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Karen Horwood

# Editorial

## Women and planning: developing the conversation

This special issue has resulted from the Women and Planning conference held at the Leeds Planning School, Leeds Beckett University, UK in May 2019. The conference aims were to develop a conversation between academics and practitioners, and those in-between, and (re)build a network of those interested in women and planning in the UK.

In common with wider feminist activity, an interest in women and planning has had a fluctuating history in the UK and beyond. The 1970s–1990s saw activity both in academic and practice, for example with the publication of the influential ‘What would a feminist city look like?’ (Hayden, 1980) and Clara Greed’s (1994) *Women and Planning*. Organisations such as the Women’s Design Service (WDS) and Matrix Architects were established to counter the lack of attention paid to the ways in which the design and planning of town and cities affected the lives of women (Berglund, 2016; Grote, 1992).

Alongside this during the 1980s an informal ‘women and planning’ network was established by Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) members, leading to a more formal RTPI committee for women’s issues (Greed, 1994; 2005) and a Planning Advice Note on Women and Planning and Equal Opportunities (EO) Policy Statement (Greed, 1994). Within local authorities, the development of women’s committees and officers led to an, albeit momentary, highlighting of the ways in which planning departments should consider and respond to the needs of women (Greed, 2005).

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a shift towards gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming seeks to embed gender sensitivity into public policy (Sanchez de Madriaga and Roberts, 2013; Sanchez de Madriaga and Neuman, 2016). In contrast to the women and planning type approached outlined earlier, where discrete issues and solutions were highlighted with a view to influence practices, gender mainstreaming seeks to modify mainstream practice so that gender is considered throughout the decision-making process (Daly, 2005).

More recently, there has been some resurgence of a focus on women in planning. In 2012 the Women in Planning network was established with an aim to ‘empower women in the planning profession’ (Women in Planning, n.d.). Also in 2012, Urbanistas, a ‘collaborative women-led network amplifying women’s voices and ideas to make cities better for everyone’ was founded (Urbanistas, n.d.). The RTPI have also been active, with a gender and planning ‘one stop shop’ launched in 2017, and *The*

Karen Horwood is a Senior Lecturer in the School of the Built Environment at Leeds Beckett University, Northern Terrace, Leeds, UK, LS1 3HE; email: [K.Horwood@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:K.Horwood@leedsbeckett.ac.uk).

*Planner* magazine's annual Women of Influence awards. Activity is ongoing with the CHANGE action plan, research into women in the planning profession and gender mainstreaming.

It is in this context that the 2019 Women and Planning conference sought to (re)develop a conversation between academics and practitioners, and those in-between, and to (re)develop a network of those interested in women and planning in the UK. Articles were invited focusing on histories, intergenerational conversations, policy, networks, barriers and successes. To reinvigorate the conversation, extensive work was undertaken to find the women working in this field and I am indebted to the women who shared their knowledge, networks and connections. Without their support and generosity this conference, and this subsequent special issue would not have happened.

During the process of writing the articles in this special issue, the COVID-19 pandemic happened. As has been widely discussed, the pandemic impacted on academic women's work with increased demands of domestic labour such as home-schooling children and pressures on space in the home in which to undertake academic work (Augustus, 2021). This impact was felt during the process of bringing this special issue together, and I am grateful to the support and understanding of the editors of *Town Planning Review* with regards to this.

Following the conference, a Women and Planning Research Group has been formed to further develop this work. Hosted at the Leeds Planning School, Leeds Beckett University, UK, the group brings together those engaged with relevant research to better understand how women's needs are met in the planning and design of our places, and to understand the role of women in the planning profession. In addition, this includes the funding of doctoral researchers to bring longevity to this focus. We are looking to the future, with a seminar series and conference programme to build on the work included within this special issue.

The issue starts with an historic focus, with Clara Greed's article which explores her life's journey and how this led to her work on women and planning. As a key figure in the field, often cited as a key influence of many including the current RTPI chief executive (Hills, 2018), this article provides a valuable insight into the life and work of one of women and planning's inspirations.

The issue then moves on to crucial documentation of specific actions that were undertaken during from the 1970s–1990s. Janice Morphet and Sule Nisancioglu's article discusses gender planning initiatives from the 1980s and 1990s. This is complemented by Bri Gauger's article which brings an international dimension through her exploration of oral histories of women and planning activities in North America. Dory Reeves's article provides an insight into later work in the 1990s, with a focus on the 1996 Which Way Now? Women Planners into the 21st Century conference.

We are then brought to the current day, with a collaborative article from Karen Horwood, Aude Biquelet-Lock, Sue Manns, Charlotte Morphet and Natalya Palit.

This article uses the lens of descriptive and substantive representation to engage with contemporary research on women and planning. In the final article Marion Roberts draws on her extensive experience to consider the contemporary intersection of gender sensitive planning and neoliberalism.

Finally, in line with the feminist ethos of the conference and subsequent articles, I would like to thank several people who were instrumental to the existence of this conference and special issue. Firstly, to all the authors for all their enthusiasm for the conference and commitment during the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, and to all who attended and supported the conference. This would not exist without your contributions. To Professor Sally Brown and Professor Jayne Raisborough for their mentorship; to Dr Bronwen Edwards, Dr Max Hope and Dr Quintin Bradley for their listening and advice. This special issue of *TPR* is dedicated the memory of Raymond Coupe (1920–2020), my grandad, who is the only person to have read everything I have written.

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