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JUST TRANSITION WEBINAR REPORT



Gender mainstreaming done right!

**GENDER EQUITY COMES IN...
SMALL PACKAGES?**

Report by:

Isobel Duxfield
Laura Babío
Linda Gustaffson
Rita Jacinto
Remke Palsma

Design by:

Alessia Giorgiutti



WHY DO WE SAY: SMCs rock gender mainstreaming?

Recognising, understanding, and designing for gendered mobility needs are complex tasks that require:



DATA



RESOURCES



POLITICAL WILL



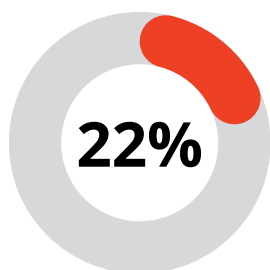
CROSS- DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

From Vienna and Umeå's redesign of public space to Transport for London's 'Report it to stop it', Safe.Brussels' 'Join the Fam', and Manchester's 'Is this Okay' campaigns, there has been a range of initiatives to identify and challenge the ways mobility ignores — and indeed further marginalises — women.

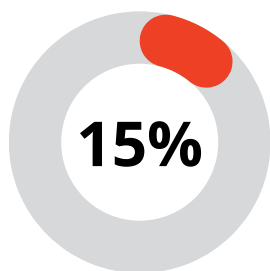
While these actions in European capitals capture headlines, it is in fact in our **small and medium-sized cities (SMCs)** where some of the most pioneering strategies are to be found. These are often cities using resources in innovative ways, creating new avenues for collaboration, and pushing beyond the "vulnerable user" paradigm to support women as transport users, and decision-makers.

Our SMCs are proving small, but mighty! Exploring research from cities of the Northern Netherlands and insights from projects on the ground in Umeå, POLIS' Just Transition Webinar 'Gender mainstreaming done right!' looked at what our smaller cities may be able to teach others in the field about the future of gender mainstreaming in urban mobility.





**WOMEN WHO WORK IN THE
TRANSPORT SECTORS**



**EUROPEAN CAPITALS
LED BY WOMEN MAYORS**

WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The Council of Europe defines gender mainstreaming as an approach to policy-making that takes into account both women's and men's interests and concerns. The concept of gender mainstreaming was first introduced at the 1985 Nairobi World Conference on Women. It is about finding the inherent differences between men and women through data collection and taking them into account when creating, implementing and evaluating policies, as to foster gender equality.

For urban mobility, this means comprehensively taking into account gendered travel patterns, experiences of safety and security, vehicle design, and other aspects which shape transport choices and experiences for women, while understanding their relationship with other axes of identity.

While many definitions do not include the importance of understanding gender fluidity, this aspect emerged as key in this webinar — there is clearly much work to be done here!

THE STORY SO FAR: Improvement... but a long way to go

The transport sector has seen a growing focus on gendered mobility patterns and bolder efforts to combat inequity at the international, national, local, and organisational levels. The European Commission's Women in Transport platform, Ambassador for Diversity initiative, and European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life have placed gender higher than ever on the international stage, while cities and operators such as EMT Madrid, SBB, London Councils and Transport for London have radically reorientated their policies and practices to ensure gender perspectives are integrated into services and operations, and a far greater diversity of voices are driving decision making.

Nonetheless, there is no room for complacency. With copious research still identifying gender-based violence as a regular experience on public transport, women still accounting for just 20% of the transport sector, and under a quarter of European capitals led by women mayors, extensive work is still required.

Mobility is a conduit to economic and political participation, a key tool to cementing equal access to employment, education and healthcare. With global gender equality figures revealing alarming stagnation in progress towards gender equity across these indicators- mobility must step up to the plate.

"SMCs can show us how we can better understand how to prioritise service provision, and deploy resources."

"Small and medium-sized cities play a very important role in designing and implementing gender-equal mobility, not just in the city, but in surrounding regions"

Remke Palsma



NORTHERN NETHERLANDS STRIKES OUT!

SMCs in Northern Netherlands dive into the main obstacles for gender mainstreaming in their cities

Designing, developing, and delivering gender-sensitive infrastructure requires a deliberative approach; so do understanding the key issues at play, identifying existing deficiencies, and determining the immediate and longer-term actions available.

This is of course easier said than done; nonetheless, substantial, evidence-based research has proven critical for instigating durable changes. This is visible across the transport sector, where partnerships between academics and practitioners have been instrumental — Westminster's Active Travel Academy and the women's mentoring scheme, Alta are both clear examples of where cross-disciplinary research-led agendas have paid off.

This has been also the approach taken by the Cities of the Northern Netherlands and the Groene Metropoolregio Arnhem Nijmegen, that, together, commissioned research into the main obstacles for gender mainstreaming in their cities and the tailored solutions which may be on hand.

"This research sought to assist both entities by supporting them in determining more effective and impactful infrastructure where needs from both men and women are being considered. It also examined the progress in other cities across Europe, and what smaller cities could draw from these," said Remke Palsma, EU Project Advisor, Cities Northern Netherlands, and co-chair of POLIS' SMC Platform.

"Gender mainstreaming is an important approach to looking at all citizens' needs; it is also an approach which ensures better planning," said Psalma.

"This is still a male-dominated sector, and cities are — often unintentionally — designed by men, for men."



THE RESEARCH ASKED:

1 HOW CAN GENDER EQUALITY IN INFRASTRUCTURE BE IMPROVED?

2 WHICH EUROPEAN INSTRUMENTS OR TOOLS CAN BE USED TO FOSTER GENDER SENSITIVITY IN URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE?

3 TO WHAT EXTENT CAN IMPROVING URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCE FEELINGS OF SAFETY?

Findings from interviews and surveys in Assen, Arnhem, Emmen, Groningen, Leeuwarden, and Nijmegen, revealed a clear lack of facilities and services for women, with urban planning routinely overlooking gendered travel patterns and associated requirements.

Inadequate lighting and walking infrastructure saw a huge drop in women's feelings of safety at nighttime — in Emmen, Assen, Arnhem & Nijmegen, this was half that of men.

The research also found that lack of access to public restroom facilities significantly affects peoples' ability or willingness to use public space.

Lastly, it also found that establishing gender training in an organisation is critical for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming.



PUTTING GENDER EQUITY AT THE HEART OF URBAN PLANNING

Gender training has proved successful in Umeå, Sweden, a city that sees gender mainstreaming as an **integrated part of the municipality's organisation and daily management**. Umeå's approach allowed it to become a city for women by:



DESIGNING BETTER SPACES

New pedestrian and cycling spaces have been designed, as well as a broader and a better-illuminated **station tunnel** with additional entrances



COMMITTING PERMANENTLY

In 1994, the city set up a permanent **Gender Equality Committee (JUSK)** — it also appointed a permanent **Gender Equality Officer**



CREATING TARGETED CAMPAIGNS

Men travel less-sustainably than women, which means that the city had to develop **ad hoc campaigns** to shift transit choices and travel behaviours



SHIFTING MOBILITY PLANNING

Women often **bike in the morning** to fulfill their caretaking role: this called for a change in snow-clearing schedules to address cycle lanes first and not roads

As said by Gustaffson, Umeå's Gender Equality Officer, the city's case showed how mobility is a means to many other aspects of local policy — women are a key user group that needs to be accounted for, so that everyone may benefit from a safer and more inclusive urban space.

"Gender mainstreaming has been a key approach in understanding which actions we need to prioritise, and which actions will support both women and men in making more sustainable choices"

Linda Gustaffson

NEVER WALK ALONE:

International action and local cooperation

Gender mainstreaming action demands coordination between national and international policy agendas and local decision-making.

Cities are undoubtedly critical in cementing action on the ground, and particularly smaller cities have proved incredibly effective in taking swift and targeted action on many aspects of sustainable urban mobility — it is no coincidence that many SMCs have been selected for the EU's Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission.

However, this is not justification for a 'hands-off' approach from international actions, rather financial and political support from bodies including the European Commission, European Investment Bank, URBACT network, and others are essential for kick-starting and scaling up initiatives, aligning cities with global governance regimes.

Faced with limited resources, SMCs have proved particularly adept at finding innovative ways to maximise resources and foster multi-level collaboration — and both speakers had many lessons for others here.

The European Commission's work programme for 2021 and 2022 lays out the role of feminism in the transition to sustainable urban mobility, stating as one of its main objectives as: "Promoting gender equality theoretically and practically through policy recommendations, tools, and solutions for civil society organizations and other stakeholders". As a result, there is an expanding pool of dedicated financial and associated resources available for cities and regions to pursue gender-equal mobility strategies.

As such, the Cities of Northern Netherlands' research explores possible and/or useful programmes and funding opportunities for advancing gender mainstreaming agendas. For example, the Multi-Annual Funding Framework for 2021-2027 is underway with 1.074 trillion EUR funding, which promises a tangible impact on equality if gender mainstreaming tools are well integrated.

Umeå, too — as lead partner in the Gendered Landscape network organised by URBACT, an EU-funded program — drew on international support. URBACT has built on the 2019 Gender Equal Cities initiative by partnering with institutions such as the Committee of The Regions and the Joint Research Council to promote ideas and encourage debate.

"Gender equality has a place in the urban planning of our city: we are a growing city, and there is a growing need to shape the city for everyone," said Gustafsson.





START BOTTOM-UP... TO AVOID GOING TITS-UP!

While support from above has been instrumental in Umeå and Northern Netherlands' successes, their collaboration with local grassroots organisations has secured the targeted action required for understanding the intersectional needs of their inhabitants.

"Asking questions is about 80% of my workday!" said Gustafsson, "We need to really understand whom we are planning for."



Engagement with local stakeholders to understand intersectional mobility demands and needs is a widely discussed element of gender-sensitive planning. Yet, the approaches taken by SMCs provide a blueprint for practitioners seeking more flexible and responsive design and implementation processes.

This approach has been at the core of Umeå's 'Gendered Landscape' approach, which highlights power structures in the city to achieve an integrated understanding of inclusion, gender equality, and sustainable urban development.

"This has given us a lot of 'injections' into the processes, from angles we may not have considered ourselves," said Gustafsson.

For example, the municipality collaborated with migrant representative groups to transform the ways public forums are arranged to allow and encourage a diversity of inhabitants to participate.



"We have a method which we work with, called the 'Gendered Landscape', where we try to highlight that the city is an arena for power structures — something that requires understanding the context of the city and the history behind changes, having a view of how inequality takes place in different ways," said Gustafsson.

"We talk about gender as a method — what are the actions we need to take and processes that need to happen. This approach recognises that we use the city based on a range of needs — not just gender."

Groningen, too, provides support to local universities and hospitality to help identify violence and how to prevent such instances.

Intersectionality:

To take an intersectional approach to gender mainstreaming denotes the comprehension of a multiplicity of nuanced experiences and power relationships beyond an essentialist man-woman binary.

Gendered experiences are shaped by a range of other factors including sexuality, (dis)ability, race, age, socio-economic status, and more. Thinking intersectionally about urban mobility means avoiding treating "women" as a uniform or singular "vulnerable user group". It means acknowledging that women are impacted by transport infrastructure and services in varying ways, with marginalisation felt in different ways in different circumstances — often at different points across an individual's life.

This is not necessarily a "layering" of oppression, but rather the ways multiple axes of identity unite to forge an individual lived experience — in this case, of urban space and mobility. For example, POLIS member Sustrans' work with Muslim women in the UK, their focus on age-related mobility patterns, and their research on mental health and active travel have helped reveal and tackle the complex issues at play behind mobility choices and avenues for encouraging and supporting more sustainable and healthy choices for women from a range of backgrounds.

You can learn more about this here: **What is intersectionality** (intersectionaljustice.org).



A woman with dark hair, wearing a black blazer over a white tank top, a black bicycle helmet, and a watch on her left wrist, is riding a bicycle. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a blue sky.

NOT EVERYTHING WILL BE A SUCCESS BUT IT IS ALL A LEARNING CURVE!

As most (if not all) those working in urban design and planning knowledge, behind every successful project or initiative are several dead ends, tactical changes, methodological adaptations, and even full-on U-turns. Now, nobody likes talking about their 'failures', but recognising and sharing missteps and hiccups are critical to the open and honest dialogue needed for successfully advancing gender mainstreaming.

This POLIS Just Transition Webinar was a chance to hear where these cities had perhaps gone wrong, and what this had taught them about how to integrate gender perspectives more effectively.

"In my opinion, our key mistakes are we need to talk to those who use the urban space more, understand gender perceptions," said Palma.

Interestingly, Umea's guided bus tours around the city show successful changes in the city, yet also highlight enduring gender inequalities.

"There are always mistakes being made, and projects which do not work, but it is really difficult to work with gender, to try to challenge power structures and identity and norms, and sometimes there is an under-estimation about the time this will take and what resources are required," said Gustafsson.

THERE IS ALWAYS SPACE AT THE PARTY:

The role of city-to-city cooperation

For both Palsma and Gustafsson, cooperation between cities has been indispensable in integrating and enhancing gender mainstreaming.

Establishing a clear pathway for such collaboration was at the heart of the research presented by Palsma. Northern Netherlands and the Groene Metropoolregio Arnhem Nijmegen already boast a strong partnership, particularly for mobility planning; the research identified capacity for further collaborative working on gender equity. Indeed, as chair of the POLIS SMC Platform, the Northern Netherlands invests heavily in cooperation forums and mechanisms.

Umeå's engagement in the URBACT project underscored the value of this peer-to-peer exchange between cities.

"Collaboration provides the opportunity to understand what others are doing, identifying which strategies could work for us, and gaining external observation and critique on our work," echoed Gustafsson.

This has also proved essential for securing political "buy-in". As decision-makers increasingly recognise their peers are taking gender seriously, they too want a piece of the action — we will term this "Feminist FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out).

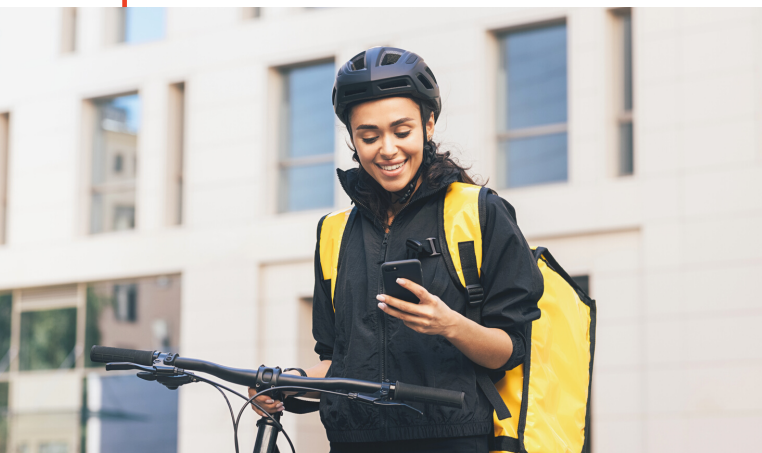


"So, how have you engaged your political leaders?" asked the webinar moderator Rita Jacinto, Programme Manager at POLIS member Lisbon City Council, who has worked widely on gender-sensitive transport planning.

"To be completely honest, this is part of the mandate of our politicians, but it does not feature as part of their daily activities, so it is a huge challenge," said Palsma.

"I recognise what Palsma is saying: it is not always easy, my experience is that we have politicians who have taken this in their stride. The Gender Equality Committee is also a great way of getting politicians involved," echoed Gustafsson.

"The advice I would give is, we need to frame it as 'do we want people to take part in our cities and move around?' — gender is a stepping-stone towards many actions cities wish to take."



A FEMINIST FUTURE FOR MOBILITY

As this webinar revealed, gender mainstreaming mobility demands new ways of approaching urban planning which bends, stretches and even transfigures conventional practices. New ways of thinking, organising and collaborating.

Yet, as cities limber up to tackle a looming climate crisis, it is not just achieving gender equality which necessitates such transformative change; access regulations, alternative fuel infrastructure, public transport services, freight — the list goes on — will need to be part of the systematic change required to sustainable and accessibility mobility.

Movements towards making our cities more gender-friendly will simultaneously offer a new lens and framework for practitioners and decision-makers across the transport sector.
Feminism is for everyone!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Equality is not a competition, so partner-up:

Find out what your peers are doing, explore the potential for collaboration and establish a dialogue with them. Networks, like POLIS, and more informal forums are available to support this co-learning process.

2

Support is available, just look for it:

Benefit of projects, programmes, and resources available to support cities of all sizes in their journey towards gender mainstreaming.

3

Accept that mistakes are part of the journey:

There will be many false starts and it is key to understand that there is no linear path to gender mainstreaming.

4

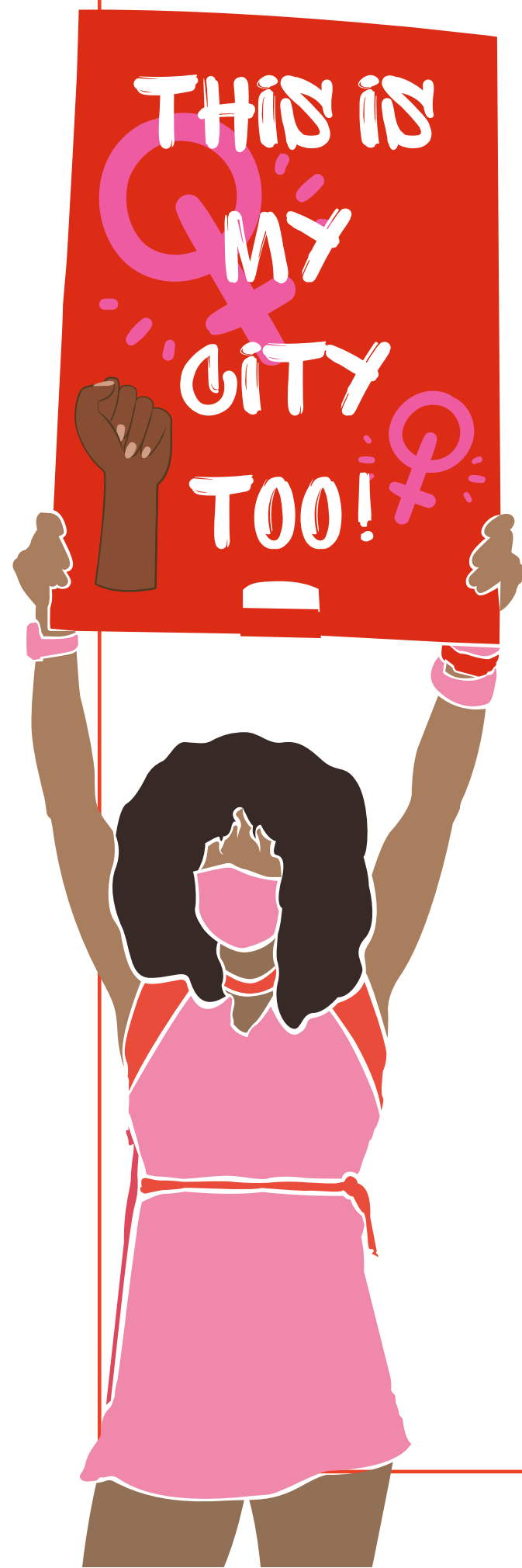
Understand that 'Gender' is a stepping-stone towards many actions cities wish to take:

Presenting this angle to decision-makers is key for buy-in.

5

Make disaggregated data happen:

Ask as many questions as possible and acknowledge the existing diversity to avoid excluding any gender during the process.



FIND OUT MORE

- Queering Cities in Australia- <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/queering-cities-in-australia>
- Counting Women so that Women Count- <https://www.fiafoundation.org/resources/counting-women-so-that-women-count>
- Madrid's STEM Chair for Women!- https://www.comillas.edu/documentos/catedras/STEM-mujer/Estudios_STEM_en_Espa%C3%B1a_y_participacion_de_la_mujer_dic_21.pdf
- Gender Equality and the Role of Women in Decarbonising Transport- <https://www.itf-oecd.org/gender-equality-women-decarbonising-transport>
- Gender equal mobility: beyond the 'vulnerable user' paradigm- <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/news/gender-equal-mobility-beyond-the-vulnerable-user-paradigm>
- Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design>
- Sustrans: Pedaling to gender parity - <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/news/sustrans-pedaling-to-gender-parity/>
- Restoring public transit amid COVID-19: What European cities can learn from one another- <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel-logistics-and-infrastructure/our-insights/restoring-public-transit-amid-covid-19-what-european-cities-can-learn-from-one-another>
- Integrating gender considerations into public transport policies and operations- <https://cms.uitp.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/P1737610d0f8070d00931b093ae318c2914.pdf>
- Placing gender equality at the center of climate action- <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099718102062367591/pdf/IDU08c737dd00f8580412b0aed90fce874ab09b0.pdf>
- The social life of transport infrastructures: Masculinities and everyday mobilities in Kolkata <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0042098019875420>



ABOUT THE JUST TRANSITION WEBINAR SERIES

At the 2021 Annual POLIS Conference in Gothenburg, we launched the Just Transition Agenda.

This webinar series traverses the multifaceted ways affordability, gender-related mobility patterns, age, cognitive capacities (and more), can guide the future of our cities and regions.

From freight to parking, traffic efficiency to active travel, electromobility to safety- and everything in between- we begin to discuss how each sector has its part to play, the challenges ahead, and how cities and regions are treading new ground.