

A gender-planning expert at the City of Vienna's Competence Centre Overall Urban Planning, Smart City Strategy, Participation, Gender Planning, Eva Kail is the creator of several role-model initiatives and projects. These include the 1991 exhibition, "Who owns the public space? – Women's Everyday Life in the City," which led to the initiation of the Frauenbüro, Vienna's first women's office, as well as the proof-of-concept housing project Frauen-Werk-Stadt, the gender mainstreaming pilot program in the Mariahilf district (2002–2006).

Eva Kail may be cited online as one of the urban planners who "made feminist planning popular," but when confronted with the description, she scoffs. "The non-sexist city or the city of short distances (now reinvented as the 15-Minute City) dates back to the seventies and was connected to the feminist movement of that time," Eva says, emphasizing that learning about the works of these early thought leaders served as her own wake-up call, setting her off on her professional path. About 30 years later, Eva looks back at an impressive record of accomplishment of gender mainstreaming urban, residential, and transport planning and projects in Vienna, Austria.

"A feminist-informed city is not identifiable by purple trams. The feminist aspect goes unnoticed. It is one in which every citizen can go about their daily life, fulfilling their needs safely, with low effort and without barriers."

Beyond the ability to access mobility without constraints, feminist transport planning touches upon the meta level. In her experience, feminism is a political and structural goal which critically reflects how urban resources are allocated. This cannot be done without active public engagement and participation.

"We collected voices, experiences, and inspiring practical examples from other cities in Europe or elsewhere as our starting point. A broader rollout followed the many pilot projects so we could refer to our own evolution and success as we continued our story."

Essential to her and her colleagues' success are the pilot projects that demonstrate the impacts that gender planning can have. As Eva highlights, "pilot projects need to include realistic goals and are to be set up to reduce public – or rather political – fears and worries." Pilots that are designed for success are a powerful door-opener for subsequent discussions and complex transformational processes.

"Gender lyrics in visions, strategic planning documents, and publications do not change much. Strategies need to be broken down, commitments need to be agreed upon and made implementable."

A dedicated strategic planning unit with continuous funding within the city authority is certainly a further part of Vienna's success. Political stakeholders and public authorities in the city agreed upon goals, initiatives, and pilots to be implemented and evaluated. Ultimately, the city was able to derive its planning guidelines based on the observations and successes achieved at its doorstep. Eva reflects: "The city's focus on pedestrian needs was initiated by women stressing their mobility needs. This is also needed for cycling."

Eva Kail

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Looking further ahead, she names climate change as the key challenge of our time. “We will need to seriously harvest the expertise, potential, and creativity of all experts and create a wide public acceptance for the much-needed urban and mobility transformation.”

“Our cities would be much better prepared today for the impacts of climate change if they had really listened to feminist planners thirty years ago.”

Expressing doubt that the interest in and application of gender planning-informed solutions for this transformation has been fully utilized, Eva brings the awareness full circle: What we do to better mobility today will have a lasting impact.