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URBAN SPATIAL POLICY: a European gender perspective

Abstract: The gender dimensions of urban form and town planning policy are investigated drawing on findings from research on 'women and town planning' in Britain, and making comparisons with the wider European situation. Even if women do have different policies this is irrelevant if they are not represented in decision-making groups. Therefore the representation of women in the built environment professions and urban policy making levels is discussed. It is argued that in order to change spatial policy it is essential to increase women's participation in town planning, and to make the consideration of gender issues a required component of policy-making.

Key words: spatial policy, gender, urban planning.

1. THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT?

This paper considers the importance of maintaining a gender perspective on urban spatial policy and town planning practice, and identifies examples of progress and areas where action is still required. Firstly the questions of 'what is the problem?' and 'what do women want?' will be considered. As a starting point findings will be drawn from recent research on 'women and town planning' in Britain (Greed, 1994). Comparisons will then be drawn with the wider European situation with reference to papers presented at a recent international conference in Paris on *Women in the city* (OECD, 1994). Even if women do have different priorities and policy proposals this is irrelevant if they are not represented on the decision-making groups which shape spatial policy:

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and therefore they have no influence. Therefore in the second part of the paper the representation of women in the built environment professions and urban policy-making levels will be considered, firstly with reference to Britain, and secondly to the wider European situation. In conclusion it will be argued that in order to change spatial policy it is essential to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies, and to make the consideration of gender issues a required element of urban policy making, by the use of EC policy directives and regulatory controls.

2. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Research and human experience have shown that in Britain women suffer considerable disadvantage within a built environment that is developed by men, primarily for other men (WGSG, 1984; Little, 1988; 1994; Greed, 1994) and this also appears to be the case in other European countries too. Although the urban situation varies considerably between the various European countries, not least because of differences in custom, culture and climate, many of the 'same' problems manifest themselves, albeit in somewhat different guises depending on the specific nature of the city in question (cf. Strauch and Wirthwein, 1989). Nevertheless, over and above gender, one must take into account these national differences in city form and structure when making comparisons with the rest of Europe. In particular in Britain, and to some extent in other more North European cities, (at least in the provinces) there is a preference for low density, suburban housing, and generally a more 'garden city' based, Anglo-American approach to town planning prevails (Hall, 1994, p. 31). In contrast, relatively speaking (as there are many exceptions to the rule) a higher density, more concentrated city form, is a characteristic of central and south European Community cities, accompanied by an emphasis upon medium to high rise, apartment living.

One must also be wary of imagining there is some sort of 'Ideal European City' or 'Perfect Gender City' which is applicable equally in every country. For example, many British planners were uneasy about the Green Paper on the urban environment emanating from Brussels in 1990 (EC, 1990) which based proposals for urban containment upon the 'model' of the high density, sophisticated, 'continental' type city, and took little account of the existing, highly suburbanised nature of British cities. Likewise in seeking to solve gender problems, although the general issues might be the 'same' across Europe (cf. EC, 1991) the specific solutions might need to be 'different' in each urban locality. Whilst certain general principles may be developed, there is no one

ideal solution for all women. For example, Cardinal (1991, p. 6) describes the preference some French women have for living 'with the sounds of active Europe' ringing in their ears within the traditional central arrondissements of Paris, and contrasts this situation with the deadly silence of North American suburbs which some women may prefer (Greed, 1994, p. 46). In summary, in respect of British cities, the problem issues for women may be identified as revolving around the effects of segregatory zoning, poor public transport, and decentralisation of retail and commercial uses at the macro city-wide level; at the lack of facilities, shops, and employment opportunities at the meso district level; and concerning safety, access and childcare issues at the local microlevel of town planning. These will be discussed in sequence in relation to Britain, and in each case comparisons will be made with the wider European situation.

At the macro city-wide level the separation of employment and residential areas by disparate land use zoning makes it difficult for women to combine outside employment and home related responsibilities. This situation, combined with a very poor level of childcare provision (little of which is provided on site by employers), means that many women have to undertake complex journeys and juggle complicated timetables to carry out their daily tasks. The situation is exacerbated by transportation planning policies which have traditionally been based upon meeting the needs of the male 'breadwinner'. Thus the 'journey to work' has been seen as a simple journey, home to work and back. In contrast, women are more likely to be making complex, broken journeys as follows: home → childminder → school → work → school → shops → childminder → and home again.

Further most public transport provision is based upon meeting the needs of the full-time worker, and so more emphasis is put upon meeting 'rush hour' need and less upon, what are seen as, 'off-peak' leisure journeys. In fact Britain has the highest percentage of part-time workers in Europe and (the lowest level of childcare provision) and so many women need, therefore, to make essential journeys outside of peak-time to fulfil their various roles (Snyder, 1992). Also road systems, and public radial basis, transport routes, have tended to be developed on with the emphasis upon delivering people from the suburbs to the city centre. In contrast women's journeys may be tangental, between different suburbs and among different land uses within the local district, and are often shorter (but still too far to walk) as they travel between home, workplace, shops, schools, and local health and administrative facilities. The problem is compounded by the fact that less women than men have the use of a car. Although 80% of households in the United Kingdom own at least one car, less than a quarter of households own two or more cars, and many women are left 'carless' during the daytime (Greed, 1994, p. 42). Car ownership in England and Wales can be either very cheap or very expensive, because of subsidisation of

company cars which come with many (mainly male) 'executive' jobs (Rogers, 1983 chapter 6: *Have you got a company car?*).

Many European cities, relatively speaking, show less evidence of large scale land use zoning, although 'americanisation' and 'out of town' development are visible spatial forces. Also public transport systems, and levels of government subsidy for them, are considerably better in many European countries. Nevertheless, at the recent OECD conference on *Women and the city*, again and again, the speakers expressed concern about the problems of zoning, decentralisation, and transport for women, mirroring many of the concerns expressed above in relation to the British situation. In particular, it was commented that even if a city has a 'good' public transport system, if the routes, timetables, and nature of provision, are mainly designed to meet the travel patterns of men, it is not satisfactory for women (Duchéne, 1994). Also concern was expressed about the effects of urban renewal and decentralisation upon the elderly population (most of whom are women, Snyder, 1992) who not only have lower levels of car ownership, and restricted personal mobility, but also may have lived their lives, and have their community base in traditional, inner city districts, and older arrondissements which are now under threat of 'modernisation' and are 'going up market' (Knibiehler, 1994). Even in countries where there is a well established alternative to the motorcar, such as in the Netherlands where much travel is still undertaken by bicycle, women have expressed concern about the implications for women's safety of introducing 'short cuts' and 'cycle only' routes, which are often badly lit, and away from the main flow of the traffic (Whitzman, 1989). As with the creation of segregated bicyle routes, and also separate pedestrian paths in the new town of Milton Keynes in England, such apparently positive road safety measures might have negative personal safety implications for women.

Urban feminist research has long identified the mesolevel of planning of the local district and neighbourhood as being of great concern to women, as they and their children are the main users of local facilities, shops and amenities. Particular concern is reserved for the design of residential areas. Women spend more time than men in residential areas, indeed the home may be their main workplace (albeit unpaid) (Vliet,1988). Many women at the OECD conference expressed concern about, what they perceive as, a shift away from an emphasis upon local spatial planning among male town planners (and planning schools), towards a European-wide, economic planning agenda. International trends towards dealing with 'huge issues' such as the 'globalisation of economies' and the need to 'save the planet' through environmental and sustainability policies are seen by some women planners as leaving little space for women's concerns about local issues, such as neighbourhood employment and housing matters: indeed such concerns can appear 'trivial' in contrast. Some urban feminists are

somewhat wary of the whole 'sustainability' movement because it appears to have supplanted the 'women and planning' movement: but women's problems remain unsolved. In the course of the research (Greed, 1994) it appeared from comments such as 'oh we've done women, you should be concerned about the environment', that 'women and planning' had become distinctly *passé*. But it was argued at the conference by delegates from Scandinavia that in order to achieve truly sustainable environments and efficient economies women's needs must be included in the agenda – as a key determinant of likely success – both as workers and as consumers (SMENR, 1994). Whilst EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) has become a compulsory component of plan making in Europe, SIA (Social Impact Assessment) has not, although it did experience a brief popularity in some countries, and often included a 'gender-impact' component (Howe, 1994). At the international level, Agenda 21 on sustainability (which derives from the Earth Summit in Rio) which, currently, municipal authorities are being encouraged to take on board at the local planning level is also weak on 'naming' gender issues, although it refers, in general terms, to community and social interests (Church and McHarry, 1994).

At the microlevel of the individual housing estate, and immediate vicinity, many women have over the years expressed and documented their disquiet about the nature of street layouts, densities, and house design; and about social issues such as crime, safety, childcare, traffic problems, disability, and accessibility (which I will not reiterate or justify *de novo* here, but cf. Greed, 1994, Appendix II, *Key texts).* There appears to be a perpetual round of conferences and events on 'crime and design' and 'women and housing' taking place all over Europe through which many of the old 'feminist' concerns have now become mainstreamed to a degree at least. But one must remain cautious. Concern is expressed by some at the growth of, what are seen as, reactionary trends in some branches of the 'urban design' movement, in which it would seem that the emphasis upon planning to preserve 'authentic, historical, urban townscapes' may militate against the inclusion of practical provision for women and children as actual users of the built environment. Within this context the mundane, but essential, issues of the provision of public toilets, play areas, seats, ramps, tourist notices, vendor kiosks, and refreshment stalls, and other such basic 'street furniture' may be overlooked or disproved of, and even removed as 'clutter'. In reality such provision may influence the attractiveness, and thus the economic viability of area renewal.

At the microlevel of local area design the British 'women and planning' movement has undoubtedly been strongly influenced by North American texts and ideas, especially on 'crime and design', which may not be appropriate to the local situation, say in London, let alone in other European cities. Current North American urban feminist writings on 'crime and design' paint a dire picture of

the situation in some American cities, and one is alarmed by comments in American popularist feminist magazines suggesting it is a women's right to bear a gun! Nevertheless women planners in Europe are taking stock of those aspects of such literature which may, with modification, provide guidelines on good design practice (cf. Wekerle and Whitzman, 1994), although urban crime and safety issues may manifest themselves in different guises in Northern Europe (cf. above Whitzman's study of Dutch cycle routes).

3. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

European women are not a unitary group and they vary greatly in terms of class, race, disability, and ethnicity, but general agreement was expressed at the OECD conference, and echoed in urban feminist literature, in identifying 'what women want'. Women want planning for 'everyday life', for practical realities and necessities, rather than for abstract economic goals (Skjerve, 1993). They want the city of short journeys, less land use zoning, more emphasis on local distribution of shops, local facilities and amenities, and better childcare provision. But many women would argue that trying to change the situation through conventional forms of state town planning which concentrate on spatial policies is not enough. For example in Turin, Italy, attempts have been made to include a plan of 'times' as well as 'land uses' within the urban plan (Belloni, 1994). It was found that in order to increase women's satisfaction with, and access to the city there was a need to ensure that shops, government offices, schools and other facilities were opened and closed at times more convenient to women (particularly for those who were combining paid employment and childcare). Also re-organising the timing of urban activities actually can increase the efficiency of the use of road space and public transport stock, thus reducing traffic jams and ensuring a more even spread of use over 24 hours. Needless to say there are advantages and disadvantages to this system, as it involves everyone working non-standard hours at times.

Ideally, there is a need for fundamental change in the whole economic organisation and social structure of cities. But it is acknowledged that women do not have the luxury of waiting for this to happen as life goes on, although developing future alternatives can prove a useful awareness-raising exercise. Rather women tend to be more pragmatic and some have sought to implement small changes, or undertake pilot design schemes. For example, in respect of residential design, some women architects in Vienna have designed and developed an apartment block scheme called the '*Frauen-Werk-Stadt*' project in Donaufelder Strasse, in 21st municipal district of the city (Bauer and Kail,

1994). In respect of making shopping development more accessible and functional for women with children, the *'Open sesame'* project in the London Borough of Haringay has concentrated upon improving shopping development design (Nisancioglu, 1994). Other women may not be doing what might appear at first sight to be 'women and planning' type work, but are infusing mainstream policy areas with design principles which benefit women, such as in the case of Carmen Hass-Klau's innovative work on traffic calming (Hass-Klau, 1990 – in which she makes British/German comparisons; Hass-Klau *et al,* 1992). In fact, 'on the grapevine' one comes across a multiplicity of women throughout Europe all working away within their own specialism and locality seeking to influence the status quo and reshape urban spatial policy and thus city form. It is only hoped that these forces for change will also be fully reflected in EC Directives and guidance documents on urban policy, and within the national planning systems of the member states.

4. ACHIEVING CHANGE

In order to understand why urban spatial policy takes the form it does, it is important to consider the nature of decision makers themselves. The discussion will primarily be related to the situation in Britain, but will also incorporate comparisions with other European countries. In this section the definition of 'Europe' is extended to non-EC states too, because it is instructive to consider why some erstwhile state socialist countries which have always had a higher percentage of women in the built environment professions are now experiencing a decline, whilst other more 'traditional' mediterranean states are experiencing dynamic growth in this respect. In Britain, taking the land use professions, trades, and urban policy makers as a whole less than 5% of those in practice are women (Greed, 1991, p. 3; CISC, 1994), by contrast over 52% of the population are women, with over 80% living in urban areas. These factors may be irrelevant to urban policy making if it is believed that the women's needs are no different from men's, or that the professional man is capable of sufficient disinterested neutrality to plan equally well for all groups in society (Dunleavy, 1980, p. 112), but as has been seen in the first section this is not generally the case.

In discussing Britain *vis a vis* the wider European situation it is, again, difficult to draw direct comparisons because each nation divides the professional cake up in a different way, and each has a separate education system. The British situation is dominated by the power of the 'chartered' bodies, to which most members of the built environment professions belong, such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the Royal Institute of British

Architects (RIBA), and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). Members are active in the private and public sectors, for example 80% of RTPI members work in central or local government, whereas around 80% of RIBA and RICS members work in the private sector. These professional groups have an important role in the transmission of dominant social attitudes and relations on to urban space, in this case the imprint of gender relations on the built environment (Massey, 1984, p. 16). As can be seen from table 1 these bodies are extremely male dominated. Investigating educational and employment structures it was found that although more women are now entering professional courses as students, the senior decision-making levels of the professions were still predominantly male (Greed, 1991).

Table 1. Membership of the professional bodies as at December 1993

Body	Full members	Female %	Student members	Female %	Total members	Female %
RTPI	14 534	20.0	3 192	42.0	17 726	23.0
RICS	70 918	6.1	21 267	15.8	92 185	8.3
ICE	52 000	1.2	9 285	11.0	80 250	3.5
ISE	17 131	1.7	6 489	11.9	23 620	4.5
CIOB	25 118	0.7	9 439	4.3	33 557	1.7
CIOH	8 000	43.0	4 116	56.0	12 116	44.0
ASI	4 820	1.2	485	10.2	5 305	1.9
ISVA	5 774	6.7	1 381	16.5	7 155	8.6
RIBA	27 708	7.2	4 102	28.2	31 810	10.0
CIBSE	12 939	1.2	2 225	4.9	15 164	1.8
LI	2 284	40.5	3 653	42.4	3 777	40.0
NAEA	non-examining body				9 657	21.1

Key: RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute; RICS – Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; ICE – Institution of Civil Engineers; ISE – Institution of Structural Engineers; CIOB – Chartered Institute of Building; CIOH – Chartered Institute of Housing; ASI – Architects and Surveyors Institute; ISVA – Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers; RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects; CIBSE – Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers; LI – Landscape Institute; NAEA – National Association of Estate Agents.

Source: The professional bodies. In some cases there are other intermediate or honorary categories which make up the remainder of the total, who are not strictly speaking either fully qualified members or students, such as probationers, technicians, international members, graduate associates. Also categories of data may be redefined by professional bodies.

At present CISC (Construction Industry Standing Conference) is developing NVQ's (National Vocational Qualifications). NVQ's are components of a new form of technical and professional qualification system which aims to improve

the definition of levels of professional competence within the United Kingdom and thus efficiency, competence and overall standards (CISC, 1994). One purpose of this exercise is to enable greater comparability to be achieved with other member state qualifications with a view to greater European harmonisation. As a member of the CISC working party the author has found that the situation is extremely complex. For example whilst in Britain the 'professional planner' has a key role in 'manning' the town planning system, in other countries the same role might be taken on by civil engineers or architects who are specialists in that range of urban matters which in Britain we happen to gather together and call 'town planning'. Also there are no exact equivalents to what the English call a surveyor, whose role is much wider than land surveying, and includes dealing with all aspects of property management and development, including aspects of town planning (Greed, 1991).

Educational levels and routes also differ across Europe with a greater emphasis upon post-graduate specialisation in some other European states than in Britain where specialist built environment professional under-graduate courses are customary (Rodriguez-Bachiller, 1988). Also high level urban policy research may be more the province of 'academic' experts in some other European countries, than that of 'professional' personnel as is more the case in Britain. Nevertheless, whatever the system in force, it has been found that women are generally under-represented in the key groups responsible for urban decision making. Some women planners in Britain (and other countries with small, specialist professional bodies) are concerned that if European harmonisation of all the construction, planning and property professions in the European Union goes ahead without taking into account the gender dimensions of professional body memberships the end-result will be disadvantageous to women's interests. Women who are, at present, well represented in the smaller professional bodies (such as in housing, town planning, and landscape architecture) may find these are amalgamated with, and swamped by other larger, and much more male dominated professional groupings. For example if town planning was deemed to be a subsection of civil engineering, women would find that they now had to swim in a much larger, and more heavily gendered pool. The professional attributes valued in the European ingenieur, that is the 'EurGeo' appear decidedly male, and lacking the sociological, and 'people-based' emphasis found in 'softer' urban professions such as town planning (cf. McLeod, 1991).

In spite of the diversity of qualifying structures across Europe, direct comparisons can be made in respect of some professional areas which exist in a similar form in most countries, such as architecture. The percentage of architects who are women is 15% in France, 10% in what was Western Germany (as against nearer 25% in what was Eastern Germany), 24% in

Portugal, 14% in Spain, 16% in the Republic of Ireland, and 22% in Italy (from tables 5.3 and 15.1 of Bevan *et al.*, 1993). In Britain women represent 9% of the profession, and 27% of new entrants to architectural courses, but nearly half of this figure has been eroded away by the time candidates reach the end of the course (which in Britain lasts for 7 years) (RIBA, 1993). In Southern Europe it is interesting that the numbers of women entering the field has accelerated considerably in recent years (from a zero start in some cases). In Turkey (of those who belong to the professional bodies) 35% of the Chamber of Architects (total 22 750 members) are women, whilst 60% of the 1 560 members of the Chamber of City Planners are women. From 30–50% of students on architectural and civil engineering courses in Spain and Italy are women in some institutions. In post-Franco Spain the numbers of women entering the building trades has been encouraged, possibly as reflection of the desire to 'start again' and be 'modern' and 'liberated' after years of dictatorship (Lyle, 1994). In mainland Greece architectural study is an attractive option for women, yet modern town planning practice lacks gender awareness (Vaiou, 1990). Women now compose over 20% of civil engineers in Cyprus (Antoniou, 1994), and increasing numbers of engineering students in Cyprus are women. But Antoniou wryly notes, because of the considerable financial investment required by families, that male students are more likely to be encouraged to study abroad, and therefore the women are left behind at home attending local courses.

As to the built environment professions (or their equivalent) as a whole, using approximations, women average around 8% of total participants in the construction and property sector in Europe, with a higher representation in the Scandinavian countries of around 10%, and as stated they compose 5% in Britain. But there are great variations in the levels of women's participation in different areas of expertise. Relatively speaking the more 'technological' the discipline the less women are to be found (engineering and land surveying), whereas the more 'social' and/or 'artistic' the discipline (architecture, housing, town planning) the more women will participate. However one finds anomalies. For example in some East European countries women have composed 30–40% of civil engineers and surveyors (FIG, 1983 with reference in particular to Bulgaria). There have also been much higher percentages of women in medicine and science and technology areas in erstwhile state-socialist countries. But this should not necessarily be seen as a sign of progress or policy making power. Rather, more women in profession may mean that the whole area loses social and intellectual status and salaries fall (Greed, 1994, p. 160). Whilst in Western Europe the number of women entering the built environment professions might be seen as an indicator of 'equality' and 'progress', Russian young women who have seen their mothers work in heavy manual jobs on building sites for little pay may consider the opportunity to be a model or hairdresser true liberation.

and have no desire to be involved in construction, even at the professional level (Khotkina, 1994). Some women in erstwhile socialist countries, who are technically or professionally qualified in what are considered in Western Europe to be 'men's jobs', have found that they now face unemployment, and attempts to devalue their qualifications, as they seek to compete against the influx of male Western technical experts coming in from outside to 'modernise' their countries and economies (cf. Rau, 1993 on the effects of German unification on Eastern German women construction workers).

Whilst it is important to get more women into the built environment disciplines, 'more does not mean better' unless positive measures are introduced to counteract sexism, discrimination, and lack of provision for women's specific needs (Greed, 1993). Many women feel that the town planning fraternity is not welcoming for women, and that there are barriers which prevent them reaching higher level positions (Michel, 1994 commenting on France: RTPI, 1989). In the course of research undertaken on women surveyors in Britain it became clear that women were under a great deal of pressure to accept the values of the male-dominated professional subculture (Greed, 1991, chapter 7: *Fitting into surveying education*). Likewise in the world of town planning education it has only been possible since the 1980s to include gender issues on courses and to feel at ease in discussing 'women and planning' policy (Greed, 1994, chapter 10). In theory as more women enter the subculture will change for the better. However, Geography courses (which can provide 'feeder' routes towards a career in town planning and other urban policy careers) attract equal, if not slightly more, female than male students, but women feel disadvantaged on such courses and the majority of lecturers are still male (McDowell, 1990). Out in professional practice women still face a wide range of problems, particularly in Britain because of lack of childcare provision. However, apparently in Scandinavian countries where such provision is higher, women may still find themselves relegated to lower level posts, and experience 'the glass ceiling' (an invisible barrier which many women encounter on seeking promotion). Positive role models, and support at central government level can help enormously. It is significant that in Finland the Minister of the Environment is a woman namely Sirpa Pietikäinen, and as result not only have many 'women and planning' policies been put in place but young women feel more encouraged to enter erstwhile male specialisms and to compete for top government posts.

In addition to achieving governmental support and involvement, it is important that the private property sector and construction industry take on board women's issues, as after all they are the main developers of urban space in many countries. The British Chapter (national branch) of FIABCI (International Federation for Commercial and Industrial Property Professionals), has a woman President this year, namely Elizabeth Edwards, a director of

Westdeutsche Landesbank (Estates Times, "European Review" 1994, p. 66). There is a danger that governmental town planners, including women planners, underestimate 'the property market' (variously referred to across Europe as: *immobilien, proprieta commercialls, Fastigheter, immobiliarias, Onroerend Goed, Immobilier; Estates Times,* 1994, p. 66) as a means of creating change. It may be argued that whilst in the past socialist governments, and state planning intervention offered a route towards promoting gender issues, nowadays women should be, pragmatically, working towards utilising the private property sector, to achieve change, particularly in post-perestroika socialist eastern states which are now prey to full-blow 'capitalist' development. The OECD (1993) stresses the importance of the rise of the woman entrepreneur (the business woman) as a potentially positive force for change, whilst acknowledging the criticism, and not underestimating the fact, that male-dominated 'capitalism' and 'market forces' can also exacerbate women's oppression.

5. CONCLUSION

In spite of women's attempts to enter the different urban policy-making bodies, governmental committees, professional bodies, trades groups, and organisations, progress has been slow. There seems to be something particularly problematic about 'built environment' professions, possibly because of the off-putting (but inaccurate) *macho*, 'building site' image of this employment sector. Even if organisations declare themselves to be 'equal opportunity employers' they still manage to discriminate, either intentionally or through ignorance (Collinson *et al.*, 1990). There is clearly more need for help for women in terms of childcare provision and career support, and for gender-awareness training for all senior, male, urban policy makers. The EC has sought to forward equal rights through a series of Directives and Articles. For example (as summarised by Duchen, 1992, pp. 17–19), Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome stipulates that women and men shall receive equal pay for equal work (original treaty was signed in 1957). The Directive on Equal Pay was subsequently introduced in 1975, whereas the Directive on Equal Treatment came in, in 1978. Such measures are more concerned with social security and employment issues rather than with making it illegal for women to be disadvantaged as a result of the design of the built environment. The 1975 Sex Discrimination Act for England and Wales made it illegal to discriminate in the provision of facilities or services 'to the public or a section of the public', but so far this has not been successfully used to challenge urban policy and there is no EC law on sex discrimination relating to the provision of facilities or services, or on the design of the built environment, as yet.

The European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights which was established in 1984 is a permanent committee monitoring legislation and policy in a wide range of areas. It produces 'action programmes' on the promotion of equal opportunity for women on a series of different topics and presumably the position of women in the built environment could be a future topic. Also the European Urban Charter which includes a range of policy pronouncements might be construed to promote fair treatment of women in the urban environment CLRAE (1993, p. 109). It refers to EC Resolution 179 (1986) on increasing women's participation in local and regional democratic life, and it stresses the importance of meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups and 'all urban dwellers'. In conclusion, it is clear that something more solid is required, possibly, as mentioned, a requirement for all member states to introduce SIA of all urban policies, along the lines of the present EIA regulations, with specific indicators to measure and monitor the effects of development and policy change on so-called minorities such as women, the elderly, ethnic minority groups, and the disabled, who together constitute a sizeable proportion of the total European population.

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