



# WIMEN Position Statement

On the state of research on mobility in Austria  
from a gender perspective  
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WIMEN was established as a network of experts from the areas mobility, energy, environment and public space as a non-profit association.

WIMEN aims to use and consolidate its members' and network partners' know-how to constructively contribute to debates in its key areas from a gender perspective through active participation in debates and concrete position papers. The first WIMEN position paper focuses on gender specific mobility, that is on the socially attributed differences between women and men that can be found in their different usage and design needs and wants in terms of mobility options.

Our starting point is the realisation that everyday mobility is still defined by gender specific differences. By this we mean inequalities between the mobility of women and men that leads to unequal access to mobility structures as well as design possibilities and in different mobility practices. These gender specific differences in the approach to and in the shaping of mobility have their roots in gender specific disparities. These differences are not however to be understood as biological differences but are products of social, economic and cultural practices. Men and women are ascribed specific social roles which are typical for their gender. The main question is how to introduce a differentiated analysis (based on life or family situation for example) which could then even be extended to include other forms of inequality.

We view the following position paper on "Mobility" as a starting point for further discussions and research possibilities. These can be divided into two categories 1) a critical perspective on the current situation and 2) future orientated perspective on gender-equal mobility. This division allows us to see the differences more clearly and identify the main overlaps and similarities between the two.



## 1. Critical view of the actual state of mobility research

### Point 1

**Traditional patterns of employment-focused mobility are still being supported today, the spatial separation of work and living spaces accepted and the dominance of automotive forms of transport promoted. Women are disproportionately affected by such infrastructure inequalities.**

In traffic planning societal developments that are criticised from a gender perspective are accepted as given and as a starting point for prognoses. Instead of considering them from an overall societal development perspective, in order to develop activities to counteract the trend, they are seen as unchangeable. Demographic aging, rural depopulation, suburbanisation and sinking fertility rates, increasing part time female employment etc. are developments that considerably influence mobility behavior, but can be changed in the long-term.

Mobility research asks the question: Are we documenting and analyzing the right questions in mobility?

Most studies up till now have been limited for instance to a survey of:

- the current situation, how people travel (mode of transport and analysis of trip chains);
- time taken to get from A to B;
- how to travel the fastest from A to B;
- what types of ticket are used;
- type of living environment.

Important for a change in mobility is the subjective context of different forms of travel. To understand this, different questions need to be asked:

- Which forms of transport are preferred in which living context, which are taken into account as options and which of these are reasonable and which compelled?
- How to mobility needs and wants and patterns of mobility change over the different phases of men's and women's lives
- How is lost or saved time experienced by women and men?
- What types of tickets reflect the real needs of women and men who care for others?
- How are the costs of different forms of transport perceived and assessed on an individual level, but also communicated and promoted publicly
- What influence do living situation and living environment have on mobility patterns?
- What role does cost play for mobility (women generally earn less, do they travel more often by public transport) or is it more a question of life style?
- Who or what is important for new transport infrastructures? (Does the analysis of requirements take gender specific questions into account?)

Based on these questions, the discussion should focus on whether through monitoring the current situation, such as trips or trip chains, alternative future mobility decisions and new trends could be defined and anticipated. Many mobility decisions develop currently out of a lack of perceived possible alternatives. Changes in mobility supply or in the perception of already existing offers could have a decisive influence on changes in the use of different modes of transport. The same goes for new alternatives in urban development that reduce the focus on certain forms of transport.



## Point 2

**There is a gender gap in mobility research and therefore also in the data used in the planning process. This has serious consequences for transport planning and development.**

Gender sensitive mobility research has only been on the margins of transport research and not really substantially supported. However, gender sensitive and future-orientated mobility planning needs to be based on gender sensitive mobility research that is the rule and not the exception. It needs to develop and apply gender sensitive indicators as standard starting from different life situations.

The behavioral dimensions that are currently used in transport research are incomplete as a basis for decision making to bring about sustainable change in the modal split. A gender sensitive approach needs to go both into depth and to take different viewpoints into account in order to create improvements in solutions for sustainable mobility through constant, gender relevant monitoring instruments and participatory processes.

When gender specific differences in transport research have been covered up till now this has normally been as the difference between women and men. The gender perspective, that is the social role, does not play a role in current mobility research. From this point of view it is not so important whether the mobility needs of the sexes are different, but if specific life situations and lifestyles have different needs and whether a different framework would be necessary for gender specific mobility.

## Point 3

**Woman, due to their societal responsibilities, find new ways of establishing environmentally friendly forms of mobility. WIMEN wants to encourage like-minded women and men to support this process.**

Many women are multipliers for the diffusion environmentally mobility they are open to multimodal transport and new mobility trends and they are especially sensitive to price of transport.

They are, just like men, influenced in their mobility preferences in favour of environmentally damaging forms of transport through restrictive spatial, temporal, financial and other structures.

For this reason environmentally friendly mobility should be supported through changes in gender sensitive working conditions and infrastructure and planning activities.

In addition, relief and support activities for environmentally friendly forms of mobility and technologies should be conceptionally reviewed. Finally governance mechanisms for environmentally friendly behavior should be rewarded and affordable ecological technologies for both sexes supported.

Women are essential partners in this process. Women who are socio-economic ally worse off for example single mothers have a higher than average affinity for using environmentally friendly modes of transport. They do this not only out of economic necessity. Many women do without their own car and live environmentally friendly forms of mobility even when their complex trip chains and accompanying trips would be easier by private car. New innovative trends such as car sharing, car pooling etc. according to the principle "using instead of owning" have especially good chances with women also a positive effect in the perception alternative mobility concepts in future generations. They need legal, organizational and technological features that can provide a good overview of different means of transport to support a rapid dissemination.



Even if men cycle statistically more than women, women's interest is growing fast. Growth in the share of bicycles in urban areas will however, quickly level off if the needs of safety-conscious persons such as parents and the elderly are not met. To motivate those who cycle infrequently to cycle more often is clearly more difficult than changing sport cyclists into everyday cyclists. The focused support of appropriate infrastructure is not only useful to this group but all cycle groups.

Women are strong pedestrians. In addition with their children sets an example to these. Gender sensitive mobility needs to strengthen the infrastructure for pedestrians of all ages and the image of walking.

Cycling and walking also have a health aspect for many women. All these changes in infrastructure will need financial and spatial resources. And again: it's not only women that profit.

We need to discuss new questions openly in order to go in new directions.

- ? Should we discuss if and how the technological interest of industry can be redirected to alternative fields of activity?
- ? Should we discuss how a trend reversal could be supported in terms of "using instead of owning" independently of criticised forms such as car-sharing?
- ? How to initiate an improvement in quality of life in rural areas?
- ? And other questions such as smart mobility?

#### Point 4

**It is high time to allow and support new gender sensitive questions in mobility research and transport planning**

Gender sensitive research needs on the one hand to increase awareness for the subjective assessment of space and transport supply and on the other hand to support research on different phases and perspectives of life. Most transport surveys collect data on socio demographic characteristics such as age, sex, job, education, and indicators concerning spatial classification. The social role of the interviewed persons and the mobility patterns associated with these roles cannot be concluded from these surveys. WIMEN therefore focuses on questions concerning the identification of different social roles and their associated implications for everyday life. WIMEN wants to encourage their widespread use in transport research.

We know that differences in labour force participation rates have a considerable effect on the preferred modal split. For this reason we think it's necessary to develop appropriate indicators and to focus attention on the needs of people who do not fit the "normal" full time employment ideal. If we look at the question of season tickets for users of public transport, we only see the status quo and the fact is ignored that some part time and core time employees don't need a season ticket based on a five-day-week. Gender sensitive questions (for example the current framework conditions, life conditions and interdependencies with other social structures) need to take these characteristics into account. They should help to reveal the needs that accompany such gender specific roles.



## 2. Future perspectives on mobility from a gender point of view

Changes are currently taken place in many different areas. New technologies bring new challenges with them. Smart vehicle technologies and the intelligent combination of different modes of transport have to be equally available to EVERYONE.

However, in addition to the challenges brought about by new technologies, we want to address important questions related to the quality of life –such as living environment, deceleration, freedom of choice in mobility, safety etc.

### Point 5

**Technological breakthroughs have been insufficiently analysed from a gender perspective. Many questions are still open.**

WIMEN finds it important to view recent trends and technological breaks from a gender perspective. Furthermore, groups who are disadvantaged need to be analysed according to their mobility needs, according to their understanding of cost benefit analysis and their access to multi modal mobility. This means:

- **Concerning ICT – real time information for freedom of choice and multi-modality**

The attractiveness of public transport can only increase if the supply and access to real time information can be guaranteed. Smart phone use is a requirement for accessing real time information. Smart phones are wide spread in Austria. However, access for women, especially older women, is more difficult in comparison to men.

Therefore the question: Which socially acceptable solutions for real time information, freedom of choice and multimodality can improve access for all?

- **Concerning electro mobility**

Are people with care roles particularly interesting addressees in relation to E-mobility due to the short trips they make?

How can pressure be increased to secure environmentally friendly forms of energy?

- **Concerning new urban forms of mobility**

Car-sharing models and offers are alternatives to car ownership. The offers need broad access for people who are less comfortable using technology.

Is a lack of funds the starting point for these trends, or is it simply that in urban areas it is not necessary to own a car.

Would this be a first step to decreasing the need to own a second car?



- **Concerning multimodality – uncomplicated mix of individual and public transport**

How can the interfaces be kept simple and cost transparency guaranteed?

What type of technological support could be useful?

How can the interface for people in care roles be improved?

WIMEN advocates taking a broad perspective and monitoring the long term effects of the changing framework conditions. The variety of new technological developments in the vehicle sector, in telematics, in sensor technology etc. lead to new breakthroughs which should happen in a controlled and reflected way. From a gender critical point of view it would seem necessary to develop an easy and playfully comprehensible, practical and generally accessible technological development which is safe and user friendly.

**WIMEN is a platform for discussion about gender sensitive developments in mobility. The most important themes are:**

- Supporting women as designers and developers of modern mobility solutions and attractive living environments;
- Support for the health advantages – more exercise in everyday life;
- Supporting interdisciplinary cooperation in order to meet the complex needs of gender sensitive mobility solutions;
- Supporting the exchange between actors in urban development, architecture, developers of public space, suppliers of transport and transport planners.

WIMEN sees itself as a think tank for visionary gender-symmetrical mobility!

WIMEN aspires to an **active development of framework conditions and structures** and using all means and influence mechanisms in order to support new approaches to environmentally friendly mobility.

Even if societal changes cannot be implemented immediately, it is important to have a broad approach and an understanding of the interlinking nature of mobility and reality in different phases of life. We want to create awareness for the necessity and purpose in creating new structures.

We want to open a **new space for discussion** and would like to invite you to join us. There are many events in the area of mobility that take place without the participation of women on the podium. We would like to have space to include women's and men's perspectives.