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Ebru Kurt Özman*, Ayşe Gümeç Karamuk**, Aysun Aygün Oğur***, Rümeyza Bayar****, Büşra Güven Güney*****, A. Eymen Karabulut*****, Zeynep Özdemir*****, Özlem Tepeli Türel*****

Situating Feminist Urbanism within Planning Education in Turkey: A Pre-Manifesto *Feminist Şehirciliği Türkiye'deki Planlama Eğitimi İçinde Konumlandırmak: Bir Manifesto Hazırlığı*

Abstract

The authors of this paper - all women and early-career researchers - address the place of feminist perspective within planning education. This positioning is revealed through 'dilemmas' and 'epiphanies' in the authors' experiences by employing an autoethnographic perspective. In the quest to create gender-equal urban areas, the study explores what planning education and teaching & practice experiences can offer to accommodate feminist insights. And it uncovers challenges and potentials in creating competence on feminist urbanism in planning, through rigorous analysis of personalized narratives. We anticipate our research to act as a pre-manifesto to provoke 'planning' audiences for the upswing in inclusive urban planning.

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Özet

Kariyerinin başındaki araştırmacılardan oluşan kadın yazarların ele aldığı bu makalede feminist şehirciliğin kent planlama eğitimindeki yeri incelenmektedir. Bu konumlandırma, otoetnografik bir bakış açısı kullanılarak yazarların deneyimlerindeki 'ikilemler' ve 'aydınlanma anları (epifaniler)' aracılığıyla yapılmaktadır. Çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine sahip kentsel alanlar yaratma arayışında, planlama eğitim, öğretim ve uygulama deneyimlerinin feminist içgörülerini barındırmak için neler sunabileceğini araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, kişiselleştirilmiş anlatıların detaylı analizi yoluyla, planlamada feminist şehircilik konusunda yetkinlik yaratmadaki zorlukları ve potansiyelleri ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Araştırmamızın, kapsayıcı kentsel planlamanın yükselişi için 'planlama' kitlelerini kıskırtacak bir ön manifesto görevi görmesini beklemekteyiz.

Keywords

Feminist urbanism, planning education, gender-inclusive cities, autoethnography, pre-manifesto, Turkey

Anahtar Kelimeler

Feminist şehircilik, planlama eğitimi, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitlikçi kentler, otoetnografi, pre-manifesto, Türkiye

- * e.kurtozman@uva.nl, University of Amsterdam, ORCID: 0000-0001-7947-4038.
** ucfaagk@ucl.ac.uk, University College London, ORCID: 0000-0003-0505-4406. (corresponding author)
*** aaygun@pau.edu.tr, Pamukkale University, ORCID: 0000-0002-9403-7124.
**** rumeysa.bayar@erzurum.edu.tr, Erzurum Technical University, ORCID: 0000-0002-6744-4429.
***** guvenb@itu.edu.tr, Istanbul Technical University, ORCID: 0000-0002-1656-8392.
***** bakirciar@itu.edu.tr, Istanbul Technical University, ORCID: 0000-0001-8787-6555.
***** zeynep.ozdemir@amasya.edu.tr, Amasya University, ORCID: 0000-0001-8412-9044.
***** tepeli@itu.edu.tr, Istanbul Technical University, ORCID: 0000-0001-7755-4480.

Introduction

As early-career women planning academics, we strongly argue that establishing a feminist perspective in urban planning is imperative. On the one hand, the way we experience, learn, and teach urban planning is quite androcentric as it stands. On the other hand, we desire an urban environment for all, regardless of gender, status, or any priority. Otherwise, what we have as cities turns into an excluding, unjust, and even insecure place, like what we experience now. In this sense, it is vital to track on how to build up just, secure and inclusive environments, not only for women but for a wider community.

Although the issue considered in this paper revolves around the obvious fact that cities are not inclusive, the authors underline the challenges they face when long-held conceptualizations in planning like public interest and equality do not account for society's heterogeneity. Therefore, adopting the approach of feminist urbanism, the paper contends that incorporating insights from feminist theory into planning education is instrumental in creating gender-equal cities. Following that, the paper enquires about how feminist urbanism can be situated in planning education in Turkey. The experiences of the authors, embodied in gender perspective together with planning expertise, constitute the empirical material of this paper. These reflections are key as data, "[...] as planning academics [...] can contribute to the re-positioning of planning, the teaching method, the way to enact it within the profession and how to develop new research strategies" (Fubini, 2004, p. 20).

The paper investigates the contested terrain of planning education in Turkey in terms of the status quo of feminist urbanism. For this, the authors harness autoethnography as a method that takes their personal experiences into account (i.e., their own introspections as both women and planning scholars) to better understand and explore the planning culture. This method allows researchers to bring their own lived experiences and perspectives, and to examine how their understanding intersects with the context. Highlighting 'dilemmas' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), 'epiphanies' (Ellis et al, 2011), and nuanced understandings in the authors' stories support the paper's analytical structure by providing a rigorous narrative and engaging the audience. The reflections gathered in a thorough manner are refined and synthesized under two categories: *planning education* and *teaching & practice experience*. The authors believe this analysis constitutes a vital contribution, as each of these stages comes with specific challenges and opportunities whose clarification can offer a framework as to how to situate feminist urbanism within existing urban planning scholarship.

In line with the global mainstream, planning education in Turkish universities is based on a 'traditional' academic curriculum that revolves around ethics and values pertaining to planning practice aimed at the public interest (Penpecioglu & Taşan-Kok, 2016). *Gender* as a subject occupies only a rudimentary place and an overarching intention to develop this perspective lacks in the discipline. This can be displayed with the low number of courses and research opportunities dedicated to developing skills and competence required for visioning

gender-inclusive cities (Alkan, 1999; 2012). Moreover, the fact that new planning departments keep appearing with newly founded universities across the country without any accompanying improvement in teaching and research capacities exacerbates this matter. What's more, the high level of representation and participation of women in planning scholarship – more than half of the planning students, practitioners and instructors are women – seems to be insufficient in igniting any interest in the field in terms of creating gender-inclusive spaces (Alkan, *ibid.*; YÖKATLAS 2022).

Looking at urban planning through planning education's diverse perspective and concrete feminist practices is what brings a unique aspect to this paper. Within the current planning education context that features the dominant prioritization of plan-making (Rorke-Wickins & Wilson, 2009), conventional planning and spatial arrangements end up being extensively androcentric. While recent works show a tendency to move planning towards a more inclusive and feminist state, overcoming the instillation of gender biases in planning students requires a more comprehensive approach (see e.g., Sahama et. al., 2021). With the awareness of this gap, this paper addresses how conceptual and political insights of feminist urbanism are integrated into planning education in a way to create inclusive urban environments. In addition, having been inspired by *A Manifesto for the Just City* created by Roberto Rocco et al. (2021) it also hopes to act as a “*pre-manifesto*” in urban academia, raising a voice for ‘positive change’ in the creation of gender-inclusive cities in the country. The authors argue that references to concrete experiences like theirs would contribute to indicating the immediate need for a manifesto for gender-inclusive cities; this is additionally meaningful in terms of addressing the gap between ‘planning practice and academic knowledge’, which Aksümer (2022) also points out. Before providing a broader picture of planning education in Turkey in relation to feminist urbanism, the paper first presents the critical influence of feminist insights in planning discussions in general. Following the presentation of the Turkish context, the paper moves on to the methodology section. It then provides an analysis of the early-career planning academics' reflections. In the light of these, the conclusion includes recommendations.

The impact of feminist thought in planning

The feminist critique of socio-spatial thought

Feminist urbanism foregrounds how women's everyday spatial experiences strikingly differ from men's, by pointing out the former's struggles in conventionally planned cities. It also posits that egalitarian redistribution of services for city denizens is dependent on how women's needs are considered in the formulation of spatial arrangements (see Adame Castillo et al., 2021; Col-lectiu Punt 6, 2019; Falú, 2018; Kern, 2021; Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015; Peake, 2020). The implication that women's urban experiences are distinctive and that scrutinizing them is conducive to “a city for all” rests on the legacy of past feminist studies.

In invoking gender as “a fundamental facet of the societies in which we live and we research” (Bondi, 1992, p. 98), these studies shed light on the entanglement of gender relations with societal processes and structures. Feminist geography has particularly offered profound insights in understanding intricate dynamics behind the spatial production of cities, while documenting gender inequalities that emerge in connection with the urbanization process: Through multiple issues including scarce employment opportunities for women, the ramifications of unpaid household labor for social security and welfare, access to facilities and safety in public space, feminist geography has displayed the ways patriarchy conditions gendered roles, dwindling life chances and well-being of women, while cities continuously transform. (Hançer, 2021; Kern, 2021; Massey, 1994, Peake et al. 2021).

Analyses of spatial features (e.g., accessibility, the way private and public spaces are defined and differ from each other) playing a role in determining gender roles have gained more rigor, in time, once they started to look more closely at how gendered norms are legitimized via hegemonic practices and actions across social, economic and political structures (Fraser, 1990). This has eventually required more detailed interrogations of the internalization of values by actors, institutionalized practices within the social order, and their knowledge bases deemed to be rational, objective, and universal (Bondi, 1992; Chouinard, 1997). In this sense, planning that embodies various institutionalized practices registers “many of feminism’s concerns” (Roy, 2001, p. 109): Conventional planning decisions are not aligned with women’s needs in modern life. To illustrate, the zoning approach separating the home from the work reflects the traditional thinking that women belong to “private” while men to “public” space (Hayden, 1980). On the other hand, zoning based on singular functions (such as housing, commercial, urban facilities, etc.) is found to generate unsafe places at certain hours of the day which restricts the time and space that can be used by women without any safety concerns (Bielinskas et. al., 2014). Moreover, accessibility and affordability of transportation and urban facilities are other issues that problematize women’s participation in urban life. The public transportation schedule is prepared based on the needs of office workers, mostly men. This approach doesn’t fit into working mothers who have more complex travel patterns due to cultural responsibilities (Sahama et. al., 2021; Greed & Reeves, 2005; Rorke-Wickins & Wilson, 2009). Such a view emphasizes that needs can be highly differentiated and urban space should be planned considering those, not only for women, but also men, children, the elderly etc. (TMMOB, 2013). Gender-sensitive urban planning thus appears as contributing to more convenient, comfortable, and safe living environments that support particularly women to be in every aspect of urban life equally (Altay Baykan, 2015; TMMOB, 2013).

While this stream of critiques has problematized the reasons and consequences of disregarding gender in the decision-making of matters related to the organization of social life – as well as the lack of women’s participation in the decision-making process – it has been chiefly led by Anglo-American scholars since the 1970s (Tuncer, 2018). Nonetheless, calls for recognizing transnational contexts are being widely shared in feminist geography (Peake,

2016). This is related to the increasing awareness around intersectionality that spotlights how different factors (e.g., class, ethnicity, gender, disability etc.) appear in the characterization of gender inequality. Thanks to its reflexive and relational deposition, the feminist approach is also perceptive of how these factors – along with diverse gender views – have varying significance and embodiment across space and time (Peake, et al. 2021). As this offers a more comprehensive look into multiple conditions related to women’s lives in terms of women’s place in real life – or the extent of their exclusion from urban life in different places – we come to see that feminist studies touch upon a vast analytical terrain. For this reason, the determination of actual forces playing a role in such phenomena requires a careful approach.

Concerning the gender and space relationship, social sciences literature in Turkey comprises numerous themes – from gendered and discriminatory nature of labor markets to the unequal redistribution of public services, from women’s right to the city to representation in urban politics (see Alkan, 2012). While they provide useful content for planning studies, we do not see a meaningful integration of the feminist perspective into the field. Alkan (*ibid.*) further points out gender and space relationship has been mostly evaluated from a modernist paradigm. This is seen especially in studies that look at women living in informal settlements, unable to go beyond analyses based on “failed integration into modern city life”. This point becomes essential, when we think of the significance of norms and visions guiding practices like planning that shape socio materialities of places. If planning aims to be gender-inclusive (as illustrated above), its practices should be aligned with a relevant and coherent ideology. Moreover, planning practice stands at the intersection of state, market and public spheres encompassing various norms and visions that are continuously circulated, communicated, negotiated, or opposed (cf. Fraser, 1990). How certain norms prevail in implementation while others become weak is a complicated process that requires a closer inspection.

Reviewing the education and experience relationship

Planning formation is a multidisciplinary approach to the space that requires analytical thinking and socio-technic resolutions. The complex social, political, economic, and administrative structure of the cities need to be well-apprehended in order to develop skills to define problems, strategically develop solutions, collaborate, set visions and manage spatial development. However, in this interdisciplinary perspective that presents a variety of thinking and methodologies, gender is addressed poorly, in a detached manner, under the separate rubric of “diversity”. The potential reasons for this can be listed as; i) the expectations of students and other public institutions that determine the scope of the curriculum; ii) the focus of planning education which is on developing skills to produce good plans which don’t have to have a gender emphasis iii) the scope of mainstream planning theory that doesn’t cover gender issues (Peake, 2020; Rorke-Wickins & Wilson, 2009; Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992).

Although an interdisciplinary curriculum is adopted in planning schools in Turkey,

similar problems can be observed in planning education and practice with less emphasis on gender issues. The critics of the planning experience – from education to practice – give clues about the reasons for this gap. First of all, the planning process lacks a democratic environment that combines what is “learned” with what is “experienced”. According to Tekeli, the level of integration of academia and the city is more important than the content of the lectures (Osmanoğlu & Olgun, 2020). In such a nondemocratic environment, short-term economic interests become dominant, academia and education lose their leading role in implementation, plans turn into just a procedure to supply certain power groups’ needs and demands and as predicted, social and environmental concerns such as urban justice, minorities, public prosperity, gender are underestimated. Even though they might be mentioned in particular plan reports – generally superficially – they don’t have spatial references (Büyükcivelek, 2020; Ersoy, 2007). Consequently, the planning experience loses its multi-dimensional perspective that education imposes, and it is degraded to a technical paper. The frame for this technical paper is defined by “Spatial Plans Preparation Legislation” which emphasizes “public interest” from a gender-neutral perspective.

Further, this market-oriented planning approach affects planning education by making technical aspects dominate and disconnecting theoretical discussions in planning studios which are high-credit applied courses (Koroğlu, 2011). While concentrating on the technical aspects, planners-to-be underestimate what urban experience and theoretical doctrine are. According to Alkan (1999) as the number of female students and professionals in city planning increases, critical voices have intensified in that field. On the other hand, although contemporary approaches embrace feminism, in practice conventional patriarchal implementations can be difficult to unpack.

Planning education is also criticized for being visual-quality-oriented in studio lectures. Studio education starts with “basic design” which brings design and visualization into the focus of the planning exercise. Therefore, the “good plan” target is diminished to “visually good design” which undoubtedly breaks the tie between multi-dimensional theoretical lectures and planning studio practices (Koroğlu, 2011).

Planning context in Turkey

Women in planning

In the light of the literature presented above, it can be concluded that the planning context pertaining to feminist concerns is a globally challenging issue. To display how feminist urbanism and gender issues are addressed in the planning discipline in Turkey, the paper presents the representation of women. Although the number of women planners (and planners-to-be) can’t be evaluated as representation alone, the increase in the quantity of women in the planning

field intensifies the feminist criticisms, Alkan (1999) states. So, it is of great significance to refer to this principal data to understand the Turkish context. It then focuses further on planning schools and examines the presence of gender-related themes in planning curricula.

In this part, the sex ratio for planning students, academics and planners is examined. The distribution of planning students by sex shows a higher number of women in City and Regional Planning departments. In state and foundation universities affiliated to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), there are 35 planning departments in total. Based on 2021 data, female students constitute 57.3% of all 8959 students enrolled in planning departments, while male students constitute 42.6%. Moreover, female planning students in the 4 largest-cities outnumber males, as seen in Figure 1 (YÖKATLAS, 2022).

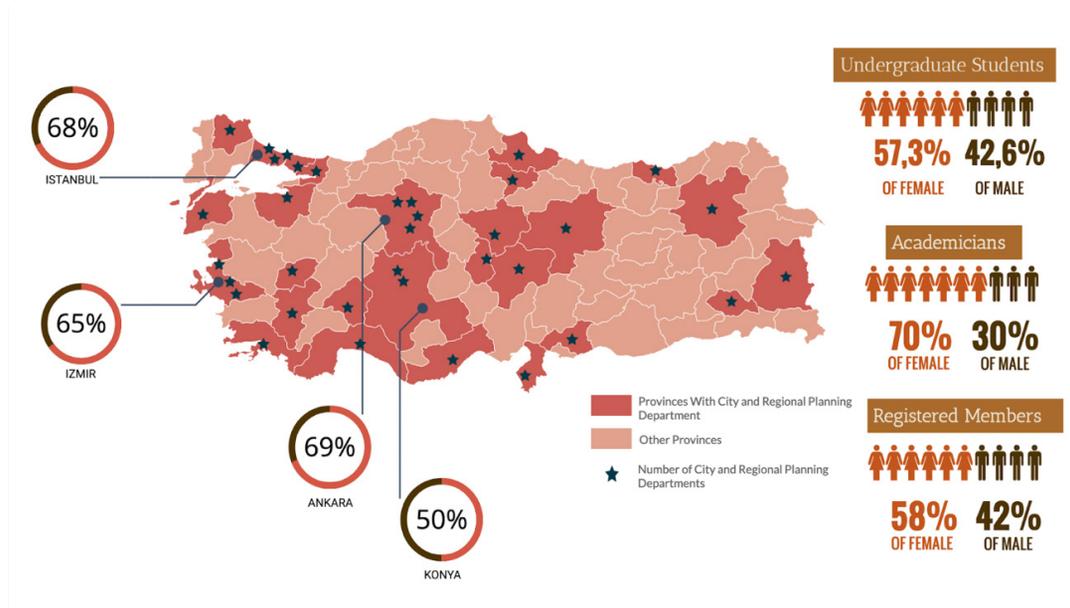


Figure 1 Sex distributions of City and Regional Planning Students, academics, and members of the Chamber of City Planners (prepared by the authors).

The quantitative dominance of women can be clearly observed in academia and in the Turkish Chamber of City Planners. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of women among 486 academics in the City and Regional Planning departments is 70% (YÖKAKADEMİK, 2022), while it is 58% (4622 women members) out of 7993 members of the Chamber of City Planners.

Planning curriculum in universities

This section examines offered courses that are relevant to gender issues in the undergraduate and graduate curricula of planning schools in Turkey in 2021. According to the data retrieved from the Council of Higher Education Thesis Center (2022), only 17% of these schools have basic courses on the subject, such as ‘urban sociology’ and ‘city and community management’ in which gender issues are partially discussed. Although curricula on the concept of ‘social equality’ and ‘social problems’ have been developed in many planning schools, it is striking that very few of them have gender themes, as a part of social equality (Oğuz, 2016). Furthermore, upon completion of their bachelor’s degree, planners mostly don’t have a feminist perspective, as a consequence of non-inclusive planning curricula. This deficiency (and disconnection) reveals that the status quo in urban planning education cannot provide a basis to discuss and disseminate gender-equality.

To estimate the extent to which gender issues constitute research interests among postgraduate students, 1196 graduate theses produced between 1999-2022 were scanned. This was carried out by filtering “gender” keyword in theses’ titles. The results indicate that only 0.5% of the theses are produced under the departments of City and Regional Planning. Remarkably, gender-focused dissertations in planning departments increased since 2010 and peaked in 2021. Meanwhile, a title search with “women and space” yields much fewer results (Thesis Center, 2022), indicating that gender is not a popular subject among postgraduate planning studies.

Planning practice and other activities

As stated above, women in non-academic planning practice are also high in number, However, when it comes to gender distribution pertaining to decision-makers in planning –especially in municipalities where official plans are approved– we see a contrary picture with drastically low rate of women practitioners (Alkan, 1999).

To bring a comprehensive look, also other activities centering gender issues should be addressed under this section. One of the most remarkable events contributing to instill feminist urbanism into the practice is the summer training camp organized by the Chamber of City Planners, which deliberately points out the gender issues among other socio-spatial themes (SPO, 2021). In addition, in the 46th Colloquium of World Urbanism Day organized by the Chamber, presentations considerably touch upon the role of women in the city under the theme of ‘Justice in Society and Space’. In 2021, the Chamber’s equality commission also organised, for the third time, the ‘Gender, City and Space Symposium’, bringing academics, planning students and planning practitioners together. Another striking event is the ‘Cities Developing Solutions: Re-think, Co-act Forum’, organized by the Marmara Municipalities Union in 2021 (MARUF, 2021). ‘Woman-up for urban challenges: Forum of Mayors’ targeted

to bring attention to the role and positioning of women in city management (MARUF, 2021). Furthermore, municipalities take initiatives in carrying out research centering women's struggles. One of them is the street application of Women Accessing Public Transportation (TOPUK) Project, which was initiated in cooperation with other public institutions to make public transportation routes accessible and safe for women (Çınar, 2022). Recently municipalities established specified sub-departments called 'equality units' for social justice, which is also a promising progress.

The place of gender inequality in planning practice in Turkey

A wider view of gender inequality statistics helps to better understand the roots of the non-inclusive planning practices in Turkey. According to the "Global Gender Gap Index" of the World Economic Forum, Turkey ranks 124th among 146 countries based on inequalities between the male and female population. Additionally, it is ranked 134th in the category of women's participation in the economy and equal opportunities, 101st in access to education, 99th in health and survival, and 112th in representation in political life (Weforum, 2022). These facts demonstrate the absence of women in socio-economic urban life in an egalitarian way.

As presented above, injustice in society unsurprisingly creates invisible (even visible) obstacles for women to participate in gender-based local decision-making processes, access to urban services, economic empowerment and business life, education services and health services (Şimşek, 2021). To eliminate these problems experienced by women, international collaborations take initiatives in Turkey. The most substantial of these is the "United Nations Women Friendly Cities Joint Programme" that led to the preparation of "Local Equality Action Plans (LEAP)" in pilot municipalities to ensure gender equality in these cities (Kadıncıkentler, 2022).

Within the scope of the Women Friendly Cities United Nations Joint Programme, neighborhood studies were carried out in Adıyaman, Antalya, Bursa, Gaziantep, İzmir, Kars, Malatya, Mardin, Nevşehir, Samsun, Şanlıurfa, and Trabzon. In these cities, women-friendly public open spaces, landscapes of educational institutions and access to urban services were designed. Magnolia Park, located in Bursa Nilüfer district, is an example of the redesign of open public spaces prioritizing safety-concern issues specifically for women-users (Tekinbaş, 2015). Nevşehir Municipality applied the "Women-Friendly Neighborhood Governance Model" aiming to include women in decision-making processes (Kadıncıkentler, 2022). Local government in Şanlıurfa preformed "There are Women in This City too" project to make women part of the planning process of urban services, as the local administration in Kars did in the project titled "Women are Everywhere" (Sabancıvakfı, 2008).

Methodology & Data Collection

In order to scrutinize urban planning from the perspective of long-standing feminist theorizations, the paper uses autoethnography as a method. Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that allows authors to express their own lived experiences in a highly personalized way in a particular cultural context (Wall, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). It is a form of inquiry that makes personal experience heard (and captivating) to extend its societal meaning (Wall, 2008). With the emphasis on the method's reflective feature, it helps authors actively embed themselves in the theory and practice while explaining the phenomenon through their intimate autobiographical narratives (McIlveen, 2008). The empirical data harnessed in this methodology is based on the individuals' reflections. Having spotlighted 'dilemmas' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and 'epiphanies' (Ellis et al, 2011) in experiences, the data is analyzed particularly through re-writing, thematising, and synthesizing as more refined text (Poulos, 2021) to develop an engaging narrative. Herein, the autoethnographic perspective places the narrative somewhere between reflections and theoretical literature, while also making the readers part of the story rather than outsiders.

The uniqueness of this study is its intention to create a *pre-manifesto* aiming to enlighten the audience (both 'insiders and outsiders') (Ellis et al., 2011) about the vitality of taking action for gender-equal urban environments. It is based on "situated knowledge" that includes subjective reflections of the authors who spent approximately ten years in urban studies. There are eight female authors aged between 31 and 35 who contributed to this research. All of them earned their undergraduate degrees in Turkey; however, they also have international academic experiences owing to different educational programs, activities, and conferences. Except for one participant who is a sociologist, seven authors are urban planners and all of them continue their studies in the urban planning field. Three authors completed their doctoral studies, and they are teaching urban planning at different universities across Turkey. Four authors continue their PhD studies and three of them work as teaching and research assistants. Also, the authors have experience in planning practice through planning offices, municipalities, and ministries. Their reflections refer to their education and work experiences, which glimpse at their interaction with feminist insights.

Employing autoethnography as the method, the authors describe their introspections within a wider cultural context (Chang, 2016; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) through feminist perspective, so as to analyze the gender discussion in planning education and practice. In doing so, self-reflective accounts represent primary data resources for this research. Within the ability of reflections and the autoethnographic method, 'epiphanies' are identified as the most memorable moments of an experience. Using semi-structured interviews as a data collection method, the authors were asked twelve questions in two main categories: planning education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and work experience in both teaching and

practice. Semi-structured interviews and brainstorming discussions revolved around the extent in which feminist discussion has taken place in the authors' experiences.

An autoethnography of feminist reflections: a pre-manifesto

The authors' feminist narratives are presented through two sections: (1) planning education and (2) teaching & practice experiences. In the first section, the authors explore the most memorable and relevant moments in their undergraduate and postgraduate education to underscore the weight given to the gender theme. By doing so, they explain the barriers they face and what motivates them in their personal education path to embrace the feminist perspective. In the second section, based on teaching reflections, authors evaluated the planning education's ability (or capacity) in stimulating discussions on gender issues, gender mainstreaming and feminist urbanism.

Analysing feminist introspections of planning education

The planning education in Turkey is not dramatically different from traditional education systems in other countries; thereby, the students are trained based on the key aspects of planning such as building theories and methodologies, creating strategies for sufficient cities and understanding the fundamentals of urban design (Penpecioglu and Taşan-Kok, 2016). Although planning is seen as an analytical process, planning education focuses on two integrated key domains: aesthetics which deals with art and creativity; and know-how which is the information used in terms of sociological, historical, demographic, and economic values in creating an ideal city (Ersoy, 2007). The first two years of the four-year planning education focus on design principles on lower scales such as site planning, neighbourhood planning, basic design and design tools also creating visions and strategies for cities. The final two years are based on creating a master plan and learning urbanism & planning law, and strategic planning with high-level goals. Students are obligated to perform a site visit in each term and collect data regarding cities' existing topographic, demographic and economic situations. This plan seems legitimate thus far, however the question of where the gender mainstreaming is included in the education process is still unclear.

The authors emphasize that gender issues or feminist urbanism are not major concerns in undergraduate education. For instance, one author states that *the only course dealing with the subject of gender in her planning education was the 'urban sociology' course*. And she also notes that *during the Erasmus exchange semester, neither the content of the courses nor the course categories she took address gender issues or feminist urbanism*. The authors' interactive discussions also support that gender issues are presented under sociology-related courses during undergraduate studies. The reflections of the author with a sociology major and city planning minor support this idea by stating that *in her sociology major, gender and*

feminist theories in relation to forms of inequalities and exclusions women face in everyday life were fairly touched upon, but not in the courses of city planning minor.

Another critical and unheeded issue is the insufficient and uneven infrastructure in universities, in terms of instructors and experts in the specific fields, and limited number of courses dealing with gender perspective. The authors who graduated from provincial (rural) universities states that *they did not have a comprehensive curriculum, elective courses were more about technical subjects, and they never encountered the term “feminist urbanism”*. However, the situation can be quite different at high-ranked long-established universities with different ‘schools of thought’. Authors who graduated from such universities in Turkey highlight the opportunities they had such as *interesting courses, events, posters, competitions, projects, students’ organizations, movie days, meetings that build awareness on gender issues*. Given the international education experiences of the authors, the countries with more inclusive cultures outshine with their universities and education programmes prioritizing gender issues. For example, in the University of Amsterdam, *gender issues always have a place in both theory and practice*, the author says. It was highly impressive for her that *there was a research center for Gender & Sexuality and even a short intensive course named ‘Feminist Urban Lab’*. Another author with a background at University College London draws attention to the institutions’ *relevant core & selective modules that focus on the different roles and needs of women in different socio-economic situations*. As emphasized, gender issues in international education have become the focus of research as an additional thematic subject, rather than being embedded in the content of education.

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Cultural codes of the society can be traced in individuals’ educational and professional perspective, e.g., defined roles of women in patriarchal societies. This unconditional acceptance leads to *degrading women’s role only as taking care of children, cooking and cleaning in the formulation of spatial arrangements like household (even neighbourhood) unit planning*, according to an author’s own lived experience. Women are underappreciated and women’s roles are overlooked. As expressed, *women were the focus only when we tried to figure out the “private” place problems whereas for “public” space design, we preferred to put on “gender-neutral” glasses in planning studios*. Through this approach, we agree that the special needs of women in an urban area are invisible in spatial planning. The codes of our society that are embedded in our thoughts can be dislocated by opening up discussions that are normally avoided in lectures. An author claims that *the interesting out-of-content discussion in a regional economy class on “invisible labor” about women’s workload at home, which is not paid and not accepted as work, opened up a new perspective on gender issues for her*.

Visibility is also about the drawn boundaries for women in public space. Safety concern is an explicit example for these chronic virtual limits. An author connects the established patriarchal intellectual structure to her unsafe feeling in public space by giving an example from a field trip they went to make spatial analysis in a medium-sized city [. . .] during her undergraduate education.

“The lecturers divided the students into groups to work in different neighborhoods, and in our female-dominated class, at least one male student was placed in each group for security. When I heard this, I felt uncomfortable because this meant that the city could offer unsafe places. When we started to create policies, we did not develop any policy or project to increase the safety of women in urban spaces.”

Her experience points to the unquestioned acceptance of the idea that “public spaces can be unsafe for a woman” as androcentric thinking imposes. Therefore, we state that planning education should emphasize not only “what we observe” during field studies, but also “what we experience individually” in field studies / field work and more broadly in our everyday urban lives. More discussions on “how we should make plans to eliminate the obstacles that we experience in urban areas” is certainly needed. We find it significant for planners to recognize and remove perceptual barriers so as to create more egalitarian urban spaces.

Postgraduate education carries great potential such as engaging in the recent discussions in academia, being part of specifically determined research projects, etc. That’s why PhD is the key to academia and the building block of teaching at universities. Therefore, to establish a well-rounded gender perspective in teaching, lecturers and academics should find room to discuss feminist urbanism in postgraduate curricula frequently. PhD programmes need to have gendered-specific curricula for each field such as urban design, urban planning, and regional planning; because creating an impact on the way of teaching and practicing in the planning field requires differentiated approaches to gender mainstreaming to make feminist urbanism possible (Kortendiek, 2011). However, we must say that postgraduate education is not only about enrolling in classes, but also taking advantage of diverse projects, organizations, and events. All authors agree that, unlike undergraduate education, postgraduate education offers more opportunities to become acquainted with feminist discourse.

Analysing feminist introspections of teaching & practice experiences

Planning studios are courses of great importance where theory is integrated into practice. However, the authors’ introspections refer to the insufficiency of this integration between theory and practice. Teaching experiences in planning reveal some problematic and hidden issues regarding the concept of the planning studio. Every semester the analysis conducted by the students consists of several questionnaires involving socio and economic situations of the pilot areas without underlining the roles, visibility and needs of women. Yet, the detailed analysis of the data collected from the field has to involve statistics beyond demographic data based on only “rate of men and women”.

Another issue that limits teaching content is existing planning laws. Gender issues or gender mainstreaming are not particularly touched upon in the planning laws believed to be gender neutral. Therefore, the planning practices focus on “public interest” without emphasizing differentiated needs of women. Moreover, the planning laws put the technical

perspective at the center by defining land use standards. As an author mentioned, *prioritizing these technical details in planning studios creates a dominance that leaves no room for other debates including gender discussions.*

The narratives reveal that in order to center gender issues in teaching, we need to internalize them first. Therefore, the authors were asked to what extent they feel confident in arguing against opponents' ideas in this sense. Most of the authors note that they can defend an argument competently within the context of gender, women and the city, and feminist urbanism. However, some of them are not entirely self-confident about carrying out such a discussion, stating that they need to work more on the issue to become a competent advocate. One of the authors even says,

"I realized I didn't have enough knowledge to talk about the patriarchal planning understanding of the current planning system. This research made me think on it, and as a female city planner, I realized the discussions about gender inequality both in the planning system, and in the planning practices."

A deeper engagement with the feminist thought has initially enriched our analytical approach, unlocking 'self-criticism'. One of the epiphany moments as one of us states;

"To be honest, our brainstorming discussions showed me how disconnected I was from the gender-urban relationship, both during my planning education and my professional life. I regret to say that it never occurred to me to consider my studies in the context of feminist urbanism, neither during my master's nor my doctorate. But last semester, I heard about a project started by a professor I worked with at ITU; the TOPUK (Woman Reaching Public Transportation) project, where many institutions come together so that women could talk about the problems and difficulties they face in transportation and offer solutions. Although I could not actively participate in the project, I started researching issues such as women in transportation, gender equality, and shaping of municipal services in an accessible and inclusive way for everyone. Although it is a late realization for me, I feel lucky that it allowed me to think about and research this issue."

The authors all agreed that experiencing different social and cultural contexts enhances feminist understanding. In other words, we realized how important gender equality is, not during the urban planning education that teaches the design of urban areas for all, but during the urban experience we gained through the education. Perhaps we didn't have a well-focused training on how to envisage spatial justice. It was a moment of enlightenment for us, and now we realize how contradictory it was. We were educated to develop urban environments in line with the needs of a community, but it lacked gender-equal insight, over and above it was largely 'men-centered'. When we look at our international postgraduate and research experiences, it is obvious that gender issues are already out there, from the very beginning. It is neither 'generic' (superficially addressed) nor 'extra' for any type of course or research. On the

contrary, it must have a substantial place in the information guide for the whole PhD process both for students and their supervisors. Gender understanding was not a detached feature, on the contrary it has been inherent during the journey.

Conclusion

The feminist perspective has long substantiated that gender inclusive planning is a prerequisite for the promotion of spatial justice in cities. Nevertheless, a comprehensive articulation of feminist insights cultivating a gender inclusive approach is absent in the existing planning context, in general (Alkan, 2012; Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2019). In relation to this, the paper sets out the debate concerning the high participation of women in both planning education and the planning profession in Turkey not being accompanied by established feminist urbanist practices in the field. In addressing this shortcoming, the paper takes an imaginative and experimental approach and makes use of autoethnography: Drawing on the authors’ own experiences, it identifies significant moments in terms of shared ‘dilemmas’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), ‘epiphanies’ (Ellis et al, 2011), in an attempt to discern challenges and opportunities within the planning formation, which can be considered for the desired change (see Figure 2).

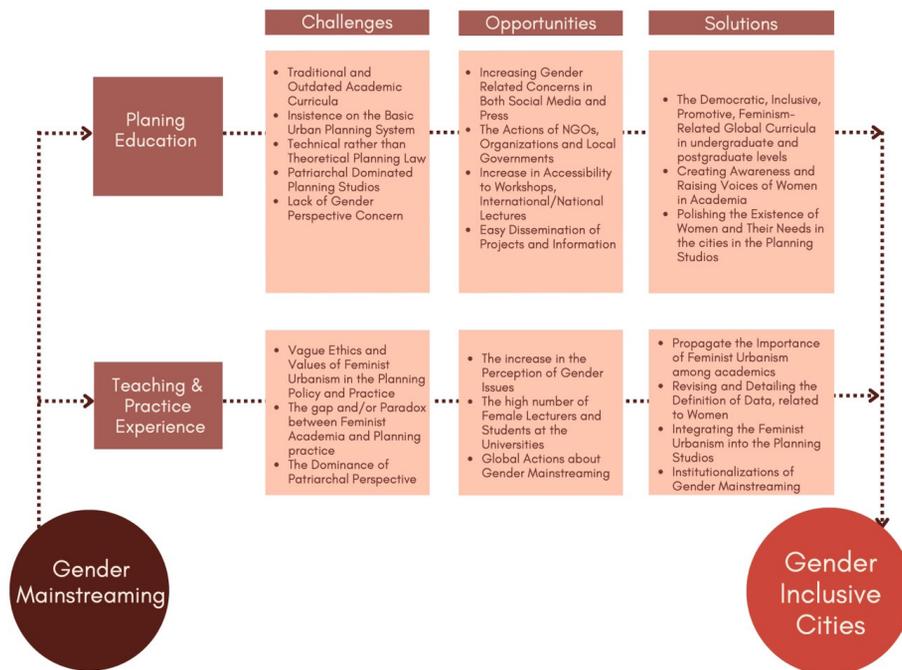


Figure 2

The challenges, opportunities, and solutions to gain a gender perspective in creating gender-inclusive cities (prepared by the authors).

While the paper displays the way self-critique sheds light on why awareness of feminist premises is only addressed in discourse and does not necessarily or directly translate in practice, we, as authors, also realize a more organized and vigorous mobilization is needed for the intended transformation. As we contend that careful consideration of ‘the public sphere’ (see Fraser, 1990) debate has the potential to address such gap between awareness, and adoption – or coherent integration – of ideas in a critical way, we hope to use this space to underscore why a manifesto for gender-equal cities is essential and urge for more collaborative efforts in the academia.

Following Alkan (2012), the paper tries to highlight the lack of comprehensive articulation of gender in planning education. Themes related to gender and feminist urbanism are mostly addressed in elective courses at the periphery of planning education. This “add and stir” approach means that there is only a partial consideration of the topic. On the other hand, both postgraduate training and teaching appear to provide opportunities and venues to grasp the reach of feminist urbanism’s analytical scope, in addition to sparking interest among students, researchers, and practitioners.

In this sense, the paper sets forth that feminist urbanism and gender should occupy an essential part within the curriculum from the start, at the undergraduate level, not merely at later stages of planning education meant for specialization. Accordingly, recently established universities, and universities in small towns can also be enforced to adjust their courses in line with the Bologna Process pertaining to the European Higher Education Area. These claims also support the need for a careful consideration of diversity: Gender inclusion, as a theme, is mostly associated with diversity in both planning education and planning practice (see e.g., gender being mostly examined in elected courses and being considered as a social policy in local governments – as social assistance). Placing gender inclusion at the core – rather than at its periphery – while considering a democratic inclusive curriculum in planning education, a more systematic and coherent examination of diversity will be conducive to the burgeoning of broad-minded individuals who can appreciate the varieties existing in the environment they live in (Grünberg, 2013). Meanwhile, we should not minimize the awareness and integration with regard to gender inclusion at the top levels of policy making and implementation. It is possible to see an increase in local government initiatives for gender inclusion.

1 “...remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person’s life...self-claimed phenomena in which one person may consider an experience transformative while another may not...” (Ellis et al., 2011)

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