# Schwerpunkt

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# Gender mainstreaming planning cultures: Why ‘engendering planning’ needs critical feminist theory

Zusammenfassung

Gender-Mainstreaming-Planung braucht kritische feministische Ansätze

Ziel des Beitrags ist eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Umsetzung von Gender Mainstreaming in der Planungspraxis. Im Fokus stehen die Fragen, inwieweit Rollen und Machtverhältnisse durch Planungsprozesse und -interventionen verändert werden können und welchen Beitrag Planungsleitbilder wie die „Stadt der kurzen Wege“ in unterschiedlichen Kontexten leisten können. Neben der Auswertung von Gender-Mainstreaming-Planungshandbüchern und der Gegenüberstellung der Implementierung von GM in EU-Staaten nutzen die Autorinnen eine vergleichende Analyse von kontextspezifischen Interpretationen des Planungsleitbilds „Stadt der kurzen Wege“. Dieses Leitbild wurde in Planungsdokumenten systematisch aufgenommen und integriert mehrere Genderthemen. Die Fallbeispiele Linz und Salzburg zeigen, dass sich die „Stadt der kurzen Wege“, flankiert durch Verordnungen, als strategisches Instrument eignet, um Gender in der räumlichen Planung auf die Agenda zu setzen. Allerdings muss dieses Leitbild aktualisiert und auf stadtregionale und digitale Raum-Zeit-Wege-Muster und Verflechtungen ausgeweitet werden. Ohne kritische Hinterfragung der Planungsgrundlagen, Prozesse und Entscheidungen hinsichtlich Genderstereotypen und Ungleichgewichten führt gendered planning nicht zu Gleichstellung.

*Schlüsselwörter*
Europäische Planungskulturen, Gender-Mainstreaming-Praxis, Stadt der kurzen Wege, Alltagsgerechte Regionen

Summary

This contribution looks at strategies for gender mainstreaming (GM) in planning practice applying gender/diversity design criteria. It offers a critical discussion of the ‘city of proximity’ (CoP) as a guiding principle for gender-aware planning. Examples of guidelines and handbooks from different planning cultures show that the CoP is a widely adopted model, not only in gender mainstreaming, however it is seldom associated with its feminist origin. As planning professionals and researchers, we consider the role of urban and regional planning to change power relations and gendered norms. Taking two Austrian cities as examples, we illustrate the impact of GM on planning practice, revealing both the strength of the legislative framework and the limitations of Leitbilder that unintentionally reproduce gender stereotypes. The paper concludes with suggestions to move beyond the stage of pilot projects and handbooks, particularly in two fields: first, by looking at the attitudes and competences of professionals, and second, by dissociating the city of proximity from neighbourhoods while implementing gender criteria at a larger scale, e.g. in regional development plans.

*Keywords*
planning cultures, gender mainstreaming, city of proximity, everyday/care-adjusted regions

## 1 Introduction

With the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam, Gender Mainstreaming (GM) became mandatory for EU member states in all policy fields. GM entered planning, urban and regional planning policies in the 1990s, in other words late compared to other fields. Gender is back on the planning agenda, and this thematic issue as well as other recent publications indicate that planning is also back on the feminist agenda. At the political level, awareness has grown that sustainability goals – from water supply to urban renewal – cannot be achieved without taking gender equality into account; a view expressed amongst others in the UN Habitat Sustainable Development Goals SDG 2030 and the consequent Urban Agenda adopted by the EU member states.[1]

A body of knowledge from empirical studies and experiments concerning gender and planning with varying strategies in different planning cultures is available. Nonetheless, so far, it is unclear how the experiences and lessons from research and fieldwork enter and transform mainstream spatial planning. The common premise of 'engendering' (Roberts 2018) or 'gender mainstreaming' (Zibell/Damyanovic/Sturm 2019) strategies is the desire to change power relations and achieve gender equality through planning. However, GM is facing a dilemma which Roberts describes as the difference between *women-centered* and *gender-sensitive* approaches:

> "[An] approach to gender-sensitive urban design differs from a woman-centered approach. Taking gender as a guiding concept avoids the essentialism implicit in seeing women and men as homogenous categories, where women are always oppressed and victimized." (Roberts 2018: 122)

The reconciliation of waged work and family life is at the top of the gender mainstreaming agenda[2] and builds on a safe and accessible city with freedom to move for all genders, ages and ethnicities (Wankiewicz 2012, 2016). Reconciliation as a guiding model for planning helps to prioritize planning interventions which facilitate the everyday routines of caregivers, spatially expressed in the model of a 'city of proximity' (CoP). The CoP is seen as creating opportunities for all genders by facilitating a combination of (unwaged) care work and waged work. Since the 1960s, it has been widely recognised as an environment worth living in, and has re-appeared under different names. Its logic is that short distances between work, care and home facilitate access to the labour market, especially for women who still do most of the care work. By contrast, the CoP may enhance gender imbalances by stereotyping women as caregivers and housewives and neglecting wider access to workplaces, culture and education while ignoring other structural problems such as violence and harassment.

This contribution argues that if the aim is to make planning a vehicle for gender equality (recognising the manifold possible conceptualisations of gender equality), we need to address planning practices by asking: How can we establish 'engendering' or 'gender mainstreaming' spatial development? As planning professionals and re-

1 Retrieved 15 November 2019 from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/; https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/node/1829; https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/themen/new-urban-agenda-werkzeugkasten-fuer-moderne.

2 Retrieved 15 November 2019 from https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming.