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Gender in Transport: A key to improve both the container and the contents



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Inés Novella is an Architect, graduating from the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia in 2008. She has also a Master's degree in Gender Quality and is currently doing her Phd on gender and urban planning. She has worked in an architect's studio and has also lectured on an Equal Opportunities Master's degree. She is currently a consultant, researcher and project manager at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, coordinating different consulting and research projects at the UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality Policies in Science, Technology and Innovation, in the university's Urban Planning Department.

Could you briefly tell us something about your background, and your area of expertise in the field of transport with gender and diversity? What field are you currently working in?

I have a Master's degree in Architecture and a Master's in Gender Equality. At the moment, I am currently writing my Phd thesis on gender and urban planning.

I have been doing research and working on consultancy projects dealing with gender in spatial planning, including transportation issues, since 2011.

I have also worked on the implementation of the "mobility of care" concept for different regional and local authorities in their transport and mobility policies.

I perform consultancy work for different engineering companies on the introduction of gender criteria in high-speed train infrastructures, mainly hubs and stations, but also some railway crossings that go through urban areas.

In your area of expertise, what have been the greatest breakthroughs with regard to increasing gender and diversity in mobility?

The most important advance is the awareness of how important trips associated with care and reproductive activities are, and how the volume of these trips has a similar level of importance to employment mobility.

I also think that the work done to include women in the sector as professionals and decision-makers is important, as this entails efforts in both horizontal and vertical segregation.

Safety issues are also important, both in public transportation systems and in public spaces (affecting cycling and walking).

Based on your experience, what are the biggest challenges that need to be addressed with a view to increasing gender and diversity in mobility?

The real inclusion of women in the mobility industry, particularly in decision-making and in

some specific sectors such as logistics.

I am also worried about the lack of a gender perspective in some sustainability initiatives. It is usually thought that women use the car less than men, but this is not the case for a specific, highly numerous group of women, i.e., the “taxi mums”. This group lives in medium/large-sized cities, outside the city centre, and has children. The only way they can meet all their commitments (work-life balance) is by driving a car. Car-use barriers have a gender impact. They affect women differently from men, not more or less, just differently, based on specific circumstances. It is the same as cycling, we need to introduce a gender perspective when planning this mode of transport.

What road maps need to be set out to increase gender and diversity in mobility at national and EU level?

- At educational level, we need to start working with girls in the fields that might help them to become part of one of the economic sectors that will offer better jobs in the future. Digitalisation is key, but STEM skills are even more important.
- We also need to combine transportation with urban regeneration. Today’s large cities will never be able to work only with PT if we do not work in terms of spatial planning (densification, poly-centres, etc.).

I think there are two main fields of action: first the inclusion and promotion of women in the transportation sector; and second, the introduction of a gender perspective in the way we plan mobility on very different scales and topics. The ideal horizon would be to coordinate and combine these two fields, but they can be undertaken separately.

In terms of women in transportation, in mobility and logistics (which could be considered as a broader yet related sector) work could be carried out on two levels: the future and the present. It is important to retain the women already working in these sectors, by following gender equality plans and many other strategies already being developed through projects such as TinnGO and Diamond. Specific training is also a key element in retaining and promoting women. This should entail both hard and soft skills. I would also consider quotas as a good tool, at least initially.

As mentioned above, efforts must be made to engage girls and young women in STEM fields related to mobility, transportation and logistics, giving them some engineering and digital skills. Taking into account the fact that women tend to choose professions and studies related to social and caring topics, the fields of transportation, logistics and, in general, STEM subjects, need to be presented differently, highlighting the idea of social welfare, progress and quality of life. Some direct measures such as grants, internships, and mentoring programmes could also be implemented to attract young girls.

I think there are different strategies to be followed for the inclusion of a gender perspective in fields such as mobility, transportation and logistics. All STEM university programmes should include seminars or lessons on gender, so all engineers finish their studies with some knowledge and awareness of this topic. This work can also be done at professional level by specific and tailored training courses. It is very important to pay attention to the content, structure, length and approach of these courses on gender.



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