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Gender in spatial science and planning

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Contents

This article describes the development of approaches to gender-oriented research and planning. As a category, gender opens up various avenues for spatial analysis and gives rise to a new understanding and knowledge of how space can be constituted and shaped. Brought together under the concept of gender mainstreaming, these approaches offer effective tools for spatial research and planning.

1 Introduction

A key objective of sustainable spatial development is to establish and safeguard gender equality through spatial planning. This ensures that spaces are suitable for everyday use and serves to create a profile for locations in competing cities and regions. Gender-sensitive planning aims to dismantle the hierarchies that structure all spheres of society and to give visibility to the disadvantages experienced by certain sections of the population as a result of previous paradigms of urban and regional planning. The gender perspective thus provides an insight into the diversity of needs, demands and interests relating to how people use space (gender as an eye-opener).

As a category, gender is associated with four analytical approaches: gender as a category of difference, a category of structure, an epistemological category and a category of process (cf. Hofmeister/Katz 2011; Hofmeister/Katz/Mölders 2013). How these analytical categories can be applied to spatial problems and solutions is described below.

2 Genesis: gender in spatial science and planning

There has long been a call to include gender relations as a factor in spatial sciences and planning, to uncover the implicit ways in which the genders have been associated with certain roles and to achieve gender equality in planning. The stage was set in the 1970s, when the idea emerged that planning aimed at gender equality ('gender planning') could and should have an emancipatory function. At that time, it was the (new) women's movement – as part of the grassroots environmental and peace movement and in the form of neighbourhood groups – that first put the spotlight on women's perspectives and interests in urban development strategies. There are four different phases involved in gender-oriented planning. Grüger (2000: 28 et seq.) differentiates between feminist, female-friendly, female-appropriate and gender-sensitive planning approaches. What all four approaches have in common – as a response to the criticism that spatial planning is too remote from how people use space in everyday life – is that they seek to create the spatial and structural prerequisites for women and other marginalised sections of the population to acquire equal access to spatial resources (Thiem 2013). The planning approaches differ primarily in terms of their analytical perspective: while in the early stages, 'gender' was understood as a category of difference, whereby the focus was on the biological distinction between men and women ('sex') with the aim of achieving equality between them, at the end of the 20th century, the discussion shifted towards gender planning. From an analytical perspective, gender is now seen as a social category. Accordingly, it is no longer just a question of opening up equal opportunities for women as representatives of a marginalised group, but also of ensuring that gender is visible as a powerful factor in shaping social relations as a whole and – in view of its spatial impact as a determinant of a person's place in society (Knapp 2007) – ensuring that it plays a role in (re)shaping the planning process.

3 Theoretical points of reference

Gender-based structural inequalities and their manifestations in the context of space developed as a consequence of the gender-specific division of labour instituted at the beginning of the modern age to separate the sphere of production from that of reproduction. The structural effects of this continue to permeate all areas of society today. Terlinden (1990) shows how the production-reproduction divide came to prevail both socially and economically from the end of the 18th century as a result of the detachment of paid work from the entire social context of reproduction. This process of dissociation eventually culminated in a spatio-structural divide – a spatial differentiation between 'productive spaces' (with male connotations) focusing on gainful employment, and 'reproductive spaces' (allocated to women). The women's movement and early research in the field of women's studies were critical, pointing to the processes of hierarchisation associated with this separation: reducing the notion of 'habitation' to private and consumptive activities, for example, has the effect of concealing and devaluing non-paid (female) labour. This interlinking of analytical approaches based on the category of difference and the category of structure – *gender* as a category of difference is applied to the analysis of spatial structures and is thus recognised as a powerful factor in shaping social structures – highlights the extent to which and how 'gender relations' feed into spatial analysis and can be used to inform a new understanding and knowledge of how space can be constituted and shaped. As an epistemological category, *gender* is thus analytically useful for cultivating another type of spatial knowledge – to address invisible and/or devalued spheres of life ('blind spots') – and is also effective for creating knowledge about how space can be constituted and shaped according to a preferential planning perspective tailored towards the needs of marginalised sections of the population: an understanding of the dichotomisation, hierarchisation and inclusion and exclusion processes that are etched into (spatial) structures leads to a critical analysis of the structures of inequality, which in turn is a prerequisite for achieving equality objectives through an emancipatory form of spatial planning.

Once the pivotal role of the production-reproduction divide is acknowledged, a critical perspective is then directed toward the inherent divisions/dichotomies that exist in the context of space and that are the focus of the gender-sensitive analysis of space and society. Accordingly, the relationship between public and private space constitutes one of the key areas of research in gender-sensitive spatial and planning sciences. Hence, from a perspective of better constituting and shaping space, gender-oriented planning aims to highlight the hybrid nature of spaces, which are seen as 'in-between spaces' – between public and private, culture and nature, urban and rural. According to advocates of this approach, the emancipatory potential of planning lies in uncovering and positively revaluing (re)productive spaces by constituting and shaping them in a more favourable way (e.g. the *Forschungsverbund* [research network] *'Blockierter Wandel?'* 2007). Seen in this light, semi-public, mixed-use spaces, urban-rural landscapes and natural-cultural spaces become important areas of research and action in the field of gender planning.

In the current gender debate within spatial sciences, there is also a call for *gender* to be interlinked with *space* as categories of process ('gendering' interlinked with 'spacing'). Here, the characteristics of spaces are not seen as a given, but rather as elements that, in one way or another,

have been powerfully and collectively constructed (Hark 2004: 229; Löw 2001). In this sense, spatial planning itself can be understood as spatial production and becomes an object of critical academic analysis. The fundamental question remains of whether and to what extent public space is associated with freedom and the need for emancipation. After all, even emancipatory ideals can only be understood as embedded in specific historical, cultural and political discourses; hence, there is a need to differentiate between and within the gender groups of *women* and *men* (Bauhardt 2004: 235).

4 Gender mainstreaming in spatial research and planning

The notion of *gender mainstreaming (GM)* is a strategy for enabling critical reflection on gender relations in decision-making processes. Ultimately, the aim is to bring about change by achieving equality of opportunities by shaping and constituting space more favourably through planning. 'Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making' (Council of Europe 1998: 15). Initially, GM represented an extension of the category of *gender* from a category of difference to one of social structure, although implementation of this strategy in all policy and planning areas may potentially involve the use of all four analytical approaches – gender as a category of difference, a category of structure, as an epistemological category and as a category of process (Hofmeister/Katz 2011).

Shaped by the international debate on sustainability and gender (for example, by the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing), GM in Europe has become an integral part of the strategy for achieving sustainability goals, including in spatial development. Gender equality is a policy strategy of the German Federal Government (GM has been enshrined in the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries since 2000), and as such is a guiding principle in all policy areas, including urban and regional planning. Accordingly, in 2004 the goal of gender equality was also included as a factor in the weighing of interests in urban land-use planning (section 1(6) no. 3 of the Federal Building Code [*Baugesetzbuch, BauGB*]), and in 2005 it was integrated into the administrative agreement on promoting urban development (Administrative Agreement on the Granting of Financial Support from the Federation to the Federal States [*Verwaltungsvereinbarung über die Gewährung von Finanzhilfen des Bundes an die Länder*] according to Article 104a(4) of the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz, GG*] on the Funding of Urban Structural Measures [*Grundgesetz zur Förderung städtebaulicher Maßnahmen*] of 13 January 2005 / 5 April 2005). GM is being tested and further developed through various programmes, activities and projects (Bauer/Bock/Wohltmann 2007). As regards the implementation of the strategy in spatial planning practice, preliminary experience garnered in Germany and other European countries (such as Austria and Sweden) shows that GM strategies considerably enhance the quality of planning; they are credited with a substantial contribution to the sustainable development of cities, towns and regions (*BBR* [Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning] 2006; Pimminger 2001).

In its conceptual orientation, GM aims to overcome gender-specific divisions of labour and to enable equal rights in terms of access to and the use of spatial and social resources. Urban development and spatial planning measures are often still deemed to be gender-neutral (Bauer/

Bock/Wohltmann 2007: 152). It is only by examining spatial and built structures that (often indirectly) affect gender relations that the full significance of the category of gender becomes apparent. Shifting economic and spatial structures – such as the fragmentation of employment processes or the dissolution of spatial and temporal boundaries at the individual and societal level – and the increase in crisis phenomena in the reproductive work sphere (for example, child and old-age poverty, the erosion of care provision and healthcare systems) are becoming a challenge as well, especially for spatial planning (Rodenstein/Bock/Heeg 1996). In practice, this means that spatial structures should be constituted and shaped through planning to meet the needs of both the gainful employment and reproductive work spheres equally, and to take full account of the diversity of life's realities and associated spatial demands.

The category of *gender* opens up a perspective that explicitly focuses on the diversity of all ways of life and enables spatial analysis and decision-making structures as well as planning options to be examined in terms of their inherent power structures and ultimately to be (re)structured accordingly. The everyday experiences and needs of different population groups vary according to gender (women, men and non-binary people) as well as stage of life, social status, income, education, ethnic origin and religion. Not only must gender- and diversity-sensitive planning take this into account; it can and must also build on it to genuinely embed within itself the analysis of the structures of inequality and power relations.

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