

The Impact of  
Gender Friendly Design on  
the Lives of Women

by

Natasha L. Ross

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**BY**

**Natasha L. Ross**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of  
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

**MASTER OF CITY PLANNING**

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## Abstract

The different ways in which women and men interact with the built environment bring to light the inequalities that currently exist between the two, and the need to address this disparity through inclusive consultations and urban planning that better reflects the needs of women. The purpose of this study is to assess whether a gender focused housing model called Frauen-Werk-Stadt (FWS), has been successful in its attempt to address spatial inequalities in the built environment, through urban planning and design, and whether this has had an impact on resident's perceptions of well-being. Eight resident women were interviewed for the project. This study will further explore how aligning urban planning more strongly with the interests of women, particularly single mothers, affects the outcome of how this community is impacted by the built environment in their perceptions of well-being.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Preamble .....	1
1.2 Purpose of the Research.....	7
1.3 Goals of the Research .....	8
1.4 The Research Problem .....	9
1.5 Frauen-Werk-Stadt Housing Model: Introduction.....	11
1.6 Significance of the Study .....	15
1.7 Limitations to the Study.....	16
1.8 Research Methods and Analysis .....	17
1.8.1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review .....	18
1.8.2 Participant Observation.....	19
1.8.3 Interviews.....	20
CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	21
2.1 Planning Cities: Historical Background.....	22
2.2 Women’s Self-Made City Planning.....	24
2.3 Historical Background: Theory.....	31
2.3.1 Rational Comprehensive Model .....	32
2.3.2 Advocacy Planning Model.....	33
2.3.3 Incrementalism.....	34
2.3.4 Mixed-Scanning.....	35
2.4 Feminist Critique of Traditional Planning Theories .....	35
2.5 Current Planning Theory Trends: Spatial Justice Theory.....	38
2.6 Gender Mainstreaming Efforts .....	41
2.6.1 Why Gender mainstreaming is important.....	42
2.7 Directives contributing to gender-focused planning.....	45
2.7.1 Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit.....	45
2.7.2 European Charter for Women in the City .....	46
2.8 Summary .....	47
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY .....	50
3.1 Overview.....	50
3.2 Procedures.....	52
3.2.1 Qualitative Interviews: Semi structured/open ended. ....	53
3.2.2 Analysis of Interview Data .....	55
3.2.3 Participant Observation.....	55
3.2.4 Analysis of Participant Observation Notes .....	56
3.2.5 Recruitment Procedures .....	57
3.2.6 Participants and Setting.....	57
CHAPTER 4 – FRAUEN-WERK-STADT BACKGROUND.....	62
4.1 Austrian Housing Development: government support and subsidy .....	62
4.2 The Frauen-Werk-Stadt Model.....	65
4.2.1 Frauen-Werk-Stadt: design elements.....	66

4.3 Site Description.....	67
4.4 Well-being and the built environment .....	70
4.5 The Ethic of Care .....	72
4.6 Physical Form: Transportation systems .....	73
4.6.1 Physical Form: Housing type and standard .....	74
4.6.2 Secondary utility rooms, common rooms and access routes .....	75
4.6.3 Opportunities for interaction.....	75
4.6.4 Dwelling Connections.....	76
4.6.5 Neighbourhood services.....	76
4.6.6 Play areas .....	77
4.6.7 Safety .....	77
4.7 Summary .....	78
 CHAPTER 5 – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	 80
5.1 Housing and neighbourhood selection.....	80
5.2 Desire for connectedness .....	81
5.2.1 Implications.....	84
5.3 Importance of planning the built-environment .....	84
5.3.1 Implications.....	86
5.4 Women as activists, shaping the built environment.....	87
5.4.1 Implications.....	90
5.5 Importance of supports/infrastructure.....	90
5.5.1 Implications.....	92
5.6 Meeting the needs of children.....	92
5.6.1 Implications.....	94
 CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	 95
6.1 Recommendations for the planning profession: .....	98
6.2 Conclusion .....	98
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 100
 APPENDIX A.....	 107
APPENDIX B.....	108
APPENDIX C.....	109
APPENDIX D.....	110

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Preamble

The provision of housing in relation to built public and private space has often been overlooked in urban planning efforts that deal with the unique needs of women. Many women are faced with multiple responsibilities inside and outside the home, and face challenges in doing so when cities do not reflect these roles in the planning, and design of the built environment, including housing design. More specifically, single mothers are among the largest group of under-represented women when it comes to dealing with urban design issues. This leaves a significant group of citizens in a challenging position in trying to navigate their way through cities in completing their daily tasks.

While family structures have changed significantly over the past several decades, the division of unpaid labour (related to the home) and care giving has not. Many women are faced with the dual responsibility of managing a household, while fully participating in the work force, and are recognizing the importance of the built environment and how it can facilitate these new roles. Fifty years ago it was common for men to work for pay while women stayed home to look after the children. Households are changing however, and Canadian statistics indicate that women represent approximately 47% of the labour force, and account for 70% of the employment increases in Canada in 2007<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Women in the Canadian Labour Market: Employment Fact Sheet from A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW), 2007.

In addition to increased numbers of women in the work force, the average Canadian woman will perform an average of 4.3 hours of unpaid work per day, in contrast to a man's 2.4 hours, largely due to child care responsibilities. Canadian statistics indicate that between 2001 and 2006, the rate of single-parent households was up 8%, and there were 1.4 million lone-parent families in Canada, or 26% of all families with children (2006 Census data). The numbers are similar in countries such as Britain, Australia and the United States, where the number of single-parent households continues to grow.

In Canada, approximately 26% of families are headed by a single-parent, 20% being women and just over 5% being men (2006 Census data). Financial resources are unevenly distributed among these groups, where 16% of single father households live below the Low-Income Cut Off (LICO), and 32% of single mother households live below the LICO, and overall, approximately 29% of all single parents live below the LICO (2006 Census data).

Despite the evidence of changing family structures, the majority of them headed by women, much of the built environment continues to reflect the needs of the nuclear family, often characterized by a working father and a stay-at-home-mom raising the children and taking care of the household. Specifically, women's experiences of public space in areas of travel, recreation and everyday tasks are viewed as being shaped by women's responsibilities, genderized roles, and unresponsive planning and design (Day, 2000). This is problematic when viewing cities from a gender perspective, as one of the main differences affecting the use of urban space is in terms of female and male care

giving roles and responsibilities (Jaeckel and van Geldermelsen, 2006). Male and female care giving roles and responsibilities have been socially- constructed and perpetuated in the built environment, leading to inequalities in how men and women experience day to day activities. This in turn can impact an individual's life chances, an important factor on which and individual's well-being depends.

Perceptions of well-being in relation to the built environment became an area of interest for urban planners and policy makers, beginning in the 1980s (Bartuska, 2007). Since that time, the built environment has been introduced into many disciplines to assess its impact on human health. Bartuska (2007) describes the built environment as “the creative (and not so creative) results of human activities throughout history.”(2007:4). The research will refer to Bartuska's expanded definition which includes four interrelated characteristics:

- 1) The built environment is extensive and provides the context for all human endeavors. It is everything humanly made, arranged, or maintained;
- 2) It is the creation of human minds and the result of human purposes. It is intended to serve human needs, wants, and values;
- 3) Much of it is created to help us deal with, and to protect us from, the overall environment, to mediate or change this environment for our comfort and well-being;

- 4) It is defined and shaped by context; each and all of the individual elements contribute either positively or negatively to the overall quality of environments both built and natural and to human-environment relationships<sup>3</sup>.

Many initiatives have aimed to demonstrate the gendered nature of the city and to integrate and promote women's involvement and decision-making in urban planning (National Network on Environments and Women's Health, 2004). However, these efforts have focused on resource distribution, as this is easily worked at through data collection with a focus on what "individuals, households, and families have" and to "understanding what the economy is producing that can be distributed in their jurisdiction." (Milroy, 2004:47).

More recently, planners and theorists are shifting their focus away from resource distribution in assessing equality in urban life, to recognition or the significance of an individual's "self-presentation (which relates to being not having) on one's capacity to have and use resources." (Milroy, 2004: 48). This shift focuses on life chances as being a combination of:

**distribution + recognition + equality + equity**

rather than an empirical combination of:

**distribution + equality**

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from: The Built Environment: A Collaborative Inquiry into Design and Planning. Edited by Wendy R. McClure and Tom J. Bartuska, 2007.

This shift is often overlooked in planning, as empirical evidence is often favoured and utilized in absence of the qualitative analysis needed in viewing social and spatial justice (Milroy, 2004:48).

The different ways in which women and men interact with the built environment bring to light the inequalities that currently exist between the two, and the need to address this disparity through inclusive consultations and planning that better reflects the needs of women. While there are examples of urban initiatives that have made an effort to address these challenges, these pursuits have been slow and sometimes ineffective in fully meeting their intended objectives. Planning and design must better reflect the impact the built environment has on our emotions, sense of community, participation in community life, and life chances, as these are often excluded in discussions around an individual's sense of well-being.

The purpose of this study is to assess whether the case study, a housing model named Frauen-Werk-Stadt (FWS), has been successful in its attempt to address spatial inequalities in the built environment, and whether this has had an impact on an individual's perception of well-being. Definitions of well-being are broad, and for the purpose of the study will be narrowed down to focus on the connection between the built-environment (buildings, housing, streets and neighbourhoods) and life satisfaction, as a

contributor to perceptions of well-being. Well-being will be looked at as an individual's experience, or perception, of how well he or she lives, as an indicator of quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

The gender focused housing project, Frauen-Werk-Stadt (FWS), is innovative. In order to identify and capture the unique urban design needs of women, and to reflect these needs in urban planning decisions, an assessment of FWS has the central objective of gathering input of the users of the project, and the women architects and planners involved in designing the project. Chapter Two reviews literature related to gender based planning and design, and Chapter Three examines methodological considerations. Chapter Four explores the specific implications of gender supportive housing. The impact of community design processes and outcomes will be explored in Chapter Five, with personal accounts from women who share their thoughts and experiences as residents in FWS. Based on the research findings, Chapter Six will offer recommendations to further inform the field of urban planning to better respond to the needs of women.

More specifically, an examination of how single mothers perceive their built environment, within the context of this Viennese housing project will be explored. Issues of housing design, proximity to services and existing infrastructure will be considered in assessing how planning practices and urban design are interconnected and how these

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<sup>4</sup> The Scottish Government Publication series: "Quality of Life and Well-Being". The article is particularly informative as it explains the difficulty in defining "quality of life" and "well-being". For example, research on social indicators identifies health, material well-being, feeling part of one's local community, work and productive activity, emotional well-being, relationships with family and friends, and personal safety as indicators of quality of life (Hagerty, 2001). The World Health Organization identifies physical, environment, social relationships, psychological, level of independence and spiritual as indicators of quality of life. Accessed June 11, 2009 @ [www.scotland.gov.uk/publications](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications)

might negatively or positively impact the lives of women. This study will further explore how aligning urban planning more strongly with the interests of women, particularly single mothers, affects the outcome of how this community is impacted by the built environment in their perceptions of well-being.

Assessing the impact of gender friendly design will be examined through a combination of theory and practice. Eight women, all of who had primary physical custody of their children, participated in interviews describing their perceptions of well-being as residents in a housing initiative built by and for women.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study is to better understand and to validate women's perceptions of their daily interaction with the built environment. A better understanding of how women perceive their built environment is significant for the planning field in general, and will further inform the field in guiding planning decisions that affect the daily lives of women.

The study took place in Vienna, Austria, where the housing model Frauen-Werk-Stadt has generated international recognition for its innovation and emphasis on design that facilitates women's navigation in their daily tasks. This is immediately evident in the good design considerations inside apartments, the establishment of on-site or nearby amenities, and providing a location with easy access to public transportation. Interviews were conducted in order to collect the stories and perceptions of women, specifically single mothers, who live in this housing model where women were actively engaged in its inception, influencing the outcome of the project that would be representative of their

needs. The intention of the interviews was to bring richness and depth in understanding the impact of this project on the lives of women who live in the building.

### **1.3 Goals of the Research**

The primary objective of this study is to identify whether positive outcomes are achievable within the context of looking at the built environment from a gendered perspective, and whether planning and design may assist in this process.

A second objective of this study will be to assess whether the Viennese residents have experienced or perceive a positive impact or change in their lives since their residency at Frauen-Werk-Stadt. In doing so, the following questions will be explored:

- How have women's lives been impacted by living in this building? What were their experiences/perceptions like before they lived here? How have these experiences/perceptions changed?
- How does design and planning that reflects the contemporary needs of women impact the lives of women and their children?
- What do women perceive as good planning and design?
- How do women's perceptions of the built environment differ in a setting that reflects their needs, to those that have been traditionally planned?

Another important aspect of the study, and therefore the third objective, will be to identify some of the challenges and lessons learned in developing a housing model such

as Frauen-Werk-Stadt. This will further contribute to the discussion and recommendations that will be offered in the latter part of the thesis. This will potentially assist others interested in implementing a similar project to Frauen-Werk-Stadt. In accomplishing this objective, an interview with a planner and architect involved in developing the Viennese housing model was conducted. The interview explored the following questions and themes:

- What prompted attention and generated interest in developing a housing project such as *Frauen-Werk-Stadt*?
- How was it decided who would be involved in the design of this housing model?
- Who supported the project financially? Was there support from various levels of government?
- What were some of the challenges and opportunities in developing such a project?
- What are some of the lessons learned in developing this housing model?

#### **1.4 The Research Problem**

Women's issues have historically been overlooked in urban planning decisions, leading to a cycle of marginalization and decreased participation of this group in society. This is particularly true for single parents, the majority of them women, who are increasing in numbers as contemporary family structures change. Many feminist scholars argue that a strong provision of gender-sensitive information is necessary in planning education, policy and practice. Many women however, who have strong roles in urban planning, have tried to introduce such innovations in areas such as transportation, leisure, security,

housing and economic development, have not been as effective as needed in influencing current mainstream planning decisions (Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992; Cook, Bruin & Crull, 2000).

In looking at measures to address the marginalization of various groups of women, many feminist scholars suggest that a strong provision of gender-sensitive information is necessary. For instance, Day (2000) argues that the adoption of the feminist theory of the 'ethic of care' is necessary to explain and respond to women's experience of public space, and should be used as a framework for "future activism, design, and scholarship concerning public spaces." (103) The ethic of care was introduced by Carol Gilligan in 1982 as a "model of moral development in which the highest moral imperative requires taking care of needs and sustaining relationships" (Day, 2000:104). The ethic of care is relevant to my research as it "may reveal positive aspects of women's relationships with public spaces, and may suggest new opportunities for enhancing well-being in public space" (Day, 2000:104). The ethic of care will be further explored in chapter four, where factors of good design contributing to women's daily experience are discussed.

In order to better understand and to validate women's perception of well-being within the built environment, this study will examine the experiences of single mothers who are residents of a gender-focused housing model geared toward the daily needs of women. In-depth qualitative analysis, taken from the perspective of these women, will assist in developing a deeper understanding of what is important to women in their daily lives,

which may contribute to a sense of balance, and identity, factors which are important to human health and well-being (Day, 2000; Bialeschkie & Michener, 1994).

### **1.5 Frauen-Werk-Stadt Housing Model: Introduction**

This study looks at the Frauen-Werk-Stadt housing model which was developed in Vienna by women architects and planners who devoted a substantial amount of time consulting with local women who were to live in the project. The housing model was developed in 1992 under the original name of *Margarethe-Shutte Lihotzky Hof* and was part of a design competition. The original title of the housing project bears the name of its designer, an influential feminist architect well-known for designing spaces to facilitate women's work in the home. For instance, Margarethe was the inventor of the built-in kitchen, which focused on efficient use of space and maximum comfort for its users.

The Viennese project has received a great deal of attention due its success and to the need for such projects. Today, Frauen-Werk-Stadt is home to approximately 1,000 inhabitants and is in its final phase of development. The building development is being completed in three phases: phase one occurred in 1997 and included the development of 357 apartments; phase two in 2004 included 140 apartments; and the final phase will take place in 2010, and will include 41 apartments.

The Viennese model is unique in that it offers a *permanent* housing solution for single mothers, and has been designed specifically to meet the requirements of the daily life and needs of women. The researcher chose this housing model after researching a catalogue

of positive actions, or “best practices”, geared toward gender equality and human settlements. Upon reviewing the housing models in the database, Frauen-Werk-Stadt was chosen based on the strength and recognition of the model, which encompasses a substantial component of the characteristics that are outlined by the European Charter for Women in the City, and MOST Best Practices (described below).

The *Management of Social Transformation Programme* (MOST) Best Practices database works in conjunction with the *United Nations Human Settlements Programme* (UN-Habitat). The database is extensive and contains upward of 700 examples of good and best practices that were reviewed and judged by independent technical committees and juries for the Habitat II City Summit in Istanbul in 1996 and for the Dubai International Awards for Best Practices in improving the living environment in 1998.

The summaries of selected good and best practices are included in the MOST database because of their particular relevance to, or impact on, poverty eradication and on social cohesion. Calling these activities “best practices” is to suggest that they can and should be replicated, and that ideas can and should be generated from them, and that they have the potential to contribute to policy development. The following four characteristics are common to all “Best Practices” as defined by MOST:

- **Best Practices are innovative.** Best Practices are recognized by their development of new and creative solutions to common problems of poverty and social exclusion

- **Best Practices make a difference.** A Best Practice demonstrates a positive and tangible impact on the living conditions, quality of life or environment, of individuals and communities concerned.
- **Best Practices may have a sustainable effect.** A Best Practice contributes to the sustained eradication of poverty or social exclusion, especially by the involvement of participants.
- **Best Practices have the potential for replication.** A Best Practice serves as a model for generating policies and initiatives elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

Many projects on the database have been guided by the objectives listed above.

Initiatives located in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and the UK are among the most noted within the framework of MOST best practices. A majority of the documented positive actions are geared towards addressing urban and economic issues for women, and are mostly located in Europe. One reason that many of these projects are located in Europe, and are less common in North America, is that many of these practices operate within the framework of the European Charter for Women in the City

The Charter is guided by the following principles that are geared towards change for women residing in cities, by:

- Removing obstacles to a woman's "right to the city";
- Highlighting the issue to all involved in operating and deciding matters related to city planning, housing and living conditions;

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<sup>5</sup> An extensive overview of best-practice projects can be found at [www.unesco.org/shs/most](http://www.unesco.org/shs/most).

<sup>7</sup> City of Vienna website: [www.wien.gv.at](http://www.wien.gv.at). Accessed on March 29, 2009.

- Promoting new democratic decision-making procedures in city planning and developing improved living conditions through the introduction of, and the contributions made by women at all levels of consultation and decision making;
- Raising renewed social awareness through “active citizenship” thereby bringing decision-makers closer to citizens’ daily concerns;
- Promoting a different philosophy in city planning, specifically focused on human values; and
- Encouraging positive changes in an increasingly diverse society

The Charter aims to establish a shift in thinking around planning cities, and is viewed as a “lasting and open analytical process containing a series of concrete proposals which might be put into practice in order to take into account and to promote increasingly active citizenship by women” in city planning (The European Charter for Women in the City, 1994). This will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

An extensive review of existing literature surrounding the Viennese housing model was done in two ways. First, documents were researched prior to visiting the housing project, providing to the planning and development of Frauen-Werk-Stadt. Some of the documents were provided from the CEO of urban planning, development and construction in the City of Vienna. Second, attempts were made beforehand to establish a connection with the local public library, where borrowing and research privileges were granted. I was able to briefly review local journals, and newspaper articles that discuss the Viennese housing model. There was little available in the English language, therefore internet research was utilized to find background information on the Viennese housing

model. Finding information was not difficult, as the housing model is the largest of its kind in Europe, and has generated international attention.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Empirical evidence, though often utilized and favoured in planning policy and practice, has not been effective in prioritizing women's needs, and newer more qualitative methods may better reflect the needs of women in particular, leading to clearer recognition and action within planning processes (Greed, 2005). Cook, Bruin and Crull (2000) suggest that existing quantitative data that addresses barriers faced by single mothers do little to "humanize" the discussion surrounding these issues between policy makers, planners and advocates. They further suggest that there is a greater necessity for qualitative research "thick with description" in order to bring us closer to understanding the complex formulation of what, for example, housing means to women. The work of these authors guides the study, as it examines the links between planning issues and design, and assesses the impact of these processes on the lives of women through the telling of their stories.

A study that presents a detailed description of women's perceptions of daily life in cities is of great importance for several reasons. First, issues around the built environment have far-reaching implications for families and their children socially, psychologically, and economically (Cook, Bruin & Crull, 2000). Second, a study of a housing model, planned and designed from a gendered perspective, can provide empirical evidence regarding best practices and challenges. Third, the lessons learned will provide insights and lessons for

planners in other jurisdictions. By assessing how women perceive their built environment-socially, psychologically and economically, it can be more easily understood how planning decisions might better reflect the needs of women. This is especially important as family structures change and the numbers of single mothers increase throughout many cities internationally.

### **1.7 Limitations to the Study**

The study recognizes that women are not alone in experiencing challenges within the built environment and society. In looking at how women experience the city, particularly single mothers, parallels can be drawn between other marginalized groups in how they might experience the city. For instance, in the built environment, the usability of public space is an issue for many citizens, including those with mobility issues, and who use mobility assisting devices. This group may experience similar challenges to a woman with a stroller who is navigating streets, sidewalks, and transportation systems.

Therefore, many of the issues that will be explored in the research can be related to many citizens in society who are outside predominant power structures that often guide planning decisions.

Time constraints were one of the major limitations to the study. Therefore, a strict management of time and planning well in advance prior to visiting Frauen-Werk-Stadt was of great importance to the success of the study. I visited the housing model, located in Vienna, for a period of four weeks. Not being a resident of Vienna made it necessary

to devote a reasonable amount of time familiarizing myself with the area. As well, language barriers posed a slight problem, and the assistance of a translator was necessary.

Also, the study was confined to eight women who are residents of the Viennese housing model, and did not examine the experiences of women outside of the model. Therefore, the experiences captured through in-depth interviews will not be representative of all single mothers. Further, there are approximately 1000 female residents who inhabit the model, and the interviews represent a fraction of this population.

### **1.8 Research Methods and Analysis**

The works of selected feminist authors will guide the methods of the study. Kirby and McKenna (1989), Ristock and Pennell (1996) offer a feminist approach to research methods, which focuses more on how we use the methods in the research process, and what drives us to do certain types of research. They contend that the researcher accounts for her personal experience that led to the research undertaking. Kirby and McKenna suggest that the “more familiar with the experience the researcher is, the better potential understanding of it she/he will have” (Kirby and McKenna, 1989: 44). This is appropriate for this study, as the researcher has experience as a single-parent, and noticed the many challenges a woman could face in the built environment, including challenges in securing adequate housing. This led to interest in the research, and through personal experience, helped formulate the research questions for the investigation.

### 1.8.1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

A review of literature around the Viennese housing model was done in two ways. First, documents providing information on the planning and development of Frauen-Werk-Stadt were researched prior to visiting the housing project. Second, attempts were made beforehand to establish a connection to the local public library, where borrowing and research privileges were granted. I was able to briefly review local journals and newspaper articles that discuss the Viennese housing model, but there was little available in English. Therefore, internet research was the main source of information on the Viennese housing model. Finding this information was not difficult, as the housing model is the largest of its kind in Europe, and has generated International attention.

As well, an exploration of theoretical and historical discussions, including criticisms of, traditional planning theories and practices were undertaken. The theoretical background and discussion that will be offered is an important step towards formulating a better understanding of the importance of including women in the planning process.

The available literature surrounding the topic of women and their relationship with the built environment suggests that traditional theoretical models are not conducive to the needs of women and have perpetuated planning decisions in cities. Within gender-based literature, many feminist theorists (Sandercock, Fainstein, MacGregor, Ritzdorf, Hayden, Greed, Milroy) contend that several key issues influence the planned environment. These issues will be addressed in the literature review section of the larger thesis, and will be divided into the following categories:

- Traditional theories of planning;
- Feminist critique of traditional planning theories;
- Women's changing roles in contemporary society;
- Importance of feminist epistemologies and women's different ways of knowing;  
and
- The importance of gender and theory in planning education.

An examination of the abovementioned issues will consider how these theories have fundamentally shaped current planning trends. The literature review will therefore allow for a comparison between traditional planning theories and practices to that of more contemporary planning practices that reflect the needs of women.

### 1.8.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation assisted in obtaining knowledge through short-term engagement in the Viennese housing model, allowing the researcher to experience personal interactions first-hand. There was frequent interaction with the residents through informal conversation, inside and outside of the apartment complex, where sharing of stories and ideas took place. This form of sharing allowed for the participants to become familiar with the researcher and her personal stories. This was an important stepping-stone in facilitating the interviews, through building trust and relationships between researcher and participant. It further provided an opportunity for the participants to offer

suggestions around the themes of the research, and possible opportunities for exploration around new themes as deemed significant to the participants.

### 1.8.3 Interviews

For the purpose of this study, in-depth qualitative and unstructured interviews took place. Participants were recruited through the assistance of a resident of the housing project. The contact person had lived in the project for several years, and was recommended to me by several people involved in the inception of the project. The contact person was recommended based on her positive relationship with the residents, and her active role in the community. She is well known and respected by the residents.

The interviews were unstructured and addressed the themes outlined in chapter five. The questions were generated based on the researcher's personal experiences that primarily led to interest in the project.

Eight participants were recruited prior to the researcher arriving in Vienna. This process was facilitated through the assistance of the contact person. It was stipulated beforehand, that those who were interested in participating in the study, must have lived in the project for at least two years. This was done to ensure participants would be relatively familiar with the residence and the surrounding amenities and transportations systems.

## CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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Spatial planning authorities (planners, policy makers, architects) play an important role in shaping cities. Planners are influenced and guided through planning education, professional development, and through their professional membership. However, issues around gender are often neglected in urban planning decisions and can lead to marginalization and exclusion of women's participation in society. As a result, the built environment is an issue of great importance for women, and should therefore play an important role in planning policy and practice.

Research on gender considerations in planning is well-known and has been a point of discussion among theorists for some time. Some of the literature around gender and cities criticizes its lack thereof in planning and policy, and so, the pursuit for the "just city" or spatial relations built on equity continues. This will be further discussed in this chapter.

It is with great effort that women continue to overcome challenges despite combining their work roles with their home lives. This struggle has not been fully addressed by planners, and indicates spatial planning policies continue to neglect gender differences. Research suggests planning that includes gender mainstreaming is necessary, and will in fact benefit more than just women, but also men who are increasingly balancing work and home responsibilities.

## **2.1 Planning Cities: Historical Background**

By critically examining the built-form of cities, we can conclude that cities are essentially “malestreamed” as evidence suggests that cities do not address women’s needs by way of housing, social supports, safety and public services. A Post-World War II development boom in cities greatly favoured the creation of suburbs, which further promoted the use of the automobile and greatly widened the distance between work, home and services. Essentially, cities have been historically designed to meet the needs of mainly white, young, nuclear families; with the father working outside of the home and mother working inside the home as caregiver rearing their children to emulate the same limited roles (Hayden, 1984, 2002). Hayden further suggests that, based on traditional arrangements, “dwellings, neighbourhoods, and cities designed for homebound women constrain women physically, socially, and economically” (Hayden, 1981: 25).

Cities that have been planned and developed in this way, are inefficient and in need of re-examination. Planners’ continued lack of awareness around the unique needs of women is one of the main reasons for insensitive design that many women encounter today. Smizik and Stone (1988) suggest that housing design and location conventions have been mutually exclusive in considering the needs of women, and further oppress women in general, particularly single mothers. They also point out that in regard to site plans, they generally do not assist neighbouring, mutual aid, and child supervision, and that “single-parent families disproportionately are forced to live in inappropriate, unsupportive, or inaccessible settings, because proper housing does not exist” (Smizik & Stone, 1988; Cook, Bruin & Crull, 2000: 720).

Raising children and domestic duties are tasks that are predominantly performed by women. These daily tasks are often hidden within the private realm, and are often not considered “work” by conventional standards, facing little consideration from employers, often being neglected in planning and policy decisions. Hayden goes on to suggest that the problem of women’s dual responsibilities is paradoxical: “women cannot improve their status in the home unless their overall economic position in society is altered; women cannot improve their status in the paid labour force unless their domestic responsibilities are altered” (Hayden, 1981: 230).

Based on traditionally planned environments, (the ubiquitous suburb or poorly located social housing) women often face a challenge in coordinating their daily tasks as worker and caregiver. Too often, daycare centres are not located within close proximity to employment centres or other basic services, and rarely operate outside of the standard hours of 7 am to 6 pm, and almost never on weekends. Hayden concludes “women are subject to daily harassment in trying to coordinate work hours and commuting schedules within the hours of these facilities” (Hayden, 1984, 2002:133).

Women are less likely to own a vehicle, and often rely on public transportation to carry out their daily activities. This can present a challenge when dealing with inefficient transit systems, where poor linkages and multiple transfers lead to a considerable number of hours spent in transit. Those who do have access to a vehicle, efficiently carry out their journey from work to home through “trip-chaining” their carefully planned

multipurpose journeys (Greed, 2005). Trip-chaining could be carried out effectively if public transportation more effectively linked the many services between home and work that many women rely on. Therefore, gendered transportation policies may lend themselves to a more efficient public transportation system linking services along the route from work to home.

The attempt at coordinating work and home activities often poses a problem for women who, out of necessity, need to actively participate in the labour force as a means of survival. Because many employers show little compassion for women who have to leave early to pick-up children, or cannot work late/start early due to childcare restrictions, it often threatens a woman's ability to maintain employment to support her family (Hayden, 1984, 2002: 76). It would seem then, that integrating gender considerations into the planning process, would likely to lead to an altered and more responsive relationship between land uses in relation to accessibility of supports and services. This will be discussed later in the paper when the importance of gender mainstreaming in planning policy and practice is examined.

## **2.2 Women's Self-Made City Planning**

In response to the previously described disparity in built-forms of cities, attempts have been made to encourage government institutions to respond to the dual role faced by many women (and increasingly more men) inside the home managing the household, and outside the home as workers. For example, The Russian Revolution of 1917 witnessed many important events that occurred as a result of women's struggles for emancipation in

Russia, and was recognized internationally. Well-known author and activist, Alexandra Kollontai, regularly organized activities for the women's movement, and formed the *Zhenotdel* or "women's department" in an attempt to assist women with their tasks in and outside the home. The Soviet government encouraged women to enter the workforce, on the assumption that they could handle the work demands of both places. Kollontai, a realist, noted that such a "double burden" was next to impossible, that is, for a woman to succeed in the roles of both motherhood and contributing to the wealth of the Soviet state through her on-the-job actions.

As such, her plan was for the state to set up a large network of services (i.e. shared dining areas, laundries and nurseries) with the primary goal of freeing up Soviet women from their domestic worries while encouraging them to work on behalf of the Soviet society as a whole. By relieving women of the burden of housework and concerns of motherhood, Kollontai noted that the state could help direct the Soviet wife and mother toward developing "the productive forces of the country, the raising and restoration of production." (Farnsworth, 1980: 133) Kollontai argues that while the "function of maternity" is very important, it should be considered a supplementary task, a task that is a social matter rather than a private family matter.

Similarly, Christopher (2002) refers to "defamilialization" which suggests that women should have a choice to marry or not, based on her own free will, rather than based on economic means or relying on the support of her husband should she chose to have children. Christopher examines certain welfare states that are used to help combine paid

work with the ability to raise children in the home. Although several decades apart, Kollontai and Christopher both understand the need to recognize that care giving in the home and participating in the workforce are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

In more recent efforts, women have become increasingly active in creating solutions to meet their daily needs within the built environment. In the early 1970s, Nina West Homes in London, England was developed, and was responsible for the design and building of over sixty-three units of housing for single parents (Hayden, 2002). Nina West, the group's founder, was a newly divorced woman, struggling to raise her children. The challenges she faced in finding daycare, housing and a job to support her family inspired her to create housing specifically for single parents. West was representative of what was known as single-parenthood, a decade and a half before single parents constituted a substantial proportion of households (Hayden, 2002).

One of the first projects she was responsible for developing and implementing was Fiona House, in London England. The project began with a modest building that included several apartments, a daycare centre, and communal play areas for children, which was a standard feature of all Nina West Homes. The suites in Fiona House were linked with a sophisticated intercom system that allowed parents monitor their children while they were briefly away from their suites, and promoted shared babysitting. Today, there are approximately 12 housing projects that are still in operation (Hayden, 2002). Such housing projects, relied heavily upon government support, and funding was conditional

on providing short-term accommodations. This was problematic, as funding restrictions excluded the much needed solution for permanent or long-term housing.

Towards the 1980s, Mother Centres were created in several countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The Mother Centres International Network (MCIN) initiative was started in 1980 by a women's grassroots movement in Germany, out of which Mother Centres emerged with the assistance of the German government. The models are innovative, and are more of an expanded community centre which focuses on service provision to families, such as:

- Pick-up and escort services for children and elderly
- Cleaning services
- Meal and shopping services

The Mother Centres have had a positive impact on fostering community building by offering a meeting place for women in which stable and supportive relationships can evolve. Further, the Mother Centres are often in consultation with planning boards when dealing with issues geared toward women, and are active participants at the regional and local government level and municipal departments.

In Vienna, Frauen-Werk-Stadt was developed with great attention and consideration to the needs of women with respect to architecture, urbanism, traffic and landscape planning. The housing project was constructed on 2.3 hectares, consisting of 357

apartment flats that were built in the form of multi-story blocks between 1992 and 1997 over two phases (a third will be completed in 2010). The blocks were designed with the assistance of a team of four female architects and one female landscape planner. The women were chosen through a design competition and were selected based on their focus on a variety of both building and open spaces such as: a central square; residential and play areas; garden courtyards; and playing fields. The women focused on the design of the building as well as the strategic location of the project, which is within close proximity to existing infrastructure and services.

Another important aspect of this housing model is that it focuses on women's interests within the context of urban planning in the city of Vienna. The city took two important steps in developing the project. First, the Women's Office was established in 1992 to address issues surrounding women and the built environment. Second, in 1998, in order to emphasize the importance of women's interest in planning and enable its broader implementation, the Women's Office became the Coordination Office for Planning and Construction Geared to the Requirements of Daily Life and the Specific Needs of Women.

The Coordination Office holds a strategic position high up in the administrative hierarchy and offers the possibility of fundamentally influencing administrative actions to bring about planning approaches that respect the needs of women. The office works with twelve planning and transportation departments, combining technical requirements and social skills.<sup>7</sup> There are five staff operating out of the Coordination Office, and the

annual operating budget is approximately \$300,000 Euros, and extra monies are available for special projects.

This distinguishes Vienna from other European cities, where equal-opportunity spokespersons or one single planning expert, often in connection with other areas of responsibility, represents women's planning interests. As well, the Coordination Office has access to significant budget resources.<sup>8</sup> Further discussion of the political climate supporting this initiative will be expanded upon in Chapter Four.

The Frauen-Werk-Stadt housing model differs from the Nina West project described previously, as the Viennese housing model offers a permanent and long term housing solution to single mothers. Similar to the Mother Centres, Frauen-Werk-Stadt offers space and opportunity for informal contacts to increase supportive networking opportunities, and encourage the formation of the neighbourhood as a "social space."

To summarize, in Western culture, society continues to stress the importance of motherhood, while at the same time acknowledging the fact that contemporary family structures tend to see both parents working outside the home and increasingly, single-parent families in which the sole caregiver must work outside the home. Problematic to this is that the current built form of cities has been planned with the nuclear family in mind, with one parent working outside the home (usually the father) and the other parent at home caring for the children and the household responsibilities. This structure often requires an automobile to coordinate tasks outside the home. Neighbourhoods that

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<sup>8</sup> City of Vienna, Chief Executive Office for Urban Planning, Development and Construction, 2003.

accommodate these family structures often are situated in the suburbs, far from city centres, where there are jobs and plenty of amenities. This raises concerns with commuting and coordinating daily tasks such as picking up children from schools or daycare centres, getting to and from work, and transporting children to activities outside of school/daycare time.

Travelling distance is only one problem women face in the existing suburban scenario. Miranne and Young (2000) indicate that current research regarding gender and the urban environment revolves around three things. First, women's and men's experiences in the city differ, namely due to unequal relationships; second, women's use of space and time can lead to changes in city structures; and finally, such change can actually impact gender relations in the city. These authors suggest that feminists have written a great deal of literature primarily concerning how women react to their urban living space, and how that relationship often leads to the "double burden", juggling work inside and outside the home as previously described by Kollontai (1921). The authors also point out that women's relationship to their urban environment is a consistent struggle to cross various boundaries. They contend that how women respond to these boundaries, is how they live their lives (Miranne and Young, 2000). Urban women, they point out, "often do resist spaces imposed on them, for reasons rising to survival to political consciousness" (Miranne and Young, 2000). Greed and Whitzman (1999) offer their critique of traditionally planned neighbourhoods as being "malestreamed." In other words, a form of planning that does not focus so much on dividing the city into appropriate land uses, but rather points toward separation between men and "others." Their contention is that the

dominant planning belief system is based on patriarchal theories, and that the planning subculture simply reinforces these thoughts.

### **2.3 Historical Background: Theory**

As the literature and case studies suggest, there are definite questions regarding equity and spatial relations, both inside and outside the home, and in society in general.

Throughout the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, theorists have offered various explanations, ranging from male-dominated workforces to the idea that the nuclear family is still predominant, to the advent of the feminist movement and women's liberation. According to Hayden (2002), a substantial portion of housing and neighbourhood planning has been performed and implemented by men and is embedded in "Enlightenment values." (44) As a result, most neighbourhoods, in Hayden's words, are "malestreamed."(44) In other words, they mainly support the ideal of the nuclear family and guide many planning decisions in effect today.

Contemporary family structures and changing family roles cannot be effectively supported in many of the outdated neighbourhoods that exist today. Despite this, many planning authorities continue to promote the building of neighbourhoods based on traditional models that are located far from the city centre, not within close proximity to services, and often with poor access to public transportation services.

In examining planning theories that have shaped the built-form of cities, theorists such as Lindblom, Davidoff, and Etzioni have shaped their rationales for solving planning

problems through the use of analytical tools from the social sciences that influence decisions, and through the design of regulations and implementation strategies that will produce desired outcomes (Sandercock, 1998, 2002).

This next section offers a background on the abovementioned theorists, to offer a better understanding as to how these theories have influenced current planning practices. This section will be followed by a feminist critique of these theories, and will further examine the contemporary theories that are guiding conventional planning practices.

### 2.3.1 Rational Comprehensive Model

This model suggests that rational planning theory is rooted in a decision-making process in which “rationalism is identified with a scientific approach to analysis and with a particular way of problem solving” (Alexander, 1992: 19). The assumption is that the planner is a rational being who, through a systematic process, identifies goals, offers lines of action, and estimates consequences. Following the decision making process, the planner suggests recommendations to policy makers and other actors in the implementation process, which will then be embraced by the public. Banfield summarizes three key aspects of the rational planning model as being:

- a) the decision makers list all the opportunities for action open to them;
- b) they identify all the consequences that would follow from the adoption of each of the possible actions; and
- c) they select the action that would be followed by the preferred set of consequences.

Therefore, it is the rational planner's objective to be apolitical, someone who separates planning from politics and pays little if any attention to political considerations of what is considered to be in the interest of the public. As suggested by Banfield, the dimensions of the model imply that the rational planner is able to forecast externalities, has a rational plan in which to respond, and methodologically predicts consequences, whilst maintaining "an antiseptic distance from the real world of messy politics" (Sandercock, 1998: 127).

### 2.3.2 Advocacy Planning Model

Opposite the apolitical nature of the rational planning model, this model emphasizes the role of politics in planning, and is essentially one of the first challenges to the rational planning approach (Sandercock, 1998, 2002). In this planning model, the planner is an advocate who will "do more than explicate the values underlying his prescriptions for courses of action; he should affirm them; he should be an advocate for what he deems proper" (Davidoff, 1965: 31). Davidoff further argues the advocacy planner as one who acts in the best interest of the public by representing a wide range of interests in which the planner would "plead for his own and his client's view of the good society" (Davidoff, 1965: 31). Although Davidoff promoted social justice, by most advocacy planning standards, the planner was seen to be the expert who is going to share his expertise with the unknowing, misrepresented public. Sandercock (1998, 2002) further summarizes advocacy planning as:

*Those who had previously been underrepresented would now be represented by advocacy planners, who would go to poor neighbourhoods, find out what those*

*folks wanted, and bring that back to the table in the planning office and city hall.*  
(Sandercock, 2002: 198)

The assumption is made that this type of planner is confident in their awareness of what is best for the public, and is duly responsible for representing other marginalized groups at the policy-making level.

### 2.3.3 Incrementalism

In response to the limitations of rational comprehensive planning, this model seeks to shape planning decisions gradually, and includes input from many groups of people. As suggested by Lindblom (1959):

*Mutual adjustment is more pervasive than the explicit forms it takes in negotiation between groups; it persists through the mutual impacts of groups upon each other even where they are not in communication. For all the imperfections and latent dangers in this ubiquitous process of mutual adjustment, it will often accomplish an adaptation of policies to a wider range of interests than could be done by one group centrally.*

Within this model, planning decisions may be made incrementally, reflecting on past practice and proceeding cautiously towards future decisions. By Lindblom's estimation, successful planning practice means that one "proceeds through a succession of incremental changes, [and] he avoids serious lasting mistakes in several ways" (Lindblom, 1959: 212). Precedent and experience, rather than an ideological vision of a more perfect future, influences planning processes, with an emphasis on removing the ambiguity of value judgments that the planner might possess.

#### 2.3.4 Mixed-Scanning

Finally, Etzioni offers a different view on how planning methods can be more effective through a mixed-scanning approach. This involves a broad view of a situation with the intention of determining problem areas, and applying rational methods to come up with solutions. According to Etzioni, the broad view that mixed scanning encompasses differs from rational planning in that it is not concerned with details or specifications, so that “the overview is feasible” (Etzioni, 1967). Similarly, MacLeod (1996) summarizes mixed-scanning in planning practice as:

*In practice, planners make repetitive attempts to solve problems, starting off being incremental and becoming more comprehensive. They thus take advantage of the strengths of each approach while avoiding their respective shortcomings, a methodology known as “mixed-scanning”.*

#### **2.4 Feminist Critique of Traditional Planning Theories**

An examination of traditional and influential planning theories offers insight as to how these theories have fundamentally shaped current planning trends. Feminist scholars such as Fainstein, Greed, Sandercock, MacGregor, Ritzdorf and Haydento name a few; argue that theories embedded in Enlightenment values should be re-visited in order to articulate new theories based on re-thinking of Western tradition (Fainstein, 1996).

Within the rational comprehensive model, feminist theorists such as Rahder (2002) are particularly critical of the underlying assumptions that: a) planning is a rational process of decision-making, and b) planning is about providing for the public interest/public good, without the notion of the public good being critically examined. Rahder argues

that planning cannot always be rational, because it assumes that the ‘expert’ planner can control both the planning process, and decisions with respect to the future. In actuality, many of what are considered rational planning decisions often lead to poorly planned cities.

For example, construction of suburbs greatly increased in response to returning veterans from World War II. Cities were designed to accommodate the needs of this returning population, and it was assumed that in planning decisions the citizens to consider were those that would settle nicely into predominately white, young, nuclear families, with a father that works outside the home and a mom at home raising the children (Hayden, 1984, 2002). However, as the 21<sup>st</sup> century approached, the make up of families changed with an increase in single-parent families in which nine out of ten single parents were women (Hayden, 2002).<sup>9</sup> It is argued then, that rational planning decisions during the post-WW II period were essentially guided by andocentric ideals, and did not forecast the changes in independence for women.

The next critique centers on Enlightenment ideologies of “reason in public life”, where there are assumptions of societal actors working toward a common goal for the common good (Sandercock, 1998). Problematic to this idea is that it is embedded in the “economic-oriented principles of efficiency, utility, and market competitions” (MacGregor, 1996). Within this model, the decisions of planners assist in perpetuating the domination of elite men and capital over other men, women, racialized groups, and

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<sup>9</sup> While the vast majority of single-parent families are headed by women (80%), 2006 census data (Canada) indicates an increase of 15% in single-parent families headed by men.

the natural environment (MacGregor, 1996). Friedmann (1996) further suggests that “women’s emancipation needs to be informed by an alternative vision of the ‘good society’ from which the power to dominate others is absent, and in which difference and equality can coexist.” (Friedmann, 1996: 41) These critiques and ideas underpin the theory of spatial justice, which will be addressed later in the following section.

Urban planning theorist, Leonie Sandercock has written extensively on exclusionary practices within public space. Sandercock (1998) criticizes assumptions regarding ‘the public’ and how this broad definition gives little recognition to the diversity of citizens affected by planning decisions. This lack of consideration in planning perpetuates existing power structures and unequal gender relations, leaving little consideration of who is in control and with what consequences.

Rational planning decisions do little to consider the possibilities of unforeseen or immeasurable circumstances. Within the rational planning model, which includes incrementalism and mixed-scanning, Sandercock (1998, 2002) further suggests that traditionally, professionals set the agenda, conceptualize the problem, and define the terms in which a solution might be sought. Therefore, assumptions are made that the planner can be objective and rational, including their belief of what is in the interest of the ‘public good’. However, without the inclusion of diverse opinions and considerations of the unique needs of a diverse group of citizens, the rational planner accomplishes little more than to base their decisions on the “experience of white, middle-class and upper class men in Western Societies” (Hayden, 2002: 119).

The literature around the topic of women and their relationship with the built environment suggests that traditional theoretical models are not conducive to the needs of women. An attempt to address this issue and to take measures to improve the 'double burden' faced by women is not a new issue but an issue that presents itself as a struggle in responding with real and workable solutions. Despite theoretical critiques, difficulties implementing feminist praxis remain. Inequitable outcomes that are evident today; the ideal of a revitalized, responsive and just city remains a point of concern (Fainstein, 2006). The above authors argue that there must be a shift in the way in which we approach planning theory, practice and education that would include gender in the analysis of planning decisions. Different approaches would acknowledge women's experiences as "expert" knowledge, and would include theory from a feminist perspective. This could potentially address women's definition of well-being in relation to the built-environment, contributing to a more inclusive and reflective planning process.

### **2.5 Current Planning Theory Trends: Spatial Justice Theory**

Although not a new concept, spatial justice is linked with strategic spatial planning in pursuit of the "just city". Focusing on diversity, the concept of spatial justice has been reopened in the planning and policy debate, and represents a new guiding principle for spatial planning authorities. Concerned mainly with the processes responsible for spatial disparities in people's life chances, spatial justice (or injustice) focuses on notions of social justice and territorial justice (Dikec, 2001). Spatial justice builds upon concepts of

social justice by recognizing that space is socially produced, and that space plays a role in shaping social relations.

Much of the research has centered the focus on increasing awareness of the significance of spatiality in the organization of our lives (Amin, Massey, & Thrift, 2000). Examining the city in terms of processes and interactions, cities represent themselves as strong networks of social interactions guided through geographical placement. Introducing diversity into the interaction is what makes a city challenging and exciting, promoting an animated nucleus of creative activity. Therefore, the geographical organization of a city plays an important part on outcomes in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas of city life (Amin, Massey, & Thrift, 2000). The authors focus on citizen's perceptions of well-being in the city, through:

*rights of being, becoming and interconnecting in the city; rights which do not flow alone from the ways in which physical space is organized, but also from the developmental and expressive opportunities given to people (Amin, Massey, & Thrift, 2000: 9)*

Stressing the importance of a person's opportunities, Harloe approaches spatial justice by looking at social exclusion, suggesting it as being less about income or poverty, and more about "prospects and networks and life chances" (Harloe, 2001). So, just as social justice requires that life chances not be distributed along class lines, spatial justice requires that they not be distributed geographically.

Fainstein contributes to the discussion which emanates from her earlier writings of a “just city.” Originally she had looked at urban justice in need of a critique on planning in practice, when in fact, as she argues; we need to move away from the assumption that the planner inherently knows good from bad without needing to make elaborate arguments justifying criteria (Fainstein, 2006). Her earlier work “Cities and Diversity” defines the just city in terms of democracy, equity, diversity, growth, and sustainability. These values can pose a challenge, in that they have potential to infringe on minority rights and impact negative outcomes. As Fainstein suggests:

*Illiberal majorities can make democracy indifferent to minority rights; the high cost of achieving equity through redistribution creates resentment among those who must sacrifice, resulting in legitimation crisis and even counter-revolution or civil war; diversity can lead to social breakdown; and growth, while making redistribution less of a zero-sum game, benefits most those who already have the most (Fainstein, 2006: 4)*

Young (2000) who focuses on the relationship between diversity and equality, agrees there is a potential problem of “illiberal majorities” and takes the position that *more* democracy will lead to more equality (Young, 2000). The idea of more democracy often poses challenges when addressing planning issues, as it is often very time consuming and relies upon “face-to-face interaction” (Fainstein, 2006: 21).

Dikec also points that it is not only the participation of the city dweller in city social life, but “more importantly, his or her active participation in the political life, management, and administration of the city” (Dikec, 2001: 1790). Therefore, as suggested by these authors, the right to the city is not as simple as a participatory right, but more importantly as an enabling right, which requires constant redefinition. As Milroy suggests:

*Theorists and practitioners have grappled with the significance of one's self presentation (which relates to being, not having) on one's capacity to have and use resources. Distribution and recognition, having and being, are tightly interwoven in spatial justice contexts (Milroy, 2004: 48)*

The importance of spatial justice is less about resource distribution (what people have) and more about increasing life chances through choice and accessibility of opportunities. In this regard, choice, opportunity and accessibility can be increased if developed within a gendered framework, which will be discussed next.

## **2.6 Gender Mainstreaming Efforts**

Gender mainstreaming, according to the Council of Europe can be thought of as the “re-organization of the improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages by actors normally involved in policy-making”. A more thorough definition, according to the Gender Equality Tool adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO):

*Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Accessed 17/06/2007 @[www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm)

Responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system-wide, and rests at the highest levels within agencies; some of the basic principles include<sup>11</sup>:

- Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established;
- The initial identification of issues and problems across all area(s) of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed;
- Assumptions that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective should never be made;
- Gender analysis should always be carried out;
- Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into practice;
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making; and
- Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes, and positive legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.

#### 2.6.1 Why Gender mainstreaming is important

Women constitute over half of the population, and should therefore have meaningful consideration in planning decisions (Greed, 2006). Social constructs of gender, however, have led to the marginalization of this majority group. This is often due to policy-makers and their constructed worldview, “in which women’s needs are secondary to public realm considerations.” (Greed, 2006: 269) To address this issue, feminist scholars

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

argue that a strong provision of gender-sensitive information is necessary in planning education and the planning profession. Evidence has demonstrated that women who have strong roles in urban planning have tried to introduce innovations in areas such as transportation, leisure, security, housing, and economic development, and many of these aspects have not greatly influenced mainstream planning decisions to date. Feminist theorists argue that by merely entering women into the planning equation, does not necessarily address the gender analysis that planning so desperately needs. While considerations of race, class, and physical disabilities are important to the analysis, gender has been an emerging focus of evaluation that has been typically ignored in planning theory and practice (Ritzdorf, 1992).

In her discussion around the importance of gender mainstreaming, Greed notes that “integrating gender considerations into the planning process is likely to lead to the reconfiguration of the relationship between land uses and the location of social facilities, in order to enable women and men to combine their working and caring duties” (Greed, 2005: 721). Consider for a moment a built environment that has included gender mainstreaming throughout the various levels of the planning process. The dual role of worker and caregiver, a role usually carried out by women-might be more appealing to men if all the necessary supports were in place. This in turn might challenge and overcome existing stereotypes regarding men and women’s roles in respect to duties outside the home.

It is likely that, “as a result of gender mainstreaming, the needs of women will need to be given higher priority than before” (Greed, 2005: 722). Such things as transport and land use policies, concerned with the location, and relationship between, residential employment and employment uses would be reviewed in the interest of all road users both male and female (Greed, 2005: 722).

If gender is to be mainstreamed into urban planning, statistics on women’s work (public and private), travel patterns and other land-use related activities need to be prioritized in planning decisions, to meaningfully and accurately reflect the representation of women within the population. Women’s journeys, work patterns and caring duties would all have a significant role in shaping the location, distribution of different land use and types of development and the transport routes and modes available (Greed, 2005: 740).

The nature of the built environment and spatial policy that have contributed to its development have been widely criticized from a gender perspective, particularly by the “women and planning” movement (Greed, 2005). The author argues that although planning policy and implementation has not demonstrated a move toward prioritizing the needs of women, there is a real necessity to incorporate gender in the pursuit of achieving spatial justice. Greed also points out that there is an assumption that if a planner is a woman, she must be oriented to gender mainstreaming practices. This is not altogether true, and quite often women planners share the similar ideas (or lack of knowledge) around gender and planning as their male counterparts.

## **2.7 Directives contributing to gender-focused planning**

Initiatives and directives in the European Union and in the United Kingdom offer an opportunity to incorporate gender mainstreaming into their planning efforts and demonstrate the importance and relevance of such initiatives. For illustrative purposes, an outline of two initiatives (The European Charter for Women in the City & The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit) geared toward the inclusion of gender in planning policy and practices are offered below.

### 2.7.1 Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in the United Kingdom developed a “gender mainstreaming” toolkit with the intention of fundamentally integrating gender into all stages of the policy-making process. For the toolkit to be effective in mainstreaming gender into urban spatial policy, local planning authorities need to look at the following issues that occur in the plan-making process:

- What organizational resources and experience are there on gender mainstreaming?
- How is the policy team chosen and is it representative of men and women?
- Who are perceived to be the planned?
- How are statistics gathered, are they disaggregated by gender, and who do they include?
- What are the key values, priorities and objectives of the plan?
- Who is consulted and who is involved in participation?
- How is it evaluated?

- How is the policy implemented, managed, monitored and managed?<sup>12</sup>

The directive aims to include gender mainstreaming into planning policy and practice in attempts to offer a more reflective and inclusive planning process. However, it is unclear as to how many planners are aware of its existence or “the impeding legal requirements generated that it will become a statutory duty just like environmental assessment.”

(Greed, 2005: 743).

### 2.7.2 European Charter for Women in the City

The European Charter for Women in the City is a framework developed by the Commission of the European Union Equal Opportunities Unit. An overview of the Charter’s 12-Point Declaration includes:

- **Decision making and Parity in Democracy:** Women at all times must actively participate at all levels of the decision-making process in town planning, urban space, housing, transportation and environmental quality.
- **Active Citizenship:** Active citizenship must be approached on the one hand through careful consideration of the influence of dwelling place and on the other, of how representative authorities and economic and political mechanisms in the city work.
- **Equal Opportunities:** Equal opportunities must be promote in education and research, in work places and in all professions related to town and country planning, urban space, housing, mobility and safety in cities.
- **Participation:** Egalitarian participatory processes must be set up for women which will favour renewed ties of solidarity.
- **Daily Life:** Daily life as seen through a woman's eyes must become a political issue.

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<sup>12</sup> Accessed on [12/06/2007@www.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:12/06/2007@www.rtpi.org.uk).

- **Sustainable Development:** Women must be fully involved in policies for maintaining the ecological equilibrium on our planet.
- **Social Safety and Mobility:** Every woman, and particularly underprivileged or isolated women, must have easy access to public transport in order to circulate freely and to fully enjoy economic, social and cultural life in the city. Women too, have a right to the city.
- **The Right to Housing and Habitat:** Women are entitled to adequate housing and habitat.
- **Gender Issues:** Gender issues in the city must be acknowledged as the source for a newly shared culture and should influence a new town and country planning philosophy.
- **Education and Local Experimentation:** Gender issues in cities must be taught in schools, institutes for architecture and town planning, and in universities. Experimentation in cities is urgently needed if any changes are to occur.
- **The Role of the Media and Transmitting Experience:** The media must set out to spread messages which will counteract stereotypes and show women in roles reflecting their development and emancipation.
- **Networks:** Exchanging information through a European network will promote the Charter and implement action of its 12 points.<sup>13</sup>

The Charter aims to establish a shift in thinking around planning cities, and is viewed as a “lasting and open analytical process containing a series of concrete proposals which might be put into practice in order to take into account and to promote increasingly active citizenship by women” in city planning (The European Charter for Women in the City, 1994).

## 2.8 Summary

When looking at cities from a gender perspective, one of the main differences affecting the use of urban space is in terms of female and male caregiving roles and

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<sup>13</sup> The full charter can be found in greater detail @[www.cityshelter.org/03.charte/chartes/charte-en.doc](http://www.cityshelter.org/03.charte/chartes/charte-en.doc).

responsibilities. As outlined in this chapter, gender specific division of labour leads to women doing most of the direct caregiving inside and outside of the home. Therefore, women should play an integral role in urban planning and development initiatives that influence the pursuit of spatial justice.

Although there is no panacea for planning issues that can attempt to address the diversity of urban challenges, there are measures that may certainly assist in the process. Gender mainstreaming has been introduced as a means of increasing the chances of planning policies that meet the needs of women, as well as men, being developed and implemented more effectively and being taken more seriously as a valid component of mainstream planning systems as demonstrated in directives adopted by the EU and member states.

With all its efforts, the commitment to gender mainstreaming has faced criticisms in meeting its intended objectives, and it is argued that to get these incentives right, it is necessary to begin “mobilizing sufficient interest among crucial actors, beginning within the bureaucracy.”(Hafner-burton & Pollack, 2009: 114). Other critics argue that “mainstreaming initiatives must also acknowledge the need to evaluate the differential impact of policies on different groups” as well as to consider “the situation of black women or disabled women might be distinct from their white or able-bodies counterparts” and might suggest “that it would be more appropriate to mainstream equality as opposed to gender” (Beveridge *et al*, 2000: 391).

This chapter demonstrates how gender mainstreaming is an important step in the pursuit toward inclusion in spatial planning and the spatial policy-making process. In order to meet this challenge, mainstreaming must play an important role in spatial planning initiatives, focusing on processes, and bottom up solutions that respect and celebrate the diversity that citizens have to offer.

## CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 Overview

This chapter will outline the methodological approaches used in the study to explore the central questions around the participant's perceptions of well-being and the potential of the built environment to influence this.

The research was approached using qualitative research methods. This type of methodology allows the researcher to inform the study through “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” where “the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Cresswell, 1994: 73).

The methodology is strengthened by the researcher's personal experience as a single-parent, and was shared with the participants in casual conversation both during and after the interviews. The research is exploratory, and seeks to describe and interpret the stories of the participants, with the central idea that urban planning that is guided by women, and for women, can lead to environments more responsive to the needs of women and increase perceptions of well-being. This is important for women, as single-parents, who are juggling multiple responsibilities such as raising children and managing household duties. The research contends that the involvement of women in the planning and the development of their own

housing can positively inform future planning efforts, lead to positive perceptions of well-being, and increase women's chances to more fully participate in society.

There are many approaches to, and definitions of feminist research methods, that generally imply a commitment to the empowerment of women. Feminists Kirby and McKenna (1989) and Ristock and Pennell (1996) argue that a feminist approach to research methods, and support for this type of research is more consistent with feminist values, and focuses more on how we use the methods in the research process (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). This type of research involves creating your own knowledge and researching from personal experience. It is suggested that this type of research is often led by an individual who accounts for their personal experience which leads to the research undertaking. Kirby and McKenna suggest the "more familiar with the experience the researcher is, the better potential understanding of it she/he will have"(Kirby and McKenna, 1989:44). As mentioned in chapter one, the interest in the study stems from the investigator's personal experience as a single-parent. The investigator's personal interaction with the built environment, and housing, has helped develop questions around the importance of the built environment and perceptions of well-being, and have been formulated over time.

In establishing how women might perceive the built environment-specifically in relation to their residence, the following themes will be explored:

- a) How does design and planning specifically geared toward the needs of women impact the lives of those women?
- b) What do women consider to be good design and is planning important in the design process?
- c) In the daily travels of women-what are some of the patterns that emerge in completing their tasks as worker inside and outside the home?
- d) How are housing design and planning processes impacted by the involvement of professional women, as well as those women who will be directly affected by the outcome (i.e. women who will live in the project)?

### **3.2 Procedures**

The research included two complementary methods of data collection to inform the central research questions. The two methods of data collection used for this research are semi-structured, opened ended interviews and participant observation. Qualitative approaches using interviews and observation notes have been shown to provide a richer more descriptive “story” in examining perceptions of well-being. This type of experiential understanding is what the study aims to achieve to better inform planning practice.

The purpose of the interviews is to gather stories from residents around their perceptions as a resident of Frauen-Werk-Stadt. In articulating these stories, it is hoped this will contribute to a better understanding of the research questions under investigation. In other words, in order to fully understand the impact of this housing model on the lives of

women and their perceptions of well-being, it is important to hear the stories of women who live there. The value in this approach is that women are able to lead the discussion and indicate what relevant information to share with the researcher.

The investigation does encompass elements of ethnography, biography and phenomenology adopted an ethnographic approach to the research, conducting open-ended interviews and participant observation. Ethnographic methods are appropriate for the study as the qualitative framework is complemented with detailed stories and descriptions of the community and its participants. The validity in ethnography lies in allowing the researcher to show there are many influences that contribute to the insights of some of the later discussed conclusions (Sanjek, 1990).

### 3.2.1 Qualitative Interviews: Semi structured/open ended.

As part of the data collection for this study, semi structured interviews were conducted, and the interview guide and consent forms are provided in Appendix A. An advantage to using semi-structured interviews for the research was mainly due to relationships that were established in the process, leading to a more organic experience for researcher and participant. This method, as Stake suggests, is not necessarily to *map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it* (Stake, 1995:43). This method of research is not only looking for how many, but what for and why.

While quantitative data is often the preferred method of research when attempting to measure something, what it often does, is to produce a series of numbers from people's

experiences. What it cannot do, is offer the richness of the findings from qualitative interviews, “which approach a problem in its natural setting, exploring related and contradictory themes and concepts” (Rubin, 2005).

It is sometimes suggested that qualitative interviewing is simply a form of storytelling that does not provide the rigorous data needed to provide a statistical analysis of a study. However, as Reistma-Street, Lund & Schofield (2001) point out, “dialogue and action may be the most effective way of addressing issues surrounding women and housing-not research per se.”(30) The present investigation will attempt to inform the “dialogue and action” idea by articulating the experiences and housing concerns of single-parent women, in hopes that women, planners, housing providers and developers will work collaboratively to address issues indicated by the participants.

While interviews are a valuable method of research, there are also limitations to this method. There were a small number of participants recruited for the project, eight residents out of almost three hundred. The results of this small sampling could not be representative of all residents-and the findings could potentially misrepresent perceived feelings of well-being for others living in the project.

Another limitation to this type of method was the reliance on an interpreter to inform the interviews. The interpreter may bias results by knowingly or unknowingly providing cues as to what types of responses are desirable. When you factor in language differences-the researcher might not be accurately informed or fully involved in the

interview process due to relying on the interpreter to feedback information in its intended form.

### 3.2.2 Analysis of Interview Data

In order to understand the behaviours and responses of the participants under investigation, the transcripts were reviewed several times and continually referenced against the research questions. This assisted in coding the data into themes relating to the investigation. General categories were then formed based on common phrases in the answers to the questions. More focused themes were generated by coding key words in phrases that seemed to belong together, and were then broken down into lists that followed the research questions being explored. Initial themes included (a) desire for connectedness, (b) engaging in decision making, (c) lack of energy to contribute to organize change, (d) importance of supports/infrastructure, and (e) meeting the needs of children. While the questioning generated additional topics, they were eventually categorized into broader more relevant themes or dropped altogether due to being mentioned infrequently.

### 3.2.3 Participant Observation

Data collection also included informal conversations that occurred outside of recorded interviews (as a natural extension of ordinary discussion) as part of participant observation. This type of research contributes to a sense of openness, as the researcher's presence and reason for being there was made known to individual participants. Participant observation complements the research methods, as it is not guided by

assumptions about what data is important, rather it encourages the researcher to be present in the daily activities of the people they hope to understand. Notes taken while observing participants have the potential to enhance and further develop ideas that are tested in the interviews (Gilbert, 2001).

The researcher was able to take notes on the days that interviews took place as well as on other days where no interviews were scheduled. This enabled the researcher to get a glimpse of the activities taking place at the housing project; where people seemed to enjoy gathering, interactions among residents, and evidence of people accessing on site services such as the nearby grocery stores, on-site medical facilities, day care, and outdoor storage areas.

There was a lot of time spent with the participants before, during and after the interviews took place. Conversations outside of formal interviews generated a lot of useful information that might not have been captured in the interview. Informal discussions were more likely, based on the comfort and relationship building done by the researcher prior to the interviews. Informal discussions around the purpose of the research and how it could inform planning practice became an area of interest for the participants.

#### 3.2.4 Analysis of Participant Observation Notes

Descriptive notes were used to inform the data generated from the interviews, and complemented the research by providing high quality, detailed information about the participant's behaviour. It assisted the research in providing insight into influences on

the group that might impact perceptions of well-being. The notes were analyzed and incorporated, where appropriate, to complement the themes of the interview analysis.

### 3.2.5 Recruitment Procedures

Through email, a great deal of correspondence occurred between the researcher and the key contact person prior to the commencement of the investigation, and the contact indicated the residents seemed supportive of the researcher being there. Eight single mothers who lived in the Viennese housing project were recruited prior to the arrival of the investigator with the assistance of a well-known resident of the housing project. The contact person had lived in Frauen-Werk-Stadt for several years and was actively involved in the early planning stages of the housing initiative. Through the task of snowballing, this person came highly recommended to the investigator by several people involved in the planning, designing and coordination of the housing initiative. The contact was a good candidate to connect the researcher with potential research participants based on her positive relationship with residents and role as a community worker at Frauen-Werk-Stadt.

### 3.2.6 Participants and Setting

The sample included eight interviews with the residents of Frauen-Werk-Stadt, and one conducted with the chief planner and architect of the project. Originally there were ten interviews planned, however, two participants had scheduling conflicts and were unable to take part in the study.

Women were recruited prior to the arrival of the researcher-and the key contact was careful to select women from varying backgrounds, but who had lived in the residential model for a period of 3 or more years. All of the participants were mothers with children who did not have partners living with them-the target group the housing model was based on. Thus, the women within the sample were roughly in similar situations, working single women with children. This method of recruiting the interviewees increased the richness of the data by selecting participants with similar life situations.

The participants selected for interviews had similar family structures. Each participant was single and had between 1 and 4 children between the ages of 1 and 16. Some of the participants were recently separated, and some had been separated for several years. This type of data was not included as a focus in the research. The research also included an interview with one key informant, a senior planner and architect for the city of Vienna who led the development of the housing project.

While the participant's levels of education and occupations varied, almost all of the women interviewed had completed some form of post-secondary education, and ninety percent of the women were employed at the time of the interviews.

All of the women interviewed had qualified for Wohnbeihilfe<sup>14</sup>, a form of public financial support for regular housing expenses. In Vienna, housing costs can be covered

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<sup>14</sup> Families with their primary residence in Vienna living in assisted, redeveloped or private apartments and not exceeding a certain income limit. Public financial support for housing expense is granted by the City of Vienna. The maximum amount of time an individual can receive the subsidy is 2 years.

by social assistance as well as other subsidy programs. Wohnbeihilfe is a subsidy that allows residents to choose where they would like to live and reimburses them for some of their living expenses, which is different from subsidized housing where there are limited options as to where you can live based on subsidized units available. Subsidy is for renters only, and does not apply to:

- subsidized built houses
- subsidized renovated houses
- privately rented, non-subsidized built or renovated houses<sup>15</sup>

The amount of Wohnbeihilfe available to an individual depends on household size, income, rent costs and square footage of the apartment. Wohnbeihilfe is mainly for:

- families with members all under the age of forty;
- families with 1 child under the age of six;
- families with members who have a disability;
- families with at least three children; and
- single parent families<sup>16</sup>

There are also minimum income requirements for individuals to qualify for Wohnbeihilfe. For example, EUR 619 for one person, and EUR 929 for a two person family, and an additional EUR 65 per dependent.

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<sup>15</sup> OECD, Social Policy Division. Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs: Country Chapter, Benefits and Wages [www.oecd.org/els/social/workincentives](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/workincentives)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

The interviews took place in each of the resident's suites. This contributed to the participant observation undertaken by the researcher, and observations regarding surroundings and general comfort of the participant in their home were recorded. By interviewing participants individually in their homes, the researcher was also able to see the unique layouts of the suites which were all very different. Some suites were one or two levels, some had balconies, en-suite laundry, and all of these observations were noted and included in the analysis of the observation notes. Interviews were tape-recorded and conducted with the assistance of a translator. The tape recordings allowed the researcher to prepare verbatim transcripts of the discussion for analysis. Confidentiality forms were prepared and signed by the translator to ensure confidentiality of what was being said by the participants.

Interviews were unstructured and a translator accompanied the researcher to 3 of the individual sessions. The other five interviews were conducted with participants who opted to do so in English. Interview guides and release forms were prepared in both English and German for each participant to review. General discussions about the research occurred prior to each interview to inform the participants of some of the ideas the researcher was trying to explore. Preparing the participants for the interviews and the interaction process between the participant, researcher and translator was an important contribution to the data collection, as the small groups felt well-informed and able to fully understand their important role in contributing to the research. While this process helped stimulate new ideas and thoughts, it could contribute to participants changing or

modifying their original ideas on the topic being discussed (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993).

## CHAPTER 4 – FRAUEN-WERK-STADT BACKGROUND

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A brief background on housing development in Austria helps further the understanding of the necessary political and social structures to implement a project such as Frauen-Werk-Stadt. This in turn will assist the reader in assessing whether or not such a project is possible in other jurisdictions, and whether or not the model can successfully be replicated.

### **4.1 Austrian Housing Development: government support and subsidy**

Vienna's social housing experienced strong support during the 1920s due to reform programmes put in place by Vienna's social democratic local government, whose mandate was to create a local Welfare state (Reinprecht, 2007, Forster, 2002). The city of Vienna had been governed by the Vienna Social Democratic Party since 1919, at the same time, Austria was being ruled by conservative governments. Having fundamentally different approaches to governance, the Social Democratic Party saw it necessary to gain independence from tax state tax legislation, to generate a budget to implement its reform programme (Forester, 2002). In 1922, the city of Vienna became a province in order to avoid interference from the federal conservative government; which allowed Vienna to establish its own tax base, and implement projects separate from State regulation. From this point, the municipal government played a key role in the development and management of social housing, and relied on a housing tax which was introduced in 1924, to meet their housing objectives. The revenue generated from the housing tax constituted about 20 percent of total tax revenues in Vienna (Forester, 2002).

Housing reforms that started to take shape in the 1990s began with the introduction of Gemeindebeau<sup>17</sup>. This type of development indicated a movement towards innovative housing and urban development that was being approached in an inclusive and public-friendly way. This formed the basis for reconstruction, new housing, and resident-oriented urban renewal. This became an important element of societal change, where “architecture served as physical expression of this new social Utopia which is best symbolized by the numerous communal facilities, by the courtyards serving as communication areas” (Forester, 2002: 15). Vienna’s government focused on theme-oriented settlements, providing incentives to develop ecological housing estates, traffic free housing estates, gender mainstreaming, and other contemporary forms of live/work housing. Incentives were provided in the form of subsidies to architects, interested in designing new housing geared towards Vienna’s theme-oriented housing (Forester, 2002). Subsidies were offered to improve the quality and innovation of design of project submissions, which were attractive to many architects, and generated interest from internationally known architects, including Margarethe Lihotzky, who designed Frauen-Werk-Stadt.

Vienna has demonstrated a strong commitment to the provision, development, and maintenance of public housing. Approximately one in four of the estimated 1.6 million residents of Vienna lives in municipal housing. Since 1994 almost one third of a total of

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<sup>17</sup> Typically refers to residential buildings erected by a municipality, usually to provide low-cost public housing. When the Social Democratic Party of Austria gained control of the municipal administration during Austria's First Republic (1918-1934) it began the project of improving living conditions for workers. Large residential estates were built during that time. Apartments were assigned on the basis of a point system favoring families and less affluent citizens

220,000 municipal apartments (68,842 new flats) have been built. More than half of these municipal housing projects were renovated between 1994 and 2005 and brought up to modern standards.<sup>18</sup>

Vienna has made impressive strides in social housing, and no other large European city has such a high rate of available apartments, compared to the number of inhabitants.<sup>19</sup> Due to the high rate of available apartments, Vienna rents are reasonable, and are at a European average. With the introduction of general housing assistance, and expanding eligibility criteria to include families in privately rented apartments (Mietbeihilfe and Wohnbeihilfe) the City has made great efforts in the direction of social justice. On an annual basis, approximately 62,000 Viennese families receive some form of housing subsidy.

In addition, Viennese architecture was supported through subsidies, which lead to many high profile design competitions. Many of these designs lead to internationally recognized housing projects, including Frauen-Werk-Stadt, which was designed by Margarethe Schutte-Lihotzky. Schutte-Lihotzky was well-known for her designs that reflected the needs of women. Many of her designs incorporated elements to facilitate work in the home, and she designed the first built-in kitchen, which focused on maximized use of space, and efficiency (Gilroy & Booth, 2004).

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<sup>18</sup> Found at Vienna's city website: [www.wieninternational.at](http://www.wieninternational.at). Accessed on July 10, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Royal Town Planning Institute (1995) Planning for Women, PAN 12, RTPI, London: 76.

## **4.2 The Frauen-Werk-Stadt Model**

The Frauen-Werk-Stadt model has become the benchmark against which other developments are regularly judged. Vienna's planning and development culture has demonstrated a movement away from male-dominated structures, such that more women are regularly short-listed for architectural competitions. In what is still a male-dominated society, the Frauen-Werk-Stadt project has "challenged both product and process, building new confidences and political strength" (Gilroy & Booth, 2004: 7).

Design principles reflecting women's needs are evident at FWS, and can be seen in many of the suites visited by the researcher. Each suite often had one, sometimes two balconies that could accommodate play areas for children, leisure space for adults, and many were favourable for some form of container gardening. The balconies faced a central play area, where parents could easily monitor their children from their location.

Special attention is given to the kitchens as central places of housework. They are all large, provided with sufficient daylight and face the courtyards, "common" or play areas. While this has been acknowledged as good practice since its introduction in the 1960s, feminist critiques nearly forty years later are still asking why many kitchens have no windows, why street layouts rarely allow a view of a play area and why so few developments have integrated play facilities (Gilroy & Booth, 2004).

Central outdoor areas for play were used by the children of the residence, and there were many courtyard/play areas located throughout the residence. Due to the large size of the

development, this allowed for residents in certain blocks to not have to go far to access outdoor recreational space. Some of the spaces were used for communal container gardening-and there were many places to sit and socialize throughout the apartment area.

#### 4.2.1 Frauen-Werk-Stadt: design elements

The name Frauen-Werk-Stadt translated means “woman-work-city” and refers to the relationship between women, paid work, care and home responsibilities and the built environment. The overall objective of the project is to incorporate the principles of meeting everyday life needs, and to facilitate community-based, collective responses to individual problems. These goals are evident in the Frauen-Werk-Stadt project, where principles of mixing home, job opportunities and daily needs are easily identified.

While gender-sensitive housing design of the dwellings was achieved, much of what would have re-integrated everyday life needs at the neighbourhood level has been stifled (Booth, 1999). The project demonstrates much of the tensions at the time: women grasping opportunities to discuss ideas of the built environment, neighbourhoods and housing, using inclusive methods to broaden the stakeholder representation, while at the same time finding limited success in actualizing these ideas.

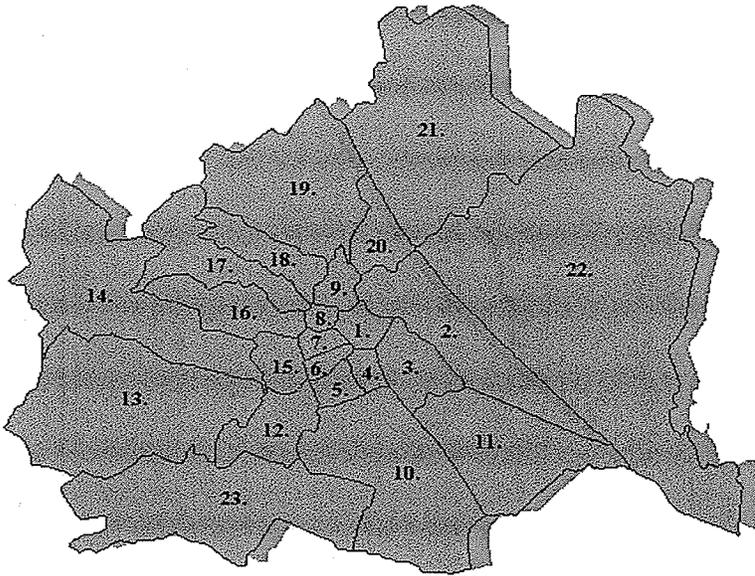
The achievements of the Frauen-Werk-Stadt model are considerable within Vienna, and the project delivered a concrete example of gender-sensitive planning. It began with consultations with women, who were allowed the opportunity to articulate their perceptions of their environment, resulting in the ideas being incorporated into the design

for a housing project. The project provided a testing ground for ideas and has acted as a template for future developments (Booth, 1999). In Vienna, the development of Frauen-Werk-Stadt has raised awareness of women-sensitive planning at all levels from grassroots women to city administrators, politicians, architects and builders. A concern for women's everyday life as a factor for high quality design has now been accepted as good practice and is routinely used in architectural competitions run by the City of Vienna. Though the equality agenda has moved on from a focus on women to a concern for gender sensitivity, it is recognized that "meeting women's needs can help create an environment that works better for everyone in society."<sup>23</sup>

#### **4.3 Site Description**

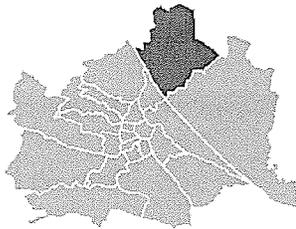
Vienna is divided into 23 districts, and Frauen-Werk-Stadt is located in the 21<sup>st</sup> municipal district known as Florisdorf (see Figure 2a & 2b).

**Figure 2a:** Vienna Districts



1. Innere Stadt, 2. Leopoldstadt 3. Landstraße 4. Wieden 5. Margareten 6. Mariahilf  
7. Neubau 8. Josefstadt 9. Alsergrund 10. Favoriten 11. Simmering 12. Meidling 13.  
Hietzing 14. Penzing  
15. Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus 16. Ottakring 17. Hernals 18. Währing 19. Döbling  
20. Brigittenau 21. **Floridsdorf** 22. Donaustadt 23. Liesing

**Figure 2b:** Floridsdorf-21<sup>st</sup> District



Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), Accessed on July 8, 2009.

Frauen-Werk-Stadt was part of an urban expansion that took place in the 1990s. The neighbourhood is approximately 2.3 hectares in size and is located in proximity to established neighbourhoods, including a shoulder neighbourhood known as Florisdorf.

The apartments were built on land designated for new housing projects. Frauen-Werk-Stadt was built in phases; the first apartments were built in 1997 and included 357 multi-story units; the second phase occurred in 2004 with the building of 140 flats. The next development will be implemented in 2010, with an additional 41 flats being built.

The housing model is located on the edge of Floridsdorf, a suburb situated on the eastern side of the Danube river. In the area, there is a mix of housing of various ages and densities, including some mixed use. A snapshot of the area includes commercial suburban centres, a manufacturing district, market gardens, a university campus, allotment gardens and the popular parkland around the lakes at Alte Donau<sup>24</sup>. There is still is plenty of residential development occurring in the area, mainly due to a large number of lots that have become available for redevelopment. The area is developing quite rapidly, and with this comes an increase of amenities. Some of the community facilities in the area include a shopping cooperative, internet cafés and coffee shops, public laundry facilities, grocery stores, bookstores, libraries, schools and pubs<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Site information accessed at <http://www.istp.murdoch.edu.au/ISTP/publications/jscheurer/urbanecology/pdf/ch16-7.pdf>, July 29, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> For a map of amenities within walking distance of the area-visit [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com) and enter "85 Carminweg".

#### 4.4 Well-being and the built environment

Important aspects of well-being can be attributed to the built environment in terms of access to education, health care, social support, physical security and material resources. There have been some universal criteria developed to assess the health and equity of the city. According to Baum, there are three sets of criteria to assess healthy cities:

1. Physical form: the use of land, housing type and standard, communications infrastructure, transport provision and the quality of the built and natural environment
2. Interaction: people come to cities for contact with others. This contact includes politics, work, economic activity, caring, education, recreation and home life
3. Individual experiences of the city: the sense of history and tradition, life-style, culture, expressions of creativity and art (Baum, 1993: 32).

Within healthy cities, there are also healthy housing environments. In looking at supportive housing environments for women, Aron Spector and Fran Klodowsky<sup>26</sup> have developed a list of eleven criteria in which to assess women's housing needs as follows:

1. Affordability: does an individual have access to adequate housing based on their income.
2. Access: access to the facilities of the city like retail commercial areas, workplace, hospitals, schools, entertainment, friends and the community.

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<sup>26</sup> Aron Spector, and Fran Klodowsky. (1993). The Housing needs of Single Parent Families in Canada: A Dilemma for the 1990s. *Single Parent Families: Perspectives on Research and Policy*. Ed. Joe Hudson, and Burt Galaway. Ontario: Thomson Educational Publication Inc: 244-251.

3. Availability: affordable housing should be available in central locations that are free from problems of deterioration, crime and discrimination. The availability of such housing should be widespread so as to enable choice.
4. Secure tenure: conversion into commercial areas, condominiums, or even demolition affect security of tenure.
5. Capacity for maintenance: in order to maintain the quality of rental housing in the face of vigorous use by its occupants, there should be established standards of permanence in techniques and materials used for rental construction.
6. Opportunities for sharing and support: opportunities for sharing and support should be incorporated into neighbourhood spaces and events. It helps reduce housing costs, is beneficial in spreading various household responsibilities such as maintenance and child care, and provides emotional support from empathetic peers.
7. Appropriate facilities for children: facilities such as playgrounds and safe outdoor spaces are a necessity for female-headed households.
8. Privacy: while such families may wish and require enhanced supports from the community and from neighbourhoods, the continuing presence of others, and the necessity for confining rules and restrictions that is often reported among residents in non-profit and public housing can be stifling.
9. Safety
10. Cost effective use of public and private funds: cost-effectiveness can be equated to the net benefit of creating an environment where the human capital can be

developed. Community-based initiatives provide an effective and inexpensive way to tackle problems at the level of the city and the household.

11. Suitability for empowerment: housing should accommodate interventions by the users so that they can develop a sense of ownership towards it.

These principles can be used as a guide in assessing the health of cities, and will be used to measure the success of the area in and around Frauen-Werk-Stadt in meeting these objectives. This chapter will further explore what is considered to be gender-based design, in relation to housing, in relation to the above-mentioned criteria.

#### **4.5 The Ethic of Care**

The 'ethic of care' was introduced in chapter one as model of "moral development in which the highest moral imperative requires taking care of needs and sustaining relationships" (Day, 2000: 104). The model is a basis for care-focused feminist critique of how society engenders caring (as an activity) labour. Theorists argue (Chodorow, 1978, Tronto, 1993, Gilligan, 1982, Noddings, 1984) that "caring should be performed and caregivers valued in both public and private life, and the potential of ethics should be considered when dealing with social issues". The ethic of care was heavily discussed by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings in the 1980s, and in simple terms, the theorists discuss what makes actions right or wrong, and emphasizes the importance of relationships in making that decision.

The ethic of care and women's use and perception of public space is articulated by Henderson and Allen (1991) as a concept that links caring as a constraint and as a source of possibilities for women's leisure. Constraints are considered to be aspects in the environment that occur between "women's public space activities and experiences, and their satisfaction with use of public spaces" (101).

The ethic of care does offer an engendered approach to planning urban environments. Feminists have discussed good built form for women that include plans for housing, public spaces, neighborhoods that focus on care-giving and sustaining relationships as central to giving and receiving care. Elements of private space include "centralized cooking and eating places, homes designed for groups of friends and their children, neighbourhoods that facilitate child care, such places extend care-giving outside of the single family home, and reinforce commitments beyond the nuclear family" (Day, 2000:113).

#### **4.6 Physical Form: Transportation systems**

If we follow Baum's criteria of healthy cities, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, transport provision is considered essential to the physical form of healthy cities. Vienna has an extensive train and bus/tram network. In Vienna's well-populated areas, public transit systems link efficiently and run frequently, even during low-traffic times of the day. The system is so well-thought out and run, it often isn't necessary to consult transportation timetables in Vienna. The convenience and flexibility of the public transport is in turn reflected by its popularity; 53% of Viennese workers travel to their

workplace by public transport<sup>27</sup>. During night hours, public transport is continued by the *Nightline* buses operating on all the main routes, generally every half hour.

#### 4.6.1 Physical Form: Housing type and standard

Dolores Hayden (2002) has written extensively on housing design, and redesign, suggesting changes are needed in the “architecture of gender” to lessen the reinforcement of stereotypes of the home as “women’s place” and the city as “man’s world” (76).

Along with her feminist counter-parts, Gilroy and Booth, these authors discuss three broad design considerations when approaching housing for women: a) suites being designed to be practical and take particular account of the needs of families, b) suites that reflect different phases of life and have layouts offering flexibility while offering rooms of equal quality, and c) an encouragement of communal outdoor spaces that can be accessed for a variety of purposes (Gilroy & Booth, 2004: 4). These considerations are further expanded on below, in their relation to the design elements of Frauen-Werk-Stadt.

Principles incorporated into the design of Frauen-Werk-Stadt were developed through consultations with women and based on women’s experiences of everyday life. The process was to be managed and informed by women, including women architects, planners, and the established of the Frauenburo (women’s office). The consultation process including surveying women who were interested in the project, as well as hosting seminars, with open discussions to find out what women wanted in their housing.

Questionnaire results and feedback generated from the seminars were then incorporated into the design elements for the development of the project, as outlined below.

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<sup>27</sup> Found at [www.wien.gv.at/english](http://www.wien.gv.at/english), accessed on July 9, 2009.

#### 4.6.2 Secondary utility rooms, common rooms and access routes

There are designated suites in the building that are accessible to residents for social gatherings such as children's birthday parties. When not in use-these spaces were adapted for a teen club-a space where older youth could gather, a large communal living room is what this was often referred to.

Another design consideration was the availability of outdoor storage space. Each section of the building had sidewalk level storage and could accommodate bicycles and strollers/outdoor play equipment. This was a spacious and secured area and was accessed regularly.

#### 4.6.3 Opportunities for interaction

While building a community is seen as desirable for the most part in residential developments, a higher value is placed by architects on "protecting individual privacy rather than creating opportunities for meeting other residents" (Gilroy & Booth, 2004). The Frauen-Werk-Stadt design encouraged and supported the development of stairwells and entrance areas that are generous and invite people to interact. Apart from their basic function, the staircases are usable and pleasant places where tenants can spend time and communicate with each other. On average, there are only four units per storey. This is to

avoid anonymity and to enhance neighbourly relations. For many women, casual networking can lead to possible exchanges of goods and support services (Gilbert, 2000).

#### 4.6.4 Dwelling Connections

Links are established between the interior and exterior of the building:

between the apartments via staircases, covered walkways and courtyards.

As in other northern European countries, covered walkways and protected communal spaces that link apartments makes sense in the Austrian climate, and provides a point of social contact between neighbours, whatever the weather.

#### 4.6.5 Neighbourhood services

The project includes a doctor's office, and other forms of mixed use such as shop space to meet the daily needs of families, a resource centre for women, a kindergarten, a commons room, and a local police station.

The kindergarten was created and is located within the housing development to service neighbourhood need. This has been a great success not only as a children's facility but also because it has acted as a meeting point for mothers who have formed friendships and support networks. Many households have consciously chosen to relocate to the Frauen-Werk-Stadt to have access to this facility such that demand for places now exceeds supply. The provision of the kindergarten is important when considered in the context of the lack of available child-care for children less than three in Austria (Bennett, Booth, & Yeandle, 1999). The project hoped to tackle this problem of women's ability to return

from work, due to lack of child-care, by alleviating concerns over quality childcare within walking distance.

As well, there is a large super market adjacent to the building, offering such things as healthy pre-made meals, and is open late into the evening, and early in the morning, accommodating a variety of schedules. The market is located at a tram stop, making it an easily accessed resource for women on their way home from work or school.

#### 4.6.6 Play areas

There are several play areas located throughout the project that are a good size with appropriate amenities for children. The play areas are surrounded by apartments, and many of the kitchens face these areas, allowing for parents to easily monitor their children from a distance, creating a feeling of safety in the area. While it is not uncommon in Austria for residential development to be frequently geared to child-rearing households, the provision for children's play is often minimally addressed. The FWS design pays special attention to children's needs, and is part of the underlying holistic vision of women who see themselves as embedded in a network of care and responsibilities for others.

#### 4.6.7 Safety

Safety measures are important in relation to avoiding particular walking routes or public spaces or to a lesser extent unsafe public transport. Given women's frequently unequal access to housing, many have less choice about where they may live, and often have

access to housing that does not promote their safety (Imrie & Kumar, 1998). Design that is sensitive to fear of crime is therefore important when considering new housing development.

Elements of safety are evident throughout FWS. Distances between transit stops and the residence are short, well-lit and open to everyone's view, as are entrances and stairwells. Staircases are open and well-lit to avoid unsafe pockets that might generate fear in women. The extent to which poor design creates opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour is well documented, and thoughtful design may prevent such incidents<sup>28</sup>. Werkele and Whitzman suggest that security-conscious design is only part of the answer with valuable inputs also being made by attention to process issues such as resident involvement. It is possible that the combination of good design in the Frauen-Werk-Stadt arising from in-depth involvement of women (although not of the actual residents) creates a greater sense of safety than either element alone.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the housing model Frauen-Werk-Stadt to provide insight into how the model was established and the principles behind the model. An overview of the housing initiatives in Vienna demonstrated their commitment to social housing projects, and to overall consideration of the housing needs of Viennese residents. This information helps inform the next section that discusses how the model (planning of, building of, and living in) impacts perceptions of well-being for women living at Frauen-

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<sup>28</sup> Women's design service has developed a broadsheet on safety and housing estates, WDS London.

Werk-Stadt. Themes were generated from interviews with participants that directly link to the design principles that guided the planning and building of Frauen-Werk-Stadt.

## **CHAPTER 5 – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

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The discussions that took place during the interviews followed three main areas of questions. The first area concerned motivation to move to Frauen-Werk-Stadt, including prior living situations and reasons for change. The second area of questioning related to each individual's experience as a resident of Frauen-Werk-Stadt, what was good, and what needed improvement. The third area of questioning involved an exploration of what the women considered good planning and design, and what were some of the important aspects to this.

The interviews were conducted in English, many with the assistance of a translator. Data generated from the interviews are referenced verbatim, and reflect some of the language/interpretation challenges experienced between the interviewees, and translator.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the names of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms. Any individual that was referenced by the participant will have their identity protected with a pseudonym as well.

### **5.1 Housing and neighbourhood selection**

Motivating factors that lead to re-locating to Frauen-Werk-Stadt revealed several key issues around what is important to women when selecting where to live, and how housing is an important factor in relation to the built-environment (as previously described: buildings, housing, streets, and neighbourhoods). This section describes the participant's

perceptions of well-being in relation to the design of their housing and its relationship to the built environment.

## **5.2 Desire for connectedness**

Many of the women who participated in the study indicated a strong need to connect to other women. Reasons were similar among the group; supports and networks being of particular importance, due to the fact that the women were on their own with their children. As Kate stated, “I have 4 children, including 6 year old twins. I wanted to be closer to my mother who lives not far from here, she could help me with the children if I wanted to have a break, or do some work. But it is also important, or necessary for me to feel accepted by other women, who understands my situation...as my children do not have a regular visit with their father, some people, they might not understand this.”

Many of the women reported similar desires, including Lydia who explains the importance of connecting:

*I wanted to be closer to other women in a similar situation. I like to share stories and ideas on how to help each other, and we are not a failure, because we maybe have a selection of partner that didn't work out, it's okay...we can share the responsibility of the children and help each other where we need it. I don't like to feel alone, I like to be in contact with others, especially women. We mostly understand one another, and so, it works. It is easy to make friends here, many people are the same age and are in the same situation.*

Another participant referenced the difference between being a resident of Frauen-Werk-Stadt, as opposed to living in another building, “in other buildings you are just a number, but here, it is constructed in such a way to promote communication here, and I don’t feel alone here...” another women pointed out “my previous residence was far away from everything...even to have a coffee with friends in my home, it wasn’t always so convenient as it is here.”

The women also discussed the importance of support networks, in order to further their professional and educational pursuits. Some of the women described the importance of having opportunities to further their careers or to pursue higher education, in order to have jobs that were personally fulfilling, as well as being able to meet their financial needs. Some of the women worked outside of the home during the day, and attended classes in the evening. One woman was pursuing her degree in Shiatsu massage, and would not be able to do this without the assistance of neighbours to pick-up her daughter, and care for her/put her to bed in the evenings while the mother went to class. As Breanne describes, “Suzanne is attending her seminars in the evening, she is a lot away and we help each other, I look after her cat and her daughter...but its okay...if I need help with my son, I can call Suzanne, and if she wants to and if she has time, it’s no problem.”

The participants also referenced other supportive housing models in the area that were of interest to them such as Autofreie Mustersiedlung<sup>29</sup>, and Wohnen Mit Kindern.<sup>30</sup> These housing models are similar to Frauen-Werk-Stadt, but on a smaller scale, and focus on car-sharing, communal spaces, and collective decision-making regarding changes that were necessary to improve their living conditions. The participants had indicated that many women live there, and it is a good housing project for women to live in, due to the supportive environment that assists women in their daily tasks, and in fulfilling personal desires.

When asked why women did not move or go on a waiting list to get into these other apartments, it was common with all of the participants that the positive relationships they had built in FWS were too important to give up.

In summary, many of the women indicated specific activities they thought were important connecting opportunities such as gardening, going swimming (outdoors), bike riding, and cooking. All of the women indicated an important reason for moving to Frauen-Werk-Stadt was to get support from other women in similar situations, and that this was necessary as “respite” from child-care duties. Support systems were also

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<sup>29</sup> Autofreie Mustersiedlung was the first car-free model housing project in Vienna. Since the beginning of construction in 1998, 244 new apartments were built, situated in the district of Floridsdorf. As one central condition, tenants committed to not use or own a car. Instead of building parking spaces for each household, only 20 parking facilities were constructed to be used as car-sharing and bicycle space. Accessed @ [www.autofrei-wohnen.de/MarkusHeller-CarfreeDevelopmentsInEurope](http://www.autofrei-wohnen.de/MarkusHeller-CarfreeDevelopmentsInEurope)

<sup>30</sup> Wohnen Mit Kindern, is located near Floridsdorf, and was established in 1995 with the assistance of the women’s coordination office in Vienna. There are 24 “family-friendly” apartments that focus on children’s needs as well as incorporating the needs of child-minders to facilitate their roles. Limited information on this project is available in English. Accessed, June 12, 2009 @ [www.wohnen-mit-kindern.de](http://www.wohnen-mit-kindern.de).

important for women to further their educational and professional pursuits, supporting research on “life chances” as described previously in Chapter Two.

Furthermore, connecting, and belonging to a group of women, where everyone had similar life situations was considered important to all the participants, and impacted their decision to move to FWS.

### 5.2.1 Implications

- Increasing opportunities for women to connect with other women, and sharing common life situations, creates a sense of belonging and decreases feelings of isolation; and
- Providing gathering places close to ones residence increases networking opportunities for women with children. This promotes the sharing of childcare responsibilities, allowing women more free time to pursue other personal interests, and professional and educational pursuits.

### **5.3 Importance of planning the built-environment**

The importance of inclusion in planning was expressed by many of the women, in relationship to planning and the built-environment. But not all of the women felt this was important, or that there was equal opportunity to participate in this type of planning. Many of the women were directly involved, and did discuss their roles in the planning of Frauen-Werk-Stadt. As mentioned, not all of the women participated in the planning stages of the project, but even those who did not participate directly, had some awareness

or indirect involvement in the planning process. For example, Breanne describes first hearing about the project:

*I had a friend who had described what they are trying to do here, she had seen a public advertisement talking about the project, and how this would be a good thing for me to explore. I did like it, because I am a little active in the issues of women, I try to discuss women's issues with others....anyway, I decided that this might be good for me...but it was too late for me to participate in the planning, I could at this point, only choose a preference in which type of apartment design I would like to live.*

Some of the participants discussed what they considered to be good design, and how this could be achieved by including women as potential residents in the planning process. As Lydia described a nearby housing model:

*...in the middle there is a very nice garden<sup>31</sup> which, they all planned it together, they helped build it. It was built by some kind of builders, but they always meet once a month and discuss problems-what has to be improved, what could be done, and expenses, so everyone has to work together, of course there are conflicts, this is quite natural, on the whole, I like it better because it is more personal...this group of people organized*

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<sup>31</sup> Lydia is referencing an outdoor courtyard area in the center of the apartment building. Many apartments designed in this way, where potential residents have children, will make sure the kitchens in the suites face the courtyard where the children play, so they can keep an eye on them while they prepare meals.

*this and did it together, this is something I would appreciate to take part in...*

Lydia seemed quite interested and supportive of the type of planning described above.

What is different about the planning and development of this model<sup>32</sup>, is the fact that residents were consulted regularly to trouble-shoot, review expenses and assist in moving the project forward.

The development and planning of Frauen-Werk-Stadt included potential residents early on in the planning, but did not continually engage the residents for the duration of the project. Furthermore, the original intent of FWS was housing for women, geared heavily to single women with children. The criteria changed as time went on however, and FWS is a housing option for all Viennese residents, as expressed by Breanne, “in the beginning it made sense, we were all of us women here...but then after a time, I don’t know, it seems anyone could live here, and now it has become a place just like any other one...”

### 5.3.1 Implications

- Active participation and input is important to women in planning their housing environments, when the input impacts the outcome of the design;
- Collaborating on small neighbourhood projects encourages local resident involvement and democratic decision-making; and

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<sup>32</sup> Information on *Wohnen Mit Kindern* can be found at [www.wohnen-mit-kindern.de](http://www.wohnen-mit-kindern.de)

- Encouraging women to think about the built environment from a gender perspective, can facilitate women in identifying barriers in completing their daily tasks.

#### **5.4 Women as activists, shaping the built environment**

The opportunity to participate in civic life has been identified as a basic human need, an important part of the psychological health of individuals and communities (Butterworth, 2000). Participation in civic life is often described as the “involvement in any organized activity in which the individual participates without pay in order to achieve a common goal” (Butterworth, 2000: 18). As well, Day (2000)<sup>33</sup> points out that constraints are one of the biggest factors that intervene “between women’s public space activities and experiences, and their satisfaction with use of public space (2000:106).

Women who were involved in the early planning stages of Frauen-Werk-Stadt indicated the importance of women actively participating in planning and influencing political decisions that might impact women’s lives. Many women discussed the change in political climate from the 1990s when the project began, to the current climate. Breanne was concerned that the Viennese government had lost it’s momentum in doing good housing projects, and felt:

*The concept of Frauen-Werk-Stadt was developed in the 1990s, and was a time when women's issues were a topic of discussion, it was an issue on the political agenda...but now it is a neglected topic once again, it has*

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<sup>33</sup> Day (2000) outlines research on the value of the ethic of care for understanding women’s leisure, and how caring (for families, children, etc.) can be conceptualized as a constraint and a source of possibilities for women’s leisure.

*been put on the backburner...and nothing really set in...just some provisions here and there, but no solid commitment.*

The importance of long-term policy changes that addressed issues faced by women was something many of the participants were aware of, and felt was of great importance.

There was a sense in the discussions that many of the participants felt it was necessary for government to make a commitment to the needs of women, that many strides had been made in Vienna, but these efforts were appearing to not be sustainable. Still, one woman pointed out her concern with the politics that took place at Frauen-Werk-Stadt:

*There are groups here that are very involved with Frauen-Werk-Stadt...but I am not part of these groups. I don't think that they help much...unless you are politically active, and know how to be politically active you cannot be fully involved. It is not welcoming. It seems that those who are politically active receive the most benefits from their housing environment.*

Most of the other women indicated they were active participants in Frauen-Werk-Stadt, and had a different view of the political climate there. Two of the women discussed their increased involvement in political activities, defining this as a way to influence their living conditions and environment, and that collectively they could make an impact:

*it is better that many of us have some common ideas about how things should and could be better here, and that the local government has done some good things, but there are still more works to do...it is something that many of us discuss over coffee, and talk about writing letters, and speaking to the frauenboro about the state of affairs at FWS, and maybe things didn't happen exactly how they thought it should.*

Still, some women questioned whether or not FWS was truly for women, and if it was a place that reflected feminist ideals, as Irena points out:

*Of course when I heard the idea of FWS, I thought it would attract people who are feminists, or who have a consciousness about women's needs-that attracted me to the project...they told us there are aspects for women here, but it was a joke, it sounds good but...I didn't have a special need for female aspects of living. I heard of them and there are aspects, okay, but before, I did not look for female aspects of living...*

Again, some women did express frustration at their abilities to become actively involved in shaping their housing environment This is evident in Lydia's comment:

*...many of this housing that is geared for women, a group of people organized and demanded what they needed and wanted...and did it*

*together, I don't have the energy for this...there are so many other things that are a priority, like the children and the house...*

The frustration Lydia describes is an issue that is raised among some of the other women. While many of these women felt it was important to participate actively in shaping decisions around housing and the built environment in relation to one's needs, actually participating in this type of activism seemed impossible in addition to the multiple tasks being carried out inside and outside the home.

#### 5.4.1 Implications

- Providing childcare and thorough *plain language* information on local issues can increase women's desire to participate in local organizing activities;

### **5.5 Importance of supports/infrastructure**

As mentioned previously, feminist theorists have developed the concept of the "ethic of care" to describe women's experience of public space, and argue that the ethic of care can create constraints for women's use of public space (Day, 2000).<sup>34</sup> The ethic of care can be used to partially explain theories of the built environment that incorporate feminist plans for housing, public spaces, neighbourhoods, and cities, with a focus on care-giving and sustaining relationships as a central concern. Much of what the participants in the research had to say about the built environment, their roles as caregivers, and the

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<sup>34</sup> "The ethic of care constrains women's use of public space through the association of women with low status 'caring' occupations, and through actions that extend restrictive caring to women. At the same time, through women's use of public space, the ethic of care generates possibilities for extending care to women to give and receive care from others and themselves, and creates possibilities for extending care to encompass public spaces" (Day, 2000: 103).

importance of an efficient and adequate link of services, relates to the ethic of care, and speaks to women's experience of public space, a central question that guides the research.

All of the participants in this study practiced the ethic of care, all of them being care-givers of children, (their own and others) as well as maintaining employment outside of the home. It made sense then, that all of the women spoke positively about the amenities, transportation and facilitated connection of services of FWS. While one participant was particularly critical of many aspects of Frauen-Werk-Stadt, she was very pleased with the ease in which she could carry out her daily tasks, due to the location of the project, and its proximity to services. As Carrie points out "the location is good though...the public transportation is near, and there is a large grocery store and pharmacy right around the corner...there is a doctor on-site...this is very good, so many of us do not have a car, and need these things." Transportation is of great importance, as indicated by all of the participants. As Elena summarizes, "transportation is important for anything with regards to women's work. It is not possible for many women to have a car...for any housing to work, transportation has to be a great consideration."

The women pointed out the ease in which their children could access the tram system, and many of the women's children were able to take the tram by themselves to get to school, beginning at age nine, which is not a common experience in the Canadian context. In Canada there are school buses, and children are often not taught how to navigate public transit systems at a young age. The participants, however, out of necessity, taught their children to use public transport, and for feelings of safety, many of

the children had cell phones to keep regular contact with their mothers. As Breanne points out “my son has had this cell phone since he was nine, as he has to get himself to and from school due to my work schedule, he calls me when he arrives at school and home, so I know there is no problems.” Schools are located close-by to FWS, or are on tram routes, and easily accessed by transportation users, such as the children.

Regular and efficient transportation is important to the women in carrying out their daily tasks. But being within walking distance to regularly accessed services is also important, as Kate and Lydia state, “it is very comfortable, because it is easy for shopping, there is a large store directly beside the residence...and you have a doctor on-site, and if you need medicine, the drug store is here also...it is good for when you have children who are sick, and you don’t want to travel all around when they aren’t feeling well...everything you need is here”.

#### 5.5.1 Implications

- Accessible and efficient public transportation systems can reduce commuting time for women and their children, which increases free time for other pursuits;
- Efficient and safe public transportation is crucial for women who are unable to accompany their children to school and other activities;

#### **5.6 Meeting the needs of children**

The women also discussed recreational opportunities for their children, such as the communication centre, a suite located on-site that could be used for special occasions,

such as birthday parties, and doubled as a regularly accessed space for the teenage residents at FWS. The women felt it was important for teenagers to have their own space to hang out, without adults or other smaller children being around, and the women felt safe that they knew their children were nearby, Lydia especially appreciated this amenity, as “my teenagers don’t always have to be in the apartment with nothing to do, they say this all the time...they can go to the teen club and be with their peers, and I can get things done at home without so many people here, and they don’t always have to bring friends over, there just isn’t enough room.” Kate had the same feelings about the teen club, “for me this is an important thing, the teenagers can watch television and a movie, or listen to music or whatever, but it isn’t a bunch of kids at one persons apartment, who maybe doesn’t have the energy for them to be there, or cleaning up after them and so on.”

For the mothers of the younger children, access to the play areas and gardens/green space is very important, and there are many outdoor play areas located throughout FWS. The play areas are located centrally, in courtyards, and the apartment kitchens face these courtyards, a gender focused design element that demonstrates understanding that many women work in the kitchen, and need to be able to keep an eye on their children as well. For Christine, she felt this part of her housing was “better for the children, they go out playing, I don’t have to worry, I can see them all the time by quickly looking out the window...I know that many of the mothers are keeping an eye on everybody’s children.”

### 5.6.1 Implications

- The provision of safe places/playgrounds in close proximity to ones home is important for women, especially spaces that require minimal adult supervision. This frees up time for women to complete other household tasks with a sense of security that their children are okay;
- Women want their children's needs to be addressed through the provision of appropriate amenities and safe recreational opportunities geared towards children and youth; women want their children to feel happy and secure.

## CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The purpose of the present study was to examine factors that contribute to women's perceptions of well-being in relation to their housing and the built environment. The main goal was to learn and to understand, from women's own perspectives, as single parents, the factors which they felt had an impact on housing selection, and whether housing geared specifically towards women's needs impacts perception's of well-being.

The catalyst for the research stems from the researcher's personal experience as a single mother, who questioned her own experience in housing and the built environment, and how this had the potential to contribute to or detract from life chances, and impact perceptions of well-being. The researcher's interest in the topic contributed to an investigation of a well-documented housing complex in Austria, Frauen-Werk-Stadt, where collaborative, informal discussions, lead to interviews which allowed women who are residents of FWS to discuss personal feelings and experiences in a supportive and collaborative way. It is hoped that the results from this research will inform future urban planning.

The research focused on single mothers for several reasons. The research has outlined and argued that women's roles in the labour force have increased, and continue to increase, without any real reduction in the expectations of home life. This is problematic for women who are faced with the need to provide for their families financially, physically, and emotionally. The expectations placed on women are often those that are placed on themselves through societal pressure, and the idea of the "super woman/mom"

syndrome. It can be stressful for women who see themselves as workers outside of the home, to also try to find themselves as workers inside the home-as caregivers.

While previous research has theorized about what constitutes good planning for specific user groups, the goal of the present research was to expand on these theories by discovering what women consider to be important as the main user group, in addressing these needs. Through the relaying of personal stories, women revealed which factors were important to them and why.

The research questions explored the relationship between women's housing environment and the built environment, women's roles' inside and outside of the home, and how the relationship between the two can impact perceptions of well-being. The research brought forth stories, thoughts, ideas and recommendations from women who have an interest in the planning of their housing environments, and ultimately in facilitating their tasks as single mothers.

The women were residents of a housing model, where the intention was to address the specific needs of women, and include women in this process. The research indicates that single mothers may have many similar needs, but also different perspectives on housing and the built environment, and how it relates to their specific needs. One common theme remained throughout the research, perceptions of well-being are impacted by increasing life chances, on a personal, educational or professional level. In order to do this, the necessary infrastructure, supports, networking opportunities, division of labour in the

home, reducing isolation, increasing a sense of belonging is crucial for women to participate more equally in society.

Vienna has done well in consulting with women in meeting their housing needs, brought women to the table and asked them about apartment design, and amenities; in other words, consulted the experts on how to create meaningful housing, housing that has the potential to alleviate some of the stressors tied to responsibilities inside and outside of the home. For example, due to the location of the housing model, the safety of the area and the well-linked transportation system, many women were able to send their children to school and other activities, unaccompanied and at far younger ages than we might do in Canada. An on-site daycare, many on-site playgrounds/courtyards, easy access to main floor storage for strollers and bikes, en-suite laundry, communal gardens, all of these things appeared to contribute to the women's sense of well-being, and because of this, many of the women were able to have a healthy balance of work and leisure, time with and away from their kids. Where these things aren't in place, you often see frazzled overworked and stressed out mothers, leisure time/time outside the home is often not an option. We begin to see how housing design, location, the built-environment can impact life-chances. Life-chances are important for all people, and as planners, we need to be more aware of this and improve how we address this in planning decisions. As the research has shown, women want to be involved, want to be heard, and want to have housing that is sensitive to their needs.

## **6.1 Recommendations for the planning profession:**

- A better identification of user groups: women from a variety of backgrounds, with differing needs would contribute to a more inclusive design process.
- Adaptability. Housing needs change or can go through stages: family situations evolve, needs evolve. Many women adopt a care giving role not only for their children, but also for family members. On-going consultations can allow planners to be more responsive and sensitive to the housing and infrastructure needs by doing so.
- Increase opportunities for women to voice their opinions in the political sphere. It isn't enough for planners to relay information for women, women must be part of committees, and advisory groups-and consulted as the expert.
- Provide women with the necessary information and resources to increase their ability to organize and address their needs from a grassroots level. This will promote advocacy for themselves and their children, and will be appropriately reflected in planning decisions.
- Better collaboration among planners and other provincial and federal departments including transportation, education and training, health, income assistance, and housing would lead to better coordination of services for women.
- Include gender mainstreaming in the education and professional work of planners.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

In interviewing the women for the research, and having first hand exposure to their living situation and the built environment around them, I could easily see how this set up would

benefit many women. Here in Canada, most public housing (where many single mothers live) carries such a negative stigma and is riddled with negative relationships, it is hardly a first choice for many mothers. There is also no consultation with women in the development, redevelopment, or upkeep of public housing. More locally, in Manitoba for instance, public housing is referred to as the projects, the ghetto and other derogatory terms. This can hardly contribute to a positive sense of belonging for women and their children, as they are aware they live in less desirable homes/areas, yet there are few options outside of this.

Family structures have been changing for some time. Many women are now faced with increased demands, inside and outside the home. Yet their housing and the built environment does not necessarily reflect this; and hasn't done a good job in making women's lives easier. To address this, more women must be included in the planning process to have their voices heard and validated, and for this to have an impact on planning decisions. This will make urban places and spaces better for all citizens.

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## Appendix A

### Request for Participation in the Research

My name is Natasha Knautz, and I am a graduate student preparing to write my major degree project in conjunction with the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba. I very much would like it if you would consider taking part in my research. The research is concerned with generating stories from female lone-parents on how they perceive their urban environment.

If you agree, and are interested in taking part in the research, I would like to conduct an interview with you on \_\_\_\_\_. If this is inconvenient for you, we can arrange an alternate time and location of your choice.

The interview will be unstructured and will ask you to offer your ideas surrounding key themes in the research. There will be a translator present at the interviews that will assist me in posing my questions in English, and the questions being posed to you in German. This address any barriers or struggles we might have in trying to accommodate our cursory knowledge of each other's language.

You might be asked to comment on two or three central ideas concerning women and the urban environment. I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for additional clarification. I would like to summarize the interviews; therefore, with your permission I will audiotape the interview. Further to this, I would like to go over the summary of the interview with you, to establish if I am clearly articulating what you are saying, or if you feel adjustments need to be made.

There are no foreseeable risks to you from participating in the research. There will be no cost to you, and if you require childcare, or expenses for childcare, please let me know in advance so that I may assist you, either through provision of childcare or recovery of cost.

I ensure you that anonymity is of great importance, and no real names will be used in the writing up of the research. This research will provide you and others similar to you, with an opportunity to voice your opinions surrounding issues on how women perceive their urban environment. It is my hope that the research will assist planners in their decision making process, through knowledge of the impact of planning issues on the lives of women.

Your participation in the research is voluntary. As well, during the interview process, you may refuse to answer any questions and may stop taking part in the study at any time. Whether or not you participate in this research will have no effect on your standing in your school/class/job/residence.

Sincerely,

Natasha Knautz  
Department of City Planning  
University of Manitoba, Canada  
Email: [nashak@mts.net](mailto:nashak@mts.net)  
Phone: (204) 489-3661

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## Appendix B

### Interview Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have discussed the terms and themes of this interview with Natasha Knautz, have had a chance to ask any questions about, and now consent to being interviewed by her.

- I agree to participate in this research carried out by her as part of her major degree project in the Department of City Planning, at the University of Manitoba
- I consent to be interviewed about my experiences, but understand that I have control over the topics of discussion and am under no obligation to answer unwanted questions
- I also understand that I may terminate the interview(s) at any time. I may also withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself
- I understand that information I provide, and select verbatim quotes from our interview exchange, may be included in the final assignment product. I consent to sharing this information.
- I understand there will be a German/English translator present at the interviews to assist Natasha in her task
- Should I have any questions I may contact Natasha's thesis advisor, Rae Bridgman at anytime

*I have read, understand and agree with the following checked items:*

- ◆ I agree to the audio taping of the interview. Yes  No   
I understand that the audiotape will be erased at the conclusion of the project, or become my property if I choose
- ◆ I understand the limits to anonymity and still consent to an interview. Yes  No   
I understand that my name and any identifying information will not be used in any reporting of the project. I will be provided with a pseudonym.  
Because I have checked NO above, I decline to be interviewed at this time.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*My signature below demonstrates that I, Natasha Knautz, also consent to the terms negotiated for this interview and am bound by them.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: Natasha Knautz. 56 Ruby Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. R3G 2C8. (204) 489-3661

Advisor: Dr. Rae Bridgman. Room 314, Architecture II building, University of Manitoba. R3T 2N2.  
(204) 474 7179



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## Appendix C

RESEARCH SERVICES &  
PROGRAMS  
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

241 Engineering Bldg.  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 5V6  
Telephone: (204) 479-8118  
Fax: (204) 261-0525  
[www.unimanch.ca/research](http://www.unimanch.ca/research)

### APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

20 May 2004

**TO:** **Natasha Knautz** (Advisor R. Bridgman)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** **Karen Duncan, Interim Chair**  
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) 

**Re:** **Protocol #J2004:095**  
**"Assessing the Impact of Planning and Design that Meets the Needs  
of Women: A Viennese Case Study"**

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Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note that, if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.**

*Get to know Research ...at your University.*



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## Appendix D

Department of City Planning  
201 Russell Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9458  
Fax (204) 474-7532

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title of Study:** *An Assessment of the impact of planning and design that reflects the needs of female lone-parents: A Viennese Case Study*

**Investigator:** *Natasha Knautz*

**Sponsor:** Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environments (ACADRE)

**Contact Information:** H (204) 489-3661; Email: [tashak@mts.net](mailto:tashak@mts.net)

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please review this consent form and discuss any questions you may have with the investigator. If there is wording in the consent form that is unclear to you, please ask the investigator to explain any words or concepts that you would like clarified. A copy of this consent form will be left with you for your records and reference. This research study is for a Master's Thesis in the Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, at the University of Manitoba. The study has been approved within the guidelines of the University of Manitoba Ethics Committee, Winnipeg, MB, Canada.

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how women's perceptions of their housing and built environments may be influenced by urban planning and neighbourhood design considerations that reflect the daily needs of women.

Interviews will be conducted to obtain information from you and other study participants. The study will include interviews from female lone-parent residents of *Margarethe-Schutte Lihotzky Hof* as well as with women who were involved in the process of starting the housing model. Each interview will be guided by an Interview Guide (approved by the Ethics board at the University of Manitoba), and each session will last approximately one hour. A translator will be present to assist in the interviews, where each session will be audio-taped for the purpose of analysis. The tapes, and transcripts that are made from the tapes, will be returned to you if you request them by June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004. All permitted tape-recordings and notes/transcripts taken for the purpose of the study will be stored in a secured, discreet and safe place, and will be destroyed upon completion of the study.



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Faculty of Architecture

Department of City Planning  
201 Russell Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9458  
Fax (204) 474-7532

**Consent**

There are no foreseeable risks to you from participating in the research. Your participation in the research is voluntary. As well, during the interview process, you may refuse to answer any questions and may stop taking part in the study at any time. There will be no payment provided to you in participating in the research. However, if you require childcare or expenses for childcare, please let me know in advance. I assure you that confidentiality is of great importance, and no real names will be used in the writing up of the research. Information gathered in this research study will be published as a thesis for the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Architecture.

If you have further questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board at (204) 474-7122, or at 244 Engineering Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada, R3T 5V6. You may also contact Dr. Rae Bridgman who is supervising this project at (204)474-7179. This correspondence may need the assistance of an English speaking translator, as staff at these offices primarily speak English.

I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to discuss the research with Natasha Knautz either with or without the assistance of an English/German speaking translator. I have had my questions answered in language I understand. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study. I understand that information regarding my personal identity will be kept confidential, but that confidentiality is not guaranteed.

I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board for quality assurance purposes. By signing this consent form, I have not waived any of the legal rights that I have as a participant in this research study.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

I, the undersigned, have fully explained the details of this research study to the participant named above and believe that the participant has understood and knowingly given their consent.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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Faculty of Architecture

Department of City Planning  
201 Russell Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9458  
Fax (204) 474-7532

### STUDENTEILNEHMER INFORMIERTE ERLAUBNISFORMULAR

**Titel der Studie:** Eine Bewertung der Auswirkungen von Planung und Design welches die Bedürfnisse von alleinstehenden weiblichen Eltern widerspiegelt.

Eine Wiener Fall Studie.

Forscher: Natascha Knautz.

Sponsoren: Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environments  
ACADRE

**Kontaktinformation:** Tel: (204) 489-3661, Email: [tashak@mts.net](mailto:tashak@mts.net)  
<<mailto:tashak@mts.net>>

Sie werden gefragt an einer Forschungsstudie teilzunehmen. Bitte lesen Sie sich dieses Erlaubnisformular durch und besprechen Sie alle Fragen die Sie möglicherweise haben mit der Forscherin. Sollten Wörter, Text sowie Ideen in diesem Erlaubnisformular für Sie unklar sein, bitten Sie der Forscherin um Aufklärung und Erläuterung. Sie werden eine Kopie von diesem Erlaubnisformular als Unterlage erhalten. Diese Forschungsstudie ist für die Magister These in dem Fachbereich Stadtplanung, Fakultät Architektur, an der Universität von Manitoba. Die Studie wurde in den Richtlinien des Ethik Komitee der Universität von Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada genehmigt.

#### Hintergrund der Studie

Der Zweck dieser Studie ist zu untersuchen wie die Wahrnehmungen von Frauen über ihre Wohnungen und gebaute Umwelt beeinflusst werden können, wenn Stadtplanung und Nachbarschaftsdesign die täglichen Bedürfnisse von Frauen in Betracht ziehen.

Es werden Interviews gehalten um Informationen von Ihnen und anderen Studienteilnehmern zu erlangen. Die Studie wird Interviews von alleinstehenden weiblichen Eltern die im Margarethe-Schutte Lihotzky Hof wohnen beinhalten, sowohl als auch von Frauen daran beteiligt waren das Wohnmodell anzufangen. Jedes Interview wird mit einer Interview-Anleitung geführt (genehmigt von dem Ethik Komitee der Universität von Manitoba), und jedes Interview wird ungefähr eine Stunde dauern. Ein Übersetzer wird anwesend sein um mit den Interviews zu helfen. Jedes Interview wird zum Zwecke der Analyse auf Tonband aufgenommen und wenn die Studie fertig ist, wird das Tonband zerstört.



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Faculty of Architecture

Department of City Planning  
201 Russell Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9458  
Fax (204) 474-7532

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