



## Woman in Development and Politics

### Assessing the Right to the City Theory from a Gender-Wise Perspective in order to Achieve Gender Inclusive Urban Space (Case Study: The City of Rasht)

Mehrnaz Molavi<sup>1</sup> | Vahid Feizkhah<sup>2</sup>

1. Assistant Professor of Urban Planning and Design, Department of Urban Planning and Design, Faculty of Architecture and Art, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran. E-mail: [mehrnaz.molavi@gmail.com](mailto:mehrnaz.molavi@gmail.com)
2. Corresponding Author, PhD Student in Urban Planning, Department of Urban Planning and Design, Faculty of Architecture and Art, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran. E-mail: [vahidfeizkhah.ac@gmail.com](mailto:vahidfeizkhah.ac@gmail.com)

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 9 July 2024 Received in revised form: 17 September 2024 Accepted: 26 October 2024 Published online: 31 December 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>The Right to The City,</i> <i>Gendered Space,</i> <i>Gender Inclusive City,</i> <i>The City of Rasht.</i></p>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>In Iran, there is an evident requirement for urban spaces that are in accordance with the civic requirements of citizens in their daily urban lives. Many Iranian cities, particularly metropolitan areas, have become "black holes," which means that they are incapable of providing a desirable living environment for women, despite absorbing a significant portion of the capital (Bayat, 2016). Urban space is a medium for the expression of the cultural, political, and ideological characteristics of each society, as well as the manifestation of social interactions. The core of this medium is shaped by concepts such as social cohesion and equal access for citizens, including various minorities, to resources. Urban space is not merely the built environment; it is also the result of social actions that are given significance through human interactions and activities in space. Consequently, the continuous, dominant, and tangible presence of one or more specific social groups in the urban space can gradually inject specific physical and functional characteristics, resulting in the emergence of forms of control, exclusion, and deprivation of other social groups. Gendering space is one of the most notable instances of spatial domination, which is predicated on the conventional belief that the private sphere is the domain of women and the public sphere is the domain of men. This is a prevalent occurrence in patriarchal societies worldwide and has continued from the past to the present. Despite the fact that the intensity and extent of the gendering of urban spaces have decreased in comparison to the past, it continues to exist in a variety of forms and at different levels, serving as a tangible manifestation of social, gender, and spatial inequalities (Fanni &amp; Ahmadi, 2020).</p> <p>Henri Lefebvre, a renowned theorist and the founder of the right to the city theory, regards it as a collective right that extends beyond hierarchical and restrictive identities such as citizenship, ethnicity, gender, and social class, to all citizens from all backgrounds. This privilege extends beyond mere access to urban amenities. It necessitates the incorporation of features and characteristics in the city that cater to the diverse requirements of all citizens and improve the quality of life (Fenster, 2006). This research, by applying the theoretical framework of Henri Lefebvre's right to the city theory and adopting a qualitative approach in methodology, tries to provide, in addition to assessing the indicators of this theory in the context of Rasht city, the necessary criteria and components for achieving a gender-inclusive city in the spatial context of Rasht city using the thematic analysis method. The main objectives of this research are to identify the components and criteria of a gender-inclusive city in Rasht city using the right to the city theory. Subsequently, a thematic map will be developed to facilitate the establishment of a gender-inclusive city.</p> <p><b>Methodology</b></p> <p>Utilizing a case study methodology, this investigation is qualitative in nature. Rasht, the urban hub of Gilan province, serves as the case study. The data acquisition method employed in this study is a hybrid of field research and library research. The theoretical information and background information regarding the research topic were obtained through library research. In order to gather data from the research environment, field research was implemented. Interviews, questionnaires, and observation comprise the field research instruments implemented in this investigation. Experts in the disciplines of architecture, urban planning, sociology, and women's studies were interviewed. The urban space's gendered aspects and characteristics were identified through observation in various regions of Rasht. Women in Rasht were provided with questionnaires to ascertain their perspectives on the attributes of a city that prioritizes gender inclusivity.</p>

### Results

In the initial stage, the sub-themes were categorized according to their primary themes after the interviews were analyzed and sub-themes were extracted. Support, empowerment, monitoring, spatial appropriation, spatial control, accessibility, comfort, social motivation, gender equality, and social inclusion were the ten primary themes that were detected. During the subsequent phase, the primary themes were analyzed and categorized. The interviewees' perspectives led to the conclusion that there are four primary components necessary to create gender-inclusive urban spaces. After analyzing the interviews, the researchers found ten main themes related to gender inclusivity in urban spaces. The ten motifs were categorized into four more general categories:

- Security: This includes feelings of safety and protection in public spaces;
- Environmental Characteristics of Space: This relates to the physical features of the space, such as design, accessibility, and comfort;
- Social Characteristics of Space: This refers to the social interactions and activities that take place in the space, including issues of control and power;
- Culture of Gender Equality: This encompasses broader societal attitudes and norms related to gender equality.

Each of these four main categories can be further subdivided into more specific sub-themes. In essence, the research demonstrates that the development of gender-inclusive communities necessitates a broader cultural shift toward gender equality, as well as a commitment to safety, the physical environment, and social interactions.

Numerous suggestions are proposed to enhance the gendered urban environment of Rasht in accordance with the results of this investigation. The following recommendations include:

- Networking and institutionalization to support women's activities;
- Efforts to increase women's share in decision-making and power;
- Empowering women for risk management;
- Strengthening formal and public surveillance of urban spaces;
- Recognizing urban spaces with predominantly female dominance;
- Advocating for reforms to judicial laws that protect women's rights;
- Creating urban spaces that are suitable for the activities that women want to do;
- Increasing the participation of women in the decision-making process related to urban planning and design;
- Raising awareness of gender issues among urban planners, designers and decision-makers.

### Conclusion

For Rasht city to become a gender-inclusive city, a comprehensive approach that includes both spatial and non-spatial measures is required. The evaluation and establishment of policies for the physical characteristics, design, and management of spaces are all part of spatial measures. Separate research is necessary to achieve a comprehensive comprehension and analysis of non-spatial measures, which concentrate on social, economic, political, legal, and cultural aspects. The right to the city is analyzed in this research using a qualitative approach, which emphasizes all aspects of urban space gendering. This approach sets it apart from previous studies. The interview design guarantees comprehensiveness, and the respondents are selected from a diverse pool of experts. This research aims to address a lacuna in the existing literature by employing a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach. This study endeavors to develop a more profound comprehension of the formation and perpetuation of gender inequalities in urban spaces by conducting an interdisciplinary analysis of cultural, social, economic, physical, institutional, and legal dimensions. The objective of this research is to identify the obstacles that impede the attainment of gender equality in urban environments and to suggest practical solutions for the creation of inclusive, equitable, and accessible urban spaces for all. This will be accomplished by analyzing qualitative data and actively engaging with experts.

---

**Cite this article:** Molavi, M., & Feizkhah, V. (2024). Assessing the Right to the City Theory from a Gender-Wise Perspective in order to Achieve Gender Inclusive Urban Space (Case Study: The City of Rasht). *Women in Development and Politics*, 22(4), 843-865. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2024.379162.1008463>



© The Author(s).

Publisher: The University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2024.379162.1008463>

---