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From the guttermost to the uttermost and back

I know that you are powerless

Revelation 3:8

This article comprises an auto-ethnography of my life's journey: I entered town planning fifty years ago and am now over seventy. It is a personal testimony of how my social class, gender, religion, education, personal characteristics, family and inner-city background contributed to mutual incomprehension, and not being taken seriously by the planning profession. Planning policies often appear to be based upon an impersonal and generalised view of different social classes and urban areas. Planners need to give greater attention to the embodied and material nature of lived urban experiences, especially in relation to women's needs, class, ethnicity and bodily characteristics.

Keywords: women in planning, social class, inner-city policy, ethnicity and planning, auto-ethnography, materiality of urban situation, toilets, religion

Introduction and contents

The aim of this article is not to present 'women and planning' policies again, which I have already dealt with extensively (Greed, 1994b; 2005). Rather, this article comprises an auto-ethnography of my life, in order to make sense of the factors that shaped my chances of being a planner. Ethnography is concerned with identifying the characteristics and values of a particular societal group (Hughes and Pennington, 2017), in this case members of the planning subculture (Greed, 1994b, 11–13). An auto-ethnographic approach reflects retrospectively upon personal life experiences from an interpretive sociological perspective, in this case my chances of being accepted by the planning tribe (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). Therefore I draw on autobiographical memories of my family background, the education system and planning practice.

Since the paper is a personal account, I write in the first person, which is not 'just' a feminist methodology but increasingly acceptable within mainstream urban research (Greed, 1994a; Saunders, 2017). I am not trying to prove a research hypothesis: my aim is to give my own witness statement; my encounters with planning and planners have shaped my own embodied, personal experiences and life chances (Grosz, 1994; M'charek, 2010; Villanueva, 2020). Observations from my life may be seen as qualitative data that illustrate the class, gender and cultural contrasts between my material life and the planning subcultural world. This is not just a personal matter, as all the so-called 'little' incidences of class and gender discrimination, biased 'person selection',

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social closure and exclusion contribute to the reproduction and maintenance of structural class, gender and race divisions within society (Greed, 2022, 24–26, referring to Blumer, 1986; and Berger, 1970), and shape 'who' makes planning policy.

In the next part, I provide some brief conceptual reflections on my experiences with reference to class, gender, and other personal and locational factors that have shaped my life. Comparisons and contrasts between then and now will be highlighted. The situation was more difficult for women planners, as a small minority, in the 1970s. It is essential to explain my personal family background, as to my mixed class legacy, in order to vindicate myself. So often I was misread, seen in the 'wrong' light and written off as 'working-class'. I was judged, at school, as 'unfit' and 'above myself'; at university my validity to become a planner was questioned, whilst in planning practice my authority to critique and develop planning policy was in doubt. Planners often asked me, 'where are you from?' 'What does your father do?' And 'who do you think you are?'

A change in my family fortunes had given me insights into the lives of people in a deprived area, and crucially an experience of educational inequality during my formative teenage years, whilst still retaining a measure of cultural capital (from my mother) that enabled me to question presumptions about me. My family was part of the 'precariat', outsiders who do not fit into a stratified class structure, slipping between, and combining characteristics of, several different social classes (Standing, 2011). My changeable class background enabled me to gain perspective on the different social classes and acquire personal experience of living in a range of socially diverse contexts. Thus I can stand back and 'make the familiar strange' – an essential skill when doing urban, social and feminist research (Delamont et al., 2010).

In the third part I must go back one generation to my mother's family and her intellectual and class background to explain the source of my 'cultural capital' and my 'different' and 'unusual' attitudes and presumed 'arrogance'. In the fourth part, I describe my school background, within an inner-city area in south London and my conversion to Pentecostal Christianity. In the fifth part I describe my experiences of planning education and practice and the many discouragements, blockages and negative attitudes I experienced from members of the planning subculture (Greed, 2022, 6). Through a series of miracles, and the prayers of my Pentecostal house church, I was accepted on to a town planning degree, but encountered many problems, being told by the all-male lecturers that I was not suitable to be a planner. In the sixth part I explain how I gradually got into the 'women and planning' movement, whilst in the seventh part I reflect upon its key objective, of 'planning for everyday life'.

In the final section, I conclude that a greater emphasis within planning policy upon the lived, bodily, material realities of people's existence is essential. I illustrate the theme of materiality, with reference to public toilet provision. This is a topical issue (Greed, 2016a), with implications for women's mobility in the city of man (Kitchen and Law, 2001). Gender-neutral toilets are at the centre of current debates around the differences between gender identity and biological characteristics, the latter having practical spatial implications regarding the provision of women's spaces in the city of man (Greed, 2019). Planners need to take more notice of the material implications of their policies on the daily physical and bodily lives of the 'planned', especially women. An ethnographic approach provides a means of revealing the needs of whole groups within society who are voiceless and 'invisible' to planning policy makers, including women (Ortiz Escalante and Gutiérrez, 2015).

Conceptual perspectives

Much of my research and publications are related to 'gender' and I have always campaigned for women's needs to be taken into account in town planning. But class and ethnicity modulate the impact of gender on a woman's life chances, along with the nature of her local area (Greed and Johnson, 2014, 327–28) and the effects of religion (Greed, 2020). I lived in a very multi-ethnic location, and had strong links with black 'West Indian' churches of the 1960s. To this day I declare that the prayers and support of these churches, and definite miracles in my life, enabled me to become a town planner against great opposition (Greed, 2020, Chapter 6). As a convert, I observed that respectable young male black leaders were frequently stopped by the police on their way to church (under the SUS laws) and realised that black people had different experiences from white inner-city residents. As a planner, I saw how black people as a whole (including the large numbers of families who belonged to black churches) either were invisible to the planners, or were seen as a 'problem' or assumed to only to consist of young black males (Greed, 2016a).

As a result of my own life experiences, I am conscious of the social class divisions among women, and the negative effects, particularly within the operation of the education system. 'Class' and 'ethnicity' were already visible to some UK feminists, in respect of housing and planning policy, in the 1980s and within wider socialist feminism (Matrix, 1984). 'Intersectionality' has now became a major concept within feminist theory, in relation to how race/ethnicity shapes women's life chances in the USA (Crenshaw, 2019; Anderson and Hill Collins, 2019). This has challenged the homogeneity of feminist theory, as women come in many different classes and ethnicities, and can be oppressed by other women. Relatively speaking, in the UK, class has a comparable effect to race, as a driver of inequality, with women from different classes ending up with quite dissimilar lives.

I did not come from a conventional middle-class background. Sociologists have identified two types of middle-class subculture – the entrepreneurial and the bureaucratic (Miller and Swanson, 1958; Stewart, 2010). The entrepreneurial, private business sector and culture are marked by greater wealth but also by higher risk taking, and a precarious existence dependent upon market demand. This fits my family background. But not everybody who is born in this class gets promoted, or remains therein (Friedman and Laurison, 2019).

In contrast, the bureaucratic 'new' middle classes populate central and local government agencies that run the country, including planning departments (and educational, health, managerial and administrative bodies). They are characterised by a more secure, more pensionable and less risk-oriented approach to life, plus possibly a higher level of 'entitlement' to plan, govern, judge and control other people's lives. I was not from this class background. My route into planning was based upon serendipity as an 'outsider' within a powerless context.

Maybe this is why I was considered 'fair game' for discrimination, for holding 'bourgeios' views, within the relatively socialist milieu of planning. But times change and planners are increasingly subject to job insecurity and market forces because of government cutbacks, with a greater proportion of planners working in the private sector.[1]

Mum's life and family background

I need to go back briefly to one more generation to set the context to my life, as my mother had such an influence on my thinking, and because she gave me the cultural capital and alternative perspective to challenge my demoted class position. She was born in 1909 into an affluent family in Croydon, Surrey, and attended Croydon High School, which was an early GDST (Girls' Day School Trust) school founded by suffragettes. Incidentally this was the school Jane Drew (born 1911), one of the first women architects, attended. Called Joyce then, she became the wife, and architectural partner, of Maxwell Fry. But Grandad (Mum's dad) decided to take Mum out of England just before she was to take her matriculation examinations and sent her to be educated in Paris, as he thought the French education system was better. Mum often told me that she had attended the Sorbonne for a short while, and that I must remember this. Whilst Mum was a student, Grandad ran off with a woman in Cannes and there was a huge divorce. Mum had to leave Paris and ended up as a bilingual secretary in relative poverty living with her divorced mother. However, Mum worked for some interesting organisations, including the BBC, and was involved in some of the first public television test transmissions in 1936.

Dad, born in 1907, was educated at the County Grammar School (best-known pupil the philosopher Malcom Muggeridge). After leaving school he worked in London in the City: he was articled at the Stock Exchange and passed his examinations to become a stock jobber. (A jobber was a wholesale dealer who made stocks and shares available to the stockbrokers.) Therefore my parents' educations were university-level equivalent. Before the war, around 10 per cent of pupils went on to secondary school to take examinations; around 2 per cent went to university (far fewer for girls). Most pupils left school by 14. Even in the 1960s, 80 per cent of children had left school by the age of 16, and only 5 per cent of all school leavers went to university (far fewer girls) (Landau, 1991). Today nearly 50 per cent go on to university and the school-leaving age has crept up to 18.

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[1] https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1588402/rtpi-study-finds-sharp-drop-public-sector-planners-past-decade.

By the standards of the time, Mum's family were quite affluent and lived in a large house which subsequently suffered from bombing ensuing clearance by the planners.[2] Mum had learnt to drive at 14 (no driving test required until 1935) and motored around both England and France. In 1913 there were only 106,000 private cars in Britain and by 1925 1,509,627. Car ownership was still for a minority, and most people still travelled by foot, bicycle or public transport (Hass-Klau, 2014). Dad used to reminisce that he owned six cars 'at once' before the war. But he began to question a future based on mass car ownership, being influenced by members of the Stock Exchange Athletics Club, which promoted walking, pedestrianisation and cycling.[3] This was an early manifestation of environmentalism.

During my childhood, in the 1950s, we were still relatively well off. Most Sundays we used drive down to the south coast and around the countryside. We visited many historic buildings, and there were few other visitors to be seen. My family was not religious, so I was always fascinated when looking out of the car window to see families and children going to church, and asked Mum what they were doing, and if I could go too. But Mum told me it was not for people like me. I became aware of what I would later realise were town planning issues, such as the growth in the numbers of motor cars and increased suburbanisation. Mum commented that 'one day there will be so many cars that there will be no countryside left', so I developed, early on, a strong spatial awareness of urban development issues. We used to visit new local developments in the 1950s and 1960s, such as Gatwick Airport, Sussex University and Crawley New Town, all part of post-war reconstruction.

My family sank from considerable affluence to experiencing major medical, social, spatial and financial problems, including bankruptcy by the time I was a teenager. Dad had left the Stock Exchange, to escape the stress, as he had extremely bad 'nerves'. What with the intervening war, he had failed to achieve partnership and wanted to do something completely different. Dad had always had an interest in motorsport, racing cars, motorbikes and cycle racing, including the Tour de France. All this was the love of his heart, not the Stock Exchange. So he set up a business around his sporting interests, gaining dealer franchises for BSA, Triumph, Norton, Raleigh and Trojan, and other major manufacturers. But this failed, probably because he saw it is a hobby, not a business. By the 1960s, people had turned their backs on two-wheeled vehicles in favour of cars. Cycling was scorned as only for the poor. In contrast with today's environmental mindset, town planners promoted car use over public transport, walking and cycling (Hass-Klau, 2014).

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[2] https://johngreed.weebly.com/clara-greed-family-history-photos.html, https://claragreed.weebly.com.

[3] https://stockexchangeac.org/?page_id=

We ended up, by the mid-1960s, in penury. To escape, we bought an inexpensive house outright at short notice in what was described by Terence Morris as 'the criminal area', in his urban social-ecology study of inner Croydon (Morris, 1958). From a planning perspective, the whole area was cheap because it was 'blighted' as it was destined for redevelopment. The planners showed little interest in urban regeneration, and were keen to expand central business district office development, and clear the way for new urban motorways (Greed and Johnson, 2014, 116–18). Eventually the area was not demolished, yet the social effects of policy neglect and negative attitudes by the planning authority linger to this day. You may know the area from the 2011 riots.[4]

Subsequently the council housing department took over the building next door as a 'halfway' house where they placed a large antisocial white family. Our windows were frequently broken, lighted newspaper and dog dirt were pushed through our letter box. I was shot at in my bedroom because I forgot to close the curtains. Neither the police nor the local authority took any action or showed any concern as by now we too were probably seen as part 'the problem' of the great unwashed. I am still frightened of standing in front of windows at night with the light on.

We were probably the most downwardly mobile family in Britain in the 1960s, becoming totally déclassé. Mum became very ill and had detached retinas and spent several years off and on at Moorfields Eye Hospital, trying to retain her sight. Dad had bad nerves, so he endlessly played Tchaikovsky on the piano, worried a lot and drank. Acquaintances seemed to think my family was eccentric and 'in a muddle', but we were in survival mode. Nevertheless, Dad persevered and tried a whole range of jobs. When he was sixty, he turned over a new leaf and qualified as the oldest HGV Class 1 lorry driver (the big trucks with long trailers), and this attracted press attention. He liked the challenge and the freedom to get out and about. He used to drive around with his Polish friend from the war, who had poor English but good Latin. So they only spoke Latin to each other in the lorry. He was elected a TGWU union representative and carried on driving happily, well into his seventies. My father's life experience and values seemed to have little in common with those of the planners. Both my parents never seemed to care what people said about them, had little 'class awareness' and were bewildered by the snobbery and materialism of the new middle classes. I found it strange that planners (and most sociologists) defined class according to occupation, in economic terms. My parents judged a person's class by their cultural background, their character, disposition and other personal attributes and abilities: not what work they did, how rich they were or what socio-economic group they happened to be in at the time.

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[4] (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-14453264/london-riots-croydon-is-a-war-zone)

My school education

I left my nice little private school, and had a short period in a state primary school (with outside toilets). I ended up in a state grammar school which put me in the bottom D stream. At school, I was assumed to be working-class and treated accordingly. I was left to get on with it on my own at school, as my parents had so many other problems to deal with. I nearly left school at 14 to care for Mum. I was even put in the bottom class for French although this was mother's second language. I was not allowed to study Latin although Mum had started teaching me the declensions when I was four. This was my first awakening as to how perceived class, and home location, rather than brains, knowledge or effort, shape one's educational life chances. But I was bright, and I knew from Mum's experiences that schooling should not be like this. It all came to a head when the school decided that I was not suitable to take O levels (GCEs) and was to be put in the non-examination stream where girls usually left school at 15 with no qualifications to 'work in Woolworths'.

I could not understand why I was put in the bottom stream, but having subsequently discovered the sociology of education I can grasp the wider picture. Streaming pupils according to presumed 'intelligence' was widespread in the school system, with black and working-class pupils being deemed stupid (Coard, 2020). Streaming decisions were also based upon the area where pupils lived, especially the racial composition of the area. Apart from the antisocial white family next door, most of our neighbours were from India, Pakistan and the West Indies (the Caribbean) – friendly, enterprising and well educated, but condemned to menial jobs, and often stereotyped as 'criminal' (Morris, 1958). I too was typecast as worthless for living in this area. I was given no encouragement or help at school. Dad was categorised as 'unemployed' although he had always been either articled, working in an independent professional capacity, recovering from illness or self-employed. They did not ask about Mum's qualifications or past occupations. Many years later, having married a Christian solicitor, we considered taking a class action against Morris and his employer, University College London, for defamation of character for calling our area and its residents 'criminal'. By then ten years had passed since I lived there, and twenty since Morris's book was published. English law does not work well for 'class actions'. As for the school, it was subsequently turned into a mixed comprehensive and a few years later demolished, to be replaced by a large supermarket and car park.

When I told Mum that I was not allowed to do O levels, she was very angry as she wanted me to go to university. She was not in hospital at the time, so she put on her best grey suit and took along her French diplomas and Sorbonne certificates, and went to see the headmistress. I don't know what was said but the very next day I was allowed to take eight O levels, I was moved into the top class and the headmistress suddenly became friendly, deferential and solicitous towards me. Previously the teachers used to tell me (variously) that I was nothing, I was dirt, I was not fit to have children. They said, ‘People like you always have too many children’, ‘Who do you think you are?’ and ‘You’re nothing’, and I was told off for trying to speak to the teachers. Clearly they thought I was getting above my presumed station in life. I took all these comments personally, not being inoculated against such attitudes. I had no knowledge of social class or socialism, not having a working-class background like some of my classmates, who explained to me that the aim of education was to keep them down, so the best thing to do was to leave and get a job.

Such girls’ grammar schools felt the need to create their own little ‘proletariat’ D stream and social class structure within, presumably to make the other ‘gels’ feel superior. Years later when I read about meritocracy, and grammar schools giving pupils an unfair advantage, I thought they had never looked at girls’ schools, or the realities of false stereotyping and media images of ‘poor areas’ that determined an individual’s fate within the education system. The issue of the social class differences between and among women, and the extent to which girls’ life chances are restricted by schoolteachers and other female ‘soft cops’ within the welfare state, according to the perceived class of their pupils, has always fascinated me (Skeggs, 1997; Ingham, 1981). But the emphasis in the sociology of education (and in regional planning) upon the male white working class (Willis, 1977), and what seemed to me to be the lack of attention within feminism towards the social class differences among and between women in feminism, conspired to divert attention from the female working class. Nowadays, educational and employment opportunities for women have increased. But the strong social class and income differences between women have become even more evident in their choice of career, particularly in relation to joining the professions, creating a strong unequal class system among women as well as men.

Subsequently, things settled down, and I was in the top stream. Whilst studying A level history I was fascinated by the Reformation and Martin Luther, who said that salvation was by faith, not by being good enough (Bainton, 1962). This appealed to me as I felt constantly damned and judged. Years later I discovered that Luther had written terrible things about both women and Jews (Luther, 2015). My best friend from school invited me to a Pentecostal house meeting on her council estate and I became a born-again Christian. This caused trouble at home as I was from a freethinker background and my parents were furious. The house church was linked to the new West Indian Pentecostal churches in Croydon and Brixton, whose members helped change my life as they welcomed me as a poor white reject from mainstream society.

The kaleidoscope shook again and I went to art college. Although I had three good A levels, I turned down for a place to read geography at Reading University (I was frightened of the professor who interviewed me who had a Nazi dagger on his desk). In those days many girls went to art college. I went to Bath Academy of Art in Corsham, to study three-dimensional design. The academy’s teaching was based upon Bauhaus principles and was an associate college of Bristol University. It was all very upper-class and housed in Lord Methuen's stately home. I became socially ambidextrous and a versatile chameleon to blend in, whilst observing it all with detachment as an outsider.

In my first and only year there, we did a three-dimensional project on the road system in our home town. I was very conscious of town planning as a force for evil, as the planners were modernising Croydon, turning it into a mini-Manhattan, demolishing so many historic buildings and houses in the city centre (Saunders, 2017). Mum had many battles with the planners and was always going up to the town hall, in between being in hospital. When I went up to the planning office to talk to the planners, individually they did not seem half as bad as their policies. I discovered it was possible to study town planning as a degree subject and become a planner in order to change planning policy: although less than 5 per cent of planners were women (Greed, 1994b, 35, 195).

The Croydon planners said they would have liked to take me on a day-release planning course but it was too late in the year to do so. These senior male planners seemed genuinely keen to help me and did not manifest the sexism and classism that I was later to encounter in town planning education and practice. Some senior planners had previously been architects, engineers and surveyors, but many tended to come up through the part-time, day-release, non-university route, being 'articled' to the planning authority straight after leaving school (Greed, 1994b, Chapter 10). But a few new university-level town planning courses were emerging, as higher education began to expand in the late 1960s. It was now nearly September so I applied through the old UCCA (university clearing) system and despaired. Whilst waiting, I went up to the local Pentecostal Bible College in Kenley, Surrey, where the two deaconesses who ran our house church had been trained. That evening the college was sending missionaries off to the Philippines. Someone stood up in front of me and gave a prophecy for the missionaries: 'The Lord will make a way for you'. ('Lucky them', I thought.) Then a woman stood up and prophesied, 'This is for you, the Lord will make a way for you'.

The shock of planning

My planning education

A few days later I received an offer to study planning at a new technological university, and crucially I did not have to have an interview. I arrived a week later than all the other students. When I first walked in one of the male students said to me, 'this course is not for people like you'. There were only four female students in the year: In contrast, today around 55 per cent of planning students, and 39 per cent of planners, are female (RTPI, 2020).

My tutor told me, in the first term, that he could always tell who was likely to fail, and implied I would fail the course. It was no surprise that they subsequently gave me a third (the lowest degree classification). I was bright, hardworking and keen, but that made no difference. I was not the right type and did not fit into the planning subculture (Greed, 2022, 5–6). The same lecturer kept telling me I was not interested in planning, although I already knew a lot from Mum's battles with the planners. I was determined to become a planner. I felt alienated by the course emphasis upon motor cars, mathematical models, statistics and technology. It was not my kind of planning, with little qualitative, social or urban-design emphasis. I felt excluded, and was seldom picked as a team member in coursework.

I suspect a lot of the real 'teaching' took place in meetings with the tutors in pubs, and being teetotal by then (because of both religious and family reasons) and uneasy in such all-male environments, I was completely left out. Nowadays Muslim women students have similar problems. I was an only one, with few male relatives, from an all-girls school, and Mum kept me fairly sheltered. There were few girls on the course, but some of them seemed worldlier, had boyfriends, brothers, and fathers who were local government planners, and so knew how to fit in. I don't remember anybody black on the planning degree, just a very few African and Indian overseas students in the whole university. I found this odd, being used to an ethnically mixed inner-city community at home and in church life. Ethnic minority individuals now comprise 15 per cent of planning students and 7 per cent of planning professionals.[5]

I found the whole course culture aggressive, adolescent, male and football-mad. Many of the students and lecturers were from the north, and I could not 'place' them class-wise, not being familiar with the accents or ways of the municipal bureaucratic middle classes. One of the male technicians kept laughing at my accent and humiliating me and calling me a 'cockney', although I had never lived in that part of London, whereas others mocked me for being 'too posh'. My accent had originally been 'cut-glass' before I consciously altered it to stop being bullied and attacked at school. I have never got it right since, making me open to attack from all sides. I did not have the right persona to be allowed to have my views on planning policy or to have my experiences of the inner city valued. Whilst the lecturers told us we should plan 'for the working class', I, and millions of others, were not included, as their policy emphasis was upon the male northern industrial working classes. They did not see women office, shop and care workers in London as working-class, or their needs as relevant to planning policy; rather they were seen as 'bourgeois': not as citizens whose employment and transport needs needed to be incorporated into planning policy.

One day a male lecturer running our seminar stated, 'In the future with computers taking over, everyone will only work three days a week and spend the rest of the time playing football.' Innocently I chirped up, 'But a woman's work is never done'. 'Don't be stupid – we're not talking about that', came the reply. So what and who were we talking about? They seemed to hate women, and frequently both staff and students would say (variously in lectures, tutorials and to my face in deserted corridors): women are stupid, children are stupid, housewives are stupid, babies are stupid, women are always moaning, women always have too many children and cause overpopulation, women are parasites, women are selfish, women are lazy, women don't work, *inter alia*. I took it all personally as I was not inoculated against male bravado. These men planners were building a brave new world without even considering women! In fact, they actively planned against including women in the city of the future. This was the beginning of my conversion to 'women and planning', although at the time I thought it was 'just me', as the movement had barely been created yet in the UK. I was doomed to failure for raising the issue of women. Years later, when I attended the university as a visiting professor, one of my old planning lecturers who was still around apologised and admitted that they hadn't understood. By then many of my books were in their university library, and I had given guest lectures and acted as an external PhD examiner in various departments at the university.

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[5] https://www.rtpi.org.uk/blog/2021/july/rtpi-supports-bame-planners-network-survey/

Planning practice

My next obstacle was the year out in the local planning office. It was very difficult as I spent much of the year avoiding being groped, and I never stayed in the office on my own with certain men. I was quite a skinny little girl then, and dressed modestly to fit in with my church culture. I experienced a great deal of what would now be called sexism, aggression and assault. Nearly every day one or other of the men would smile and grab my breasts or touch my bottom. This also happened when I met planners from other local authorities. There was nobody female in authority to whom I could complain. Nowadays this behaviour (and much worse as the year went on) would be seen as criminal incidences of sexual and physical assault, but in those days it was just 'life' or 'my fault' presumably for 'planning whilst female'.

The planners in that office criticised everything I said, wore, thought, did and wrote, and never allowed me to attend the planning policy-making meetings that took place 'upstairs'. I was the only young female planning assistant in that department. The ambiguity of my accent meant that (sometimes on the same day) I had trendy socialist male planners patronising me for being (presumed) working-class and other planners shouting at me for being 'a middle-class cow', telling me my voice was too high-pitched, posh and 'staccato'. I was accused of being bourgeois, selfish and presumed Tory, because I was from Croydon, which they imagined to be an affluent suburban location, when in reality it had been heavily industrialised with deprived inner-city districts (CNHSS, 1979). They laughed at my religion and made rude comments about black Pentecostal men I knew from the church, saying they were 'bigger' (a sexual racist remark). No wonder they did not treat black community representatives with respect (Greed, 2016a). When they asked what my father did, I tried to explain, but they ignored most of what I said and declared, ‘Oh you have a dirty little bicycle repair shop’ (reductive and incorrect). Nor did they recognise the fact that Dad had always supported the case for cycling in the face of increased car ownership and did not respect him as an early environmentalist. Presumably the modern equivalent of these patronising men in their 1970s sports cars would be ‘lycra louts’ on their expensive bicycles.

After the year was out, they said I was not fit to be a planner (nor were they), and recommended that I leave the course. We prayed and prayed back in my house church and eventually the university let me return for the final year.[6] When I left university, I got a job in a pleasant county planning office. It was all going well. I felt much happier, until my boss called me into his office. He sat me down and simply said, ‘You smell.’ I was very shocked but I did suffer from heavy periods and was always washing. By then I was lodging with a Polish Catholic charismatic Christian family with eight children.

I never had any children. I had so many problems as a young teenager and had a lot of troubles subsequently which would fill another book. But I had a very nice husband who was a lawyer, lecturer, ley line hunter, prophet, author and lay preacher. He died of cancer in 2010. We spent much of our time writing, researching and thinking, and being childless gave us the time and space to do so.

Gradually I got into part-time lecturing and then became a full-time lecturer, but to surveying students, not planning students, who were all nearly male too. I was so glad to escape planning practice. I could not take a research route in academia or do a PhD because I had a third class degree. However, I was welcomed at the polytechnic, as there was a much greater emphasis upon practical experience then, and an almost anti-academic attitude existed amongst built-environment professionals (Greed, 2022).

I stayed with the polytechnic, which subsequently became a new university, for my entire career. But I re-created myself every so many years and changed departments several times too. I have lived in the same suburban house for forty years as I could never forgot the fear, the stones, fires and gunshots, which I still associate with Victorian London town houses, even if they are now gentrified. I could not face going back into planning practice. Until now, I have hardly ever mentioned in my publications the harassment I experienced, or issues of class or sex, or my inner-city experiences, because I blocked it all out as it was too painful.

Women and planning: writing my way to change

I was very anti-feminist as a young woman, seeing ‘feminists’ as rich, selfish, suburban American women who were always complaining but had no real problems. I was also wary of English middle-class women because of my experiences at school. Gradually, over the years, following a pathway from studying liberation theology, then neo-Marxism, I eventually came across feminists, but I was relatively ignorant of all aspects of feminism until my late twenties. I met up with other women planners, for example from the early WEB (Women in the Built Environment) network, women from South Bank Polytechnic, and eventually Wendy Davis from WDS (Women's Design Service) and members of the women's design cooperative Matrix. I was also in touch with the pioneering North American Women and Environments group, who made me 'European correspondent' for their magazine. Jackie Underwood at SAUS (the School of Advanced Urban Studies) in Bristol University suggested that I do a PhD, and Beverley Taylor of WEB recommended I do it on women in surveying (not planning), as surveying was now my specialism. Nobody quibbled about the fact I had a third, as by then my reputation demonstrated my knowledge and ability and I had professional qualifications too.

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[6] A house church is a group of people (Christian believers) who meet in a house/home rather than going to a church.

After another series of miracles, and serendipity, Linda McDowell, the famous feminist urban geographer, became my PhD supervisor (at the time she shared an office with the equally famous Doreen Massey (Massey, 1984)), whilst Sandra Acker at Bristol University advised me on professional subcultures. I did my PhD between 1985 and 1990, whilst working full time. (The year 1985 was also critical in destroying my chances of having children, so I concentrated on my PhD instead.) From the late 1970s, I had written unofficial papers on women's planning issues, and we were circulating material amongst the early 'women and planning' network. (There was no Internet, Google, email or www then!)

There was little published UK work on 'women and the built environment'. However, in the USA, there was some early prescient work on 'women and planning' (IJURR, 1978). All the earlier first-wave feminist work on women in cities was forgotten (Greed, 1994b, 70–105). It was not until the mid-1980s that one began to see the first key urban feminist texts being published, for example Linda's paper on the gendered nature of urban space (McDowell, 1983), the work of Matrix (1984), and Dolores Hayden's work in the USA (Hayden, 1984).

My first opportunity to publish my work 'officially' was as a result of going to a conference in the late 1980s on 'feminist ethnographic methodology' organised by Liz Stanley (a planning graduate who became a famous feminist sociologist) at Manchester University. I was one of the few people who got there, due to major thunderstorms and train cancellations. Therefore the organisers were able to give more attention to my work than if some of the 'big names' had been there, and Liz asked me to write a chapter on my research methodology for a book later published by Routledge (Greed, 1990). So the publishers 'knew' me when I subsequently suggested I do a whole book, a monograph on 'women and surveying', which I wrote (on my primitive Amstrad computer) at the same time as writing up my PhD (Greed, 2022). Straight after that, I wrote the book *Women and Planning* (Greed, 1994b). I have never stopped writing ever since as it is my way of 'changing the planning discourse'. One of the best ways to create change, to influence the minds of the next generation of town planning students, was to write textbooks, which I have done throughout the last twenty years (Greed and Johnson, 2014). I always make sure that I include at least one chapter on 'women and planning' (Greed and Johnson, 2014, Chapter 15), so the students see it as 'the most normal thing in the world'.

I also created an introductory series of planning books, including edited editions on urban design (Greed and Roberts, 1998) and published widely in refereed international journals (Greed, 2005). It was essential to get involved in national research and policy-making bodies to create change. I became a member of various CISC (Construction Industry Standing Council) working groups, and a member of their Women in Construction committee. I was active in the RTPI Women and Planning committee and worked with Dory Reeves to produce the RTPI Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (RTPI, 2003).

I continue to contribute to the development of 'women and planning' policy, which increasingly links to environmental objectives, but with an emphasis upon creating sustainable social infrastructure, as well as physical infrastructural improvement. This has been a key theme in the European 'women and planning' movement (Sánchez de Madariaga and Neuman, 2020). I am currently part of the advisory board for an international research project with colleagues from Manchester University funded by the NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) on sustainable sanitation in China.[7]

Subsequently, when I got into the 'public-toilet' phase of my life, I published extensively on loo issues (Greed, 2003; 2016a; 2019). I was increasingly invited to speak at international conferences, and in particular I seem to go down well with the Chinese and the World Toilet Organisation. My toilet research attracted the attention of newspaper and web-based journalists and I have also done quite a lot of radio and television over the years, for example a documentary in 2004 with Carlton Television, entitled 'Loos for London' in the ITV *Metroland* series, which all helped publicise the issues.

Planning for everyday life

I have always considered it important to give a full account, past and present, of the development of 'women and planning'. I sought to make sure that planning was more about 'everyday life' and ordinary people's spatial concerns. My main concern was with the divisive zoning of modern cities, which greatly inconvenienced women in separating 'workplace from home'. This problem was linked to the male-oriented nature of public transport and road networks that prioritised straightforward male commuter journeys from home to work. In contrast, many women trip-chain their journeys, making intermediate stops, dropping children off at child minders and school, on their way from home to work, and adding stopovers to food-shop, and they undertake essential caring work such as ferrying children to the doctor, sports, after-school activities and so forth (Greed, 1994b, 95–104; Sánchez de Madariaga and Neuman, 2020).

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[7] http://www.complexurban.com/project/sassi/

From a personally retrospective class and gender perspective, many such accounts of women's journeys appeared based upon a rather middle-class suburban version of life. I questioned this 'script' and could not apply much of it to my previous inner-city location. Whilst the area was seen as deprived and doomed to demolition, in fact its layout was environmentally sustainable, but that was not appreciated by the planners. Everything was accessible by walking and public transport, and work and home were close by, within my high-density, mixed-use inner-city area. The reason our house was constantly under threat of demolition in the 1960s was because the planners were 'reconstructing' our town around a car-based, decentralised, heavily zoned model of urban form. New urban motorways were needed to bring in predominantly male car commuters from the suburbs to their city centre work locations, in new high-rise office blocks. Our house, business and family (and my life) were in the way. But nowadays car ownership has grown, suburbia has expanded and many inner housing areas have been demolished and the residents moved out to distant housing estates. All social classes of women are now inconvenienced, including me, and suffer the problems created by 'the city of man', described and critiqued by the 'women and planning' movement (Greed, 1994b).

Toilets, gender and biology

Having been involved for years in all sorts of 'women and planning' initiatives, I realised we were not getting very far, as implementation is so difficult. I decided to concentrate on just one key topic, namely public toilets, because of ongoing toilet closure, and the unequal level of provision for women in those that remain. It is a major, but unaccepted, planning issue which affects women's access to and mobility within the city of man (Greed, 2003; Ramster et al., 2018; Greed, 2019). Women's journeys are constrained by 'the bladder's leash' (Kitchen and Law, 2001). Yet toilet provision is still deemed *ultra vires* (not part of the planners' legal remit).

Sanitary engineers and toilet designers are still mainly men and have little idea of women's 'different' toilet design needs and quantitative requirements. In many buildings, such as theatres and railway stations, women still have to queue for the loo, because on average women have around half the level of provision as men. Even if the floor space is equal in the Ladies and the Gents, men get far more places to pee, because you can fit in a whole row of urinals in the space taken up by a couple of cubicles.

British Standard BS6465, Part 1 (BSI, 2006), for many years endorsed this inequality and it was not until a few women began to get onto this committee in the last twenty years (including Michelle Barkley, Susan Cunningham, Mary Bickley, Joanne Bichard and myself) that levels of provision improved. But these standards only apply to new facilities and few are being built. The still extant 1937 Public Health Act gives local authorities permissive powers to provide toilets (if they choose), but there is no compulsory, mandatory requirement to do so.

But all our toilet efforts were overtaken by new trends, which have overwhelmed many other parts of the feminist agenda too. Within second-wave feminism, gender was seen as a straightforward male/female binary. Likewise, local authorities provided separate Ladies and Gents toilets. But in this age of diversity and inclusion, gender has become a continuum. Gender identity and biological physicality have become detached from each other. In eagerness to accommodate ‘everyone’, including non-binary people, women’s rights and separate spaces and toilets are often forfeited. This has resulted in the introduction of gender-neutral toilets (GNTs). Whilst we understand that a small section of the population requires changes to toilet provision, this should be in addition to, and not at the expense of, women’s already limited toilet provision. The worst type of GNT is where the label on the door is changed from ‘Ladies’ to ‘Toilets for All’, with absolutely no alteration to the design, privacy or numbers of cubicles available, as happened at the Barbican Arts Centre (Ramster et al., 2018). This was discriminatory, as whilst men can use the ladies’ cubicles, biological women cannot use male urinals. Providing self-contained, purpose-built individual GNT cubicles is a better solution, but there is little money for new toilet construction. Rather more and better toilet provision for women (51 per cent of the population) should be the first priority.

Whilst GNTs were first intended to accommodate trans and non-binary toilet users, in fact any and all men can use desegregated toilets. Many women are extremely uncomfortable with this situation because of concerns about privacy, modesty, hygiene, safety and dealing with intimate biological functions in mixed facilities, including menstruation, pregnancy, incontinence, miscarriage and menopause. Whilst some argue that separate toilet cubicles give privacy, many women are uneasy queuing for the toilet together with men, being stared at, sharing washing facilities and losing one of the few safe refuges in the city of man (Ramster et al., 2018; Greed, 2019).

Toilet provision for women is both a human rights issue and a town planning manner. This has become the subject of ongoing legal battles. Under the 2010 Equality Act, gender is a protected category and single-sex services and facilities (toilets) are required as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim such as privacy and safety in women’s toilets, without discriminating against other groups. But toilet desegregation continues, and, like with much town planning policy, women’s needs and experiences appear invisible to the decision makers.

The specific practical needs of women (and feminism itself) have, arguably, become minimalised and marginalised within the current disembodied, abstruse and culturally abstract 'gender identity agenda' (Fraser, 2020). The wheel has gone full circle. At the beginning of my planning career, women's spatial needs were ignored. It took years to get 'women and planning' issues recognised as valid concerns within planning practice and policy making. At the end of my career, we are fighting, again, to re-establish recognition of women's 'different' biological and spatial requirements.

If a more qualitative, ethnographic, research approach were used, then women's different bodily and material requirements would soon be revealed as relevant to planning. For example, in our previous research on public toilet needs, individual open-ended qualitative interviews, personal recollections and focus groups were used, to build composite 'toilet personas' and 'cameos' representative of different user group needs (Greed, 2019, 913). Discussions with women about their bodily and urban spatial experiences would yield quite a different set of issues to inform planning policy. For too long planners have based their policies on disembodied generalisations, abstractions and male-dominated assumptions and stereotypes, which have rendered women's experiences and material realities invisible, be that in relation to the perceived (male) inner-city 'criminal area' or problem-free images of desegregated toilets in which women's concerns are dismissed.

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