

## Intervju med fil. dr. stadsplanering Dorina Pojani (universitetet i Queensland, Australien)

*Dr Dorina Pojani växte upp i Albanien men undervisar nu om stadsplanering vid universitetet i Queensland (Australien). I debattartikeln [Sexism and the city: how urban planning has failed women](#) skriver hon och hennes medförfattare att "Patriarchy in city planning is not just a failure of society – it is a failure of imagination. So, where to from here? The "matriarchal city" is not necessarily the answer. We need to move past the notion that one group – male or female – creates the world on behalf of everyone else".*

### **Can you tell us a little bit more about yourself?**

I grew up under a communist regime, which imposed a double burden on women. Full-time participation in the work force was expected, while a traditional culture, rooted in the Ottoman Empire, reigned at home with most house care, childcare, and elderly care duties falling on women. I saw my mother, my aunts, and my grandmothers struggle with this.

For most of my adult life, I have been an international migrant to Western countries (besides Australia, I have lived in the US and various places in Europe). This has allowed me to acquire valuable experiences and cultural competency. But I have also had to contend with the host of [negative stereotypes that befall women from South-eastern Europe](#), ranging from 'gold digger' to 'incompetent'. This background has shaped me personally and professionally; patriarchy and racism are what I seek to both expose and resist.

### **Can you describe the situation for women in Australia today? What are the biggest challenges for women's safety?**

I don't want to be alarmist. Australian cities are quite safe for women relative to places such as America (both North and South), Africa, and South Asia. However, they are far from perfect. In the past few years, we have experienced the tragic deaths on public streets of several young women, most recently [in Melbourne](#). Male

violence in public spaces but also a looming homelessness crisis have been responsible here – both of which can be considered as urban planning issues as much as public health or criminology issues.

### **Is there a successful Australian project where the aim has been to increase women's safety and placetaking?**

I am not aware of any. Recently, some colleagues and I sought industry partners in the public sector to conduct an action research project on gender mainstreaming of urban space and transport. We encountered a lot of good will but very little financial commitment. This shows that Australian entities are not yet ready to provide support for grappling with feminist issues that are uncomfortable, thorny, and radical.

### **Would you say that urban planners and architects in Australia generally work from a norm-critical perspective or do they tend to end up in a circle of routine?**

Most day-to-day planning work tends to be incremental and hardly challenges the status quo. Instances of combative feminist planning are rare within the system. Most of the push comes from planning advocates outside government, such as non-profit organizations. However, these tend to be poorly funded and supported. When, for example, it comes to homelessness and housing affordability for women who are victims of

domestic violence or abuse – there is little incentive for action because too many people and groups stand to profit from a broken housing system that favours the wealthy over the vulnerable.