



Urban Agenda Platform

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# The Gendered City Tour - Challenging Power in Cities

Region	Europe and Central Asia
Award Scheme	Guangzhou Award
Themes	Gender Planning & Design Public Space
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

What does a bus station, a park and a tunnel say about equality and gender issues? The Gendered landscape allows visitors to travel through the city of Umeå, a municipality that has worked broadly with issues of gender equality for a long time.

## Background and Objective

The method exemplifies successful changes and landmarks in the city as well as illuminates remaining issues and challenges in relation to the goals for gender equality. The purpose is also to underline the importance of gender in society and to show results of a long-term work within Umeå municipality. BACKGROUND INFORMATION At local level the gendered landscape approach contributes directly to city council objectives of developing a growing sustainable, learning and gender equal city with 200 000 inhabitants by 2050. The project is in line with regional development strategy priorities of "Inclusive societies" as well as Swedish gender equality objectives at national level. At international level it contributes to both EU2020 objectives, the CEMR declaration European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, as well as the UN Sustainable development goals (in particular Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 11 on Sustainable cities). ORIGINS The idea about the Gendered City bus tour sprung from the need to find new ways to visualize successful work on gender equality, as well as visualizing and draw attention to issues that need to be addressed. Equality between women and men is one of the European Union's founding values. Gender equality means that power and influence is divided equally between women and men. It means that women and men participate equally in all areas of public and private life through a full and equal inclusion in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making, and that women and men should be equal in decision making, the labour market, sharing family responsibilities. 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 spaces in their role as home managers, and as key producers of residential environments in their role as community leaders and initiators of neighborhood networks. 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 public spaces. 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. 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, visualizing successful work on gender equality, as well as visualizing and drawing attention to issues that need to be addressed. The initiative strives to contribute to the overarching gender equality goal of the city of Umeå; that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. 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? The gendered city bus tour is a way of making statistics (published in the "Gendered landscape" report) come alive. It currently outlines 25 integrated practices in the city, and an innovative way of demonstrating concrete effects of striving for gender equality. The work has been led by the municipality, but also by other organizations and persons. One idea of the tour is to highlight the city as one, and hence the need for cooperation and collaboration in creating an inclusive city. One example is the park "Freezone", a collaboration between different parts of the municipality, architect firms as well as groups of girls in the city. The collaboration led to a better understanding of expectations that young women deal with every day and the need for public spaces where nothing is expected of you. With this new



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knowledge, a park was built in the city centre. For the architect firm, the whole process has contributed to a deeper understanding for the need to create public spaces for more audiences than what has previously been the norm. It has also 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 is the collaboration between the municipality, Umeå University and the Swedish for immigrants-school, that led to an understanding that there is a difference between being seen and feeling like an object or a subject in public spaces. How does background, age, gender, disability play in, and how is the city planned? This has led to changes in how public forums are arranged in the city to ensure that more inhabitants take part in the process. Both these examples are part of the Gendered landscape tour which also includes places with work that has been or is being done by NGO's, public works of art and highlighting the constant interactions between public and private that is present in the city. The gendered landscape city bus tour is a very cost-efficient initiative. It is coordinated by the city's gender equality officer and has an annual running cost of 40 000 SEK (around €4 000). The funding is allocated from the Gender equality committee (JUSK) of the Umeå city council, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the initiative. Locally, it therefore has a very sustainable and democratically funded basis. It has been run as a city tour in Umeå since 2009, and is under constant development. During 2016 the tour was expanded with a virtual reality element, allowing for new target audiences to include the gendered landscape approach in prioritised target groups, for example primary and secondary schools, where it can be included very easily in pedagogic exercises. 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. Since the launch in 2009, 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, as the city knowledge base has increased.

## Outcomes and Impacts

There are several examples of how the initiative has made an impact in the planning and development of the city. The work with the "Freezone" park (mentioned in D.3.) 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 is the Gammliavallen 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's 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. 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 bus tour 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. The initiative strengthens the city of Umeå's profile as an international model town for gender equality.

## Innovative Initiative

The initiative could be described as Revolutionary in the sense that the method raises questions about the city's development and identity issues, questions that are norm critical and, in some cases, confrontational as well as challenging and dynamic, however important to ensure a socially sustainable city development. In line with the city of Umeå's high ambitions on sustainability and gender equality, the gendered landscape and city bus tour method has been developed in Umeå, and to the best of our knowledge it is the first of its kind in Europe and the world. The initiative has also triggered other cities to follow with similar approaches inspired by and re-using Umeå's approach, now underway in other Swedish cities such as Uppsala and Eskilstuna. The gendered city bus tour is a way of making the statistics about gender equality in the city's urban planning coming alive. It 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. 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? In Umeå, the gendered bus tour and its underlying statistics, is being applied in forming policy and strategy, in urban planning and infrastructure planning processes, in design and in the city's overall governance practice. The method raises important questions about the city's development and identity issues that are norm critical. In some cases, these questions can be seen as provocative and challenging. Over the years the municipality has used various methods to try to visualise differences between groups of women and groups of men. We have found the method of the gendered landscape, where the city in itself is the canvas for discussing inequality, to be the most successful. Travelling through the city (physically or virtual) and highlighting a number of sites creates a better understanding that gender (in)equality is a broad issue and something that affects everyone, we have found that this not only increases knowledge, but decreases the resistance towards working with gender equality.



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## Conclusion

So far, we have had around 30 international exchanges with representatives from most European countries and around the world on the “Gendered landscape” and Gendered bus city tour approach. The challenge of gendered power structures is shared across all cities in the world. The social and cultural context of the cities of course differs across countries, but the gendered landscape approach offers flexibility to adapt to these different pre-conditions. In an international context, we see that the potential to reuse the methodology is great, as the methodology has proven to be easily adaptable to different local cultural and social contexts. We believe that the gendered landscape integrated approach has been successful in Umeå. The long-term ambition is to build on the interest generated so far and implement further developments in Umeå and across Europe. The city of Umeå has the ambition to work together with others on further developing the approach, in Umeå and elsewhere.

**RELEVANCE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Target 2: Access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all Target 3: Participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management Target 7: Universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, in particular of women, children older persons and persons with disabilities Target 8: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas Target 9: Improving resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters and implement holistic disaster risk management