

Good Practice Summary - The gendered city tour (Umeå)

The problem and proposed solutions , the main outputs for achieving objective, innovative elements

The current development of urban infrastructure and the built environment needs to be redesigned to promote greater gender equality in the use and benefits of urban space. Many of the past and present trends in urban planning and development reflect the male perspective regarding the role of women as primary caregivers. Viewing families, communities, towns, cities, and regions from a gender perspective requires a radical shift both in thinking and in actions. When looking at cities from a gender perspective, one of the main differences affecting the use of urban space is in terms of female and male care-giving roles and responsibilities. Due to the gender-specific division of labour, women do most of the direct care-giving work within families and communities. As such, women are central to urban planning and development, both as key users of urban space in their role as home managers, and as key producers of residential environments in their role as community leaders and initiators of neighborhood networks. Since 2009 the city of Umeå provides guided bus tours around the city to show “the gendered landscape of Umeå”. This is an innovative way of showing how working with gender equality takes form in a city - exemplify successful changes and work in the city, as well as illuminating remaining issues. In line with Umeå’s high ambitions on sustainability and gender equality, the gendered landscape method has been developed in Umeå, and to the best of our knowledge it is the first of its kind in Europe. The method of "the gendered landscape" is being used for educating and creating awareness on the importance of a cohesive understanding of gendered power structures concerning all urban planning in the city. The method raises important questions about the city’s development and identity issues that are norm critical and in some cases provocative as well as challenging and dynamic. How do we build new tunnels, playgrounds, meeting places, recreation centres? Do we plan our public transport for those who use it or for those we wish would use it? Why are women using public transport more frequently than men? Who has the power to decide? What knowledge do we use when we are working to develop the city and our public spaces?

Timeframe, dates, important milestones

1994	Launch of the Umeå city council Gender equality committee (JUSK)
2008	Umeå signs the CEMR European charter for equality of women and men in local life
2009	Launch of the first “Gendered landscape” report, with subsequent regular revisions, last in 2014
2014	Launch of the “Challenging power” theme during Umeå2014 – European Capital of Culture
2014	Innovation pitch presentation at the first Urban development network meeting in Brussels, October 2014
2016	The European Green Capital jury highlights Umeå’s work “taking account how gender impacts engagement with the environment”
2016-2017	Development of the Gendered landscape Virtual reality version

Link to the specific strategy (with key themes, subthemes, actions)

The gendered city bus tour is a part of the Strategy for Gender Equality Work in Umeå Municipality

<http://www.umea.se/download/18.65c1214d14f38ac15533fc0c/1443787693979/Strategy+for+gender+equality+work+in+Ume%C3%A5+municipality.pdf>

Results achieved, monitoring

There are several examples of how the initiatives of the bus tour have made an impact in the planning and development of the city. The Freezone initiative has impacted the work of the Umeå Street and Parks department, changing their methods for dialogues with citizens and gender-mainstreamed the content of steering documents. Another example from the tour is the example of Gamliavallen football stadium and the city's ambition of more equal use of public spaces and sport arenas. In 1999, a political decision in the municipal board of leisure led to that practice hours were divided according to what division soccer teams played in, regardless of gender. Since then, the decision has impacted the distribution of practice hours in all municipal arenas in Umeå. A third example is from Umeå as a cultural city, where the cultural sector continually monitors gender representation in the city cultural scene. A positive trend towards more gender equality is observed over the last few years. As of 2015 there were 45 % women (out of 2000 events) represented on the main cultural stages in Umeå.

Umeå has been highlighted by the CEMR as an international model town for gender equality. Also, the jury of the European Green Capital highlights the gender work and declares that "Umeå has taken into account how gender impacts engagement with the environment. This approach was appreciated by the Jury".

<http://www.charter-equality.eu/exemple-de-bonnes-pratiques/umea-a-model-town-for-gender-equality.html>

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/EGCA-Jury-Report.pdf>

Potential for re-use and improvement

In an international context, we see that the potential to reuse the methodology is great, not least within an URBACT context, as the methodology is easily adaptable to different local cultural and social contexts. International exchanges have been done within the framework of Umeå as European Capital of Culture, and around 30 other international exchanges. The gendered landscape best practice is coordinated by the city gender equality officer and organised under the Gender equality committee of the Umeå city council. It has been a city tour since 2009 and is under constant development. In 2016 the tour was expanded with a virtual reality element, allowing for new target audiences to include the gendered landscape approach in prioritised groups, for example primary and secondary schools. Since the basis for the practice is constantly developing knowledge on the city as an arena for the gendered landscape, it is important that the gendered landscape is a flexible practice. The tour has been adapted continuously, and currently encompasses 25 "stops". Some have remained since 2009, some have disappeared and even more have been added during the years.