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Occasional Paper

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A New Model Project of Experimental Housing and Ur-
ban Planning (ExWoSt)**

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Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development – A New Model Project of Experimental Housing and Urban Planning (ExWoSt)

“Our aim is that cities offer an attractive living space to both, men and women alike,” Tilo Braune, the undersecretary of the Federal Department of Traffic, Building and Housing, stated in his introduction to the research field ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development’. With these words, gender has become more of an issue in mainstream urban development.

This is not a matter of chance. Gender mainstreaming (GM), which has been part of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (GGO) since 2000, aims to integrate the perspective of gender equality in all the political fields and activities. That means that the various living conditions as well as the needs of women and men need to be taken into consideration. In order to facilitate the difficult path of putting this into practice, the model project ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development’ was started early this year. In accordance with the principle of learning by doing, experimental research is directly connected to its practical application (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Information on the research project

ExWoSt research field „Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development“

Public client: Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing (BMVBW), as represented by the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR)

Contract holder: The German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) in cooperation with the Agency for Integrated Planning Berlin (BiP) and the On-Site Planning Group (Bremen)

People in charge: Dr. Stephanie Bock, Ulrike Meyer, Franciska Frölich (Difu), Uta Bauer (BiP Berlin), Heike Wohltmann (On-Site Planning Group)

Working period: 2003 – 2005

Terms of reference:

In the ExWoSt research field ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development’ transferable procedures are to be developed that enable the communities to actually implement the common equal opportunities objective within everyday administrative planning. The background is that even though there are ‘model projects’ on this issue, the consideration of the equality perspective as a routine task for the administration has not yet been systematically established.

Further information: www.exwost.de

The project has already been part of the research programme 'experimental housing and urban planning' of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing (BMVBW), which the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) is in charge of. Worth mention is the preparatory work carried out since the early 1990s that documents the differing demands of women and men for spatial structures under the heading 'women and spatial planning'. In addition, the model project is based on two actual projects:

- Expertise of the BBR on the issue 'Gender Mainstreaming and Urban Development Policy'. It contains the research and evaluation of international, national, and municipal approaches to the implementation of the gender equality principle in the political field of 'urban development' and also includes the development of first draft approaches to implementation.
- Experts' convention on 'Gender Mainstreaming and Urban Development Policy' of the BMVBW, BBR, and the German Städtetag (see BBR 2003).

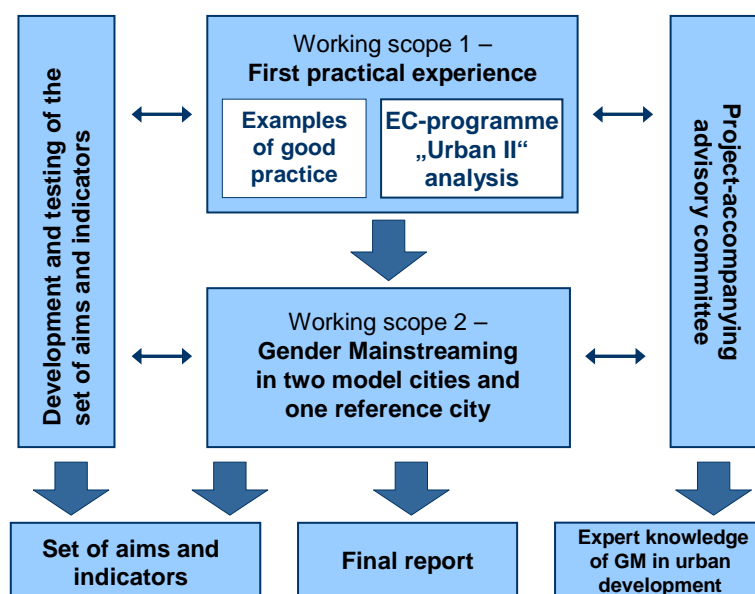
Based on this preparatory work, the new model project now focuses on the actual local practice in selected model cities. It is quite clear that GM can become the trademark of high quality urban development. The quality of urban development and the built environment can be improved by implementing straight concepts, understandable and checkable planning decisions, a comprehensive alignment of interests, and improved procedures for user participation. If the cities take up GM and make use of the manifold knowledge of women and men and their approaches when designing the cities, they will be able to meet the requirements of the increasingly heterogeneous society. Failures in planning and need for improvement could be prevented if gender questions were taken into consideration during the early stages of the planning process.

In order to show the importance of GM, the aspect "equal opportunities" has lately been included into the Federal Building Act. It is stated in Article 1, Paragraph 6 No. 3, "... (6) When designing the building plans, the following is to be considered: ...3. the social and cultural needs of the people, in particular those of families, the young, the elderly, and disabled people, the various effects on women and men as well as the concerns of education and sports, leisure, and recreation..." In addition to the already existing facts of the case that are subject to consideration, the principle of gender mainstreaming thereby gains further significance.

However, the systematic implementation of GM as a cross-sectional task and a predominantly top-down controlled process is still in its infancy, despite the resolutions passed by the EC and the federal government (see gendermainstreaming.net). The result of an opinion poll done by the German Städtetag proved this (see Holland-Letz 2003). The communities that took part in the survey were familiar with the strategies of GM, but barely half of them implement them in their city administration. So far, it can be assumed that GM is only partly integrated in local

administrative activities. This can be seen in the numerous pilot projects and individual projects that have been implemented in urban development projects during the past 15 years mainly in West German towns, at first in accordance with the equality perspective and currently incorporating the gender issue. At this point, there seem to be enough model projects. However, lasting transfer and generalization is still missing, as is the steady transformation of the experience gained (see Gröger, Zibell 2004). This is exactly where the research project sets in (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Project design ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development’



Working scope 1: Evaluation of the existing experience

The first working scope aims to identify the supportive or hindering factors in the implementation of equality criteria. Therefore, the presentation of the 'good examples' does not only include a descriptive review of the local projects in practice, but also focuses on their systematic evaluation in terms of success or hindrance factors. That way it becomes obvious that the successful incorporation of equality-political aspects in urban planning projects is based on the interplay of several factors. Committed on-site protagonists take on a key role, without whose endurance and perseverance things would be accomplished much less efficiently. Necessary knowledge of the subject matter as well as gender knowledge is also important, which usually requires respective further training and a sound data basis, i.e. gender-specifically collected and evaluated data. The need for action can only become evident and explainable when the prevailing differences in the living realities are documented. A further prerequisite is the incorporation of the issue at the top of the administration and in

politics. Without this kind of back-up the committed protagonists remain isolated and run the risk of being ignored.

In this context, the analysis of the 'Urban II' EC-programme is particularly interesting since this is where, for the first time, the cross-sectional aim of 'equal opportunities' is to be implemented in every field of action (economic affairs, social affairs, urban development) of the programme. Among the twelve participating German towns Leipzig and Bremerhaven had been selected for a more detailed examination. Possible impulse effects on task awareness in other urban planning programmes, such as 'Urban Restructuring in East Germany' and 'Socially Integrative City' are examined as well as the question of how the cities of Leipzig and Bremerhaven actually implement the strategy of GM in their planning measures.

As matters stand at the moment the collection of 'good examples' as well as the analysis of 'Urban II' shows that the communities are facing severe theoretical and methodological uncertainties when implementing GM. Nonetheless, there are some positive first approaches. The clear-cut phrasing of GM objectives in the EC structure programme can be regarded as a major impetus. It forces all the participants to deal with the issue, it safeguards the on-site protagonists during the implementation, and has also initiated an extensive 'learning process' in Leipzig and Bremerhaven. Additionally, it became obvious that the concrete implementation of GM in urban planning issues was a lot less skilled than in the people-related measures in the areas of 'economic affairs', e.g. promoting women in qualifying measures, and 'social affairs', e.g. counseling opportunities for single parents. The common statement "urban planning measures are in and of themselves gender-neutral" clearly points out the fact that the people in charge are not yet fully aware of the influence that the architectural structures and opportunities offered indirectly have on everyday demands. Specific guidelines for the 'programme design' are essential, such as systematically breaking down the cross-sectional aim into the individual fields of action.

Working scope 2: Model implementation of GM

One of the central elements of the research project is to develop common strategies to integrate and control GM in everyday procedures of the planning administration. Three objectives are part of the scientific counseling and accompaniment in the model cities Dessau and Pulheim:

1. The model implementation and controlling of a GM process in local planning activities as well as the derivation and further development of feasible procedure steps,
2. The systematic transfer of GM process knowledge to urban development, planning, and building,

3. The application, modification, and further development of a set of aims and indicators 'GM in Urban Development'.

Dessau and Pulheim: two 'ordinary' model cities

The two model cities not only represent contrary basic conditions but also diverging future development prospects. By choosing these two cities the possible range of implementation of GM in urban development was to be examined (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Structural facts about Dessau and Pulheim

Dessau	Pulheim
78,000 inhabitants	53,000 inhabitants
Saxony-Anhalt	North-Rhine Westphalia
Decreasing	Growing
	City council resolution on GM (2002)
City council resolution on the pilot project in 2004	City council resolution on the pilot project in 2004
Pilot project: Topic city redevelopment: – B-plan proceedings – informal structure planning – participation	Pilot project: Topic open space planning: – draft – implementation planning – participation

The city of Dessau intends to qualify recent plans and city redevelopment tasks. For this, theoretical objectives and criteria have to be developed in order to guarantee that equal opportunities are taken into consideration in the process of city redevelopment. On the other hand, procedures are to be developed that enable the systematic integration of equal opportunities in all the future urban planning activities, while at the same time facing the hard general conditions of the municipal personnel and economic plight. City redevelopment has to be carried out according to a double strategy, that is, upgrading the inner city quarters and the reinstatement of sites that are not marketable anymore. That is why two pilot projects have been selected, the project 'Flösnergasse' representing the formal planning procedure (zoning plan) and the 'Heidestraße Nord' the informal planning procedure (structure planning). Due to highly negative movement balances especially of young women, success in urban upgrading measures within the scope of city redevelopment will also depend on how the residential area demanded by the various target groups can be created as well as neighborhood structures that are tolerable in the long run. In order to do so, analyses of the needs and demands on the living environment, among other things, must be detailed and adjusted to each target group.

In its pilot project the city of Pulheim is working on the recent redesigning of the public gardens. At the moment the green space is hardly used because the gardens are in an undefined state and thus do not attract visitors or offer attractive accessibility. The goal in remodeling the gardens is to increase their recreational qualities as well as the acquisition opportunities and accessibility. By taking the gender aspects into consideration, the public gardens should become a recreational spot for both women and men at various stages of life with differing role designs. The planning procedure is accompanied by extensive participation of the public. Again, the prerequisite is a detailed analysis of the different life situations of the various sections of the population and their demands on the built city surroundings in order to account for them in planning, shaping and implementation as well as in the planning and participation procedures.

Performance check and 'learning process'

What can other communities learn from the experience gained in the model cities? How can it be avoided that simply the collection of local 'model projects' has been completed? By initiating the pilot projects, extended activities in the communities should be developed and supported so that GM becomes a consistent administrative strategy. For that, a systematic control model is being developed and tested in the research project, starting with a detailed agreement on the objectives and quality. In the model cities the agreement was democratically legitimized in accordance with the decisions of the city councils. The Federation and the communities officially signed the agreement at the opening events in the model cities in July 2004. A transferable set of aims and indicators, which integrate the results of the individual research components, will be developed parallel to the work in the model cities. Once again, its practicality will be tested in the model cities.

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