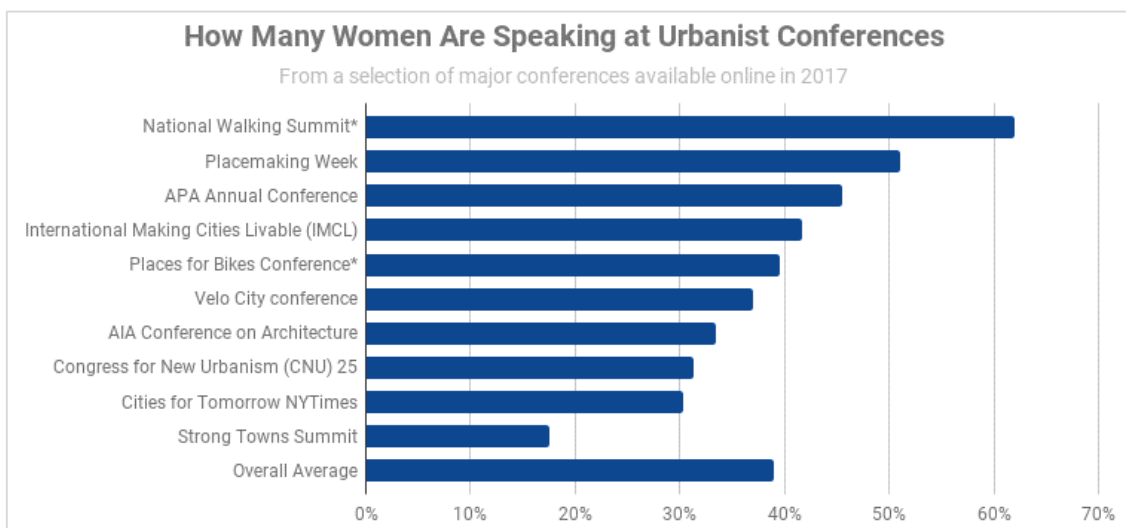

Figure I. Percentage of female participants on panels and keynotes (*featured speakers only). (Source: https://nextcity.org/features/view/urban-planning-sexism-problem (Last verified: 13/12/2020))

On the Middle East side, a Palestinian initiative in partnership with the Women's Empowerment programme in decision-making in the region is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany (BMZ) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It conducts a dialogue session that aims to discuss gender issues and the need to integrate women into development and the urban planning process and provide opportunities for women as members and workers in local organisations to create changes and achieve gender equality (MIFTAH, 2017). Among the results of these discussions is that there is a need to develop public participation tools to include all members of the local community in the planning, execution, and follow-up processes of development projects under implementation, in addition to strengthening cooperation between the local government and the private sector (MIFTAH, 2017). They also agree that there is a positive emphasis on supporting women's representation,

enhancing their awareness of their role in strategic urban planning, and providing them with opportunities to create achievements and successes that reflect this role.

The African Female Participation

The Maghreb fights for the last two decades for gender equality and eliminating discrimination. It's translated in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco into constitutional, legislative, and political repairs. Despite these attempts, limited progress is achieved in women's rights concerning socio-economic and political domains (UN Women, 2020). However, with support from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN Women aims to promote the rights of women and girls in urban public spaces and change attitudes. NGOs in Morocco such as Association Fraternité, Association Jossour Forum des Femmes Marocaines, Centre Culturel Africain du Maroc, and Fondation Ababou in Morocco cooperate in experimental interventions in the city of Rabat towards empowering women. They encourage gender mainstreaming in the local decision-making process and call for equity, equal opportunities, and the application of a gender approach in different domains (UN Women, 2020).

A programme introduced in 2011, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Reform of the Administration and the Civil Service in Morocco, aims on an egalitarian basis to encourage equal representation of men and women in the civil service through gender mainstreaming. From then on, three rounds of Women and Leadership training courses have been organised in Paris and Rabat. In addition, a Parliament Network introduced in 2015, as a pioneering initiative, encourages the adoption of quotas in national and local elections as legislation to impose a quota of 1/3 of women in the decision-making positions. In Tunisia, women are able to loudly claim their rights. They are able to lead, participate and benefit equally from national and local gender-sensitive governance systems. A gender-based perspective is mainstreamed in planning policies and legislation, and gender assessments are integrated into policies and programmes addressing women's needs. Furthermore, a programme launched in 2015 through coordination between UN Women and the Algerian Government shares the same precedent aims with a focus on women's participation, constant monitoring of opportunities and constraints facing women, and offering training on leadership (UN Women, 2020).

Moving to other African countries, there is a ministry dedicated to women in many of them such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. However, this interest affects the informal sector. For example, Lagos in Nigeria is an informal city, and the informal sector particularly influences the city's future development. Nevertheless, they have plans to stimulate more women to participate in decision-making at all levels to allow experiencing the city through a female perspective. A discussion on gender perspective in urban planning and design took place in September 2020 to engage urban planners, designers, developers, the government, and the general public. It highlights the importance of putting women's needs into consideration when designing spaces in order to create a gender-inclusive city (Hoelzel and Umunna, 2018, p. 5).

Egypt's Progress towards this Goal

There is a basic and common goal between the private and public sectors in Egypt represented in the participation of women and men in the workforce and achieving a balance between family and work life, thus enabling women to be economically independent. As a result of the quota system and affirmative actions, gender equity is achieved in the Council of Ministers and local councils, and new legislation is enacted aiming to increase the

participation of women in corporate organisations in both public and private sectors. Investing in infrastructure as well as having women in key political decision-making positions fosters women's economic empowerment (UN-Habitat, 2013).

In this context, the Egyptian Government in 2015 issued a Sustainable Development Strategy within the framework of Egypt's Vision 2030, then the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 was issued two years later by the National Council for Women. This strategy includes the 17 goals that the state intends to achieve, based on the orientation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda issued by the United Nations in September 2017 (Awaad, 2018). It stipulates several goals, the fifth of which calls for achieving gender equality. It has six objectives, including the empowerment of women, ensuring their full and effective participation, as well as providing equal opportunities for leadership on an equal basis with men at all scales of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. In addition, it prohibits discrimination against women in holding decision-making positions and even preparing them to succeed in these positions. Yet, three years have passed since its issuance, no steps have been taken to implement this strategy (Awaad, 2018).
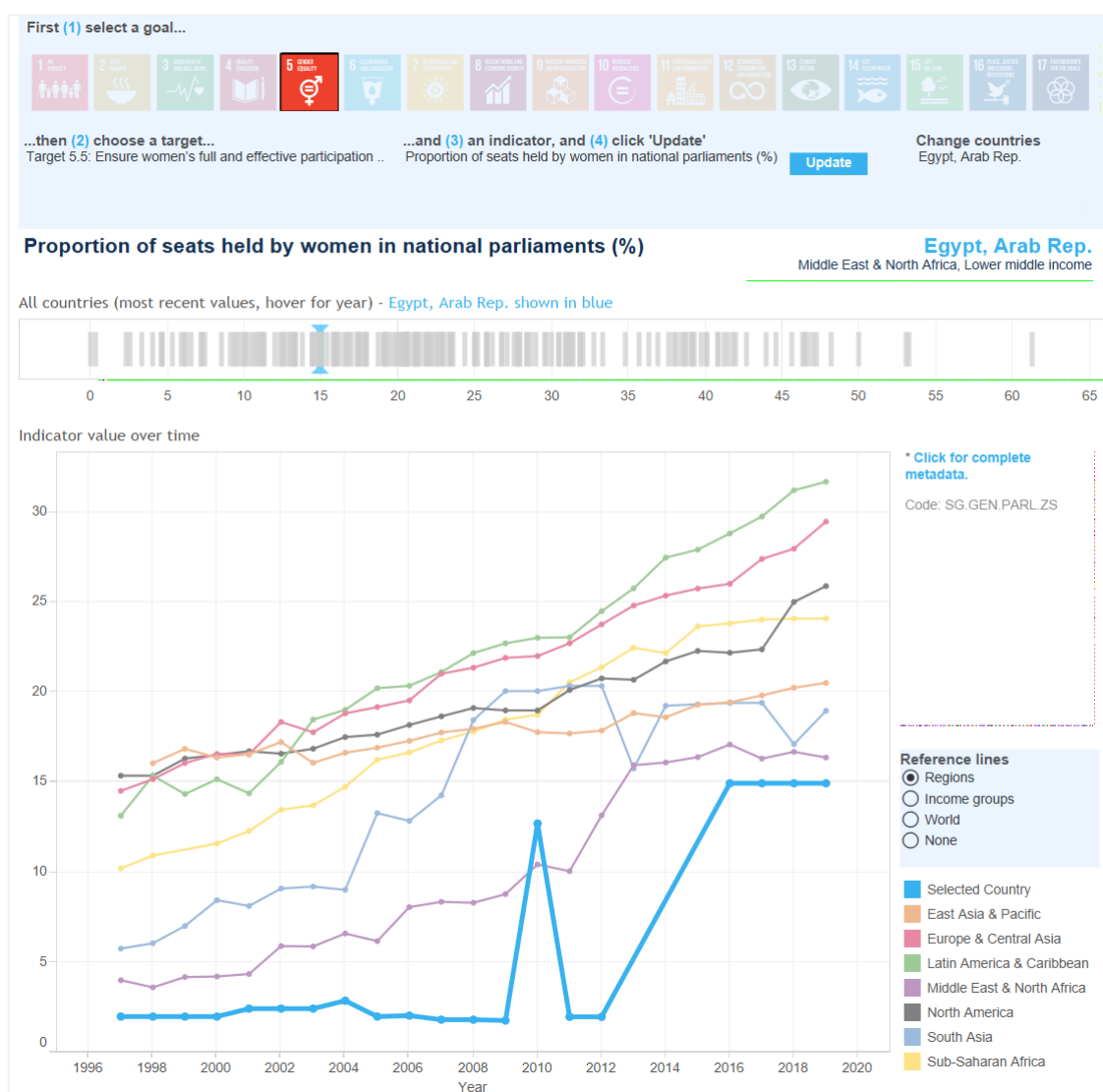

Figure II. Percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments,
by the World Development Indicators.
(Source: https://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgs/ (Last verified: 15/12/2020))

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The country is moving forward, but still has a long journey to achieve such goals. As evidence, the dashboard above shows Egypt's position in terms of the percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments (Figure II), representing the political situation of women in decision-making positions (World Bank, 2020). However, the recent Arab political action has awakened hopes among dreamers that the wheel of change is revolving towards a better reality in which human rights are respected. They expect a healthy community where women are recognised, as well as their human merit, their social status, and their civil rights as free and independent beings (El-Mostafa, 2017, p. 399).

6. Encouragement and Limitation

Civil society organisations in general, and feminists in particular, must play a fundamental role in the achievement of gender change and lobbying for the expansion of the scope of women's natural role in society and their effective participation in public affairs (El-Mostafa, 2017, p. 400). The political, economic, and social situation of women improves when they participate in decision-making and policy development at all levels of government. Through their active participation in civil work and feminist movements, women working in local government and private sector are fully aware of issues facing women in their communities and are uniquely capable to address them and come out with real applicable solutions (ESCWA, 2019).

Multiple Ways to Stimulate her Participation

Urban planning strategies depend on deep knowledge and understanding of the different needs of community members including women. Therefore, their involvement is an influential element in the decision-making process (Moser, 1993, p. 37). Nevertheless, women's participation is very limited. This is the reason why they are encouraged in various aspects. Women can be inspired and stimulated, for example, by seeing successful female figures and role models. One of the most remarkable figures such as Jane Jacobs, a powerful female writer on cities with a feminine point of view in the masculinist urban studies field, has a role in shaping the spirit of the city. Her focus and interest are women's and children's everyday life in the city, especially city streets and open spaces (van den Berg, 2017, p. 23-26). Her theories are based on a gender-equal urban environment and a friendly city. Her work helps shape modern thinking about cities (van den Berg, 2017, p. 28, 111). Jacobs's 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* is considered the most influential book in city planning in the twentieth century (van den Berg, 2017, p. 13).

Another aspect of encouragement for women can be achieved through the existence of organisations that support their thinking and desires and encourage them to participate and express their opinion. Like UN Women, which is part of the United Nations and has a goal to help women on a wide international scale. It encourages the participation of women in different domains and their protection from violence. It aims as well to create gender equality around the world by working closely with local organisations to provide maximum benefit for women (Kristof and WuDunn, 2009). There are many international organisations that share the goal of supporting women, such as the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). It focuses on women's issues on the international stage by presenting policy proposals and different solutions to save women's rights (Kristof and WuDunn, 2009). As well as the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), a global research institute with multiple cooperating positions like specialists in social science, economy, and demography, all of whom work on gender issues concerning human dignity and gender equity. It studies the obstacles facing women in different domains. Likewise, the Women's

World Banking (WWB) makes investments to create economic stability and prosperity for women and their families (Kristof and WuDunn, 2009).

Unfortunately, women are still denied in many regions of the world. They only need support and respect to gain their rights and be encouraged to offer their services to their community and their country in the first place. Therefore, their country's support is another strong source of encouragement and support for women (Lamble, 2019). Such as the successful experience of gender equality in Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Latvia, and Sweden according to the World Bank's women, business, and the law 2019 report. It's concerned with the development of a better understanding of women's employment and equality of opportunities (Lamble, 2019).

In line with the current era, there is an employment of social media in promoting the participation of women in the transitional periods in the Arab world. Social media presents unprecedented capabilities for its users, the ability to create virtual communities and exchange data and information, etc. (Azruel, 2017, p. 376; Foran, 2013). Therefore, it's impossible to overlook its role in stimulating the participation of women in their society. It highlights the opportunities and challenges facing women. Thus, social media platforms are employed to enhance their ability to exploit these opportunities or face those challenges. The inequality in digital gender representation and decline in women's participation in social media in the Arab world can be observed by looking at the statistics of women using it in North African countries, which reach 36 per cent, and in other countries such as the United States of America, where this percentage reaches 72 per cent compared to men 66 per cent according to the 2016 statistics. This number has increased significantly in just 10 years, as this percentage was 4 per cent for women and 6 per cent for men in 2005 (Azruel, 2017, p. 377-378).

Public campaigns are already being launched to spread awareness on social media, thereby providing greater access to women around the world, and encouraging virtual and active participation. These campaigns give them an opportunity to express themselves and their issues, demand their community rights, and stimulate social change (Azruel, 2017, p. 381-378). Among the advantages of social media is the documentation that helps women to record what they face in their daily life, appreciate the role of virtual organisations, and enhance the capabilities of spread and outreach among users in the world in general, and the Arab world in particular. However, the counter-use of social media and its downsides must be wary of (Azruel, 2017, p. 392-395).

Limitations and Constraints

Despite more than 50 years of feminism and demands for equality, inclusion, and diversity, a survey by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in 2017 shows that more than 20 per cent of women working in the urban planning profession have faced – and are probably still facing – gender-related barriers affecting their professional progress. Therefore, the RTPI launched an inclusive study on women and planning in March 2019. Its primary aim is to highlight these barriers experienced by women working in the planning career. Some results suggest that women specifically face discriminatory practices depending on the culture of their workplace, they might also experience sexist comments or behaviour by their male colleagues. It includes other factors such as masculine culture, lack of flexible hours, lack of support concerning maternity leave, discrimination concerning their opportunities for promotion and advancement, etc. (Adams and Tancred, 2000, p. 5-6; RTPI, 2020).

Throughout history, men have monopolised sovereign ministerial positions, in addition to female ministers assuming the same ministerial portfolios that have been allocated to women since 1962 during the era of former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Initiated by appointing the first woman Hikmat Abu Zayd as Minister of Social Affairs, women were accordingly restricted to ministries closest to care homes and the traditional roles of women imposed by society, such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, and the Ministry of Manpower and Immigration. There are limited exceptions as the current Government board that has female ministers occupying some different ministries than in the past two decades, such as the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation (Awaad, 2018). The precedent ministry is occupied by Hala Al-Saeed, who is recently classified as the best minister in the Arab world, within the Government Excellence Award 2020 launched by the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with the League of Arab States (Egypt Independent, 2020).

Thus, the biggest barrier facing women is their deliberate marginalisation in decision-making positions and the lack of conviction by decision-makers of the importance of women's empowerment and their participation (Awaad, 2018). Part of this is a reflection of the sovereign leadership competent in appointments and selection of new leaders in some regions of the world. For example, a representative from South Africa at the twenty-fourth session of UN-Habitat in Nairobi pointed to the fact that despite the efforts of his country to achieve gender equity in parliament and local government, it's restricted because some political parties do not agree with this goal, as well as the dominant culture and traditions. He added that there is also a difficulty in providing some jobs for women, such as the position of a senior executive in companies. However, the solution is to take effective and systematic actions to change or eliminate negative traditional stereotypes, values, and practices (UN-Habitat, 2013).

7. Case Study: Women's Participation in Egypt

The issue of women's empowerment remains one of the central issues in Egypt's Vision 2030 and is consistent with the state's developmental orientation, as the vision is concerned with mainstreaming the gender dimension and considering women as a key partner in preparing, formulating, and implementing this vision. A questionnaire has been introduced by the author to investigate facts about the status of women on several levels: the workplace level, the occupation level, and the state level. It has been conducted among a selected sample of highly educated men and women that work in governmental entities, public sector, and private sector in various fields of occupation. It has been available in both Arabic and English. Having an internet connection and being familiar with technological devices affected the selection of the previously mentioned strata since it has been an online questionnaire. It was due to the limitations of social distancing and the concurrent circumstances of writing the research paper, so other surveying methods were not available at the time.

The study focuses on the situation of women's work life and the issue of empowering women, examines some examples of the most influential NGOs in Egypt in terms of encouraging women's participation, and illustrates the constraints women face in their workplace and the ways of support helping them move forward. Overall, 37 responses were received from 62 per cent of females and 38 per cent of males. The following results along with a visual representation do not aim to represent the experience of the entire population of women working in Egypt. Nevertheless, the results contribute to giving an indication of the major problems that women face with regard to their participation in decision-making.

The case of women's participation in Egypt is studied on a small scale such as the workplace to reflect their situation on a larger national scale regarding their participation especially in developing urban planning strategies in Egypt, in addition to the role of the private sector in encouraging this process. Therefore, respondents working in the private sector have been dominating the selected sample in order to reach more realistic results (Figure III). Nearly 40 per cent of the respondents say that their workplace has a female occupancy rate that ranges from 25 to 50 per cent while they only have 25 per cent or less of female leaders among them (Figure IV). Besides, the chance of a female being in a senior management position is limited from 1 to 5 times, and 24 per cent of them state that it has never happened yet. Thus, these results suggest that a majority of women still face obstacles to their professional advancement because of their gender.
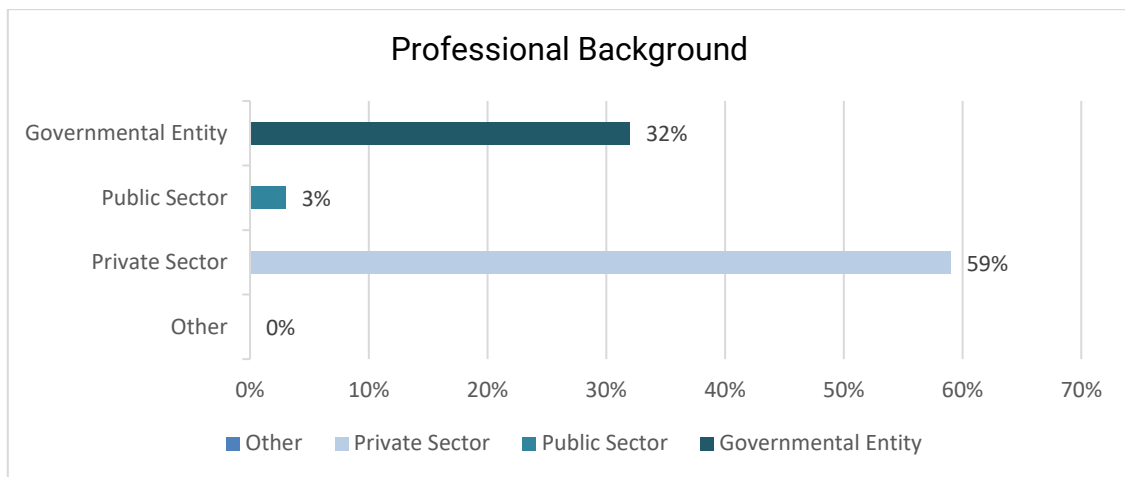

Figure III. Bar chart representing the professional background of the questionnaire's respondents. (Source: The author)

It then focuses on the consideration of women's needs. Nearly 45 per cent of the study participants think that their workplace is suitable for women and mention that her influential and leadership role is appreciated. Close to 60 per cent of them tend to think that the same applies to influencing the shape of the city by considering the different gender needs. A woman is naturally aware of the future generations' needs, and her participation in decision-making to issue urban planning strategies directly affects her and these generations. Feedback gathered from the study highlights that when responsibility is divided, gender equity is realized and men are involved in raising these generations, so both of them would be familiar with the different gender needs and participate together to achieve the best outcome.

The participants have unanimously agreed that both the public and private sectors provide all possible means of encouragement and support in order to greatly motivate women to participate in the decision-making process. These means include providing them the necessary powers, using positive words of encouragement, believing in women and showing confidence in them, in addition to the orientation of the country itself. More than 60 per cent of them share an affirmative opinion about Egypt's stimulation for women's empowerment and their involvement in decision-making. They also agree that the previous matter has a clear impact on laws and legislation being more gender-sensitive. Despite the efforts of the PPP in supporting and qualifying women leaders in Egypt, women still face some obstacles in the decision-making process such as ostracism from their society, the imposition of masculinity and patriarchy, stereotypes, lack of time, limited powers as well as capabilities in their institution such as the budget.
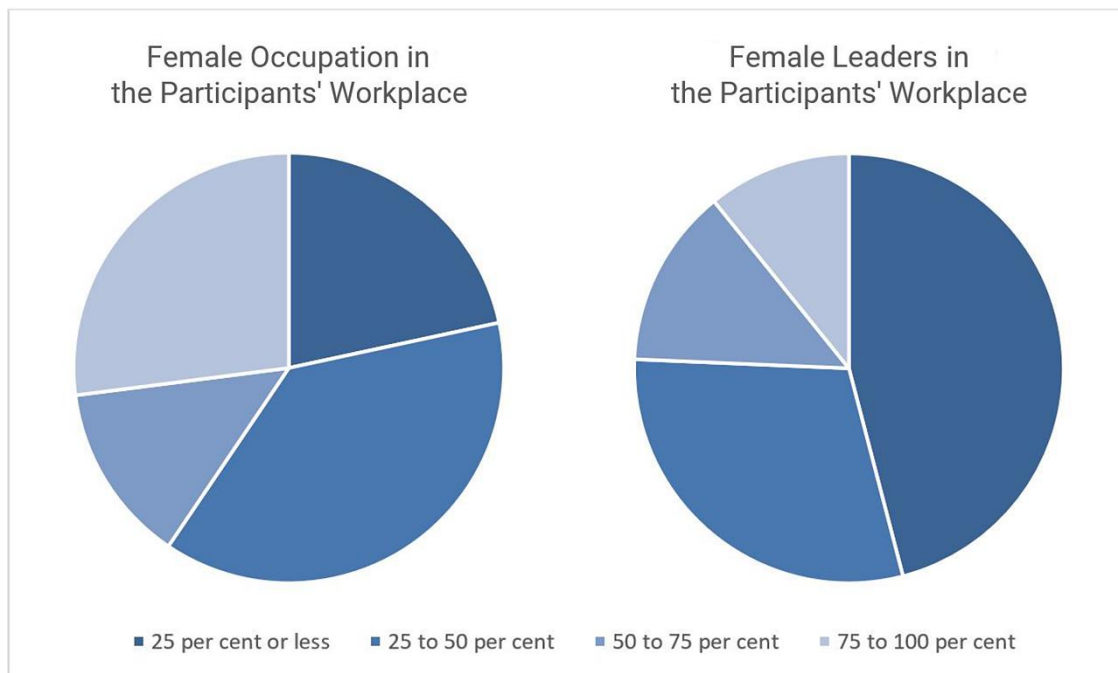
Figure IV. Pie chart representing the situation of female employees in the workplace of the questionnaire's respondents. (Source: The author)

To have a clear vision of the situation, women also face some natural obstacles without external interference such as the social situation like becoming a wife or a mother. Although 30 per cent of the respondents have disagreed that it reduces their effectiveness and productivity during work, they agree that it affects women's continuity in their institution and even puts them at risk of discrimination when returning from maternity leave. As mentioned previously, the study is concerned with the role of the private sector in that matter. Almost 45 per cent agree that NGOs and associations have an influential role in issuing laws for women. However, the participants have contributed to the study and suggested several influential ones in Egypt concerning encouraging women's participation such as the National Council for Women, the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women, the Arab Women Organisation, the New Woman Foundation, etc.

It's not recently common for everyone to agree on a specific matter, but by choosing on a particular constant and focusing on a certain group such as the male participants of whom 65 per cent are between the ages of 20 and 30, there is something agreed upon. This group with such refreshed youth thinking agrees that the orientation of the country strongly supports women's participation and encourages them to be part of the decision-making process. Fortunately, this is realised through Egypt's Vision 2030. One of its main concerns is the comprehensive empowerment of Egyptian women to integrate feminist perspectives into the policy-making process in various fields: political, economic, social, etc. The government works on this strategy for years now by elaborating a suitable legislative and institutional environment, influencing the general culture, and raising awareness of gender equity. It includes training and qualifying executive and governmental cadres, especially female ones, to prepare Egyptian women leaders as one of the sustainable development goals in Egypt. Thus, it leads to sensitise institutions and civil society on the issue of gender and its relationship to coexistence, so that women have a common opportunity to participate, stimulating government institutions to take legislative actions and prepare gender-sensitive strategic plans, not only consider marginalised women, and allow them to participate in policy-making even regarding land use management.

8. Conclusion

The responsibility of women increases and their role in their local community expands, although their traditional role still dominates their daily life and might affect their continuity in the path that they choose for themselves. Therefore, there is a need for urban public spaces to balance their life and give them the right to the city. Its characteristics are affected by the spatial needs that differ from one woman to another according to age, abilities, social situation, level of education, cultural background, etc. The results of the conducted study indicate that local women in Egypt lack the feeling of spatial and moral comfort in urban public spaces due to many physical and social reasons. Therefore, the different needs of women must be met in urban planning policies in order to provide comfort, safety, and inclusivity creating an effective link with the urban environment.

The study examines the perception of the reality of urban planning policies and the decision-making process. It illustrates how the current policies adopted by local government institutions responsible for city planning and designing its land uses and spaces do not sufficiently take into account the different needs of women when discussing and formulating these policies, in addition to the inadequacy of private sector interventions in this matter. Proof of this is that the members of the selected study sample unanimously indicate that they have never been asked about their needs in urban public spaces from any public or private organisation, but there is always a glimmer of hope by observing the surrounding efforts to integrate a gender-based perspective into decision-making. One of the problems might be the ignorance of a large percentage of women in the local community of their spatial rights in the city in addition to the limited available choices that do not have to be compatible with the needs or aspirations of women.

Women imposing themselves in society and claiming their rights over time makes them face fewer challenges than past cohorts of women. Although women still face gender-related barriers, they manage to self-develop, become leaders, and reach senior management positions that give them the power to recommend new strategies and challenge bias and gender stereotypes. Thus, responsibility should be distributed equitably, such as parental leave to take care of the children, so that the two genders' roles are complementary and help each other. Each member of a family wants the success of all its individuals by providing equal opportunities between both genders, and each one succeeds in his own way so that society becomes a better place and the wheel of progress turns.

Finally, the solution lies in the participation that starts from adopting the results of this study and similar ones to create an urban guide and terms of reference to be applied in urban planning policies by governmental and non-governmental institutions to meet the needs of local women. The importance of rethinking urban planning strategies according to new standards that take into consideration the viewpoint of women regarding the use of urban public spaces at all times and their sense of safety must be taken into account. The policy-making process reaches the optimum outcome when women themselves are involved. It should include women from among the general public, not just specialists. New urban infrastructure systems should be developed to serve women's needs and put in place strict laws to protect their rights. In fact, the process includes the private sector that has a very influential role in this issue and this depends on the government giving them sufficient authority and resources. To be all covered, along with promoting the idea that women have the right to enjoy active participation and interaction within the urban spaces of the city, this awareness should include men in order to encourage them to participate and be a party to the cause of women.

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