

Gender Mainstreaming as a strategy for sustainable urban planning procedures

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(work in progress)

Abstract (100-150 words)

This paper includes a reflection on the process of implementation of gender mainstreaming in urban planning in Villach (Austria; 60,000 inhabitants). To integrate gender mainstreaming in urban planning processes means to promote structures which support the equality of women and men, by accepting their differences for the purpose of equal opportunities. The GM implementation process started in 2002 with the decision of the municipal council to integrate gender mainstreaming in the administration procedures. The methodical planning steps to integrate equal opportunities for women and men in urban planning will be exemplified by the concept “Gender mainstreaming in urban traffic planning” of the department for city and traffic planning of Villach. The evaluation of the case study shows that for a successful implementation it is necessary to build gender planning competence as a part of the planning expertise of urban planning experts in the administration.

Key words: gender mainstreaming, needs-oriented planning, social sustainability, urban planning, gender planning competence

1. Introduction

The present article seeks to contribute to the debate on the integration of the European political strategy of gender mainstreaming as a top-down administrative strategy in urban planning procedures.

Gender mainstreaming in urban planning focuses on the integration of gender equality in all stages of the planning process: from formulating the objectives to planning the measures and to implementing and evaluating them. Furthermore, the strategy supports the concept of ‘critical sustainability’ which is based on the three dimensions of ecology, economy and society (e.g. Grimm-Prettner and Wück 2009). Therefore, the work on the symbolic order (e.g. Irigaray 1987, Muraro 2003, Markert 2002) is crucial to achieve equal opportunities for men and women. A sustainable change towards gender equality in spatial planning must be rooted in the visualisation, deconstruction and redefinition of social values which create equality for men and women. These values and social norms are the very foundation for the integration of gender, group and age-specific criteria in urban planning procedures and policies.

The implementation of gender mainstreaming in urban planning at local and regional levels is governed by various legal sources. The European Strategy of

Gender Mainstreaming in particular serves as a guiding principle for the implementation of gender equality in sustainable planning procedures. Policy-making processes must be reorganised, improved, developed and evaluated to ensure that the actors normally involved in policy-making will include the perspective of gender equality in all policies at all levels and in all stages (Council of Europe 1998, Bergmann et. al. 2002). Gender mainstreaming was endorsed as the official European gender equality policy and is legislated in the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997 (e.g. Rees 2005).

Gender planning as an integral part of urban planning requires “a more explicit consideration of gender [...] in both how planning is delivered and in its wider impact” (Burgess 2008). It is generally assumed that gender planning supports the everyday lives of women and men and opens up perspectives for sustainable development on a communal and regional level (e.g. Feinstein and Servon 2005). Furthermore, the integration of gender mainstreaming into spatial urban policy-making will result in a more sustainable, equal and accessible environment for all members of society (e.g. IBAN 1996, Greed 2005, Burgess 2008).

Therefore, integrating gender mainstreaming in urban planning processes means promoting spatial structures which support the equality of women and men. Such support can only be provided if the differences between men and women are acknowledged and their age, life situation, ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds (e.g. Treaty of Amsterdam, art. 13, para. 1, Rees 2005) as well as the structural-spatial and socio-economic situation are taken into account.

This paper discusses the implementation of the political strategy of gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender considerations in urban planning in the city of Villach. To begin with, the objectives and requirements of the gender mainstreaming strategy in urban planning will be outlined. The structuralist working method of landscape planning which defines the approach of the case study will be presented and reflected upon in the light of the findings of the case study “Liveable Living Space for Men and Women” (2007/2008)¹. This case study aimed at building gender mainstreaming and gender planning competence in the administration of the Carinthian provincial government, municipalities and cities² and aimed at allocating and combining gender mainstreaming practice in the administration. It was carried out in co-operation with the planning department of the province of Carinthia and the department of women’s affairs. The target group was the administrative staff, in particular planning experts on local, regional and provincial levels. The project revolved

¹ The case study was financed by the Interreg IIIB project GenderAlp! – Spatial development for men and women.

² Carinthia is one of the nine provinces of Austria. The province counts about half a million inhabitants and stretches over 10,000 km². In the south it borders Italy and Slovenia. The biggest towns are Klagenfurt (90,000 inhabitants) and Villach (60,000 inhabitants). The majority of the population lives in small towns and villages. Carinthia is often referred to as the province of lakes and mountains. Tourism, along with medium-sized industrial enterprises, characterises the province’s economy. Carinthia is subdivided into 112 municipalities and 5 regions.

around two topics. The first topic, the exchange of experience made with the implementation of the strategy of gender mainstreaming in the administrative activity, focused on gender budgeting and gender planning in spatial and urban development. The second topic related to the qualification of planning experts in administration and in practice to enable them to implement gender planning on local, regional and provincial levels.

This paper outlines how gender mainstreaming can be integrated in the urban planning processes of the city of Villach by incorporating gender planning principles in the existing planning procedures and practice. Furthermore, the paper provides general suggestions for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in urban planning procedures. It concludes that capacity building is a vital prerequisite for a sustainable implementation and furthermore postulates that gender planning competence must become an integral part of the overall planning competence.

2. Gender mainstreaming requirements in urban planning procedures

In urban and landscape planning, gender mainstreaming is a political strategy with the objective of changing structures and values on the different levels of policy-making in planning procedures (e.g. Wotha 2000, Greed 2005, Damyanovic 2007). First of all, gender mainstreaming puts a strong emphasis on women and men as well as on the relationship between them. From the point of view of urban planning, this means that firstly, the built environment and open space structures must be assessed in terms of their usability in the daily lives of women and men with consideration of age, life situation and ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds of the users (e.g. Massey 1994, Burgess 2008, Löw 2008). In the next step, the underlying social conditions and values must be made visible and the factors of discrimination against certain user groups must be identified. The objective is to change the overall setting, the spatial structures and the underlying values in such a way as to achieve equality for men and women. In summary, gender mainstreaming considers the diverse requirements of men and women of all age cohorts in all stages of the planning procedures (e.g. Fainstein and Servon 2005).

3. The structuralist landscape planning assessment (SLA)

The structuralist approach in landscape planning supports the requirements and objectives of gender mainstreaming in urban development (e.g. Damyanovic and Roither 2009). The SLA is a analysing/planning loop which focuses on the systematic analysis and implementation of the various structural elements that determine the urban planning process, such as the built environment, the social environment and the economic environment.

The structuralist work distinguishes the symbolic, the imaginary and the real layers in the analysis and implementation of an urban planning process (e.g.

Deleuze 1973). As “the real without the symbolic is less than nothing” (Muraro 1993: 116), the symbolic layer or symbolic order is the central element of the structuralist method; besides it, reality (the real) and the world of imagination (the imaginary) can be identified. The symbolic order, i.e. the political and societal values, structures the imaginary and real layers. In urban planning it describes and defines the ways of thinking of the players involved. These players are first and foremost the planning experts in administration and practice and the policy-makers which determine the planning processes. The symbolic order becomes visible in the spatial structures of a city and in the planning models of the city (e.g. the planning model of functionalist town planning). The imaginary layer describes the imagination and images applied in planning procedures, models and planning concepts which are criteria for the daily work in administration and politics. The analysis on the imaginary layer leads to a assessment of different ways of living and the impact on the daily lives of men and women. Very often the planning models are professionally invented ideas which lead to “should-be realities” (e.g. Deleuze 1992, Damyanovic and Roither 2009). Mostly, these planning concepts are oriented on the image of the hegemonic masculinity (e.g. Cornell, R. 1985) and ignore the different ways of living of men and women as dependent on age, life situation, cultural and social background. Therefore, enormous mental, physical and financial effort is required every day to conceal, overcome and retouch the discrepancies between real and model life (e.g. Roither and Jauschneg 2007). The real layer is comprised in the spatial structures of the city, the different user groups of the spaces, the persons involved in the planning procedures and the legal framework of the setting.

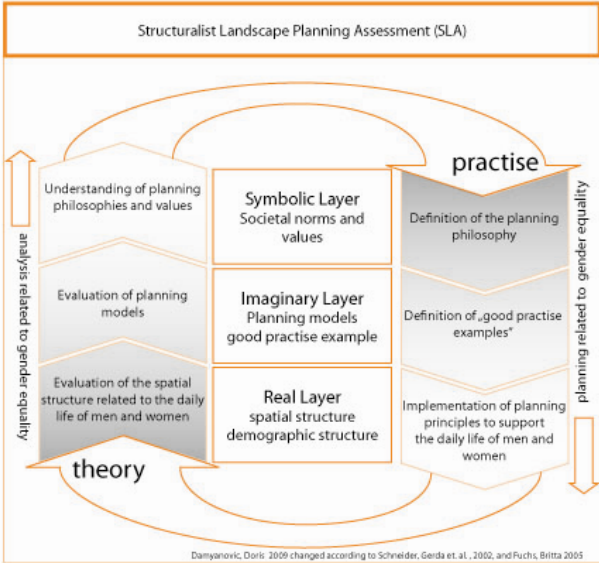


Fig. 1: Structuralist Landscape Planning Assessment (SLA)

The SLA starts with a description and analysis of the real or initial situation, i.e. the spatial patterns and the persons involved in the urban planning process. The

quality of the spatial structures are evaluated according to the level of support they provide to cater for the different needs of the users in their daily work. The scope of action provided by the legal planning framework is also analysed. In the next step, the impact of the planning concepts and models on the daily lives of men and women is evaluated. The last step of the planning analysis consists in understanding the symbolic order of the planning values and philosophies. The first step of implementation is to define and specify the gender equality objectives for urban planning. The visualisation and specification of the value attitudes which underlie the structures determine the urban gender planning process from a gender and diversity aware perspective (e.g. Bourdieu 2005). The next step is to work out planning models and concepts in view of the daily lives of men and women. Finally, concrete planning suggestions are made and implemented by the administration, accompanied by participatory planning methods (e.g. Fenster 2008).

4. The implementation of gender mainstreaming in city planning in Villach

Methods applied in the implementation process

The implementation concept for gender and diversity aware urban planning was developed in the knowledge brokerage forum “Regional and local planning” which was part of the case study “Liveable Living Space for Men and Women”. The research team worked out a concept for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in urban planning in close co-operation with the participants of the forum. The participants of the knowledge brokerage forum were representatives from the departments of city planning of Villach and Klagenfurt, the Villach municipal department of human resources, organisation and controlling, the garden and parks department of Klagenfurt, the department of women’s affairs of Klagenfurt and planning consultants. The participants were divided into two groups. The first group worked on the implementation concept for the integration of gender mainstreaming in urban traffic planning in Villach. The second group focused on the implementation concept for the integration of gender mainstreaming in urban park design in Klagenfurt.

The procedure for strategy development applied in the workshops reflected the requirements of the gender mainstreaming strategy and applied the concept of structuralist landscape planning assessment. It involved four steps. The first step was to communicate the benefits of gender mainstreaming in urban planning procedures to the participants and to analyse the legal framework on federal, provincial and local levels. This included illustrating the benefits of needs-oriented and requirement-oriented planning as an important contribution to the sustainable development of a city and to the quality of life of the citizens (e.g. Zibell 2006).

In the second step, the participants were invited to analyse an actual planning project of the city. Different methods of analysis were introduced by means of

good-practice examples. In the forum, the “4R” method was used to analyse the urban planning project. This method was originally developed by researcher Gertrud Aström for the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and was translated to spatial and urban planning in the framework of the GenderAlp! project (e.g. Döge 2002, Petterson , 2004; Damyanovic et. al. 2005). The 4R method is structured as follows: the 1st R refers to the representation of men and women in planning projects and processes, the 2nd R stands for the equal distribution of resources such as space, time and money. The legal framework and the rights form the 3rd R. The 4th R stands for the realities in terms of social norms, values and existing planning models which make the inequality between men and women visible (e.g. Damyanovic 2007).

The third step was to define objectives for the planning department and the projects as well as to identify useful connecting points to implement gender mainstreaming in urban planning procedures. In the fourth step, the participants worked out how gender mainstreaming could be implemented in public procurement and planning procedures. To this end, a concept matrix was used to determine how the participants could account for gender equality and implement gender mainstreaming in the steps of the planning procedures of their own sphere of action.

The framework for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Villach

Currently, the legal basis in Villach for the integration of gender equality in urban planning is provided by legislation at a European, national, provincial and city level.

The main statutory source is the Treaty of Amsterdam which requires the incorporation of a gender perspective in all international and national mainstreamed policies. A gender equality duty is laid down in the Federal Constitutional Law and, at a Carinthian provincial level, in the province’s equal treatment act of 1994 (Kärntner Gleichbehandlungsgesetz 1994) and the antidiscrimination act of 2005 (Kärntner Antidiskriminierungsgesetz 2005). Furthermore, the municipal council of Villach has explicitly committed itself to gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective in all political concepts and measures, with the objective of achieving equal opportunities for both genders (e.g. the decision of the municipal council of Villach in 2005). The council has set up a steering team to work out a gender mainstreaming implementation concept. This concept includes five points, namely measures to ensure appropriate qualification, the generation of gender specific data, suggestions for pilot actions, reporting and controlling, and financing. However, it can be stated that the existing legal framework does not contain any guidance on how to implement gender mainstreaming in the urban planning procedures. In 2007, the department for city and traffic planning initiated the first pilot action, the project “Efficiency optimisation of traffic light infrastructure”, which implemented gender mainstreaming in urban planning. The concept was worked

out by planning experts at the department for city and traffic planning, together with a representative from the Villach department of HR, organisation and controlling. The objective was to develop a systematic method for the integration of gender mainstreaming in future urban planning procedures.

The concept of the “gender perspective in urban traffic planning”

The main objective was to review the existing traffic light infrastructure and to adapt it to the new traffic safety requirements. The concept was developed in three steps: analysis of the initial situation, formulation of the gender equality objectives of the procedures and integration of gender mainstreaming in the actual procedures (e.g. Damyanovic et. al. 2007).

Analysis of the project “Efficiency optimisation of traffic light infrastructure”

The 1st R (representation): Who is involved in the planning procedure? Who will be affected by traffic planning?

The department for city and traffic planning, the decision-makers of the city of Villach, special interest groups, construction management, abutting owners, schools and owners of businesses in the neighbourhood will be involved in the planning process. The project will affect pedestrians, cyclists, users of public means of transport, motorists and men and women living in the neighbourhood.

The 2nd R (the resources of space, time and money): How is space and time distributed? Four scenarios were discussed: First scenario: extending the crossing times for pedestrians. Second scenario: favouring public means of transport. Third scenario: optimising individual traffic. Fourth scenario: favouring cyclists.

The 3rd R (rules and legal framework): What constitutes the legal framework?

The legal framework is defined mainly by the Austrian directive on traffic light infrastructure, road traffic regulations, the Austrian standard for traffic planning (ÖNORM) and the public procurement law. The legal framework for the implementation of gender mainstreaming is the aforementioned decision of the municipal council of Villach of 2005.

The 4th R (realities: social standards, planning models and values): Which were the underlying planning values? The planning models and social standards are part of the general traffic concept of Villach, the local development concept of Villach and the Villach land-use plan and, furthermore, the personal values of planners and stakeholders.

Formulation of gender equality objectives for the department and the project

1. Gender equality objectives for the department for city and traffic planning:
 - Implementation of the gender mainstreaming decision of the municipal council (2005)
 - The overall traffic concept of Villach is the framework for decision-making
 - Integration of gender mainstreaming objectives of the city of Villach in the traffic planning concept; this also refers to the decisions of the municipal council, of the political head of the department for city and traffic planning and to the budget debate
 - The directive on traffic light infrastructure provides the framework for the implementation of the gender equality objectives
2. Objectives for the project:
 - Optimizing the effectiveness of the traffic light infrastructure
 - Use-of-potential analysis – who, how and why?
 - Directive on traffic light infrastructure
3. Gender equality objectives for the project and connecting points for the implementation of gender mainstreaming:
 - Analysis of user data in terms of gender equality aspects
 - Programming the red/orange/green indicators so as to correct situations of discrimination

Integration of gender equality in public procurement

Steps of the planning procedure	Participants and sphere of action	Accounting for gender equality and implementing gender mainstreaming
<i>Deficiency statement regarding traffic lights is issued by the planning department</i>	<p>Department for city and traffic planning, mainly its political head</p> <p>The municipality applies for funding from the provincial government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision of the municipal council of Villach (2005) - Overall traffic concept of Villach - Villach local development concept - Land-use plan
<i>A report is submitted to the political head of department</i>		
<i>The order is placed by the political head of department</i>		
<i>Invitation to submit quotes</i>	Department for city and traffic planning, planning offices	GM competence of the planners is introduced as a requirement for the project
<i>The procurement committee and the planning committee of the city of Villach take their decision</i>	Allocation committee, the planning committee of the city, the political head of the budget department	GM is integrated in the decision-making process as required by the 2005 municipal council decision
<i>The planning offices are contracted</i>		
<i>The planning project is drawn up</i>	<p>Open planning procedure</p> <p>Responsible party is the planning office in co-operation with the department of city planning, representatives of interest groups</p>	Different perspectives are offered
<i>The variant is selected</i>	Department of city planning, political head of department	The gender effectiveness of the different variants of the project are examined
<i>Approval by the local authorities</i>	<p>Planning committee</p> <p>City senate (Stadtssenat)</p> <p>Municipal council</p>	Implementation of the GM resolution
<i>The municipal civil engineering department is contracted</i>		

<i>Public call for tender for the construction work</i>	Municipal civil engineering department	Tender criteria are used as tools to steer gender effectiveness
<i>Approval by the building committee</i>	Building committee	Implementation is achieved through a political decision
Implementation of the construction work		

5. Capacity building in the municipality enables a vision for sustainable urban planning development

The case study has made it clear that gender competence of the planning experts in the administration, the practitioners and other stakeholders is a key prerequisite. However, given the inter-relationships between gender, space and power, the form and function of the built environment can make a difference and should not be overlooked (Burgess, 2008). The successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in urban planning requires first and foremost raising the awareness of how important it is to take into account the needs and requirements of women and men throughout the entire decision-making process (e.g. Greed 1994, Zibell 2006). The research work has shown that it can be very difficult to convince especially male planners of the benefits of gender planning (e.g. Greed 2005, Burgess 2008). For a sustainable implementation, the city has to provide more training for its staff to build gender planning competence. The planners and stakeholders must be able to integrate the gender planning approach in their own sphere of competence. Such further education will sharpen their perception of the differing needs of men and women with consideration to age, life situation, ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds. Furthermore, it will help them develop the skills needed to apply indicators, tools and methods for the purpose of a sustainable implementation. As Burgess (2008) mentioned in her article, “more advice and training is needed to give planners and regeneration practitioners information about how to turn the requirements of [...] new legislation into practical actions”.

6. Sustainable urban planning is based on gender planning competence

The conclusion of this paper is that gender planning competence is part of the planning competence of each individual planning discipline, such as landscape planning, spatial planning, architecture, geography and traffic planning (e.g. Damyanovic et. al, 2007).

Building gender planning competence aims at endowing the individuals involved with the ability to autonomously apply knowledge and skills related to gender mainstreaming in spatial planning and development. Competence is

different from qualification. Qualification means to acquire explicit knowledge, while competence means to build the capability to act.

Compared to qualification, competence becomes particularly important when the goals of action are not or only vaguely defined and the future perspective appears open and complex (e.g. Fuxjäger 2007).

For building gender planning competence in urban planning it is important to consider the scope of action of the participants. Gender planning competence includes four fields of expertise – professional expertise, methodological knowledge, social competence and gender mainstreaming expertise. These fields of expertise are important for the sustainable implementation of gender mainstreaming in spatial and urban planning procedures (e.g. Blickhäuser and von Barga 2006). Gender mainstreaming competence, i.e. the knowledge about the social construction of gender as well as the understanding of gender-fair objectives and strategies in administrative planning procedures as determined by European and Austrian law, is a cross-sectional competence and an integral part of building gender planning competence.

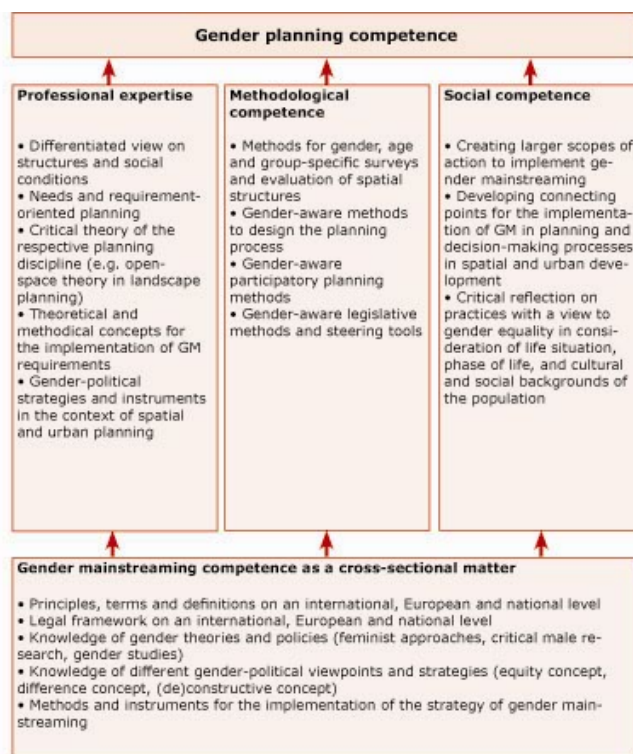


Fig 2: Four fields of gender planning competence (e.g. Damjanovic et. al. 2007)

The “differentiated view” on structures and social conditions

Professional expertise describes the ability to exercise a profession and the knowledge about relevant procedures, processes and courses of action. In terms of gender planning competence, it is important that gender and diversity knowledge is included in such a professional expertise. Gender knowledge is becoming an integral part of the planning expertise. It includes knowledge about the complexity of gender and diversity issues and the findings of gender and

diversity studies (e.g. Genderkompetenzzentrum, 2007). Gender and diversity knowledge is therefore an addition to the existing professional expertise. Furthermore, new theories, instruments and methods keep surfacing in the discourse. An important component of knowledge brokerage is teaching the “differentiated view” in urban planning procedures. The application of the differentiated view allows to visualise the needs and requirements of men and women in consideration of age, life situation and ethnic, cultural and social background, and to formulate measures for the purpose of gender equality in planning procedures. The differentiated view refers to both theory and methodology of the planning discipline.

Gendering of projects and administration procedures as a part of methodological competence

Methodological competence refers to the knowledge of gender planning projects and procedures. Presenting methods and tools to the participants in the qualification process has an important impact on the sustainability of the implementation of gender equality. The objective of the knowledge brokerage process is the acquisition of expertise to develop projects and implement procedures which account for gender equality aspects in urban planning processes.

The initial situation and the solutions derived from it in particular require a gender-aware description and analysis. Therefore, methods of gender-aware analysis are important in all knowledge brokerage initiatives. Furthermore, methods and tools which integrate a gender perspective in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decision-making processes in urban planning are essential to achieve sustainable implementation of equal opportunities in administration. For the qualification process it is important to develop instructions on how to integrate gender mainstreaming in all steps of the administrative procedures in urban planning. Moreover, the knowledge about participatory planning is a prerequisite to achieve grass-root acceptance for projects.

The ability to bring gender in the mainstream as a part of social competence

Social competence refers to the ability of creating constructive working conditions to implement a gender-aware perspective in urban planning (e.g. Blickhäuser and Barga 2006: 10). For the process of implementation it is important to find connecting points as points of departure on the one hand, and to develop a framework which ensures the sustainability of what is implemented on the other. Furthermore, a reflection on the scope of influence of the persons involved and the possibilities to integrate gender equality on all levels is important.

7. Outlook

To conclude, the main finding of this research paper is that gender planning competence as an integral part of planning expertise contributes to a sustainable urbanity which relies on the fundamental appreciation of gender equality and social sustainability to ensure a high quality of life for men and women. However, a lot of work still lies ahead. The results presented in this paper clearly show to what great extent the fulfilment of the gender equality duty depends on the commitment of individual persons in administration, business and politics (Wotha 2000). The decision-makers must therefore promote more strongly a top-down approach to the strategy of gender mainstreaming on all levels in order to anchor its principles in the urban planning procedures (Greeds 2005). The research recommends that the provincial and city government authorities allocate more resources to achieve a stronger impact. 'True' implementation of gender mainstreaming in the local spatial planning procedure used for urban planning is needed.

8. Acknowledgments

This research work was supported by the planning department and the women's affairs department of the Carinthian provincial government and the European Community (Interreg Alpinspace).

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