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Inclusive mobility is not a matter of image

**Founder & Managing Director at AEM Institute**

Ines Kawgan-Kagan has a PhD in Traffic Systems and acts as a consultant to municipalities and companies on gender and mobility. She is the Managing Director of the AEM Institute and is a researcher in the mobility research group at Goethe University Frankfurt. She is passionate about innovative mobility, transport and gender and other diversity aspects. Her mission is to promote social justice, equity and equality in mobility. This dimension of sustainability is often left out. She helps companies in the field of transport and mobility to achieve diversity with a special focus on gender. This includes work culture as well as users. Her PhD thesis at the Technische

Universität Berlin centred on the gender mobility gap in terms of innovative mobility availability. She is a lecturer and trainer at several institutions and universities. Her interdisciplinary background gives her a holistic view on the topics of mobility, transport and society, and she aims to create awareness on the subject and share her knowledge to shape future mobility.

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?

When I grew up, my mother worked because my father was at home due to health issues. She worked a lot, but I did not even think that this might have been unusual. We lived in the eastern part of Berlin, and I didn't think this was anything special. But the older I got the more I noticed that there were some invisible limitations because of gender expectations that were linked to being either a girl or a boy. The further I got with my education and career, the more I noticed hidden and even unconscious discrimination that people were not even aware of. This led me to become interested in why we have those expectations in our heads that generate typical male or female ways of handling things. When I was told about the gender gap in the use of carsharing in 2013, I was curious about why it was mainly men that used these services. I expected carsharing to be a pragmatic, environmentally friendly way of urban

mobility and thought it was a more female view on mobility. The people who did wonder what was behind the phenomena were not really keen to find out more about it or even work on closing the gender mobility gap. I thought this was my chance and dedicated my PhD to understanding what the mobility obstacles are for women and what could be done to promote carsharing with BEVs to make it more attractive to women.

Now, I am working on different gender and transport projects. We are working with mobility operators on how to make their services and projects more inclusive and attractive to women and we are advising municipalities and cities on gender-sensitive data collection and analysis and on what kind of measures they can take. Many of them do not know where to start with the issue because they are afraid to recreate gender stereotypes and make things worse. This is where my years of experience provide an advantage in offering the right advice.

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

In my opinion, the greatest breakthrough is that the topic is finally on the agenda. The issues have been well known for decades – except for the new forms of mobility of course – but they never actually made it into regulations or got put into practice. I find a lot of students reaching out for information about the topic for their theses and dissertation projects. This means that a lot of new material is likely to be created over the next few years that can be applied in practical terms. The topic of gender and transport and mobility had traditionally been a niche area in academia and did not even make it into research projects that did not have gender as a focus.

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 biggest challenge for me is to make people understand that gender and diversity are part of sustainability. “Social aspects” is one of the three cornerstones of sustainability and considering gender in transport is not only a way to create a better image of a municipality or company. Looking at female mobility means looking at the mobility of half of the population. But we are still at the stage where these organisations are surprised when they find out about significant differences in this area.

Unfortunately, people tend to ignore the issues that are related to gender aspects in transport and mobility. They say “Yes, it is a really important topic, but we have different priorities at the moment!” And this “at the moment” becomes a permanent fixture. But the only way to get a commitment on inclusive mobility is to develop and plan the way we have always done and put gender assessment at the end of the process.

This enables you to analyse what impact your plans might have on people who do not meet the male standards. Accordingly, we need to develop official guidelines that address blind spots and make sure that gender is considered right from the start of a project.

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

In order to develop these guidelines, we need to compile detailed information about potential biases in all areas of transport and mobility. This, of course, means we need to have the right data to identify blind spots. Unfortunately, the current data sets come from a male-dominated perspective. However, even existing data sets provide a lot of insights if we analyse them according to gender – which currently means men vs women. This is something that younger people especially do not understand. Why do we compare women and men? Shouldn't we get away from this heteronormative way of potentially recreating gender stereotypes? In my opinion, this is not actually an issue. All countries have a general gender gap. As far as I know, there is no country that does not have a gender mobility gap either. In order to eliminate disadvantages and provide gender-neutral or gender-sensitive transport, we need to know what the issues are by looking at male and female mobility. In our society, we have these pre-constructed gender-typical labels that shape our expectations about how women and how men are supposed to be. While we still have these labels, we need to know what they are so we can resolve them and balance out their disadvantages.



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