

# Action Research and Learning: Gender Mainstreaming and the Media

(Social Transfer)

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## Project leads

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## Abstract

- Research on Gender Mainstreaming at the City of Vienna, in cooperation with the department for Gender Mainstreaming. Deliverables (group assignments): field reports and/or interviews (written and/or audio (podcasts)/audio-visual (video) reports) on agreed case studies, published in form as blog entries on the “LET’S TALK EQUAL” platform.
- Interpreting research results and formulating action proposals on possible interventions on gender mainstreaming in the media. Deliverables (individual assignments): action proposals incorporating theoretical concepts (literature review), in blog entry on addressing gender (in)equalities in and by the media in form as blog entry on the “LET’S TALK EQUAL” platform.

## Keywords

media and gender; participatory action learning and action research; deliberative teaching; social awareness; responsiveness to gendered inequalities; journalism curricula

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## Aims of the Third Mission activity

The aim of the Action Research Project is twofold:

- I. What is the usefulness of Gender Mainstreaming as a concept and what are the lessons to be learned from the City of Vienna? (Research Question 1)
- II. How could these lessons be interpreted within the context of the media? Taking action: Critically assessing and planning possible interventions on gender mainstreaming in the media (Research Question 2).

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## Cooperation partners outside the university sector

Stadt Wien Dezernat für Gender Mainstreaming

## Cooperation partners from the scientific/research field

None

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## Faculty

Institute für Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft, Fakultät für Sozialwissenschaften

**Timeframe** 01/09/2019 - 01/03/2020

**Funding** None

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**Research basis** I am researching media governance practices and gender inequalities in and by the media industries.

**Social/economic relevance** The course and the tasks were an empowerment exercise and an opportunity for visibility to each participant. The participatory learning scheme enabled the engagement with the ordinary interactions performing gender and advanced their understanding of gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday practices. The analyses of the individual learning journals of the students (n=57) filled out throughout the semester delivered meaningful results about self-identification, engagement and mobilization as a matter of social reflection and responsiveness to inequalities.

**Integration into academic teaching/the curriculum** <https://ufind.univie.ac.at/de/course.html?lv=220023&semester=2019W>

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**Impact** In answer to the first call (RQ1), students were organized during the semester in five different groups and investigated the following areas and according to their specific inquiry:

- Group 1: Challenging gender stereotypes in the Kindergarten: Policy measures by the City of Vienna. The students applied a mix of methods including document analysis, expert interviews with Eva Reznicek (head of the department of internal organisation and strategy for the City of Vienna kindergartens) and Ilse Appel (head of a kindergarten) as well as an observation in a kindergarten in the 15th district in answering their research question. Their findings were presented in a report accompanied by interview records (Eva Reznicek über Wiener Kindergärten und Geschlechtergerechtigkeit; Ilse Appel: Leiterin eines genderneutralen Kindergartens im Gespräch) and visuals documenting their field research. They revealed the various schemes utilized by the City of Vienna to overcome gender stereotypes in kindergartens. The interior space design, the selection of playing materials aimed to deconstruct dominant gender distinctions and allow children to develop their identity were crucial elements of the policy. Moreover, they have exposed organizational efforts in the professional development of kindergarten teachers addressing gendered matters of early childhood education and attempts at recruiting more men to the teacher's cohort.
- Group 2: Safety and the perception of security at public transport: Gendered policy measures of the City of Vienna. After careful theoretical considerations, the students

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conducted expert interviews with Martina Steiner, Head of the 24-hour Women's Emergency Hotline and Franz Broneder, Head of the Department for Prevention and Security Issues at Wiener Linien. They familiarized with the background and the details of the gender equality policy measures of the City of Vienna. Furthermore, they surveyed young women aged 18-23, mainly students, living in Vienna about their experiences and perceptions of safety using public transport in Vienna. Their research report showcased the numerous precautions in place in Vienna to ensure safety, especially for women. However, it also shed light to the shortcomings of those measures due to lacking awareness among the target group and more specifically to the hindrances women faced once actually in need for making use of dedicated safety buttons thus the limited perception of safety.

- Group 3: Gender mainstreaming & urban planning: The case of Neubaugasse and Seestadt Aspern. This research project focused on the impact, thus the success of gender mainstreaming at two major and recent urban planning projects of the City of Vienna. Based on a throughout literature review and document analyses, expert interviews Dipl.-Ing.in Eva Kail with urban planning specialists at the City of Vienna provided a nuanced picture about gendered urban planning methods. The field observations documented by videos and field notes exhibited the complex challenges to mainstreaming gender to the everyday experience of people walking on the streets of Vienna and realizing a transforming environment. Moreover, they revealed the consequences of the existence of “Angsträume”, specific abandoned places, bearing with the perception of fear, especially to women living in close vicinity. The lack of appreciation by the inhabitants limited the success of the policy interventions. Again, awareness and understanding proved to create the main barriers to engagement with transformations.
- Group 4: Community spaces (public parks) and gender mainstreaming. This project aimed at analysing the implementation and impact of the City of Vienna’s endeavours for gender-equal city life, studying two major public parks in Vienna, namely the “Währinger Park” and the “Parkanlage Prater”. The group first looked at urban planning policy and methods and conducted three expert interviews with employees of the MA13 (Renate Kraft and Katharina Röggl) and the MA42 (Ursula Dominikus). Furthermore, they observed on the field the actual conditions of women’s access to and possibilities of enjoying public open spaces at the Währinger Park and the Wiener Prater/Praterallee documented by videos and field notes. The participatory planning methods applied by the City of Vienna of social space analyses revealed the specific needs of young women

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subject to strict social control. Young women and girls needed bright retreat spaces in the parks to avoid being observed and controlled by their families. Moreover, girls in the age of 12 to 14 years often had to look after their younger siblings in the parks and therefore could make less use of the activities on offer. Thus, the NGO Juvivo Association was mandated to offer for appropriate childcare of the younger siblings so their sisters could enjoy recreation at the parks. The profound impact of the social context, the deprivation of the neighbourhood created severe limitations on policy and action.

- Group 5: Gender-neutral language policy of the City of Vienna in internal and external communication. The research project examined how the City of Vienna implemented gender-sensitive language policy with a mainstreaming approach within its own internal and external communication. After review of the relevant policy documents (Leitfaden für geschlechtergerechtes Formulieren und eine diskriminierungsfreie Bildsprache 2011), two expert interviews with Ursula Bauer, the Head of the Department for Gender Mainstreaming of the City of Vienna, and Eva Gassner, media spokesperson for the City of Vienna helped to draw an overall picture on the implementation of the policy. Next, a quantitative content analysis of the press releases of the City of Vienna and qualitative analysis of the accompanying visuals was conducted, contrasting the findings with the guidelines for the gender-sensitive language. The results exposed only slightly more than 50 per cent of the press releases of consequent use of gender-sensitive language. They concluded with recommending actions for further alignment with policy objectives. In conclusion, the research project added several insights and critical analyses on the usefulness of the gender mainstreaming concept and method. The dedicated use of gender statistics (Geschlechterverhältnissen bei der Parkbetreuung) and analyses (Sozialraumanalysen), gender sensitisation training e.g. of kindergarten teachers, as well as gender-sensitive stakeholder consultations (“Sag’s Wien” App) proved to contribute to the success of policy interventions. However, the lack of (gendered) awareness among target groups and audiences posed acute limitations to several efforts. The learnings on the vast array of mainstream practices bear with further theoretical relevance to the study of gender equality measures.

### Transfer aspect of the activity

1. Understanding the fundamental concepts of Gender Mainstreaming and its relevance to media: What are the lessons learned from the City of Vienna? What are the common issues with regards to inequalities in and by the
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media?

2. Conceptualizing, designing and implementing gender equality actions: What is or what could be the role of policy in addressing gender inequalities? What objectives should those policies address?
3. Strengthening of methodological skills: What were the methodological considerations necessary to study gender inequality in case of the City of Vienna? What were the limitations of the methods?
4. Empowering of next-generation media workforce to a socially reflective and responsible role in the media: What personal and professional strategies were observed throughout the Research Project successfully challenging gender inequalities? How do you see your role as a media professional in adhering to challenging gendered practices of media production?

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### Future orientation & sustainability

Visibility - The output of students? Research was published on the self-crafted and curated online platform on gender (in)equality and media in Austria, the Let's Talk Equal web platform. The Let's Talk Equal web platform served as a deliberative and empowering communication channel to present their work as a point of reference as well as to speak up and let their voices heard. Students? were provided with the opportunity for individual presence and publicity on the platform. They were given full freedom to name, brand, and design the website in a democratic manner. Participatory Action Learning and Action Research: the teaching method proved its appropriateness to empower and prepare students as future generations of media workforce to critically observe and challenge their roles and possibilities within the media with a socially responsible affection.

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### Achievement of objectives

The TP as a research process was documented throughout the project's lifetime with Individual Learning Journals completed after each class by the students and submitted at the end of the semester (n=65). Students had to systematically make logs and document the learning process, note their observations, analyse them and reflect, draw conclusions and map a personal action plan. Furthermore, I have recorded my observations in Teaching Diaries (n=19), all of which were systematically analysed across the main pillars of the TP. Also, Collegial Teaching Visits organised by the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Vienna (n=5) provided further input and feedback informing this paper. Additionally, students? Formal course evaluations submitted to the University of Vienna (n=69) and aggregated by the Quality Assurance Division (n=3) were further assessed against the criteria of clarity of teaching objectives, and satisfaction with the outcomes and the quality of teaching, as well as against the Research Question. Finally, the research reports and the individual

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testimonials expressed in the blog entries of the students were thematically studied as a matter of social reflection and responsiveness to gendered inequalities. Research paper is to be published soon (accepted).

**Measures to sustain this activity over the long term/expand it**

I keep continue cooperation (Service Learning) with other external partners implementing the same teaching method.

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**Links/Publications**

- <https://letstalkequal.blog/>
  - <https://cms.falter.at/blogs/thinktank/2020/07/15/geschlechterungerechte-medien/>
  - Research Paper upcoming (accepted).
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