

Report on research of gender equality and design- DIG Equality

This has been prepared as an outline research document for the DIG equality research forum by Lorraine Farrelly University of Portsmouth lorraine.farrelly@port.ac.uk with research assistant Claire Perera.

The research undertaken in this report has been separated into categories which help to identify the area/issue researched and give clear direction to access information available. These categories are as follows:

1. Historical context of women in design
2. Examples of design products or environments that have affected the lives of women and gender equality
3. Forums, Support networks and Organisational bodies tackling issues of gender inequality
4. Gender issues which can affect architectural design, and running a practice. (Successful case studies). Gender issues in the workplace with a focus on architecture

All material has been correctly sourced and referenced. It is intended that it will be possible to use this body of research as a base from which to further the DIG equality study.

1 . Historical context of women in design

Throughout history women have been deeply involved in design of objects and spaces. Prevailing attitudes towards the perceived nature and capabilities of women have changed thorough out time. These attitudes may have affected the esteem in which women hold themselves and the value of their work.

“A woman’s touch” by Isabelle Anscombe discusses the role of women in design form 1860 to the present day. Below I have extracted key points to highlight.

“Woman’s place- particularly middle-class woman’s place – has traditionally been held in the home. A part of that notion is the belief that the light indefinable touch of a woman’s hand can transform even the barest room into a home... only aristocratic women, previous centuries could claim the prerogative of exercising their own taste” pg 166

Elsie de Wolfe and Surie Maugham first introduced and liberalised the belief that an interior could provide a means of self expression for women.

“in the nineteenth century women were largely dependent on working under the aegis of father, brother or husband and their work subsumed within the artistic personality of their

partner. It is also notable that the majority of women were in their mid-forties or older before they had both the confidence and the freedom from family life to strike out on their own.”p12

Glasgow school of arts

“Although Margret and Frances had opened a workshop together in 1980’s, on marrying both had then collaborated with their husbands and, even if a market had existed for their work, the ideological pressures on women not to work independently were too great for them to consider this course again, despite their economic difficulties. For Margret especially, Charles was too well known in Glasgow for her to find independent work without evoking the stigma that she was supporting her husband” p61

1920’s

“The modern woman wanted furniture she could move regularly herself as she cleaned the house with her new Hoover. Curtains and rugs could be in lighter colours and even less durable materials, as the days of beating out the dust had past.”p167

Bauhaus

It is mentioned that Helene Nonne- Schmidt wrote in an article entitle “Woman’s Place at the Bauhaus” :

“The artistically active woman applies herself most often and most successfully to work in a two dimensional plane. This observation can be explained by her lack of spatial imagination characteristic of men”

Helenes views are interesting as they mention the limitation of the capabilities of women. This is mentioned also in the way that society views certain spheres to be gendered. For example nature is thought to be feminine and culture to be masculine.

“fabrics (first pioneered by the Bauhaus weaving workshop) using synthetic fibre which could be washed, which were light and easy to handle, or which were less susceptible to dust” p167

“The women students were free to choose any of the workshops, but in fact they overwhelmingly opted for textiles.... The women themselves were aware of the irony of the fact that given complete freedom of choice they gravitated towards a traditionally female field of activity”

Working with Le Corbusier

Charlotte Perriand on chaise lounge designed by herself and Le Corbusier 1928-29

“I would work on the elaboration of a general project with the office, then I took responsibility for doing the equipment. It was necessary to be on site, to watch the execution down to the smallest details.”.. It is noted by the author that “ These famous chairs, which are still produced, are now described as designed solely by Le Corbusier, and Charlotte Perriand, who “took responsibility for doing the equipment”, is almost entirely forgotten”.

1940's and 1950's

"The years after the First World war also saw the beginning of dramatic changes in household technology. It was women who incorporated a practical knowledge of the needs of the housewife or servant into the designs for rugs, furniture, curtain and upholstery fabrics or tableware. Equally it was women who called for architects to consider such amenities as communal kitchens or wash-houses, despite the fact that even the most avant-garde of male architects continued to design for the nuclear family." p15

" In recognition of women's supposed search for perfection, new technologies in kitchen equipment, cleaning agents, easy care fabrics and the like were developed especially for them in unprecedented quantities. In advertisements, manufacturers took on the role of domestic science expert..... despite the new gadgets, liquids and powders the proud homemaker's work was never done." p189

Beginnings of formal architectural education for women;

Extract from Essay in Desiring Practices by Pual Finch, entitled "Prisoner of Gender or the equality of uncertainty";

"Indeed the revolt against the poor conditions and lack of training which led to the foundation of the Architectural Association in 1847 (and ultimately to the establishment of formal architectural education) was entirely based on male membership. It was only in 1893 that the election of a woman, or rather two women, was proposed at the AA, a Miss Ethel and a Miss B A Charles. A special meeting was held, as Sir John Summerson noted in his 1947 history of the AA, to discuss the "threatened invasion" of a hitherto exclusively male stronghold. The applications were rejected by a two-to-one majority, despite the support of luminaries such as Sir Banister Flecher. (Ethel Charles went on to become the RIBA's first associate and delivered an AA lecture in 1920 entitled "Plea for Women Practising Architects". The AA finally admitted women in 1920, though it was another fifty years until they elected

2. Examples of design products or environments that have affected the lives of women and gender equality;

(Also those in which women have been influential in effecting)

Bicycle- Given as an example in DIG equality

Washing machine & Hoover- Allowed household cleaning to be less laborious. These technologies gave more free time to housewives

Breast pump- Allows women to express milk. In certain circumstances this can allow men and women to share responsibility in feeding and can allow opportunities for fathers to bond with babies.

Rape alarms- Allows woman to disorientate any potential attacker and alert passersby. It offers a certain peace of mind to women who may have to walk alone in vulnerable situations.

Designed sex toys for the high street- commercialisation and mainstreaming of sexual behaviour into everyday culture.

Gaming consoles such as Wii and Nintendo DS- marketed to be more inclusive to appeal to a wider spectrum of society. See appendix for details of book gender inclusive gaming design

Inclusion of parent and child spaces in car parks is now standard and allows greater mobility to young parents.

Spaces for prams and storage on buses. This allows mobility which much greater ease for both those carrying luggage shopping or have a pram.

Integrated car seats and pram design. Allow greater ease and mobility between modes of transport while not compromising on safety.

Work place crèche. An Example of this is University of Portsmouth nursery which allows young mothers to return to work and student to return to education without heavy financial burdens of childcare.

3. Forums, Support networks and Organisational bodies tackling issues of gender inequality

RIBA and AFC

RIBA Equal opportunities policy is guided and co-ordinated by "Architects For Change". This is an umbrella organisation acting from within the RIBA set up in 2000. "Beyond the RIBA , AFC has links with other Construction Industry organisations, such as CIC, CIB, CITB, along with Women's Manual Trades and other professional associations to share experience and avoid duplication." Architects for change works to promote equality for all in terms of race, gender, disability it recognises the value and richness that people from different background can bring to the profession. Within 5 years they seek to address education and the profession. In regards to education the aim is, "To encourage a more representative entry of women and ethnic minorities in education, reduce their dropout rates and support recognition of diversity in architectural education. Additionally in terms of the profession they seek "equal pay and career progression opportunities for women and ethnic minority architects. Fair working conditions and pay for students. To demonstrate that family friendly working and humane hours can make business sense."

Since its foundation in 2000 the AFC has undertaken the following actions.

Promoted and advised on the development of the RIBA Policies on Equal Opportunities, Good Employment practice and Access and Inclusion policies.

Secured sponsorship from RIBA and CABE for “DiverseCity Architects”(see appendix 1), a travelling exhibition to show case work of women architects and minority led practices and establish UK and international links on equality and diversity issues and the practice of architecture

Undertaken research to investigate issues and guide service development including RIBA’s own “Why do women leave architecture?” Study with the University of West England. (see appendix 2)

Pioneered a model for “career taster” workshops to inform girls and school students from minority ethnic backgrounds considering careers in architecture.

Developed external partnerships to produce guidance material, notably with the Centre for Education in the Built Environment (CEBE) on supporting student diversity.

It is interesting to note that gender issues and particularly issues affecting women in architecture have been tackled by the RIBA under the same group heading as for ethnic minority architects despite many differences in the issues faced.

RIBA TALK ABOUT RESPONSE TO MAIN REASONS WHY WOMEN LEAVE ARCHITECTURE

Women@work- with British council and Women In Architecture

This was a British council initiative to link female professionals in the UK with their counterparts in North Africa and the Middle East. Women In Architecture were chosen by the British council to participate in the exchange. Outcomes of the exchange included a commitment to e- networking and mentoring. There has been interest in developing future possible joint projects and professional exchanges. See appendix for full details.

WIA - www.diversecity-architects.com/WIA/wia.htm

Women in architecture- Description about group taken from website:

“Women In Architecture was founded in 1999, springing out of the former Women's Architecture Group which had been in existence since 1985.

There are particular issues faced by women architects within the profession and Women In Architecture aims to provide a forum for people to meet, share experiences and jointly lobby for better conditions and opportunities for women. We aim to raise the profile of women within the profession and represent their views.

WIA aims to increase the number of practicing women architects. The reality is that women are still only 13% of the practicing architectural work force despite student academia being over 35%. We are rarely seen on building sites and there are not enough women at director level, particularly in large commercial firms, where we could definitely have a more positive influence. There are not enough role models in our business to encourage others to follow. WIA has been instrumental in commissioning the recent research to find out 'Why Women Leave Architecture', which will provide the springboard for addressing these issues.

If we encourage more women to take up architecture and stay there, then there is a chance that we can improve our working environment and therefore have a more direct impact on our built environment by using and combining complimentary skills and sharing the responsibility of design in a more natural, democratic and representative way.

- Career taster days - to encourage schoolgirls into the profession
- Networking lunches with influential keynote speakers
- Working together with Architects For Change with exhibitions and seminars
- Lobbying the Government, RIBA and the Education system
- Liaising with other construction industry equal opportunity bodies including Construction Industry Council, Women In Property, International Associations of Women In Architecture”

DiverseCity & BD -

WIA with CABE were involved with BD's 50/50 issue campaign for more women in architecture. The issue featured twelve women who were making their mark and presented them as role models for other women. Additionally they put forward a women friendly working charter which they wanted 250 practices to sign up and commit to. The Charter had the backing of various organisations including the Department for trade and industry. The main points of the charter are as follows:

1. To recruit, promote and pay according to experience and ability alone
2. To set out any maternity and paternity rights in a written contract for every worker and strive to go beyond the statutory minimum.
3. To offer flexible working to all employees and retraining for returning parents
4. To challenge the long hours culture and monitor working time.
5. To appoint a practice champion to promote and monitor the charter

By the end of the three month magazine campaign BD had attracted over 250 signatures and they promised to revisit the practices to ensure their good intentions are put into practice.

CEBE- Centre for Education in the Built Environment-SIG

http://www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/learning/sig/equality_arch/index.php

The Sig was set up support student diversity in architectural education. Sig action and outcomes include the following:

“ - a new collaboration of academics researchers and diversity specialists

-a diversity symposium for teachers of architecture, London Metropolitan University 21st Oct 2005

- a briefing guide “supporting student diversity in UK schools of architecture” to be published by CEBE in spring 2006

- information, contacts and resources published on the CEBE website.”

SIG have reviewed relevant reviews on both gender and ethnic minority inclusion. In 2004 they identified the following issues,

“ – a lack of diversity in teaching and learning methods; in learning resources and in role models, contributes to the problems of retention and erosion amongst women and BME architecture students in the UK

-Traditional studio teaching and learning cultures, and methods of design criticism, are failing to address the learning needs of the diverse range of students who now study architecture in UK universities.”

The SIG’s operational base has been provided by the RIBA Equality Forum “Architects for Change” The SIG programme has also included seminars and visits to schools of architecture by individual members.

CABE , The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment– www.cabe.org.uk

On their website CABE state that “The built environment can contribute to a more equal, inclusive and cohesive society if places, facilities and neighbourhoods are designed to be accessible and inclusive for all.” The organisation sets out its own standards, targets and methods in various booklets including a 3 year action plan on statutory equality responsibilities and on inclusive design. In addition to this they have link to other related networks focused on gender such as gendersite and women’s design service.

Cabe are committed to encouraging designers be working in an inclusive way from the early stages of a project. They have 5 Principles of inclusive design which are set out as following in the CABE booklet entitled Principles of Inclusive Design. The 5 principles are as follows:

Inclusive – So everyone can use them safely, easily and with dignity

Responsive- taking account of what people say they need and want.

Flexible -so different people can use them in different ways.

Convenient- so everyone can use them without too much effort or separation

Accommodating for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances

Welcoming - with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people.

Realistic- Offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all.

CABE also booklets to guide inclusive design including space shapers which provide information of community workshops and a booklet entitled inclusion by design, equality, diversity and the built environment. This booklet talks in detail about the experience of space by minority or underrepresented groups. As an example the following points are mentioned as marker of inclusive housing design,

1. "homes that are designed with wide hallways can accommodate baby buggies, teenagers' bikes, crutches, hikers' equipment, children's toys and a Zimmer frame ensuring they are practical for or stages of life."
2. " housing that is designed so that windows overlook well- connected streets helps to create public spaces where vulnerable people feel safer." Pg 17

CABE offers practical advice on design situations and provides useful case studies and links to other organisation.

Women's Design Service – www.wds.org.uk

The mission of the women's design service below, as outlined on their website:

"WDS believes that the diverse communities of women who live in towns and cities should enjoy a quality environment that is well designed, accessible, environmentally sustainable, affordable and safe, and to that end we seek to work with women to improve the urban environment. We work with women and with statutory, voluntary and academic organisations to incorporate women's needs into the design of buildings, transport systems and open spaces. Women's Design Service is a unique resource for consultancy, training, information, advice and research on issues related to women and the design of urban environments." <http://www.wds.org.uk/> 22.08

The womens design service works to ensure that the design of the built environment reflects the needs and aspirations of women. For full list of the organisations vision and aims See appendix 3

Opinion on gender inclusion in design from Wendy Davis from women's design service taken from CABE booklet:

“So long as women earn on average half of what men do, form the majority of carers for elderly relations and still do most of the housework and shopping, there is still a whole range of issues related to planning, transport, urban design, and housing provision which will impact differently on the sexes. So long as women continue to be the victims of sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape they will have a radically different experience of what constitutes safety in homes, town and public spaces. Women live longer than men, which has consequences for poverty in old age, disability and frailty, loneliness and isolation. This in turn has implications for the design of lifetime homes and neighbourhoods”- www.wds.org 11.

Service provision

The women’s design service offers consultancy, training, research, advice and a library material related to design gender and planning.

Examples of Projects –Current Past and potential

Women’s Design Groups in London- “WDF’s include both women who are professionally involved in planning and the built environment, and women from the community who have an interest in becoming more knowledgeable and engaged with issues affecting their neighbourhoods” http://www.wds.org.uk/www/projects_wdgs.htm 22.34

Past projects include

“Making Safer Places

A three year pilot project run by the Women's Design Service which involved carrying out Women's Safety Audit Training with groups of local women to explore how the built environment impacts upon women's perceptions of safety. The project was delivered in the cities of Manchester, Bristol and London by involving local women in auditing their area and developing recommendations for improving their locality in relation to safety.

Women's Safety in Parks

Working in partnership with Anne Thorne Architects this project aimed to get local women involved in shaping the future of London's public parks and help make them safer for women. The project was commissioned by the Greater London Authority.

Women's Neighbourhood Volunteering Project (WNVP)

A partnership project between Women's Design Service and Women's Resource Centre to improve women's volunteering in three London boroughs: Tower Hamlets, Newham and Haringey.

Planning Safer Places

A Women's Design Service project delivering safety audit training to groups of women in the London boroughs of Camden and Southwark and funded by the Bridge House Jubilee Fund.

Cycling for Women

A Women's Design Service action research project based in London finding out why more men cycle than women. A good practice CD ROM has been produced as a result of the research.

Disability and Regeneration

A research project into the role of disabled women in local regeneration. This project was managed and supported by Women's Design Service, Greater London Action on Disability and the London Regeneration Network."

The women's design service provides a straightforward user friendly website. It has relevant publications as well as discussion forums and links to relevant useful websites such as London women & planning forum and women's resource centre.

Gender site – www.gendersite.org

Gendersite- "website that brings together resources on gender and the built environment"

This was developed by Women's design service working in Partnership with Queen Mary University of London to publish an online resource for issues of gender and construction. The project was funded by UCL led UrbanBuzz. The database is intended to allow spread of information from academia to professionals, planners and students.

Case studies

The case studies shown on the website demonstrate interest in gender issues affecting design both nationally and internationally. Below are two examples of case studies in the uk:

Oxfam's work at Govan, uk

This project uses gender analysis as a tool to examine how urban regeneration money could be spent on improving and developing green areas in Greater Govan (Glasgow) for women's benefit. See appendix article for full details.

Girli Concrete is one, provocatively-named, recent manifestation of this - a product developed by a two-woman team based at the University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland: Ruth Morrow, an architect, and Trish Belford, a textile designer. See image below
See appendix for full article



Image above showing Girli concrete

GDUS- www.raliboku.ac.at/gdus.html

GDUS is a Europe wide group of scholars practitioners and planner who have come together to form a network for discussion of issues of gender, diversity and urban sustainability.

The objectives of the group as follow as taken from the above website:

- **“establishing and expanding a network** of people actively involved in “Gender, Diversity and Urban Sustainability”
- **presenting studies** performed in various European countries on initiatives against gender discrimination in spatial policies regarding public space, housing, mobility and environmental sustainability.
- **evaluating existing practices** and highlighting key factors that can be reproduced in other sites.
- **exchanging this knowledge** with practitioners, policy makers and citizens groups.
- **constructing a theoretical framework** that allows integration of gender-insights into spatial planning systems and theory.
- **promoting gender and diversity issues in spatial development** at all levels of policy making: from EU level (ESDP, SDS, research and development Programs) to regional, urban and local level.”

Images of areas involved. See appendix for more details of network.



London women and planning forum- <http://www.lwppf.org.ukkk/index.htm>

Background and role of group taken from homepage of website:

“The London Women and Planning Forum is an information network for planning officers, architects, academics, students and community and voluntary organisations involved with urban environment and gender equality issues. It aims to change and improve the position of women in relation to planning issues; to provide a productive opportunity to share experiences of problems and difficulties encountered by women in the field; and to promote feminist thinking in planning organisations and urban studies. The Forum meets three times throughout the year to discuss contemporary urban issues from a gender perspective.”

Recent talks have discussed location of red light district within the city, women and gardens and equality impact assessments for public transport schemes. The steering group behind LWPF consists of women from various universities including Queen Mary, along with the women’s design service.

Taking Place - <http://www.takingplace.org.uk/>

Taking space was set up in 2000 by a group of 7 artists and architects as an ongoing space discussion. The group is interested in questions of gender and spatial practice and explore new directions for change.

“Our working method is process based and open ended and depends on site research and exchange with users”

Currently the group are involved in a project entitled “The other side of waiting” which is concerned with creating six artworks in the mother and baby unit in Homerton hospital. See appendix for detail. The group are interested in the maternity space as a gendered space and they work with staff, patients and expectant fathers on exploring the experience of waiting and what happened when waiting is valued.

Aside from this project the group are involved in workshop days and events such as the 3 day feminist school of architecture held at the University of Sheffield in Sept 2002.

4. Gender issues which can affect architectural design and running a practice. (Successful case studies). Gender issues in the workplace with a focus on architecture.

- EU directives and implications on equality
- Successful female role models including 2008 female president of RIBA
- Perception of space and gender of space
- Female led practices eg muf, Sarah Wrigglesworth
- News articles

Extract from Brenda Vales essay in desiring practices;

“That women should have equality with men is undisputable. The problem arises when women want to behave as men, thereby jettisoning all the cultural traditions of what it means to be female. The skills and knowledge that rest with women in the domestic sphere are dismissed as being of no value, for they have no association with men and their goal centred approach . It is after all the goal centred approach that has produced the environmental problems of the industrialised world. However as an architecture that is environmentally responsible has to belong to its locality, it has to work with the elemental forces that surround it , it has to be self effacing. The hope is that women will realise they are, at present the best people to understand this need, providing they are prepared to retain current female cultural tradition.”- p272