Module 6.7: Public Spaces

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Module Structure

	Section 1 introduces the concept of public spaceandsection 2 discusses its meanings and political significance in India and globally. Section 3 discusses processes of privatisation and shrinking of public spaces in India. Section 4 discusses the contestations and struggles around public space with the case of street vendors in India. The ideas of diversity,

	dense cities and eyes on the street as advocated by Jane Jacobs and their relevance in Indian cities are discussed, especially with reference to street vendors. Section 5 discusses public space from the perspective of gender.In Brief summarises and concludes the module.

Description of the Module

Items	Description of the Module
Subject Name	Sociology
Paper Name	Sociology of Urban Transformation
Module Name/Title	Public Spaces
Module Id	6.7
Pre-requisites	
Objectives	This module explains the significance of public space in urban life. It presents the issues and challenges facing public spaces in contemporary urban India. In particular, this module discusses how increasing privatisation results in shrinking of public spaces. It also discusses the various contestations and struggles around public space with the case of street vendors in India and the challenges on the use of public space from the perspective of gender.
Key words	Public space, accessibility, spatial exclusion, citizensô rights, gender and space.

Introduction

Starting from town halls built in ancient cities to the gardens developed by the British to the parks and public gardens and open maidans in contemporary times -- public spaces have always held a significance in urban life. Public is a juridical category, firmly in the ambit of state and law, a contrast to that which is ñprivateò (Gidwani and Baviskar 2011). In contemporary cities, these spaces include parks, plazas, sidewalks, community centres, schoolyards, open and green spaces, amongst others. The fundamental tenets of publicness are freedom of access and accessibility of public spaces to all groups of the population (Carr et al 1992). Together, these characteristics render public spaces as ñgeneric destinations for variety of places that host regular, voluntary, informal and happy anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and workò (Oldenburg 1989: 16).

An alternative point of entry into the idea of ñpublicò in urban settings comes from the concept of the urban commons (Gidwani and Baviskar2011:42). These include:

> ...public goods: the air we breathe, public parks and spaces, public transportation, public sanitation systems, public schools, public waterways, and also the less obvious: municipal garbage that provides livelihoods to waste-pickers; wetlands, waterbodies, and riverbeds that sustain fishing communities, washerwomen, and urban cultivators; streets as arteries of movement but also as places where people work, live, love, dream, and voice dissent; and local bazaars that are sites of commerce and cultural invention.

As is evident, the idea of the ñurban commonsò differs in significant ways from the idea of public space in encompassing resources beyond the spatial. Moreover, unlike ñpublicò, which lie ñfirmly within the ambit of the state and lawò, the commonslie at the ñfrontiersò of ñterritorial grid of the lawò (Gidwani and Baviskar 2011: 42). Moreover, ñcommons need communitiesò to safeguard them; in the absence of such communities, they are vulnerable to privatisation. Nonetheless, these concepts are closely allied even if they emphasize different features of civic life in the city.

In fact, ñpublicò spaces and ñurban commonsò have carried varied meanings across

cultures and across time. The features of open access and accommodation of difference emphasized by Carr et al and other authors are part of what Caldeira (2000) calls the ñmodern and democratic public spaceò as an ñideal of the open cityò. The work of Caldeira in Sao Paolo, Brazil as well as authors such as Kaviraj (1997) in India demonstrates how this ñmodern ideal of public spaceò is not constant either across cultures or over time. Instead, the ñpublicnessò of space can become subject to competing claims, encroachments and enclosure by both elite and subaltern groups.

Indeed, one can also think of spaces that are seemingly public but are actually private. Examples include shopping malls, spas and beauty parlours, clubs, cafes, gymnasiums and amusement parks that are accessible to everyone, provided one is able to pay. Such spaces lie in the gray zone between public and private, but are also increasingly subject to ñprivatizationò.

This module delineates three dimensions which provide a meaningful understanding of the issues and challenges facing public space, especially in urban India. The rest of the module is divided into five sections. Section 2 discusses the importance of public space, and considers alternative conceptualization from the ñmodern ideal of public spaceò to vernacular Indian ideas of urban space. Section 3 discusses increasingly salient processes of the privatisation and shrinking of public spaces, especially with reference to India. Section 4 discusses the contestations and struggles around public space, with a case study of street vendors in India. Section 5 discusses public space from the perspective of gender.The section In Brief summarises and concludes.

Section 2: Significanceof Public Space

Historically, public spaces have evolved alongside changing cities. Madanipour (2010) cites the examples of the *agora* in Greek cities, the forum in Roman cities, and market squares in medieval cities. In contemporary India, the ghats in Ujjain have been highlighted as a similar ñurban public realmò (Samant 2004).

Yet, as the discussion of ñpublic spacesò and ñurban commonsò showed, not only have notions of ñpublicò varied across cultures and civilizations, scholars have also

offered varying conceptualizations of it. The next section highlights what Caldeira (2000) has called the ñmodern democratic ideal of urban public spaceò and its relationship to democratic politics.

2.1 Modern ideal of Public Space

ñOpennessò, ñaccommodation of differenceò and ñequalityò, according to Caldeira (2000:304), aresome of the hallmarks of modern and democratic urban public space. Madanipour (2013:1) takes a more functional angle to argue that such spaces ñshould be *accessible places*, developed through *inclusive processes"*.A key outcome of these features is that it allows different social groups to come into contact in the public space, even when residential patterns remain segregated (Caldeira 2000).

In broad terms, space can be differentiated as public and private based on the criteria of accessibility. In other words, public spaces are ñinclusiveò because they are accessible to the general public, for instance, public transport, public gardens and parks, streets, walkways, sidewalks, footpaths. In contrast, private spaces are ñexclusiveò as their accessibility is limited by factors like ownership, use and ability to pay, for instance, private residences, resorts and hotels. And there is a range of gray spaces between these categories, including places such as malls, private parks or recreation facilities etc that may be considered partially private.

What value, if any, attaches to modern public space in cities around the world?
On the one hand is a perspective offered by Amin (2006) who argues that the ñcollective promiseò of urban public space comes from the ñsociabilityò and ñcivic sensibilityò it allows, even when these spaces emphasize ñconsumptionò and ñleisure practicesò rather than political engagement per se:

> Through and beyond the consumption and leisure practices, the experience of public space remains one of sociability and social recognition and general acceptance of the codes of civic conduct and the benefits of access to collective public resources. It continues to be an experience that supports building awareness of the commons, perhaps one that falls short of fostering active involvement in the life of a city, but still underpins cultures of

sociability and civic sensibility.

Aminôs argument thusdownplays the strictly political value of public space. In fact, the ideas of citizenship, associational life, civic traditions have an important bearing on the development of public space. It is, therefore, worthwhile to understand the political significance of public space, especially in democracies such as India. The next sub-section analyses the political significance of public space.

2.2 Political Significance of Public Space

What picture comes to your mind when you think of public parks like JantarMantar in New Delhi, Shivaji Park in Mumbai, Taksim Square in Istanbul, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China and JalianwalaBagh in Amritsar?

Each of these places has served as sites of protests at particular points in history. The JantarMantar made news throughout 2011 because this was the site where the anti-corruption movement unfolded (Sitapati 2011; Brahmachari 2015). Shivaji Park in Mumbai has a long history of holding gatherings and meetings, especially those led by the Shiv Sena (Patel 2006). In Istanbul, citizens protested plans to build a mall complex that would destroy Gezi Park inTaksim Square; these protests were in news in major part of 2013 (Shafak 2013; Oktem 2013).Tiananmen Square, long an ñempty spaceò was transformed into a political public space with student protests in 1989 (Lee 2009).

Public places such as the JantarMantar, Shivaji Park and Taksim Square offer opportunities for citizens to engage with politics and if necessary, protest against government actions. In an interesting study on the role of a public place in social movements, Said (2015) argues that a public space that already has a history of protests and is labelled as politicised space can itself serve to draw people and encourage them to participate in a movement. His argument is based on his examination of the understanding of Tahrir Square and its role played in the Egyptian revolution of 2011.

Authors have often argued that public spaces are vital for democratic expression besides their recreational value. Date (2006) cites the example of Mumbai which was

once famous for its working class militancy, demonstrations and highly disciplined marches and strikes, but these are increasingly being curbed by government repression coupled with vanishing public spaces. ñThe demonstrators are now confined to Azad Maidan, a colonial era ground and their isolation is enhanced by a humiliating barbed wire fenceò (Date 2006: 3474).

The ñmodern ideal of public spaceò may not be the only model of public space but it provides a powerful link to political expression. The discussion abovesuggests that any attempt to limit the use of public spaces or privatise public spaces can affect space for citizensô dissent in the long run. Thus, the manifold challenges of conservation of public spacescan be said to be connected to larger questions of protection of citizensô rights, crucial for a functioning democracy like India.

Yet, although the ñmodern ideal of public spaceò exercises a powerful imaginative hold, it is important to keep in mind that it is not the only model of public space. Vernacular Indian concepts of public space differed substantially from this modern ideal.

2.3 Public and "Pablik" Spaces in India

Drawing on evidence from Calcutta, SudiptaKaviraj (1997) has argued that in pre-colonial Indian cities, public spaces were uncared-for ñoutsideò spaces (see Vanka 2014:10) from which ñpropertied citizens and state actorsò remained disengaged.

The street was the outside, the space for which one did not have responsibility, or which was not oneôs own, and it therefore lacked any association with obligation, because it did not symbolise any significant principle, did not express any values.

This is a view very different from ñcivic spaceò, which has its own ñnorms and rules of use of its own, different from the domestic values of bourgeois privacyò (Kaviraj 1997: 98 in Vanka 2014: 35). Thus, such spaces remained under-regulated and subject to ñnegotiated useò,not unlike to the commons (Vanka 2014: 20). This is key to understanding the claims and counter-claims on the street in the Indian context (Gambetta and Bandhopadhyay 2012), which are examined in sections below.

Equally, ceremony and celebration remained significant uses of public space in the Indian context: ñSouth Asian collective activities in open spaces constituted a fundamental form of expression of the polityò (Freitag 1991 in Vanka 2014: 34). Yet, colonial policies have led to contestation over both these senses of public spaces in the Indian city. Citing Freitag (1991), Vanka (2014:37) notes that ñthe colonists sought to depoliticize public spaces by categorizing public celebrations of religious occasions as private eventsò.

Furthermore, while the pre-colonial notion of ñpublicò as ñnot-privateò orñvalue-lessò rendered such spaces open to a multiplicity of claims, colonial policies increasingly regulated and restricted both uses and users. Such regulation has continued to intensify in post-colonial India on grounds of aesthetic and safety
by middle class claimants (Vanka 2014).

At the same time, older conceptions of public space have allowed the poor to make claims on it. Kaviraj (1997:108 in Vanka 2014:117) captures the ñplebianisation of public spaceò by distinguishing ñpublicò from the vernacular ñpablikò space, ie ñnot owned by individual property ownersò, that became subject to livelihood and squatting claims by the poor. Institutions like the government or municipal authorities have been more hospitable or less hostile to such claims on ñpablikò space (Kaviraj 1997 and Vanka 2014), though that is not always the case as a number of highly publicized eviction drives in recent years have shown. These various conceptions of public space come face-to-face in the struggles of street vendors discussed below.

Section 3: Privatisation and Shrinking of Public Spaces in India

Note, however, that the boundaries of public and private are not fixed but get redefined and restructured over time. This restructuring of space is informed by a number of sociological, economic and political factors. For instance, Madanipour (2013:4) contends that with the ascendance of free market political paradigms in the West, ñpublic and private organizations and their associated professionals had lost interest in the public space, seeing it as irrelevant or expensive, or were encroaching

upon it for private gains.ò Thus ñprivatisedò public spaces are an increasingly prominent feature of cities across the world.

One mechanism for such privatisation is the mushrooming of gated communities across cities in the global South, including India. The neoliberal city of gated-communities and neighbourhood enclosures, golf courses, newly laid residential enclaves, tolled roads, flyovers and bridges for the easy flow of traffic (mostly private vehicles) isalso witness to the increasing privatisation of urban spaces. Various studies have shown how development of gated communities imposes limitations on public access and accessibility of streets, walkways and such other public spaces (Ramoroka and Tsheola 2014: 59).

Caldeira(200:297) calls this a process of the ñimplosion of public spaceò. As the rich retreat into their gated communities, public spaces lose social diversity. Encounters across social class barriers become less and less likely. In Sao Paolo, which Caldeira (2000) calls a city of walls, processes of gating have been caused and reinforced by widespread fear of crime, which has physically transformed public spaces by the presence of high barriers, armed security guards and restricted access to streets.

Similarly, in democratic South Africa, contemporary urban settlement planning epitomises the gated community phenomenon, which includes security villages and enclosed neighbourhoods (Ramoroka and Tsheola 2014: 59). Ramoroka and Tsheolaexplain that in South Africa, increasing number of gated communities creates ñphysical enclosures that transfer public spaces to private control and ownership, thereby perpetuating apartheid social exclusion legacies within South Africaôs towns and citiesò(Ramoroka and Tsheola 2014:59).

In what ways does such privatisation matter? As Caldeira points out (2000:234), ñonce walls are built, they alter public life.òBased on the Sao Paolo experience, her work also shows that the ñimplosionò of urban public spaces can occur alongside avenues for increasing democratic participation. Indeed, she suggests that the segregation and intolerance built into public spaces by processes of gating often represent a reaction to democratization across other spheres.

The phenomenon pf privatisation of space has played out a little differently across cities of India. As Kaviraj (1997) as highlighted, public space carries a different set of meanings in the Indian context. Even so, Date (2006), points out that of the few open green spaces in the city of Mumbai, several are controlled by private luxury clubs and other institutions. Several municipal parks are also being privatised with entry fee that are unaffordable for the poor. Public parks like the Almeida Park in Bandra which are still fully accessible to the people are turning into rarities. So are eating houses, such as the historic Irani restaurants that are being converted into other uses (Date 2006).

While walking spaces for common people are neglected, there is a substantial increase in recreational walking spaces either for jogging and running created by affluent residents with corporate or government support limited to upper class areas (Date 2006).

Elite civil society organisations (CSOs) expound exclusionary ideas about zoning to eliminate street vendors and slum communities that encroach upon middle-class urban spaces. Some of the recommendations of middle-class CSOs reflect their elitiststand. For instance, in its recommendations on the Scheme for Hawkers in Mumbai, a group of CSOs maintained that footpaths and roads were just for commuting. The use of public streets and pavements is, first, meant for the use of the general public; they are not laid to facilitate the carrying on of private businesses. It is the obligatory responsibility of the municipal authority of Mumbai to keep public streets free of obstruction (Singh and Parthasarathy 2010).

Singh (2012) points out that the municipal authorityôs guidelines for the maintenance of open spaces reserved for recreation grounds and playgrounds allow trusts and citizen groups to manage such plots either on an adoption or a caretaker basis. Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) that have adopted public gardens from the municipal authority for maintenance invariably bar neighbouring slum residents from entry into the space, on the pretext of maintaining cleanliness.

In contemporary urban India, the urban commons are also being rapidly diminishing and replaced by new ï privatised, monitored ï public spaces, such as malls, plazas, and gated venues(Gidwani and Baviskar 2011:43). It is evident that privatization of

public spaces in India in particular have differential impacts on different classes and groups of people, and serve to undercut the poorôs ñright to the cityò.

Against the backdrop of Kavirajôs (1997) analysis of the claims on public space by poorer groups, these processes also recall the ñpolitics of forgettingò and ñspatial purificationò invoked by Fernandes (2004), which serves to remove the poor from the city. The ñhawker menaceôò targeted by middle class associations are seen ñas a threat to a wide array of bourgeois interests, including inconvenience, sanitation, fears of social disorder and the threat of declining real estate prices for residential areas marked for relocating hawkersò (Fernandes 2004 quoted in Vanka 2014:10-11)

Section 4: Safety and contestations around public space

Increasing privatisation results in shrinking of public spaces. However, contestation and conflict over the limited public spaces that remain available in Indian cities also results from negotiations over the meaning of ñpublicò (Kaviraj 1997). In developing country cities, contestations over public spaces emerge over roads, sidewalks and parks. The struggle of street vendors is a useful case to understandsuch conflict.

In her classic work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs critiques the current principles that have shaped modern city planning in the West. Her critique also applies in developing countries like India. She argues that planners are concerned about ñhow cities must lookò and not ñhow cities work.ò Planning works on the principle of segregated land use. There is space allocation for different activities ï industry, leisure, housing, schools, markets and the like.

In reality, cities function quite differently. More often than not cities develop organically. Most cities carry the imprint of mixed land use. Formal spaces exist with informal spaces of work, living and leisure side by side. Jane Jacobs propagated the ideas of ñdense citiesò and ñdiversityò as opposed to segregated planned cities. The social behaviour of people in cities, and the economic behaviour of cities depends on diversity of both uses and users.

Jane Jacobs coined the phrase ñeyes on the streetò to talk about the significance of mixed land use and diversity in cities. Diversity and mixed land use as opposed to spatial segregation are important not only for the social life, but also to maintain public order and safety. Spaces solely dedicated to office use like the Ballard estate, Nariman Point, BandraKurla Complex in Mumbai become rather ñunsafeò at night. Drawing from the experience of successful and safe neighbourhoods (many of them quite poor) in Boston, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, she explains that ñthe successful urban neighbourhood required an animated street scene of foot traffic throughout the day, that in turn was underwritten by a great diversity in housing, commerce and occupationsò (Jacobs in Scott 1999: 277).Jacobs further described this as a ñprocess of maintaining public order: the curiosity and vigilance of hundreds of people (small shopkeepers, vendors, fruit sellers, butchers who tended their enterprise all day) throughout the day doing the unpaid work of sustaining public orderò (Jacobs in Scott 1999: 278).

In his study on street vendors in New York, Mitchell Duneier (1999) explains that although a public nuisance in the eyes of city authorities, street vendors, in fact, produce safe public spaces and enhance the quality of life in the neighbourhoods in which they work.

Indeed, in Indian cities, street vendors and hawkers similarly help maintain safety on the roads and public order. Sadana (2012) uses Jacobs ideas in her analysis of the Delhi Metro stations as public spaces, and critiques the rising use of CCTV in place of ñeyes on the streetò.

4.1: The Case of Street Vendors in India

In the world class city imagination that drives contemporary urban development, to a great extent, street vendors are categorized as ñnuisanceò, and therefore, must be removed from city spaces like sidewalks, footpaths, around railway stations and parks. Removal of street vendors is closely linked to the logic of efficiency in urban governance, beautification and new aspirations around the city. Prioritising efficiency in urban governance is tied to new aspirations about the usage of city space connected to the cultural practices of consumption and lifestyle changes of Mumbaiôs middle classes. The new aesthetics of the cityôs architecture stress beautification and the need

to do away with all ñuglyò things, including encroachments in the form of street vendors (Singh2012; Anjaria 2006).

Bhowmik (2003) discusses that in a significant judicial case a common street vendor, Sodhan Singh, who sold garments at Janpath in New Delhi was evicted by the New Delhi Municipal Corporation, appealed to the Supreme Court through a Public Interest Litigation. He claimed that the act violated his fundamental rights, more specifically his right to carry on business or trade (Article 19(1) g). In a very significant judgment, the Court ruled that,

> ...If properly regulated according to the exigency of the circumstances, the small traders on the sidewalks can considerably add to the comfort and convenience of the general public, by making available ordinary articles of everyday use for a comparatively lesser price. An ordinary person, not very affluent, while hurrying towards his home after a day's work can pick up these articles without going out of his way to find a regular market. The right to carry on trade orbusiness mentioned in Article 19(1) g of the Constitution, on street pavements, if properly regulated cannot be denied on the ground that the streets are meant exclusively for passing or re-passing and no other use (*Sodhan Singh vs NDMC, 1989*).

The above extract from the Supreme Court judgment is significant because it emphasises several important aspects of street vending and use of public space. The judgment notes that street vending, if regulated, cannot be denied merely on the ground that pavements are meant exclusively for pedestrians. The most important aspect is that street vendors are exercising their constitutional right to carry out trade or business hence it should be regulated properly and not abolished.

Note also how the claims made by street vendors echo the negotiations over public spaces in India described by Kaviraj (1997). Nonetheless, a lot depends on the judiciary and how its reads and interprets citizensô right, especially when they conflict with one another. Scholars have theorised on rights and the use of public space is different ways, especially with reference to street vending. Nath(2010) explains that the ñright to existential space is the physical space required by a person to follow economic activities in order to survive and existential space of affluent citizens is bigger and encroaches on the existential space of the poor. The poor bereft of existential space, that is not affordable for them, encroach on public space for their survival needsò (Nath 2010: 59). Similarly,Jhabvala (2000) points out that if we plan for and accommodate street vendors in city spaces, they will not

obstruct other essential functions, such as traffic flows. Vendors now seem such a nuisance because there is no place for them, and so any place they occupy belongs to some other function. Therefore, both national and state policies on street vendors need to feed into urban plans and schemes.

TeLintelo (2009) elaborates that the ñright to existential spaceò in practical application defies another essential concept, namely, that of natural markets. The ñright to existential spaceò implements through space allocation, choosing a space that offers least competition with other functions or activities, therefore, avoids conflict of interests. Yet, natural markets are usually in places with multiple functions and external competition, so a conflict of interests is inevitable. For example,in bus terminals or railway stations food vendors are banned , even though these are ideal natural markets for them. Their presence seems to obstruct other functions, which are prioritised. It also appears to infringe on the Supreme Courtôs jurisprudence declaring that shopkeeperôs livelihoods also have a right to be protected against encroaching vendors. This shows that there is a need to rethink space allocation, and address the conflict of interests instead of avoidance.

Section 5: Gender and Public Space

The public versus private also has a gender dimension. Inner spaces in residential structures referred to as *antarmahal* are private, usually occupied by women. In contrast, the spaces on the outside like the living room and courtyard connecting the residential structure with the outside world are more public, open to outsiders, and usually occupied by men. Antarmahal or ladies quarters that we find in residential units since the pre-colonial times have been beautifully depicted in films like *GareBaire* by Satyajit Ray. This film is particularly interesting as the lady of house creates a revolution when she first steps out of the private women quarters to the living room labelled as public. That created a stir, as womenôs mobility during those times was strictly limited to the private quarters.

To understand the linkages between public space and gender one must refer to some scholarly works done in this area. In their book *Why Loiter?*Phadke et al (2011) compel a broader understanding of the linkages between gender and space in cities by explaining that ñloiterò (meaning standing at street corners, doing timepass over chai

without surveillance, using clean toilets after dark, and indulging in consensual flirtation and sexual encounters) actually has the potential to change the terms of negotiation in city public spaces and creating the possibility of a radically altered city not just for women, but for everyone. They argue that the political project of making public spaces habitable for women is not enough, women should have the right to loiter, have fun and seek pleasure without being at risk. Therefore, they shift the debate from the politics of safety to the politics of pleasure by adding another dimension in the gender and public space debate.

Urban design, city planning and infrastructure, especially public places like public toilets and public transport tend to restrict womenôs access to public spaces. Take the case of public toilets. Womenôs access to public toilets in cities is abysmally low. Even when limited access is available, they are unclean and pose serious threat on womenôs health. Public toilets also pose security and safety challenges and also carry the threat of sexual violence. In a study on these issues, Sharma et al (2015) note that ñWomen are often sexually harassed, teased, mocked at, or molested on their way to public toiletsòé while their safety is threatened by factors such as poor/faulty design of the cubicles (open roofs letting men peek in); poor maintenance (broken latches and doors); inadequate lighting; men and boys loitering around, and the absence of female attendantsò(Sharma et al 2015:73).

Limited or no access to public toilets by underprivileged women forces them to use ñRailway tracks, behind bushes, behind parked cars, open spaces, urban jungles, near *nalas*(drains)ò(Sharma et al 2015:74), showing the ways in which public spaces are transformed in Indian cities.

In Brief

This module introduced to the concept of public spaces, the many meaning it carries in different cultures and scholarly interpretations, the significance of public space in urban life and its political significance. The various challenges around public places in contemporary urban contexts were discussed with special reference to the rise of privatised gated communities and other privatised public spaces like shopping malls that result in the shrinking of public spaces. Increased privatisation in turn is related to new modes of city planning driven by private capital and aspiration of world class

cities. This mode of city development (with a weakened focus on public goods)invariably leads to greater struggles and contestations among citizens. This contestation, especially in relation to public spaces is brought out with the case of street vendors in India. The importance of dense cities and diversity are brought out, especially with reference to the presence of street vendors in cities in the discussion on the importance of public space, public order and safety in cities. The judiciary, academia, civil society groups and street vendorsô associations have interpreted the issue of citizensô rights in varied ways and the ensuing discourse has further complicated the questions relating the use of public space, rights and attendant contestations. The discussion on gender in relation to public space is significant because it brings out challenges that women face in the access and use of public spaces on a day to day basis.