

**Women in the Planning Profession
Making the Built Environment Better
Patsi Petrie (US) and Dory Reeves (UK)**

Abstract

The built environment affects every facet of our lives; our ability to access decent education and paid work, our ability to lead healthy and meaningful lives and our ability to care for our families. When more women come into a profession, the profession starts to change. The planning profession institutes in the UK and the US have been changing, albeit slowly over the last 15 years. International collaboration has helped support the work women have been carrying out in the UK and the US. The Royal Town Planning Institute corporate membership is made up of 28 per cent women and the American Planning Association has slightly less. This paper examines the difference women have made on either side of the Atlantic and draws on a new book by Dory Reeves entitled 'Planning for Diversity'.¹

Aims

This paper examines the contribution of the built environment to women's equality and the role planning plays. The authors consider the nature of the planning profession and how this affects what is planned. It concludes with a manifesto for change for the rest of the decade.

Background

Both authors have worked independently to promote the role of women and women's issues in their respective professions in the UK and the US.² IWPR provides an opportunity to present one paper on the planning profession in the UK and US to a wider policy audience.

The approach to this paper is comparative and reflective. It has involved reviewing the literature, synthesizing research to date, talking to colleagues, observing and thinking.

¹ *Planning for Diversity* was published by Routledge in May 2005.

² Dory Reeves is a graduate of Durham University and has an MA and PhD from the University of Sheffield. She is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and was on the Executive Board between 2000 and 2004 and chaired the Education and Lifelong Committee. In 1995 she co-authored the RTPI Practice Advice Note 12 'Planning for Women'; helped produce the RTPI Gender Audit Toolkit in 2003. She has produced a Gender Impact Assessment Action List which is available through Echelon. Between 2000-2003 she was Maude Clarke Visiting Professor at Queen University Belfast. She produced the first gender analysis of RTPI member surveys and is a member of the Scottish Women's Budget Group. Email doryreeves@aol.com

Women's equality and the built environment

Spatial planning has an important role to play in shaping the future of the places and spaces in which we live and helping create sustainable communities. Planning in the UK and the US has broadly similar aims despite inherent differences between countries³ (see Table1). Spatial plans show how places connect and how these connections and links can be improved, what built and natural heritage needs protecting; what land to provide for housing, economic activities, leisure and recreation and what design standards to apply. Spatial planning offers an understanding of the spatial implications of different decisions; whether economic, social policy or health decisions. Planning is an activity, undertaken by communities and agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors which lead to outcomes at a range of spatial scales. As an activity, it leads to tangible outcomes. Plans can be produced by a range of agencies, and their legitimacy depends entirely on the level of support and ownership gained through due legal processes.

As a profession, planning attracts those committed to the environment and those who want to make places better for people. Women have not reached a critical mass in planning amongst educators and researchers, senior professionals in local government, the private sector or in professional institutes.

The profession in the UK does not have a particularly high status; planning courses are generally not oversubscribed and there is a shortage of planners despite continued growth⁴.

Planning has a contribution to make to equality between women and men. Below is a list of some of the areas which planning has can influence directly and indirectly and which research has shown impact on women's equality:

- Women's daily activities and travel patterns are likely to be more complex than men's as many women combine work with

³ How the US and the UK differ: The recent World Economic Forum survey places the UK, 8th, grouped among a number of, what the Guardian called, 'women friendly' nations including New Zealand, Canada, Germany and Australia (Ward, 2005). The US, in contrast is in 17th place, reflecting minimal maternity rights and state childcare provision. However, the UK comes 21st in the category of economic participation measuring the proportion of women in the labour force and the gender pay gap.

⁴ The latest Labour Force survey shows that the number of practising town planners in the UK is 17,000 planners compared to 12,000 in 2001. (CEBR, 2005).

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childcare, and nowadays increasingly with care of elderly relatives (Darke et al, 2000).

- Poverty is gendered. It affects access to jobs and the labour market, education and facilities and as such is inherently linked to poverty reduction. Planning can improve access to affordable housing, the labour market and facilities (Oxfam, 2005; Yeandle, unpublished).
- Mobility is gendered. In the UK women are less likely to own or have access to a car. So accessibility between home, paid work, community facilities and leisure is crucial (Hamilton and Jenkins, 2000; Reid-Howie Associates, 1999).
- Caring is gendered. In the UK, 65 per cent of women with children aged under 5 in employment work part-time. Planning can help increase access to child-care facilities.
- Access to housing is highly gendered and dependent on income and access to the labour market. Planning can help ensure a supply of affordable housing which meets the needs of all of those on lower incomes.
- Leisure patterns are gendered and so needs differ. Planning can encourage a mix of leisure facilities to meet a range of needs (Woodward, 2000).
- Employment is gendered. In the UK, 68 per cent of women and 77 per cent of men of working age are in employment and the pay gap is 18 per cent (ONS, 2004).
- Women's contribution to sustainable development is likely to be different to men because they want different things.
- Women's concerns are different from men. They want decent public toilets, a clean environment and doorstep recycling.

The need to develop spatial planning policies which help eliminate inequalities between women and men was first recognised in the US by feminist planners (Hayden, 1980). Critiques of planning have highlighted deficiencies caused by gender blind approaches and the historic male gendering of knowledge (Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992; McDowell, 1983). In the UK the debates took off a little later (Greater London Council, 1986; Healey, 1994; Greed, 1994, 1999, 2003; Morris, 1995; Booth and Gilroy 1996). Yet if you look at many development plans in the UK, you will still

find very little gender analysis. An exception is the Greater London Authority (Reeves, 2004, Greed and Reeves, 2005).

Good planning requires a balance between systemizing and empathizing⁵. It requires technical knowledge of how cities and places work, drawing on a range of disciplines including economics, sociology and psychology. It also involves knowledge of sustainable development, and demographics. The terms environmental systems, transport systems, ecosystems are common to planners. Planners also need to understand how people perceive their environment. We need to understand how different people want to live. We need to appreciate that how and what we plan affects equality between women and men, boys and girls.

However and here is the real stumbling block. The planning profession in the UK and US has always been male dominated. It is not surprising that the way in which planning is defined reflects this. In the UK, the profession is still 75 per cent male. It is fair to assume that since planning has more male brain types focusing on the issues, on average, a more systemizing approach will predominate.⁶ You can see this in the development control system in particular and also transport.

This definition from the European Spatial Development Perspective reflects a systemizing approach:

Planning is about 'Influencing the future distribution of activities in space to create a more rational organization of land uses and linkages between them' is the European Spatial Development Perspective's definition of spatial planning (ESDP, 2003).

Whereas the following definition reflects a more empathizing approach:

'Planning is about making spaces and places which work for everyone.'

⁵ Using Baron-Cohen's (2003) work, it could be argued that planning and other similar professions have developed the way they have as a result of the operation of particular brain types. Sex does not dictate brain type, although Baron-Cohen and his team have found that more women have the female brain type. On average, females spontaneously empathise (identifies with another's emotions) more than the average male and the average male systemises (analyses, explores and constructs systems) more than the average female. Those who find this thesis too contentious may want to consider the impact on professions of a majority group with different life experiences to women. The results are likely to be similar.

⁶ Don't forget that sex does not automatically determine brain type and so there will be some women who are more prone to systemising and men who are more empathizers.

'Collaborative planning represents a consensus-building approach to urban and regional change. It has a very practical orientation in that it is concerned with how communities organize to improve the quality of places.' (Reeves, 2005 on Healey, 1997)

The difference women make (examples of positive impacts)

Women have tended to promote women's equality and mainstreaming diversity:

- Practice Advice Notes on planning for women (Booth and Reeves, 1995)
- Transport Audit Checklists (Hamilton and Jenkins, 2000)
- Safety Audits (Wekerle, 1996; Dame and Grant, 2002)
- Emphasis on the social dimensions of sustainability (Greed, 2003)
- Gender Audit toolkit (Greed et al, 2003)
- Gender Impact Assessment (Reeves, 2005)
- Mainstreaming toolkits (Fitzgerald, 2002; McGauran, 2004)
- Gender Budgeting (SWBG)
- Surveys of women in the professions (Greed, 1994; Petrie, 2005)
- Promoting women in the construction profession (Stone, 2004).

To understand what needs to happen next we need to understand the equality and gender issues facing planning.

Equality issues facing planning and the profession

Issues for legislation:

- In the UK, the recent public policy trend is towards generic equality (EOLG, 2001) and the consequences of this are that gender and women's equality has been marginalized and sidelined with race and disability taking precedence.
- Traditionally planning practice has been very weak on equality issues in general and gender issues in particular as a result of weak legislation.
- Planning legislation has much to learn from the way in which legislation relating to other areas of public policy have developed and responded to equality issues. For example, education legislation addresses equality and inclusion issues much more positively.

- Sustainability appraisals are becoming the main appraisal instruments in the UK and LEED ratings are growing in the US. This mirrors the move towards a more generic approach to policy appraisal which also needs to have a strong gender component.

Issues for politicians:

- Women are represented in government departments dealing with the environment and transport (e.g. Yvette Cooper, Minister for Planning in Westminster⁷). Women in planning groups in the UK have not developed effective links with these Ministers.
- Women politicians recognize the need to establish equality of representation. 'Things have changed in the 13 years I've been an MP, but until we get equal representation, it's a work in progress.' (Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport).

Issues for academia:

- The number of women at senior and professorial levels is still small and this affects the influence they have on the development of the professional training.
- Although equality is a recognized component of the professional educational guidelines; without detailed monitoring by institutes and the rewarding of good practice, individual planning schools may well not do what they need.
- There is little awareness of the various strategies of building in gender equality perspectives such as mainstreaming.
- Amongst women students, there is a lack of appreciation of the extent of gender inequality.

⁷ Yvette Cooper, MP for Pontefract and Castleford, was appointed Minister for Housing and Planning at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 9 May 2005. Yvette Cooper previously held the position of Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. From May 2002 to June 2003 she was Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department and from October 1999 she was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health. She has been MP for Pontefract and Castleford since 1 May 1997. Before being appointed as Health Minister, Ms Cooper was a Member of the Education and Employment Select Committee and the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Issues for the profession:

- Planning needs to develop areas of collaboration with agencies such as IWPR in order to increase awareness of the role of planning in achieving gender equality.
- There is a need for the profession to increase awareness of planning and gender equality amongst the general public.
- Surveys show that women think professions take equality less seriously (see Table 3).
- Despite there being some very good material on gender impact assessments for planning; gender mainstreaming toolkits, practice advice notes, they tend not to be promoted by the male leadership in the profession on conference platforms.
- Internally, professions need to become much more gender balanced in their governing bodies, committees and boards.
- Women make up only 24 per cent of the membership of the RTPI and yet 34 per cent of those resigning were women and 30 per cent of those struck off were women and it is thought this is because they do not see the Institute meeting their needs. (see Table 2)

Issues for women in the planning profession:

- Amongst young planners there is a very low awareness of pay gaps, glass walls and ceilings; the need to plan for career breaks and plan for returning from a career break.

Manifesto for change 2005-2010

A new manifesto for change is needed which says where we want to be by 2010 and how we get there. This paper makes the first step of headlining a series of issues to be tackled in a manifesto for change.

Governments

Planning legislation needs to incorporate a clear statement on equality. (Scotland's new Transport Bill includes an Amendment 59:

'the meeting of statutory equal opportunities obligations;
the provision of transport services to a wide range of different users
(including the socially excluded)'

Professional Institutes

Professional institutes have still not mainstreamed equality issues. They need to commit to equality and gender proofing all their activities:

- Charters (The current Charter of the RTPI, revised in 2003, states that the Institute will 'promote equity and equality in the practice of planning and education in planning and in all aspects of the governance of the Chartered Institute' (RTPI, 2003).
- Codes of professional conduct need to reaffirm commitments to equality: (The RTPI Code of Professional Conduct, which states that: 'In all their professional activities, members shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, sex, creed, religion, disability or age and shall seek to eliminate such discrimination by others and to promote equality of opportunity' (RTPI, 1994).
- Educational guidelines need to include stronger requirements for equality and accreditation processes need to monitor these guidelines
- Good practice guidance needs to be promoted

Employers

Employers in the private and public sectors need to demonstrate:

- Wider recognition that gender balance matters
- Commitment to:
 - Flexible working
 - Equal Pay audits
 - CPD

Academia

- Universities and funding bodies need to ensure that all research takes a gender perspective
- Gender balanced research teams and specific training for researchers
- Gender proofed curricula and courses
- Education on mainstreaming
- International research and networking

Individual professionals

- Self development and CPD on gender equality issues
- The development of cultural competence (see Reeves, 2005)
- Women in planning networks

What next

Pattsi Petrie is about to launch a web based survey to collect data about the experience of women and men in the planning profession.

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It will be open to US planners and also planners in the UK and beyond. Initial analysis will focus on the US experience.

Funding is being sought to enable the comparative work to be undertaken and written up.

The URL for the survey is: www.urban.uiuc.edu/apa-pw/status/usa.htm

If you have any queries contact Patsi Petrie at the University of Illinois, Dept of Urban and Regional Planning. (patsi@uiuc.edu)

Conclusions

The authors believe that there is a common set of issues and a potential common agenda for change in the US and the UK.

We will continue to support each other and aim to widen participation in women in planning networks.

The survey of women and men in the professions in the US and the UK will underpin this work and provide important empirical data.

A manifesto and plan of action will then be produced.

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Table 1 World Economic Survey – US and UK compared

	UK	US
Overall ranking	8	17
Overall score	4.75	4.40
Economic participation	21	19
Economic opportunity	41	46
Political empowerment	5	19
Educational attainment	4	8
Health and well-being	28	42

Source: World Economic Survey (2005)

Table 2 Women and Men Leaving the Planning Institute in the UK

Categories	2001		2002		2003 (up to August)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Retire	134	16 (11%)	118	21 (15%)	83	18 (18%)
Resign	149	60 (29%)	137	72 (34%)	126	55 (30%)
Struck off	117	58 (33%)	117	51 (30%)	98	62 (38%)
Total	400	150 (27%)	372	144 (28%)	307	135 (31%)

Source: (RTPI, 2003)

Table 3 Satisfaction with professional institute in the UK

Statement	Female		Male		Overall Result	
	% agree	Confidence limit	% agree	Confidence limit	% agree	Confidence limit
I am satisfied with the balance between my work and other aspects of my life	59.2	8.2	50.6	5.0	52.8	4.3
The RTPI is effective in encouraging women into the profession	16.9	6.7	31.2	5.8	26.5	4.5
The RTPI provides adequate support for members who are women	12.1	6.1	21.8	6.4	17.9	4.6
The RTPI is effective in raising issues in planning that affect women	17.2	7.0	27.1	5.9	23.7	4.6

Source: (Reeves, 1999, 2001)

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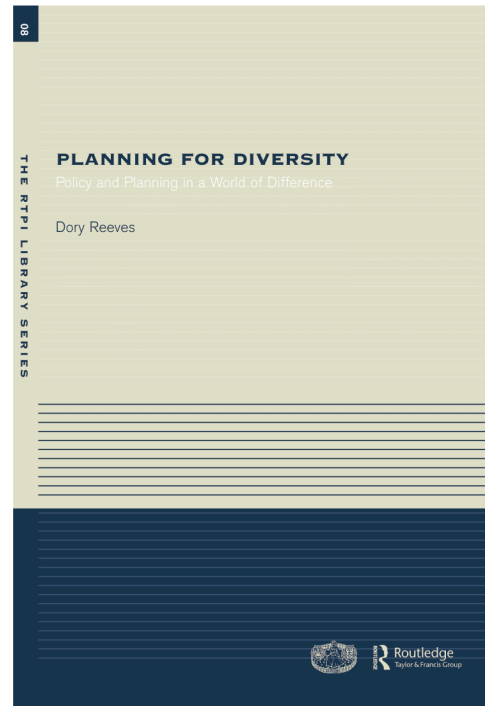
Planning for Diversity

Policy and Planning in a World of Difference

Dory Reeves, Principal Reeves Associates, UK

The practical importance of diversity and equality for spatial planning and sustainable development is still not widely understood. Using international examples, this book shows planners and educationalists the benefits of building in a consideration of diversity and equality at each stage and level of planning.

Despite being one of the most diverse and gender balanced of the built environment professions, complacency has been widespread in planning. This book shows why a diverse profession is important and drawing on a wide range of good practice, shows how those involved in planning can develop their sensitivity to and expertise in diversity and equality.



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