

# HOUSING IN IRELAND: BEYOND THE MARKETS

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*with*

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## Chapter 9

# Housing and Gender

EVA KAIL AND SABINA RISS

### **Why gender mainstreaming and gender planning?**

It is common for the everyday life patterns of men and women to be quite different due to their social roles and their share of care work. In the 1970s women started to fight for equal rights and the same opportunities as men. Established parties focused on the working world and how unpaid family work and paid work could be best combined. Feminists had a much more holistic approach and pointed out how much influence the slope of power between the sexes had on their individual life circumstances. ‘The private is political!’ was the battle call of the second wave of the women’s movement.

But compared to the efforts of institutionalised women’s policy and non-governmental organisations’ or women’s initiatives, which were mainly in the social sector, progress was slow. It needed more structural influence and effective equality policy instruments. So, the strategy of gender mainstreaming was developed and first presented at an international level at the Beijing World Women’s conference 1995. In this concept, the simple dichotomy of male and female was extended to social roles. Gender mainstreaming therefore means identifying and systematically recording different needs and promoting equal opportunities for different groups in society. At a European level, the implementation of gender mainstreaming was established in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1998. Gender mainstreaming is a political guiding principle that aims for equal opportunities in all social and political fields of action and at all levels of action as a cross-cutting issue.

Gender planning concretises this view for planning and development disciplines. Gender planning qualifies those involved in and affected by planning processes, as well as any resulting buildings, with regard to different spatial demands, resources and competencies. It takes into account the patterns of appropriation and use of space by different social groups, and it promotes the identification of people with their environment. The compatibility of paid employment and family work, the subjective sense of security and the promotion of 'choice' in the use of space are essential aspects of gender planning.

The focus is on the needs of different user groups and their requirements in different phases of life. In this context, frequently underrepresented groups, such as children, young people, people with care responsibilities, people with a migration background and the very elderly (75+) are given greater consideration. Most of these groups have a strong neighbourhood link and are therefore dependent on its quality. The needs of people in social and economically vulnerable positions are also taken into account. This is also called the gender+ concept.

### **Impact of urban design on the quality of everyday life**

Urban design and housing should support the 'caring and providing' functions of everyday life; spatial structures should facilitate the combination of care work and gainful employment and promote the independence of 'cared-for people' such as children and the elderly. Given this, neighbourhoods should offer local shopping and services, kindergartens, schools, doctors, jobs, public transport and recreational and leisure activities. Apartment layouts should offer adequate space for different users according to their needs.

Due to differences in income and the availability of cars between women and men, suitable offerings in neighbourhood and environmental networks are particularly important. These offerings should take into account the complex chains of routes in everyday life (from home to school to work to the shop, back to home, and so on) as well as subjective feelings of security.

In public space, women need to feel safe and comfortable at all times of the day. Feeling safe can be supported by thoughtful design of public space and the surrounding buildings, such as lively ground floor zones and windows of flats oriented to be 'social eyes on the street', as Jane Jacobs called them (Jacobs, 1961). Parks and squares have an important integrative function and create the social capital of a neighbourhood. This requires good accessibility and a sufficient size (to support at least a conflict-free coexistence of different groups).

### ***Gender-sensitive housing***

The number of single-women households is continually rising and in many larger cities, more than 50% of all women head a household. Women tend to earn lower

incomes and pensions, and have therefore proportionately higher rental costs. Thus, housing is too expensive for many women, as has been pointed out by Viennese architect, researcher and lecturer Sabine Pollak. Women have little influence on location discussions, project development and housing production. Furthermore, the housing market is not responsive to the needs of women. Apartments are too inflexible. Many conventional housing projects are anonymous, uncommunicative and isolating; are hostile to children; and have too little free space and inflexible apartment layouts with few opportunities for participation in the design process. Developments often don't promote good neighbourhood relations or mutual support. Pollak identified a great need for housing for female students, single parents, women with patchwork families, flat-sharing communities, single women over 55 and retired women, as well as older women who have specific needs for home care.

As most architects have been men, mainstream planning culture has historically ignored the perspective of users who spend more time in and around the home. This is especially true for people – most of them women – who, as well as taking care of family members, also have responsibility for daily household work. Housing was regarded as places of shelter in which to spend leisure time, thus being the opposite of urban areas where employment takes place. So, the everyday life experience of the employed, male planner, who was cared for, also to a high degree influenced his perspectives on housing issues.

Taking care of the specific needs of house and family work does not mean strengthening traditional gender roles. It is not about determining who is doing the work. The share of labour between sexes cannot be influenced by architecture, but the unpaid work does have to be taken into account in the design process. Physical structures cannot change gender roles, but they can support the functional demands of caregivers, and participation processes can have a transformative influence on gender roles.

In the 1970s, the disadvantages women faced in urban planning and housing were articulated in Germany at an academic level by Kerstin Dörhöfer and Ulla Terlinden, followed by the first pilot projects in Germany and Switzerland. Inspired by these activities, the practical implementation of gender housing started in Vienna in 1992.

### **Vienna's social housing system**

Social housing has a long tradition in Austria. The percentage of multi-storey social housing in urban areas is high and has a significant impact on the rental-housing sector.

There are two types of provision. Firstly, non-profit/subsidised housing is developed by around 200 non-profit societies. According to the Non-Profit Housing Act, they are allowed to make only limited profits and must reinvest them in further housing construction measures. Likewise, rent must be set at

levels that ensure affordability. Secondly, social housing in Austria means communal housing owned by the municipalities (in Ireland, local authorities). In comparison, non-profit housing in general also has a significant role in the supply of housing for the middle classes due to quite high income limits for accessing it, whereas communal housing targets a supply of socially weaker groups by means of income limits and prioritisation criteria.

Compared to other European cities, and even within Austria, Vienna has a high percentage of social housing. It is a municipality and a federal state and has a long and outstanding tradition of social housing with the famous ‘Wiener Gemeindebau’, initiated by the Red (social) Vienna Programme after World War I. Vienna’s social housing system currently has 220,000 communal dwelling units owned by the City and an additional 180,000 units of non-profit/subsidised housing, which together accommodate nearly 40% of the Viennese population of 1.9 million.<sup>1</sup> Together with a stock of older buildings also owned by the City, the so-called *Stiftungshäuser*, around 60% of the Viennese population live in housing units with guaranteed, regulated and limited rent levels, managed by either the City or non-profit societies.

### **A short history of gender planning activities in Vienna**

The City of Vienna has been addressing gender-sensitive planning issues for three decades. It started in 1991 with an exhibition – ‘Who Owns Public Space? Women’s Everyday Life in the City’, followed by the initiative of the Women’s Office, at that time headed by urban planner Eva Kail, with the pilot project *Frauen-Werk-Stadt*, which is still the largest European women-oriented housing project designed only by female planners. In 1998 a Coordination Office, a specific planning ‘spin-off’ of the Women’s Office, was based at the Executive Office for Construction and Technology, again headed by Eva Kail. It took over the central task of establishing and developing the novel practice of gender mainstreaming as a process-oriented strategy to safeguard quality in planning. The office coordinated more than 60 pilot projects in fields such as mobility, public space, parks and playgrounds and public buildings within different departments of the City. It has also had a strong focus on gender-sensitive urban design and has championed the gender-sensitive planning of new housing complexes.

### **Vienna Housing Fund – tying housing subsidy funds to quality planning criteria**

The Vienna Housing Fund is owned by the City. It is tasked with buying sites for subsidised housing projects, organising developer competitions for projects

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1 Vienna City Administration MA 23, 2017: 5.



that exceed 300 dwellings, making quality assessments for smaller projects via a regular board and distributing subsidies for urban renewal.<sup>2</sup>

Vienna has regulations that link the allocation of housing subsidy funds to compliance with quality criteria. An interdisciplinary jury of experts, the Property Advisory Board, evaluates residential projects with fewer than 300 residential units on sites owned by developers for which subsidies are being applied (from Vienna as Federal State). When ‘developer competitions’ must take place, developers and architects have to offer concepts together with experts for one of the several sites in the competition, normally owned and offered by the Vienna Housing Fund. The winning projects are selected by the same jury, augmented by additional experts. The winning applicants acquire the building plots to develop their project.

From 1995, the Vienna Housing Fund has developed criteria to judge the housing projects that have been based on a three-pillar quality criteria model consisting of architecture, economy and ecology. The Pilot Project Frauen-Werk-Stadt was a kind of forerunner of developer competitions, and Eva Kail was a jury member from 1995 until 2011. The practical value of gender planning issues for planning quality was acknowledged by the decision-makers responsible for the conception of the new, stronger, quality-oriented focus of the social housing policy in Vienna. Based on the call for tenders for projects, and an evaluation of the outcomes, a list of criteria was developed in regard to gender-relevant issues that is still the basis for a gender-sensitive assessment in advance of the projects discussed by the Property Advisory Board. (The prequalification of developer competitions is not standardised and is more content-dependent.)

In 2009, the three-pillar model with a gender-specific preliminary review was supplemented with a fourth pillar: social sustainability, which took into account many gender-relevant aspects.<sup>3</sup> Whereas economic criteria aim at economic efficiency, expediency and sustainability, social sustainability criteria are aimed at the social mix of users, different forms of housing, co-determination and suitability for everyday use. Architectural criteria seek contemporary and innovative concepts at the levels of quarter, building, open space and dwelling. Ecological criteria target climate, resources, environmental awareness and open space.<sup>4</sup> So gender-sensitive planning criteria, developed by the Coordination Office, sit alongside the general quality criteria of the Vienna Housing Fund. Therefore, using gender-sensitive criteria to assess subsidy applications impacts considerably on the resulting high-quality, affordable housing.

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2 Wohnfonds Wien, undated.

3 See Table 5.1; Vienna City Administration MA 18, 2013: 88–89.

4 Vienna Housing Fund Assessment Sheet 4 Pillars Model.

## **Instruments to ensure affordable high-quality housing in the 21st century**

Vienna as a federal state is responsible for housing-subsidy legislation, building regulation legislation and the distribution of housing subsidies. Vienna as a city is responsible for neighbourhood planning and zoning including site-specific building regulation.

In early 2010s, around 80% of newly built Viennese dwelling units were subsidised. Due to the rapid growth of the city and international economic development, housing became an attractive investment. The proportion of subsidised housing currently has decreased to around 40%. A lot of international capital funds started to invest in Vienna, often producing poor-quality housing projects. When units are sold, quite often the new owners do not intend living there or sometimes do not even rent their units: their only interest is the rise in value of their investment. To counteract this, Vienna started two initiatives to ensure future affordable, high-quality housing for a broad population.

In building regulation legislation, the zoning category of 'subsidised housing' was added. The housing policy for new zoning plans says that two-thirds of the gross floor space of housing zones must be social housing (subsidised or communal); only one-third can be used for for-profit development.

Vienna also uses so-called 'urban design contracts' (Städtebauliche Verträge), now added to its building regulation law as a common practice, requiring civil contracts between the city and housing developers. The city can negotiate a financial contribution for infrastructural needs (such as parks, streets, schools or technical infrastructure) caused by the new housing development, but can also establish quality-securing procedures. In recent cases interdisciplinary quality boards have been installed for larger development areas. Their task is to discuss the projects based on the urban design and masterplan, which was made before the new zoning plan.

In Vienna, developers agree to these procedures, as very often they have bought agricultural land in low-density areas and need a change of planning documents to realise their project ideas, which will also have considerable infrastructural needs.

In the case of one development area, the quality board detailed a quality catalogue as a basis for the assessment process. The following criteria were set: the obligation of a common design of the block inner open space with no fences between the sites, and a colour concept for the street facades etc. The contract also included three mobility stations to rent bikes and electric cars or the development of two kindergartens. Their design had to follow the standards of the City of Vienna, such as the size for indoor areas but also outdoor facilities.

With this contract housing developers commit to present projects to the quality board and accept its recommendation before starting the formal process for building permission or requesting subsidies in the case of non-profit housing.

On the quality board there are also representatives of developers, as well as architects and landscape architects and members of the City administration. For the assessment of the single building projects, housing developers are not part of the smaller sub-group of the quality board. Therefore, alongside the control of the general quality of the masterplan in a neighbourhood, a similar process of quality assessment to the one for subsidised housing projects in Vienna was established in 2020.

All the above-mentioned policies and procedures targeting affordability and quality assessments create a favourable framework for a gender-sensitive housing policy.

### **Vienna's gender planning handbook and objectives**

All the methods, guidelines and planning recommendations developed over the years on different planning levels have been put together in a Gender Planning Manual, published in 2013 (Vienna City Administration MA 18, 2013: 10–15), which also contributed to the Urban Development Plan, published in 2014.

The Vienna manual, 'Gender mainstreaming in urban planning and urban development' (GM Manual), offers a good overview of the methods developed so far and is essentially a toolbox for planners.<sup>5</sup> It is based on planning approaches and methods developed within the various gender planning projects of the City of Vienna. Basic principles, different life phases and the needs of different user groups are explained. Objectives and quality criteria of gender-sensitive planning for different planning scales, levels and main topics are described. Included are masterplans and urban design, land use and zoning plans, public space, housing and public buildings. The GM Manual has been translated to English for international dissemination.<sup>6</sup>

In Table 9.1, the most relevant content for housing is shown, especially the criteria list for the prequalification of the projects.

In the GM Manual, the key term on the urban design level, 'high-quality urban density', meaning well-balanced quality, guides the discussion of urban planning. The provision of private or semi-public open spaces at the block or site level is considered. Sunlight indicators for these spaces provide an additional quality parameter. The manual states the acceptable number of storeys in sight or earshot of the street or open space, and defines the maximum block depths (depending on north–south or east–west orientation) for flats extending throughout the building, to ensure sufficient light in the innermost areas. These parameters, when combined with indicators for public green spaces from the guidelines for green and open spaces, provide differentiated measures of density.

5 <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/b008358.pdf> by Vienna City Administration MA 18, 2013.

6 Available at <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/b008358.pdf>

The GM Manual therefore recommends a meticulous quality check of the urban planning design from a net FAR of 2.0.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 9.1: Strategic objectives and mainstream urban development models associated with gender-sensitive planning, from the GMM Manual.**

<b>Strategic objectives of gender-sensitive planning</b>			
(E)	Strengthening a polycentric urban structure, a city of short distances	(G)	High-quality public space
(H)	Promotion of environmentally friendly means of transport	(I)	A safe city
(J)	A barrier-free city	(K)	Planning and construction geared to the requirements for daily life
<b>Mainstream urban development models associated with gender-sensitive planning objectives</b>			
A.	Taking into account and supporting the compatibility of family duties and paid employment	B.	Equitable resource distribution through awareness of different spatial needs
C.	Attractiveness, safety and security of the housing environment	D.	Representation based on equitable participation and involvement of all groups in development and decision-making processes

In urban planning, designs for new urban development areas focus on supporting the principle of the city of short distances. It ensures that the arrangement of facilities and public transport stops results in logical route (or trip) chains, and that sufficient attractive green and open spaces are available, e.g. for kindergartens. In new urban development areas, there is a central attractive neighbourhood park and a car traffic-reduced development. Good public transport connections are available, meaning walking is attractive, which also revitalises the new neighbourhoods.

Three scale levels are important to consider: the residential quarter, the residential building and the individual apartments.

A safe and attractive living environment is particularly important for children, older people and their carers. Housing complexes should have well-designed open spaces and also provide space for informal contacts so as to encourage the

<sup>7</sup> Floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of a building's total floor area (gross floor area) to the size of the plot on which it is built.

formation of a neighbourhood as ‘social space’. Building entrances should be easily visible. Staircases and entrances should be designed as friendly, clearly structured areas for further communication and prevent the emergence of anxiety zones. Utility rooms such as laundry rooms or rooms for storing prams and bikes must be strategically positioned, be of adequate size and, if possible, feature natural lighting. Underground car parks, which often are felt to induce anxiety, require particularly thoughtful planning or should in the best case be avoided.

Apartments should be flexible and adaptable to different family set-ups and life phases. If apartments are practical, housework is made easier. Good natural lighting is needed. A functional and comfortable kitchen allows for housework, childcare and communication.

### Planning criteria for gender-sensitive housing

The criteria in Table 9.2 give an insight into quality assessment of housing of submitted projects for housing subsidies.

**Table 9.2: Planning criteria for gender-sensitive housing.**

<b>The residential neighbourhood</b>	
Location and mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of public transport within walking distance (within 300–500 m)</li> </ul>
Accessibility of infrastructure facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social infrastructure and local supply in walking distance, by bicycle</li> <li>• Nearby network of safe footpaths and cycle paths, public transport</li> </ul>
Local supply, recreation, leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing local supply within walking distance</li> <li>• Usability of the first-floor zone for local supply, small businesses</li> <li>• Social infrastructure (day-care centre, school, playgrounds) within walking distance</li> </ul>
Community open spaces and outdoor facilities of the residential complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well usable contiguous open spaces with good routing: short distances, clear orientation, safe, barrier-free, well lit</li> <li>• Spatial qualities and amenities for recreation, play and sports</li> <li>• Different zones for different activities (noise, communication, quiet) and different seasons (weather protection)</li> <li>• Equipment for different age groups: safe zones for children, exercise areas for young people, quiet areas for older people</li> <li>• Good visibility from common areas of apartments or access areas</li> <li>• Additional common areas on the roofs of buildings</li> <li>• Rentable gardens (20 m<sup>2</sup>) or raised garden beds (4 m<sup>2</sup>) for private use</li> </ul>

<b>The residential building</b>	
Building structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High residential quality ensured up to a floor space index of 2.0</li> <li>• Max. six stories for visual and acoustic connection of apartments and outdoor facilities</li> <li>• High-quality semi-public spaces and well usable open spaces</li> </ul>
Possible flexibility of use of the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building grid allowing subsequent changes of use</li> <li>• Living and working – workplaces in shared rental spaces, connectable workspaces, home office</li> <li>• Ground floor layout and height for subsequent conversion into commercial premises (offices, medical practices, small businesses)</li> </ul>
Access and common areas of the residential building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrance areas visible, generously open and barrier-free</li> <li>• Natural light in stairwells and access zones on the floors</li> <li>• Lobby and corridors wide and attractive to enable communication and formation of neighbourhood</li> <li>• Manageable communities: 10–30 apartments per development unit</li> <li>• Short and clear routes to basement and garage</li> </ul>
Common rooms to support the formation of neighbourhood: hobby rooms or playrooms (for party, meeting, meditation, yoga, etc.), wellness facilities, workshop, library, fitness room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive central location in the residential building</li> <li>• Sufficient size (50–300 m<sup>2</sup>) or in larger housing complexes several common rooms of different sizes, possibly also in combination</li> <li>• Use-neutral design and e.g. divisibility</li> <li>• Barrier-free accessibility directly from the staircase</li> <li>• Natural lighting and ventilation</li> <li>• Connected kitchenette and wet area (shower, WC)</li> <li>• Direct exit to usable outdoor space</li> </ul>

**Other building-related associated rooms**

Laundry room and drying room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barrier-free arrangement on the ground floor or attic floor</li> <li>• Naturally lit and ventilated</li> <li>• Access to outdoor space or visual reference to playground, playroom, open roof space</li> </ul>
Storage room for baby carriages and bicycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather-protected, lockable storage space, also for visitors</li> <li>• Barrier-free accessibility on the ground floor</li> <li>• Directly assigned to each stairwell according to the number of apartments</li> <li>• Sufficient size (per residential unit: &gt;2 m<sup>2</sup> for bicycles, &gt;4 m<sup>2</sup> for strollers and bicycles)</li> </ul>
Storage room for each apartment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy, short accessibility via the staircase</li> <li>• Size: min. &gt;2 m<sup>2</sup> per residential unit, ideally &gt;4 m<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
Underground car parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy, short accessibility via the staircase</li> <li>• Increased safety by natural lighting</li> </ul>
Waste disposal room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility from all apartments on short, barrier-free routes</li> <li>• Clearly arranged design and good lighting</li> </ul>

**The individual apartments**

Variety of apartment types and sizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widest possible range of apartment concepts and sizes for different forms and phases of life: from one-room apartment to multi-room or shared apartment</li> <li>• Apartments for assisted living, or planning of space requirements for future care needs</li> <li>• Additional connectable and rentable premises: rooms and micro-apartments for guests, students, work</li> </ul>
Apartment floor plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small access areas, but sufficient room for movement</li> <li>• Kitchen as a meeting point for all household members, appropriate for the household size with direct lighting and natural ventilation</li> <li>• Rooms: use-neutral and separately accessible – the latter above all in one- to two-bedroom apartments</li> <li>• Flexibility and adaptability of apartments through variable walls, equally sized rooms and separate accessibility</li> <li>• Minimum size of common rooms &gt;12m<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Storage space, walk-in closet: &gt;1.5 m<sup>2</sup>, 2–3% of the apartment area</li> <li>• Orientation to west or south to ensure sufficient daylight</li> <li>• Larger apartments to be ventilated from two sides</li> <li>• Rooms to be furnished with standard furniture</li> </ul>

Apartment-related, private open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private open space for each apartment (terrace, balcony, loggia, garden) ensuring privacy</li> <li>• Accessible from the living room/kitchen without barriers</li> <li>• Size: &gt;4 m<sup>2</sup>, depth &gt;1.60 m, matching household size</li> <li>• Water connection, light and electricity</li> <li>• Weather protection</li> </ul>
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### Pilot and best-practice housing projects – successful implementation

The urban housing projects in Vienna listed in Table 9.3 give an insight into visions, models and means of applied gender planning on different scales of urban planning and housing.

**Table 9.3: Vienna projects.**

	Project	Planning and implementation	Scale, size	Characteristics
4.1	Frauen-Werk-Stadt I	1992–1997	Neighbourhood scale 2.3 hectares (ha) 360 apartments	Largest housing project in Europe according to women-oriented housing competition, eight female architects invited
	Frauen-Werk-Stadt II	1998–2004	Block scale 0.46 ha 140 apartments	Women-oriented planning, focus on elderly Developer competition
4.2	3 women co-housing projects [ro*sa]	2003–2014	Building scale 40–50 apartments each	Participative co-housing projects, participation only for the female inhabitants, only women sign contracts
4.3	Urban development area Wolfganggasse	2018–2023	Neighbourhood scale 3.1 ha 850 apartments	Focus on social mix and specifically single parents Developer competition
4.4.	Urban development area Oberes Hausfeld	2015–	Urban development area, 20 ha, 3,800 apartments	Urban design masterplan, gender planning consultancy Quality board, gender planning expert as one member



***Frauen-Werk-Stadt I and II***

Housing and the everyday needs of women was made a subject of discussion in Vienna in the 1990s. Existing housing standards were questioned, and new spatial concepts developed that met women's everyday life needs. For the first time, quality criteria for location, formation and quality of spaces were formulated at the scale levels of neighbourhood, residential building and apartment (Riss, 2016: 285ff).

Frauen-Werk-Stadt I was initiated in 1992 by Eva Kail, at that time first head of the Women's Office of the City of Vienna. The claim of a comprehensive district development bringing concerns of women in housing and the neighbourhood to the fore is expressed in the name 'Women-Work-City' (Frauen-Werk-Stadt). Completed in 1997, it is the largest housing project in Europe applying women-oriented housing and urban development criteria. 360 apartments were built by two housing developers (one subsidised, one social housing) on a 2.3 ha site. The competition asked for an urban design proposal plus the design of the buildings and apartments. Four female architects planned the large complex with different buildings. At that time in the 1990s, quality was achieved both in the ambitious planning process and in its implementation. The improved housing quality and suitability for everyday life set new benchmarks for many following developments in the mainstream of subsidised housing.



**Figure 9.1: Green areas in the main axis. Photo credit: raum.film.**

The residential complex of Frauen-Werk-Stadt I offers a wide range of integrated local supply such as doctors, kindergarten and a pharmacy. Additionally, a large

supermarket and two tram lines are nearby. The primary school lies within walking distance. It is a real neighbourhood of short distances. The layout of the buildings creates green pedestrian outdoor areas conducive to communication, with good visual relationships from apartments as social control.

Staircases and corridor areas have visual reference to the outside and are designed as places for meeting. Community rooms for adults and children are located directly at the open spaces. Communal laundry rooms are located in naturally lit rooms on the ground floor or attic with outdoor areas in front of them. Apartment floor plans are predominantly neutral in use and flexible, with private open spaces (Riss, 2016: 302ff).



**Figure 9.2: 85 m<sup>2</sup> flat layout. Layout credit: Elsa Prochazka; design: Andrea Neuwirth.**

The follow-up project, Frauen-Werk-Stadt II, used previous experiences and was initiated in 1998 by the Coordination Office, headed by Eva Kail. It was already a housing developer competition with a thematic focus on creating good conditions for neighbourhood self-organisation and assisted living for the elderly, among whom women are the majority. Completed in 2004, it comprises 140 apartments.

### ***Women's co-housing projects [ro\*sa]***

Architect Sabine Pollak started a process for women interested in self-determined co-housing in 2003. This led to the foundation of the women's association [ro\*sa] Frauenwohnprojekte. The first women's co-housing project, [ro\*sa] Donaustadt (40 apartments), was developed in 2009, designed by Pollak and Köb. Two other

projects followed, designed by other architects: in 2009 [ro\*sa] KalYpso Kabelwerk (43 apartments) and in 2014 [ro\*sa] ImElften (49 apartments).

All projects were developed as self-initiated, participative co-housing projects within the framework of publicly subsidised housing. Women are involved in the process from an early stage. They participate in and determine all planning and project phases. Power of decision-making and ownership are permanently in women's hands and rental contracts are only signed with women.

These projects are living models for self-determined, integrative, communicative cohabitation of women. The living concepts take into account different phases and forms of life and are tailored to needs. Individual flats are quite small, for reasons of affordability, but customised and changeable. A great emphasis lay in common areas. General access areas offer opportunities for meeting and communication. Projects comprise generous community rooms with integrated kitchens, laundry rooms, library, office spaces, workshops and sauna. Outdoor facilities include garden, terrace, roof terrace.

### ***Wolfganggasse – a prime example of a new neighbourhood***

The 3.1 ha urban development area of Wolfganggasse is currently under construction and will offer a new neighbourhood with approximately 850 subsidised apartments. It also comprises office spaces, workshops and spaces for other commercial premises, as well as shops and restaurants. Community facilities include a neighbourhood centre, a nursing home and a nursery school. Large communal open spaces with a diverse range of offers serve residents of all buildings and connect to the existing neighbourhood. Social mix is achieved by the diverse housing options, aiming at different living and income situations as well as family types. Included are municipal and subsidised housing like the special affordable (and therefore compact) SMART apartments as well as shared apartments for partially assisted living for people with disabilities.<sup>8</sup>

This developer competition was the first one asking for special offers and ideas for single parents. This is part of the political programme of the Viennese Executive City Councillor for Housing, Housing Construction, Urban Renewal and Women's Issues, Kathrin Gaál, to support a cohort of 82,000 single parents. The great majority of them are women, for whom it is often difficult to find affordable housing with suitable floor plans. Thus, Wolfganggasse offers diverse forms of innovative apartments such as studio and shared apartments, living groups and temporary apartments as well as transitional housing and dormitories. A socially supportive living environment is being created by communal spaces, childcare and activities. (Since 1 July 2020, single parenthood has been recognised as a justified housing need in social housing, thus facilitating single parents' faster access to municipal housing.)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.iba-wien.at/en/projekte/projekt-detail/project/wolfganggasse>

### ***Urban development area: Oberes Hausfeld***

The urban development area of Oberes Hausfeld is an example of a mainstream project, where 15 different housing companies, for-profit and non-profit, bought agricultural land plots and, cooperating with each other and with the City, commenced an urban design process. First a masterplan was developed. Then a quality board was created and an urban design contract was signed with the City. After the zoning plan, the developers came together as a consortium. The City's gender planning expert, Eva Kail, was consulted in the planning process and is now a member of the quality board. The function of the board is to assess the further detailed implementation process, as there is always the danger that the ambitions of the masterplan get lost. Hence, it is important to formulate and fight for common interests, while acknowledging economic constraints and considerations in a permanent dialogue, which has proved a fruitful approach.

The urban design on this site is based on open perimeter blocks, with protected, common designed and usable inner courtyards, grouped around a 3 ha central park, with the supermarket based in a very central position. There will be mostly car-free mobility, and a green central axis. The neighbourhood is framed by two underground stations with a bus line connecting them, collective car garages for several blocks, and rental sharing facilities for cars and bikes to support a sustainable mobility mode with no need for car ownership.<sup>9</sup>

## **Discussion and conclusion – implementing gender in urban planning and housing**

### ***Key strategic elements***

Vienna started with gender planning activities 30 years ago. It was a developing process determined by women in the City administration using a pragmatic approach, often just seizing 'windows of opportunity' rather than any strategical planning. But politicians were willing to support the issue. Looking back, it is possible to identify the key elements of a strategy, which was developed just by doing.

The outcomes of gender-related research projects and spatial analysis created *awareness* and convinced decision-makers. Successful pilot projects produced *visibility* and proved that gender planning methods led to reasonable results with a high user quality, and created positive media resonance, which was an important factor for politicians.

Lead and pilot projects widened *practical experience*. Based on 60 actual project manuals, planning recommendations and lists of criteria supported the *sharing of knowledge* in and outside the City administration.

The branding of 'Fair Shared City' and the publicity of pilot projects supported the *dissemination* of the most important aims. Specific gender training, lead

9 <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/projekte/zielgebiete/donaustadt-aspern/rahmenplan-hausfeld.html>

projects in various departments and participation as gender experts on numerous juries led to the *mainstreaming* of gender planning methods and contents.

Most of the time planning deals with resolving conflicts in goals. In the planning mainstream, they are just discussed as functional issues. Gender planning makes it possible to support socially sensitive decision-making – ‘to walk a mile in their shoes’ in a systematic way – and is also valuable for the *prioritisation of resource allocation*, which is important in times of financial constraint.

### ***‘Fairness check’ as a practical method***

It is crucial to develop adequate methods. A simple one is the ‘fairness check’, which was developed in a pilot project. In this, it is necessary to define some significant target groups relevant to the project and to discuss the impact of proposed measurements on the different groups. The outcome of this rough qualitative evaluation can be visualised in a graphic by overlaying the valuations of the single measurements or contents. It therefore becomes obvious if positive impacts are high or are missing for a specific group. (In Vienna this has been done for the strategic concept of Mobility and for Public Space, together with gender, diversity and inclusion experts.) A bundle of measurements were redefined or honed. At the beginning of a project, the definition of a relevant target or user group helped to identify and focus on their different relevant needs. Therefore, this method is useful to structure the discussion and should be implemented at different project states.

### ***Flagship Frauen-Werk-Stadt***

The completion of Frauen-Werk-Stadt I, which was inspired by foreign examples, was a convincing pilot project for the housing sector. Its size and urban scale allowed it to test gender planning principles on an urban design level, as well as on the level of building. As a pilot project it worked in many ways: as it was new, it received a lot of media attention and is still one of the best known housing projects in Vienna; a series of other ‘thematic’ housing projects followed.

Apartments were easier to rent out than in other housing projects in similar locations due to public interest and the future residents’ confidence in the planning approach by female architects. For the first time, new planning topics like the quality of outdoor areas as well as common facilities and secondary rooms were emphasised. They were carefully designed with regard to size, shape and location. New types of flexible usable apartments were developed. All these features became standard in the other gender projects that followed.

### ***Linking subsidies to quality assessments***

Parallel to the success of the first pilot project, Frauen-Werk-Stadt I led to a change in Viennese social housing policy too. Subsidies were linked to quality assessments. There was a political will to raise the quality of housing through

the use of so-called housing developer competitions and to include a gender perspective from the beginning. Planning criteria for ‘housing construction geared to the specific needs of women’ were tested in various projects and subsequently included in quality assessments to allocate housing subsidies to housing developers and planners. If housing projects were rejected due to poor planning quality, the statement of the advisory board referred explicitly to the gender comments, based on the criteria list. The projects had to be revised and improved and therefore raised the attention of mainstream architects for these gender-based criteria. Experts being part of the survey and decision process for the allocation of housing subsidies works really well and is one of the most successful strategies for quality assurance geared to gender-specific needs in housing. This has resulted in considerable quality improvements in housing, specifically in all public and semi-public areas.

High-quality processes and development projects that specifically take account of the diverse interests of different target groups and women may take a little longer to prepare, or at least involve a more explicit discussion of conflicting goals in the consideration processes. But over the lifetime of the projects, the investment of time and focused attention pays off. Previous women’s projects in urban development and housing have always successfully lived up to this quality consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the Viennese municipal experience, the following general recommendations are considered useful.

- *Create awareness and make the gender differences visible.* Empirical research and data analysis is an option, but the organisation of focus groups is more effective. To discuss the needs of different groups in a systematic way, various methods like ‘fairness checks’ or participatory investigations are useful. Another way to start is walks, with specific groups visiting and analysing the gender-relevant aspects of existing projects. Exhibitions and publications can help to spread the outcomes.
- *Start with carefully selected pilot projects.* The framework of pilot projects has to be carefully chosen, as they have to be a success. Therefore, it is necessary to define realistic objectives: what should be achieved or proved with a project. There must be a high chance of successful implementation and not too many obstacles due to circumstances that cannot be influenced by the project approach.
- *Evaluations with experts and users help to formulate relevant criteria.* Learning from pilot projects is crucial for further progress. Evaluating

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10 For more detailed descriptions of Viennese gender planning history, projects and quality criteria see Irschik and Kail (2013) and Sturm et al. (2019).

housing projects with similar targets nationally or internationally helps in defining important planning criteria. In mainstream discussions the perspective and opinion of different user groups is often neglected, as it is sometimes necessary to ‘translate’ between everyday language and technical terms.

- *Expert pool.* It is important to identify a group of gender-sensitive, user-oriented experts, but first check their planning attitude and culture: whether they can combine social with technical intelligence, which is a basic ability for gender planning. Such an expert pool is helpful for the realisation of pilot projects as designers, consultants and jury members are needed – depending on the structure and dimensions of your project.

### **Mainstreaming**

Planning recommendations such as the Viennese *Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development*<sup>11</sup> and project documentation help to spread the planning approach anyway, but a subsequent roll-out is challenging. It is easier in the social housing sector. Municipalities responsible for providing housing or national or regional organisations distributing housing subsidies can define pilot projects and integrate gender-sensitive aspects in their proceedings, especially if they use quality assessments. In the private housing sector, decision-makers can be ‘nudged’ by highlighting good practices and the argument that if they meet their customers’ needs better, their products sell or rent better. (This argument is only reliable when the demand is not too high.)

A more obligation-oriented approach for a municipality is to set up civil contracts with private owners. Very often housing developers buy agricultural land or low-density areas and need a change in the zoning plan to realise their project ideas. The content of such contracts based on civil law can include very different aspects, such as financial contributions to infrastructure investments caused directly by the project (like parks, streets or schools). So, the contract can be used to establish quality agreements and proceedings for quality assessments for larger development areas. The task of negotiated quality boards would be to discuss the different projects based on the urban design and masterplan.

These recommendations are like a *staircase*: easy to start, and needing a lot of effort for an effective roll-out in the end. But it is worth the effort, as a gender-sensitive approach can contribute effectively to housing as one of the most essential fields of action and the basis for a good life. To have a supportive environment that responds to the needs of one’s everyday life is crucial for everybody. Gender planning is part of the answer.

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<sup>11</sup> Vienna City Administration MA 23, 2017.

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