

# Women's Negotiation of Domestic Spaces in Slums: The Roles of Physical Environment on Practical Gender Needs in Hajaribagh and Ganaktuli Sweeper's Colony, Dhaka.

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**Abstract:** This article investigates women's nature and extent of negotiation of domestic spaces by understanding the role physical environment in slums play in addressing their practical gender needs. While slum area and population in large cities of developing countries are increasing, women among the urban poor suffer doubly from the denial of their human rights on account of gender inequality as well as due to poverty and hence, often are unable to negotiate their Practical Gender Needs. This paper shows how poor women negotiate domestic space use to fulfill their practical gender needs and implies a far-reaching impact on society and conducts a case study of Ganaktuli and Hajaribagh Sweeper's Colony, manifesting slums in Dhaka. This investigation is based on both quantitative and qualitative data with 20 dwelling samples taken for more detailed study from each site. The research findings revealed that in general, women's inability to negotiate domestic spaces in slums results in failure to address their practical gender needs. This also hinders the growth of a gender-sensitive domestic environment, women being the prime users of such spaces. The roles of domestic space use and organization catering to negotiation toward fulfillment of women's gender needs remain crucial for future interventions in a gender-sensitive low-income housing.

**Keywords:** Slums, Domestic Space, Women's Negotiation, Practical Gender Needs.

## INTRODUCTION

Rapid population growth in Dhaka city results in the failure to address increasing demands for adequate housing, services, and employment scopes. A visible manifestation of this failure is the extent in which the informal sector (slums and squatter settlements) has proliferated. According to an estimate of the mid-1980s, 47 percent of Dhaka's population lived in informal settlements and 64.6 percent worked in the informal sector economy (Amin, 1989 cited in Ghafur, 2006, p.5; New Geography, 2012).

A slum, in general, is characterized by the inadequate provision of basic civic amenities, high residential and population densities and unhealthy living conditions. A critical gap in slum discourse relates to the research focusing on urban poor women. It emphasizes gender issues, in particular concerning how these women negotiate in using domestic spaces to fulfill their practical gender needs and eventually imply a far-reaching impact on society.

Women among the poor suffer doubly from the denial of their human rights – first on account of gender inequality, second out of poverty; these women become the poorest of the poor class. Studies on the proliferation of female-headed households and research into social impacts and gender-specific effects of structural adjustment policies have led to increased attention to the concept of “the feminization of poverty.” The perception is growing around the globe that poverty is becoming increasingly feminized, i.e. an increasing proportion of the world's poor are female (Moghadam, 2005, p.2).

This paper is based on a research that attempts to examine the relationship between domestic spaces, their uses and gender relations in women's negotiation pattern in low-income housing in Dhaka. To investigate these issues, two slum areas of Dhaka, Hajaribagh Slum and Ganaktuli Sweeper's Colony were selected as case studies (Rahman, 2013).

To study the patterned relationships between an organization and use of domestic spaces, three different approaches is suggested: behavioral, spatial and temporal interpretations. Also, analysis of domestic space use is governed by a set of binary oppositions like enclosed-open, front-back, public-private, male-female (Lawrence, 1990, p.73-76). Women's negotiation pattern considers both the immediate and extended domestic realm. Here, the concept of negotiation 4 is explained as a problem-solving process in which two or more people voluntarily discuss their differences and attempt to reach a joint decision on their common concerns (Moore, ).

Women who typically play the major role to use and organize domestic spaces are subjected to specific roles to modify their mobility and household activities by existing patriarchal/patrilineal society norms ascribed to them. Conceptualization of gender roles and women's needs is central to analyzing their negotiation pattern. In most Third World households, especially women in low-income group encompass triple roles. They are Reproductive Role, Productive Role, and Role on Community Managing and Community Politics (Moser, 1993, pp. 29, 34). Men and women play separate roles in society, own varied levels of control over resources, and so often have different needs. The concept of gender needs arises from women's `gender interests which women or men may develop due to their social positioning through gender attributes. Gender interests can be either strategic or practical each being derived in a different way and involving differing implications for women's subjectivity (Molyneux, 1985a, p.232 cited in Moser, 1993, p. 38). But the lack of gender awareness and man-made social norms result in women's inability to negotiate in the low-income housing suppressing their practical gender needs. Research works in the context of Housing and Gender, however, lags behind in Bangladesh. Studies on low-income housing or on gender issues have been done separately, but relevant works incorporating both these issues lack in the context of Dhaka. There lacks an effort to understand the link between the low-income housing of Dhaka and women's negotiation pattern in those areas, in the light of fulfilling their practical gender needs addressing the physical environment in which they reside.

The objective of this paper is to identify the nature and extent of women's negotiation of domestic spaces in relation to practical gender need addressing the physical environment in which they live. This paper first examines the nature and use of domestic spaces; then it presents the major findings on the practical gender needs of women addressing the physical environment. Women's negotiation pattern is explicated next in relation to their gender needs. This paper concludes by noting women's inability to negotiate domestic spaces in slums by limiting their fulfillment of practical gender needs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This article is based on the findings of a research entitled "Women's Negotiation of Domestic Space: An Investigation into Gender Issues in Low-Income Housing of Dhaka" carried out by the Author in 2008. Case Study is the key feature of the Research Methodology to investigate and collect empirical findings, both quantitative and qualitative.

The Case Studies, Hajaribagh Slum and Ganaktuli Sweeper's Colony have been purposively selected considering their location, type of settlement, as well as to accommodate variations in domestic spaces, socio-cultural diversities, women's employment opportunities etc. The selected site in Hajaribagh includes Ward 58, Company Ghat and Ward 59, Bhagalpur, both at the Western fringe of Dhaka with some low lying land and ditches. Ganaktuli Sweeper's Colony, beside Pilkhana consists of Ward 52 and 58. The surveyed areas are high residential and population density slums for heterogeneous residents. Domestic spaces

include the indoor private domestic space/s of a dwelling, as well as the semi-public extended domestic realm. There are rarely any pleasant open spaces. Environmental aspects like natural lighting, ventilation, the interior arrangement as well as the provision of kitchen and utility services (drinking water, bathing and sanitation, electricity, fuel, garbage disposal, drainage and flooding etc.) are inadequate. Safety, security, and privacy are improper. Thus, prevailing domestic spaces and unfavorable environment hinder comfortable living for women and children who mostly use the domestic realm.

A field survey was conducted taking a comparatively smaller sample to generate a pattern acting as a basis for descriptive analysis of the research problem. The stratified sampling method was used in sample unit selection. The population was divided into sub-groups (religious, socio-economic groups, age, household position and space organization pattern etc.) and separate samples were taken within each sub-group. From each site, 20 dwelling samples were taken to study while respondents from those 20 household samples were selected.

Data collection method used Ethnographic approach involving "an intensive study of some given society," but it was modified to house the architectural research focusing this study. Data gathering was limited to aspects of domestic spaces and concentrated on the status and roles of women in the two survey areas, their activities within/outside home, their interaction or negotiation with male and other female members of the domestic realm, negotiation patterns in familial and social life relevant to the physical environment of women. A mixed data-collection process was employed consisting of observational techniques, participation, interviews (usually informal) and secondary information bases such as recorded history, oral traditions, physical artifacts etc. A structured questionnaire was prepared to act more as a guideline and help to study various aspects of the respondents' household demographic data, socio-economic aspect, surrounding physical environment etc. Open-ended spontaneous interviews accompanied by Field Notes also enabled added information on the research problem. Information on dwelling types space use and women's negotiation pattern, all were recorded and analyzed. The analysis of the research was carried out in the following two non-physical and physical levels: first, considering the philosophical and religious aspects, and attitudes of the society; second, studying the formal aspects, the design of space and its use, environmental and climatic aspects.

## NATURE OF DOMESTIC SPACE ORGANIZATION AND USE IN THE TWO SURVEYED AREAS

The structure type and profile of main dwelling units have been discussed first to understand the domestic space organization and use in the survey areas. Then, domestic organization and space occupancy pattern have been discussed to comprehend the use pattern.

Structures are mostly semi-permanent (Brick/CI sheet walls, C.I sheet roof) and structurally weak; a few permanent type structures (Brick wall, cement roof) are seen. There are quite a few kutchra structures built in bamboo mat walls and C.I Sheet Roof while straw or polythene is used widely. A few two-storied exist mostly having the ground floor built in brick walls but the upper floors in CI sheet tin or bamboo mats. Pitch roof is the common trend. An average household size of 5.2 people occupies an average indoor domestic floor space of 122.25 sft while the floor area per person is 23.5 sft. One-roomed dwelling units dominate while their ceiling heights vary from 6.5 ft to 8 ft.

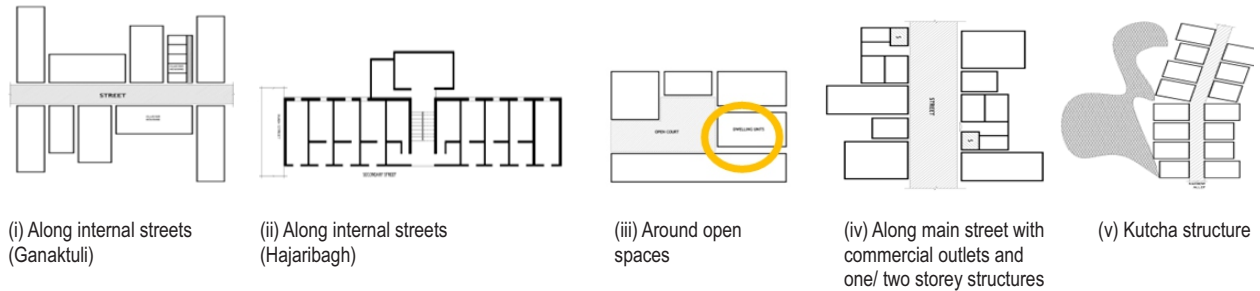
**Table 01:** Percentage of different types of dwelling units according to number of rooms, Source, author, survey, 2008

Types	Single-roomed dwelling	Two /more roomed dwelling	Dwelling units with single-room and additional space/s	Two or more roomed dwellings with additional space/s
Percentage in Ganaktuli	35	10	40	15
Percentage in Hajaribagh	65	15	20	-

## Organization of Domestic Spaces and Dwelling Units

Individual dwelling units are arranged in different patterns in these surveyed areas. These patterns include:

- i. Along internal streets in single storied cluster form (Hajaribagh) and four storied buildings (Ganaktuli)
- ii. Around an open space
- iii. Along the main street with commercial outlets and one/two storey multi-room structures
- iv. Rows of temporary kutcha structures.



**Figure 01:** Pattern of Arrangement of Dwelling Units (Source: author's survey, 2008)

Domestic space includes both the indoor main room and extended domestic realm following hierarchy of space. First, the indoor space of the dwelling unit for the family's private use (Sleeping, storing etc), second, areas of intimate contact like the door step (immediate extended realm) where children play and adults carry out different household and social activities and third, neighborhood covered or open meeting places (water collection area, religious/ community structures etc.).

The single/ multi- room dwelling units are inadequate in terms of occupancy; small floor space results in congestion and overcrowding (varied aged occupants, basic furniture, personal belongings, storage like, food, water, fuel, HBE raw and finished materials, kitchen utensils etc.) which not only limits easy space use and indoor circulation but also makes the space/s hygienically improper. Typically domestic space is a multi-activity, non-segmented single room area indicating user's life-style. For extended families, either space is separated with a physical partition or a separate room is allocated for an adult couple or an elderly member; there is no segmentation age-wise. Service areas (laundry, bathing, toilets) in the extended domestic realm are function-specific and segmented from the main dwelling units. They are sometimes gender-specific but often lack considerable privacy for women. Collective spaces like common circulation corridor, open courtyard etc. are neither gender-specific nor age- segregated loci and are an integral part of the woman's domain being the centre of household activities and leisure time during day time. Cooking, eating, sleeping, child rearing, sewing and gossiping and even home-based income-generating work, all take place in the courtyard. Open spaces existing around temples, shops or schools at times are the venue for women's socialization.

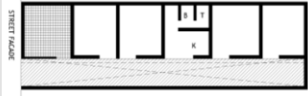


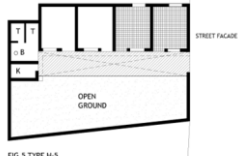
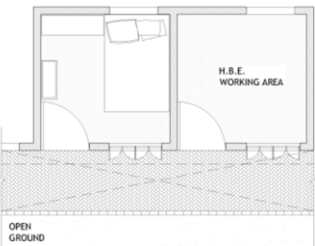


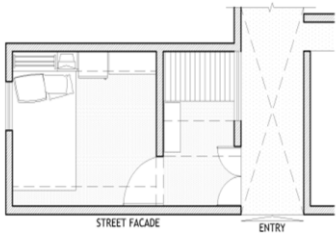

Thus, gender specific and non-gender specific areas, as well as function-restricted and multi-purpose areas, are characteristics of the domestic organization in the surveyed areas.

## Space Occupancy Pattern in Domestic Spaces

Space occupancy pattern and use of domestic spaces have been analyzed under three distinct approaches: Behavioral and Spatial interpretation as well as interrelations between them over time. Behavioral pattern of the residents in the surveyed areas reflects their homogeneity in financial status and rural based traditional culture; residents are more social, interact more and socialize in the prevailing common spaces. Spatial

organization regulated by cultural determinants includes factors like personal space, territoriality, privacy/boundary and socialization pattern. Although personal space is absent, space organization is affected by binary oppositions like enclosed-open, front-back, and public-private domain, male-female domain, clean-dirty and symbolic-secular which overlap as houses are mostly one-roomed. Occupants are forced to occupy space within the territory of intimate and personal distance in their rooms. Only when they come out to occupy collective spaces can they operate within the territory of social distance and sometimes in the extended realm within the public distance. Space constraints impose a change of use pattern with time and refer to many meanings at a specific time for a change of use over time, perceiving boundaries between spaces, the creation of ambiguous spaces due to spatial and temporal conditions, the transformation of space use etc. Thus, space occupancy is regulated by behavioral and spatial interpretation while space use is restricted spatially and temporally.

The domestic space organization can be understood from Figure: 2

Cluster and Unit Types	Plans	Images
<p><b>Single-roomed dwelling unit</b> (usually with circulation corridor and detached common service area)</p>  <p>FIG.1: TYPE H-1</p> <p>These single rooms used as multi-purpose space obviously cater to all domestic activities and storage of all kinds of household belongings.</p>	 <p>SINGLE ROOM DWELLING UNIT</p>	
<p><b>Two or more roomed dwelling unit</b> (with detached common service)</p>  <p>FIG.5 TYPE H-5</p> <p>Tenants with extended families or using extra room for HBE activities fall in this category.</p>	 <p>H.B.E. WORKING AREA</p> <p>OPEN GROUND</p>	
<p><b>Dwelling units with single-room and additional space/s</b> (with detached common service)</p>  <p>Fig.3: TYPE H-3</p> <p>An adjacent space at times is included with single room to be used for cooking, dining, storing, guest/second living room or to sub-let.</p>	 <p>STREET FACADE</p> <p>ENTRY</p>	



Cluster and Unit Types	Plans	Images
<p><b>Two or more roomed dwelling unit (with attached service area)</b></p> <p>Extended families usually live in this unit type having two or more living rooms and an adjacent space to be used for cooking, dining, storing or serving as a guest room. Mostly these are individual structures.</p>		

Figure 02: Dwelling types as per number of main living rooms with /without attached spaces and their Uses, Source, author, survey, 2008

## Women's Practical Gender Needs Addressing Physical Environment in the Surveyed Areas

Gender need concept arose from women's gender interests which women or men may develop due to their social positioning through gender attributes. Gender interests can be either strategic or practical. The needs women identify in their socially accepted roles are the practical gender needs not challenging the gender divisions of labor or women's subordinate position, but rising out of them. These practical needs are a response to immediately perceived necessity, identified within a specific context and often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions, such as water provision, health care and employment (Moser 1993, p.40). In this study, the notion of women's Practical Gender Needs is analyzed under the following aspects:

### Practical Gender Needs in Housing and Domestic Spaces

Survey reveals that women, as wives or mothers are primary and long time users of domestic space (inside and the extended realm). So, incorporating practical gender needs effectively is vital. Women's practical needs related to domestic space are: adequate indoor space in terms of natural ventilation, light, well arranged necessary furniture with ample circulation space, separate private space or storage for woman's personal use, overall indoor privacy, security, safety and overall cleanliness. These practical genders needs seem inadequate and not fulfilled as analyzed by the quality of physical spaces and factors like personal space, territoriality, privacy, boundary and pattern of socialization. Lack of proper safety and security is also very common. The indicators and their effect on women are discussed below:

**Physical Environment** – Semi-permanent dwelling units are often inadequate having degraded quality due to ill-maintenance. Some kutchra structures often result in exposure to adverse weather; rain water seeping into rooms through pores on roof/walls etc.

**Natural Ventilation and Lighting** – The typical one window of a single room mostly is kept closed to maintain indoor privacy and security resulting in inadequate ventilation especially at night. Women use the domestic spaces for a longer period of time and hence are affected health-wise with inadequate ventilation, damp and dark interior.

**Comfortable Use of Space and Hygiene** – Overcrowding, congestion and damp walls/floors result in presence of rats, insect etc. adding threat to diseases and personal hygiene. The bed is used for sleeping and also for many activities which the women need to manage giving extra labour. Clean spaces for executing religious rites/rituals are difficult to get. At times, cooking activities, washing clothes etc. are done inside hindering normal indoor activities and polluting cleanliness of space.

**Privacy** – Privacy includes concepts of personal space, territoriality and crowding with the common element of controlling of undesired interpersonal interactions and communication. Privacy is threatened not only by

outsiders or neighboring rooms (both visual and auditory) and also from own household members (for adult women). Here, women do not have any private space of their own. The only open door/window to allow ventilation and natural light threaten privacy for women. Damaged partitions (holed bamboo mat walls covered by newspapers, boards etc. ) between two attached rooms do create a visual barrier but fails to create the auditory one; any kind of loud speech or noise disturbs the immediate neighbors.

In the case of joint families living in two spaces of a room, privacy is threatened as members have to pass other's room while going out to use the toilet or for other reasons, especially at night. Thus, adult women feel awkward and embarrassed with such lack of privacy. There is no special arrangement for child-birth which mostly occurs at home. Most often mothers give birth to their babies inside rooms only by placing a mat on the floor and making a temporary, meager partition by a sari or bed sheet; densely placed units, with common walls or often lacking adequate visual/ auditory barriers seems not at all appropriate for child-birth in these single room dwelling units.

**Security and Safety** – Doors kept open to let light and air in threatens security. Broken electric meter box, exposed wire over wash areas, mud-ovens placed at doorways or inside rooms are threats against safety. Thus, women need to be extra careful as they remain at home mostly.

The quality of Extended Realm – Outdoor Circulation Corridor or open space is used by the neighborhood residents for various activities. Narrow, slippery corridors add threat to accidents and stampede during fire hazard.

### **Practical Gender Needs in Basic Services**

Provision of basic services for livelihood here remains highly inadequate or unsatisfactory. However, sharing kitchens, water collection areas and baths enhance social interaction although at times these inadequate facilities cause quarrels.

**Cooking** -Typical common kitchens (either semi-permanent or kutchha structures) often do not have adequate openings. Some kutchha structures are comparatively more open. In the absence of a designated kitchen space, women cook with individual mud-stoves outside in open spaces, in front of their rooms or if weather or situation does not permit, then inside the room. The kitchen floors are often wet, slippery and ill-maintained while ventilation or lighting is inadequate. Kitchen space too, at times, is not big enough for several women to work together or place enough burners to fulfill the demand.

**Water Collection** – Water taps, baths, and toilets are within the cluster territory in Hajaribagh. In Ganaktuli, the common water collection points are away from the dwellings and placed in a public zone. Fetching water from distant water sources early morning, long queue due to a shortage of supply, carrying heavy water pitchers/ pails through wet, slippery pathways create extra loads for women who solely do these.

**Washing/Bath/Toilets** – Bath spaces and toilets are often at considerable distances from the houses. Sometimes, facilities are not enough and mostly ill-maintained. Privacy for women is threatened in the open common bath spaces. Slippery and dirty floors, exposed wires over the bathing spaces etc. are a threat to the safety of the residents, especially in Ganaktuli.

**Child Care** – There is no provision of Community Child care. Mothers or elder siblings take care of younger ones in between their domestic chores, HBE activities and other responsibilities.

### **Practical Gender Needs in Employment**

Lack of adequate skills and training is a fundamental problem for formal employment in the surveyed areas. Also, male household heads expect women to remain as home-makers only. But present day economic demand has initiated women's home-based enterprise (HBE) an increasing trend. HBE among women is observed in Hajaribagh. Ganaktuli women earners are mostly employed in the City Corporation or earn by

other means. In Hajaribagh, domestic spaces, common corridors or open spaces are used during daytime for HBE activities. like thonga making, toffee wrapping, food vending, tailoring etc. Gender-biased division of labor promotes women for most of the unpaid work. They cannot invest in their actual needs, priorities or self-development and remains totally financially dependent. Despite their unrecognized experiential knowledge, women tend to reduce their self-confidence and do not agree to participate in household decision-making processes. This is often unfavorable for women as men, who take decisions in planning domestic spaces do not perceive domestic space use as women do. Lack of proper/extra space for HBE activities often creates problems for others. It also hinders effective output since works are abandoned when spaces are occupied by others. Thus, unfavorable housing consumes more work time, reduces work sharing and adds to health and security hazards, all of which reinforces women's subordination in all spheres. Inadequate multi-use spaces thus play important roles in women's lives not addressing their practical gender needs in the domestic arena. This has resulted in extra time and energy in their requiring as well as created scope to negotiate.

## **WOMEN'S NATURE AND EXTENT OF NEGOTIATION OF DOMESTIC SPACES**

To understand the nature and extent of negotiation of domestic spaces, it is important to understand how activities are distributed over time and space and how the interactions take place between different family members (male –female, female-female or between members of varying age and position). The physical, visual, and audible intersections between customarily self-contained domestic spaces may render negotiable social role of the woman member as a mother, housewife or sometimes as an earning member.

### **Spatial, Temporal and Social Negotiations in Domestic Spaces**

Dynamic and temporal perspectives are important factors to understand negotiation pattern, especially about when and for how long women interact with other household members. Negotiating space for different activities is also important as space constraints force users to use them on a temporal basis. Hence, this discussion is seen on the basis of space use for different activities at different times also taking into consideration social factors of living in a close-knit neighborhood. Women's negotiation of space, in other words, relates to their addressing practical gender needs.

### **Negotiating the Use of Space for Domestic Activities inside Dwellings**

Houses are used by generations; from old to young, mother to daughter, father to son and onwards. With the changes of users' lives and activities, domestic space modifications become necessary too, irrespective of how much change they really can afford to make. Parents with young children in one room negotiate with the circumstances in their limited space constraints. The same parents either rent (in Hajaribagh) an additional space or build one extra room (in Ganaktuli) when their son/s marry and bring the wife in the house. The new bride then negotiates to share available space with her in-laws and often has to accept the minimum facilities that she is provided with. Few areas of negotiation based on activity, interaction pattern and gender needs have been discussed below:

**Sleeping** – A proper and comfortable bed is required for sound sleep (prerequisite for good health). Most households have a bed (typically chowki) in varying sizes. In the case of larger families, members use the floor for sleeping usually on a 'pati'. Male members are given priority while at times older or woman household head gets the privilege to sleep on beds. But, privacy for sleeping is either meager or totally absent. Even, a young bride most often does not have private space with her husband unless it's time to sleep at night. Thus, some women are able to negotiate and have a better place and privacy for sleeping while others fail to do so.

**Eating** – There is no formally assigned space for eating. The floor and sometimes the bed is used for eating. Members dine together rarely; most often children and adults eat at different periods of the day while women tend to dine after others have had their meals. This grouping to dining is due to space constraints. So, women



negotiate with space constraints and gendered attitudes in sharing eating time and space.

**Storing** – Storage of personal belongings, kitchen utensils, fuel or material for HBE is an important space use next to sleeping here. Almost all the walls, space on and under the bed are used for storage. Typically women members need to take the role of managing within inadequate space to accommodate not only persons but also placing or storing objects and also maintain the cleanliness of spaces. At times they negotiate to add furniture to facilitate storage space. Moreover, they often give extra effort to protect /clean the rooms from rain water or drying wet beddings, clothes etc.

**Income-based Work** – A significant number of female members involved in earning activities go outside the home to work while others work in home-based enterprises. Whatever the situation is, these women have to juggle this labor with their other full-time household responsibilities as husbands seldom help in domestic chores.

**Indoor Leisure** – Men go out to spend leisure while women mostly remain inside and keep themselves busy with domestic chores not even realizing the need to spend personal time. Small or female children play inside or around the house. Male children often go to the streets to play and fool around while female children are seldom seen to play in the streets. Women here seldom care or rarely have any scope to explore their creative self. They do not negotiate this need and accept their lifestyle. When male members come back home, women interact and negotiate with them to use their limited spaces having little scope to have her own space and privacy. She is the one to sacrifice of having the choice to use her time and space in that limited space. Watching TV is a new trend that women enjoy after a long day's work.

**Child-Birth** – A woman giving birth to a child has to negotiate with others about how much privacy and space she can afford to get in that meager dwelling before and during her child-birth and afterward during her post-natal period. A pregnant woman cannot even expect to have a special space where she can give birth in a hygienic way.

**Guest Entertainment** – When any male guests are entertained inside, adult female member, even if tired or sick are expected to leave the room. Negotiations are required often in the case of HBE activities carried out inside; it becomes necessary for the women engaged in HBE to stop and wrap up their activities. The choice is then between incurring a loss of time and income prospect and using the space for some other purpose.

## **Negotiating the Use of Space for Domestic Activities inside Dwellings**

Use of extended domestic realm for commonly shared spaces (kitchen, wash/bath area) incurs social negotiation. Women sharing such common areas interact and negotiate with other household women or neighboring women, like who will use the spaces or when. Some areas of negotiation regarding sharing extended realm for service activities are as follows:

**Cooking** – Women (mostly in Hajaribagh) negotiate with neighboring women to use the common kitchen (with multiple-burners, each for the individual tenant). This solves the problem of cooking schedule but often is difficult for several people using the small cooking space. Working women, wake up at dawn, cook for her family, do other household chores before going out to work. In the case of small cooking space, often an attached space or even the dwelling room is used for cooking. Thus, a woman negotiates and shares the inconveniences of sharing a small kitchen.

**Bathing and Sanitation** – Women share and negotiate use of common bathing space and toilets with both the male and female neighbors. Separate baths and toilets of the clusters are a better option in terms of privacy. But some common bathing spaces not having adequate visual barrier are vulnerable in terms of privacy, safety, health, hygiene and comfort since women of all ages share those with males. Women have an added responsibility to clean these bathing/toilet spaces. Thus, they are unable to negotiate and provide for themselves a good bathing/ toilet space.

**Water Collection** – A woman starts her life very early in the morning to stand in the queue for collecting water. In Ganaktuli most women have to walk down some hundred feet to collect water (supplied twice a day) or use the toilet. In Hajaribagh although water supply has no definite time but there is a shortage of supply. Thus negotiation with neighboring women takes place and often becomes an extra suffering.

### Negotiating Space Use for Home-based Activities:

The survey findings show that HBE is the main income source (Hajaribagh) for most of the earning women. At times male members give a hand to HBE activities when free and at home. For HBE activities, women use the main living room, adjacent spaces, common spaces (circulation corridor, courtyard etc). The raw materials and finished products are kept inside the room creating over-crowding of belongings. In cases, where enterprises operate indoors, the rooms naturally are not being used exclusively for HBE; often, they are forced to stop HBE activities inside rooms to give space to guests or sick family members requiring rest. Some women even continue their HBE activities at night, sacrificing their leisure time. Thus they negotiate with time, space and other household members to carry on income-based works.

There is also a significant gender division in the HBE run by men and those run by women. Like, small-scale tailoring, making things, wrapping toffees, preparation of food items (Pickles, roasted nuts, pan cakes etc.) are mostly done by women. Men mostly earn from block-printing, shoe making, tailoring shop, small-scale general stores etc.

Regarding negotiation, as most of these enterprises involve household women, their manual labor not associating with any kind of unhygienic outcome, noisy activities or forming dirt, hence there are no objections from anyone. However, residents/neighbors get disturbed when HBE activities occupy the only circulation corridor. Also, flies gather around the exposed toffees /other food items to create an unhealthy situation. Despite all inconveniences, household members encourage HBE while landlords or neighbors are tolerant towards HBE workers unless the activities are too disturbing or hazardous as they accept HBE one of the ways to improve their financial struggle. Women involved in HBE activities negotiate socially too; Young mothers at times negotiate with older women of the family (mother /mother-in-law) or others to take care of their babies / young children while they work. Elderly women, young girls or girl- child also extend support in HBE activities sometimes. Thus, women of different age group use the same space for HBE, interact more and share things together creating a better bondage between them.

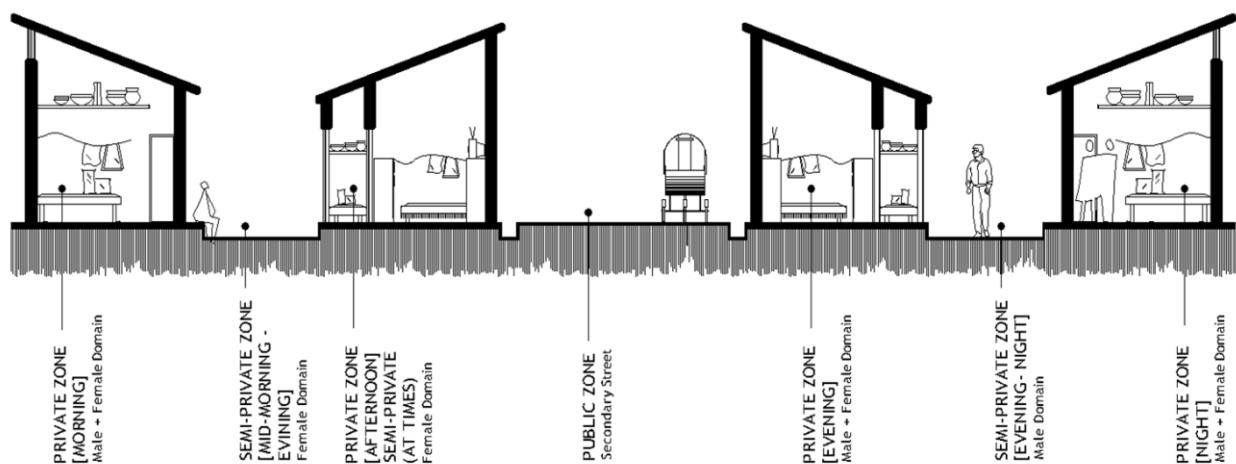


Figure 03: Relationship between domains considering spatial-temporal interpretation

**Negotiating Temporal Use of Space** – Domestic space, both indoor and extended is used differently at different times for varied purposes; these require temporal negotiation between the space users. In Hajaribagh, average male members spend about 10-12 hours outside the home, few women members working outside (very rare) do not stay out more than 6 to 8 hours a day. Most women involved with HBE activities work in between their home chores. Usually, during early mornings, then mid-mornings and the evenings, women take turns to work in kitchens. Those involved with HBE use their time in between cooking hours to do the HBE activities. Men involved in HBE activities use the whole day (about 10-12 hours) with meal breaks and at times work beyond normal working hours. In Ganaktuli, male and female household members working for the City Corporation usually have work shifts. They stay out of home for 4 to 8 hours per day depending on duties. Some male has extra income from private clients while women usually stay at home after formal work to do their domestic chores. During weekends, men are usually seen in and around the house, passing leisure time while women continue giving time to household matters. At times, guests are entertained inside the only room making it difficult for the adult women to work and move around. The common semi-public domestic realm which is used for regular domestic chores and circulation is sometimes used for a social gathering (wedding ceremony, religious rituals etc.); negotiation takes place with neighbors taking part in these programs.

## **Negotiation and Gender Needs**

Gender roles and negotiation pattern often is related to an individual's economic independence. Survey reveals that some women members play a significant role in earning an additional income for the family. Being either the household head or joint-decision maker with the male counterpart, women have crossed the traditional boundaries of gender roles and try to fulfill their gender needs to an extent. Although decisions to improve living conditions often depend on the family's main bread-winner, but most often aspirations are from women home-makers who motivate and negotiate with their male counterparts to do so.

Survey findings reveal that day-to-day routine activities with the almost constant interactions give structure and form a similar pattern except for a major change in life. The typical nuclear family consisting of parents and children, at few instances has a temporary guest (mother-in-law, siblings etc.) The extended families usually include the comparatively elderly household head with a spouse, son, and daughter-in-law, other children etc. Thus, inside a house, interaction pattern or negotiation revolves around these people and depends on the extent of their relationship and household position. Women's gender needs and negotiation pattern changes with the phases of life cycle. Thus, a girl child, an unmarried girl, a new bride, a new mother, a mid-aged woman, a mother-in-law or an old woman (dependent/independent) will perform in a different set of activities and will have a difference in their negotiation pattern. In the surveyed areas, women face a double or even triple burden of productive and reproductive work putting in longer hours than men. Women maintaining cooking, cleaning and child care occupy the private and semi-private domains of domestic spaces, while men dominate the public arena. Both men and women use the common spaces around their houses periodically according to regular routine chores, occasional needs or during festivals/occasions like Eid, Puja, marriage etc. integrating their spaces to carry out certain goals and use them as a group. Negotiations thus, between women and men are often dynamic mainly depending on the understanding level. At times, negotiation also happens when a male considers the woman counterpart eligible to think, decide or act with intelligence. Although, the survey findings revealed a few instances where women household heads were capable of taking decisions but mostly the typical role of the woman are not negotiable.

## **CONCLUSION**

The objective of this research is to identify women's negotiation of domestic spaces investigating the roles of the physical environment on their Practical Gender Needs. Findings reveal that women's Practical Gender Needs in the surveyed areas regarding the physical quality of dwelling units, surrounding environment and

services are met inadequately. Unplanned, haphazard growth of densely placed dwelling units with the pressure of increasing residents results in a lack of climatic comfort, hygiene, privacy, safety, and security as well as basic service facilities. Lack of designated HBE space or less time and scope for self or skill development has resulted in inadequate fulfillment of women's gender needs in employment. Due to lack of education, financial position and aspirations to enhance individual creativity, skill and identity, women most often are not motivated to explore individual desires. They accept their non-fulfillment of gender needs and desires as mere fate. Thus, women's habitual routines performed mostly in the domestic realm often do not comply with the fulfillment of their gender needs or residential satisfaction and remains nonnegotiable.

Appropriate domestic space organization takes a central role in the negotiation of women's social relations. Women's negotiation of domestic spaces relates to activities distributed over time and space as well as interactions between family members. Gender ascribed roles of man and woman result in their different needs and aspirations. So, negotiation is needed to fulfill their interests, be it for similar objective or for individual goals. Since low-income household women typically have to adjust, interact and negotiate in a multi-purpose single space, hence these are zoned spatially and temporally.

In general, housewives abide by the desires of male household head regarding use or improvement of their domestic spaces. Women's practical gender needs are not met adequately in housings designed for males. Women also are not aware of their individual needs and accept all they lack as mere fate. This unawareness and lack of negotiation result in long-term dissatisfaction or frustration. In the extended domestic realm, women interact on the community level with other men and women. For women, shared areas become a convenient social space where they can share things, talk and laugh even while working. However, women often face privacy, security and safety problems which prove that they still fail to negotiate with the male owners to ensure a certain level of basic gender needs in these semi-public spaces. Earning women often gain an importance and can share in decision making (depends on the attitude of the male counterpart). Women empowerment in the domestic level thus incurs better negotiation. Thus, with similar group orientation having more or less the same origin, characteristics and socio-economic background there is a presence of collective social interaction and negotiation among the neighbors, their kin and old friends in the surveyed areas; but due to lack of awareness of gender equality concept, issues regarding gender needs still need to be addressed and improved.

Improvement of the physical environment both in the domestic realm and basic service areas, progressive interior arrangement, structural adjustments and improvements in the household equipment are possible as a consequence of the ability to negotiate with the decision makers (family members or owners). These issues and observations can be further analyzed and researched for effective outcomes to be implemented in practice and initiate spaces and environment where women may be able to negotiate and fulfill practical gender needs in a better way.

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