Women's safety: A consideration of the role of planning through the Capability Model

Karen Horwood and Charlotte Morphet, Leeds Beckett University

Abstract

This paper examines the role of planning in addressing concerns about safety for women. The paper recognises that safety has once again become a matter of public interest in the UK. We examine the ways in which safety has been included within the UK women and planning movement in the past, and the ways it is being articulated today. We argue that a narrow focus on safety is problematic and fails to engage with the breadth of the women and planning movement. We utilise Sen's (1992) Capability Model to propose ways in which a focus on safety be improved through a more holistic engagement with the Women and Planning movement's insights. We conclude that doing so will address many of the *wicked issues* planners seek to respond to.

Keywords

Women and planning; feminism; women's safety; capability model

Introduction

In 2022 the UK government consulted on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England. Unusually, within this was included a question which spoke to the issues raised by the women and planning movement:

> *"Do you think that the government should bring forward proposals to update the Framework as part of next year's wider review to place more emphasis on making sure that women, girls and other vulnerable groups feel safe in our public spaces, including for example policies on lighting/street lighting?" (DLUHC, 2022)*

This consultation happened at time when issues of women's safety were once again prominent in the UK following high-profile murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa (alongside many less high-profile murders of women) during the COVID-19 lockdown. This resulted in a national conversation about the safety of women in public spaces alongside a government strategy and funding response (Stoeckl and Quigg, 2021).

The safety of women from male violence has always been a key concern of the feminist movement (Mackay, 2015). For example, the Reclaim the Night movement highlighted the right of women to

move around urban space without fearing violence (Mackay, 2015). Feminist analysis has also drawn attention to the issue of male violence against women in private space for example domestic violence (Smith Stover, 2005). Feminist activism has included initiatives to improve women's safety such as women's refuges, changes to the law and calls for changing the urban environment to make it safer (Poggi and Coornaert, 1974).

However, feminist activism has always extended beyond this raising other issues such as equal pay, abortion rights, child-care and so on. The Women Liberation Movement conferences from 1970-1978 in the UK made seven demands, with only one focused on the safety of women which was the last to be added in 1978 (Sisterhood and After Research Team, 2013). This multiplicity of demands has been echoed in the women and planning movement, with the identification of issues and solutions specific to planning theory and practice (Greed, 1994; Little, 1994; Reeves, 2005). These cover multiple aspects of women's experiences of our towns and cities. In this paper we are focusing on the women and planning movement as a distinct moment within planning where the lack representation of women in the profession, and the extent to which women's needs were met in practice, came into question. This started in Australia and the USA in the 1970s, and within the UK in the 1980s (Gauger, 2022; Morphet and Nisancioglu, 2021). This continues to the current day with examples from across the world (Dutton et al, 2022)

The focus of the NPPF consultation on safety rather than the other demands of the women and planning movement reflects a broader trend we have observed. We have been researching women and planning for the past five years and in this time, there has been building interest within the profession with a notable increase in speaking invites. This is also reflected in the planning classroom with students focusing on this area in their dissertations both at our University and elsewhere. However, within this we have also observed a focus on issues of safety. For example, requests to talk about women and planning are often framed around addressing women's safety rather than broader women and planning concerns, and student dissertations often focus on safety. This led us to ask to ask questions as to why this is the case, whether it matters, and (if it does) what can be done to remedy this to ensure that the breadth of the work on women and planning is engaged with.

This observation has also been noted in practice:

> *"Women's issues if they get addressed at all generally focus on safety and the perception of safety in cities (Divine and Bicquelet-Lock, 2021, p. 13)*

This shift towards a focus on safety rather than the broader concerns of the women and planning movement is a potential issue of concern, as we will discuss further in this paper. However, this increase in interest also presents an opportunity. If questions of how women's safety can be improved through a planning response resonate with policy makers and decision makers, there is perhaps a moment where we can attempt to broaden the conversation to include more of the demands made by the women and planning movement. Policy frames are created through the process of defining an issue and as a result the potential solutions (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016; Yanow, 2000). This is a dynamic and contingent process that responds to the discursive political context in which is exists (Yanow, 2007). In this paper, using lessons learnt from the UK through the examination of planning policy, we explore how a broader range of issues raised by the women and planning movement can be bought into the policy frame we are observing.

The aim of this paper is to address how the current narrower focus on how planners can respond to calls for greater safety for women can be expanded to a broader understanding of how women's safety intersects with the wider demands of the women and planning movement. To do this, we explore the ways in which safety has been engaged with in the past by the women and planning movement and now planning policy in the UK. We then draw on Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1992) along with feminist articulations of it (Nussbaum, 1999; Robeyns, 2003) as a way of broadening what is means to be safe, and explore how this can bring the wider concerns of the women and planning movement to an audience of decision makers interested in safety.

Research design

The research design adopted for this paper was shaped by our own positionality as insiders, as researchers and activists in the women and planning movement. Charlotte is the co-founder of Women in Planning, a network that champions gender equality in the planning industry (Women in Planning, 2018). Karen was the convenor of the Women and Planning conference 2019 and founder of the Women and Planning Research Centre hosted at Leeds Beckett University. Through this work we are networked in with other people working in this field, and participants in and convenors of Women and Planning activity in both academic and practice. As such we are observing the trends and shifts discussed in this paper from inside, and are advocates for the activities promoted.

To better explicate the trends that we have been observing in academia and practice we undertook a content analysis of materials. Firstly, we collected historical materials from women and planning activity since the 1980s onwards. We identified key documents and followed up references within these to other documents to collect a comprehensive representation of the materials produced at the time. The authors are in communication with several of the women who led this work at this

point in time so were able to request any missing documents direct from the authors and we are grateful to the women who responded to our requests. We also contacted the RTPI for documents they held and are also grateful to the work they undertook to access documents in their archives.

As we have been working in this field for several years, we have a comprehensive database of documents that we have seen published more recently, so were able to access this for more recent items. These are materials we have seen published, promoted on social media and shared through networks. We are also indebted to the academics, practitioners and students who share their work by contacting us through Women in Planning, or the Women and Planning Research Centre.

In this paper we draw on the documents that best explicate our conceptualisation of the trends we are observing as case studies. These are selected as examples that best illustrate our conceptualisation (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This is not designed to be exhaustive, but rather give tangible examples of what we are seeing. The documents selected have been prominent in recent conversations within the women and planning movement, and we have observed discussion of them in practice, academia and the classroom. They are the most recent examples of practice in the UK, where there a limited examples of the application of these ideas. They give useful examples of the issues that we are raising in the paper, and have been selected because the give the most insight for the phenomena we are discussing in the paper (Flyvjerg, 2006).

Following content analysis we drew upon Sen's capability model as an analytical frame to explore the ways in which planning activity could better connect the wider aims of the women and planning movement and the focus on safety. The model provided us with a way of exploring how the empirical data would be theorised to suggest ways forward to broadening the focus on safety. Amartya Sen's (1992) Capability Approach, or the Capability Model provides a way of conceptualising the well-being and freedom of individuals. It uses functionings and capabilities as a way of defining both what people can do and achieve, and notably the extent to which they are able to do and achieve these things. Within a planning context functionings are the things people can do, for example access the opportunities the urban environment has to offer such as good quality housing, secure employment and access to services. However, crucially capabilities are the extent to which individuals are able to access these opportunities; capability includes the ability to do something with the addition of the opportunity to do something (Blecic et al, 2013). For example, the provision of a park provides a place people can access. However, the extent to which this is accessible depends upon the individual's own ability to access that space, alongside the ways in which opportunities are given or restricted. For women (and others), this might include the extent to which that park feels safe and whether it is accessible from home through available transport

options. Through this we can see how women's capabilities can be restricted by a poorly designed built environment.

Considering this within a women and planning context, the Capabilities Model provides a way of examining the extent to which women are able to access the opportunities the built environment offers, taking us beyond simply seeing what is available in the city to better understand the extent to which these things are practically available to women. Through this model, the barriers identified by the women and planning movement previously can be conceptualised as ways in which women's capabilities are hindered.

The application of Sen's capability model to feminist issues is not without precedence; it has been drawn upon by feminist scholars, arguing for the capabilities approach to address a range of feminist questions and concerns (Nussbaum, 1999; Robeyns, 2003). Nussbaum (1999) identifies that the capabilities approach can be used to better understand what women can do and what they can be. Through this approach we can better understand the barriers that women experience throughout their lives including those because of a built environment that is not planned with her needs in mind. Nussbam (1999) advocates for this approach to emphasises women's choices rather than adopting a more paternalist approach. Through this lens the role of society, and in this instance, planning becomes to provide the external conditions that enable women's capabilities.

Pyles (2008) makes direct connection between the capability approach and women's safety. She identifies the ways in which interventions to combat violence against women can fail to address the structural issues that are also crucial to understanding the matter at hand and providing targeted action. For example, there can be a lack of understanding of the ways in which housing circumstances contribute to whether a woman is able to escape a violent relationship, focusing instead on her own personal actions. This shifts responsibility onto the woman herself rather than the external factors that limit her capabilities. Through use of the Capability Model, we can better identify that the lack of provision of accessible housing can be a barrier to a woman's capability to act. Where a woman needs to leave existing housing, this barrier has a material impact on her safety.

Safety within the Women and Planning movement: the past

The women and planning movement was concerned with both the substantive and descriptive representation of women in planning (Horwood et al., 2022). Descriptive representation is concerned with the extent to which women are represented within the profession through working as planners at all levels, whilst substantive representation focuses on the ways in which the needs of women are met through planning activity (Horwood et al, 2022). Both the movement and broader

discussions on how planning impacts women and women's position within the profession started in America and Australia in the 1970s (Gauger, 2022; Morphet and Nisancioglu, 2021). Although Royal Town Planning Institute started debating issues of gender in the 1970s, the movement gained momentum in the UK in the 1980s (Morphet and Nisancioglu, 2021; Reeves, 1996).

The challenges women faced were twofold: women's standing in the planning profession and other allied professions (e.g. architecture and surveying) and women using the built environment (Horwood et al., 2022). The discussion on women and planning focused on inclusive access to services, jobs, housing and public transport; and the ability for women citizens to be part of decision-making in their neighbourhood (RTPI, 1995; Reeves, 1996; Greed et al., 2003). Within this, feelings and perceptions of personal safety are highlighted as issues that need addressing.

From the 1980s to the mid-2000s, Women and Planning work focused on quality of life and how planning impacts this, especially for women (Reeves, 1996). Most planners worked in the public sector, and therefore, most of the work happening on Women and Planning happened in this sector with support from the third sector (MATRIX and Women's Design Service). Little (1994, 262) identified four main policy themes that the women and planning work focused on in the public sector– employment, housing, transport, and childcare. The RTPI's Planning Advice Note 12 Planning for Women focused on three areas: accessibility, design, and mobility (Reeves, 1996, 27) and as Reeves (1996, 27) states:

> *"The PAN seeks to recognise the richness of women's lives" (Reeves, 1996, p. 27)*

For Greed (1996), the main focus was on the separation of different uses (e.g. housing and employment) and how this impacts women. The RTPI's Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit focuses on access to housing, employment, facilities, and transport, living conditions and health and how these all interrelate (Greed et al., 2003). It also considers power relations and women's role in decision-making processes (both professionally and in the communities affected by planning) and how the impacts of climate change can disproportionately affect women (Greed et al., 2003). The framework for the Toolkit was the Swedish 3R – representation, resources, and reality (Greed et al., 2003).

The issues the women and planning movement covered were broad. The broadness reflects the wider-ranging impact planning has on women. As Greed et al.: (2003, 5) put it:

> *"Places shape the way we live our lives, the opportunities we have to get a paid*
> *job, how easy it is to get to school or the hospital and keep in touch with friends*
> *and relatives". (Greed et al., 2003, p. 5)*

The movement was focused on using planning to improve the ability of women to meet their needs and have a good quality of life, with personal safety being an important thread to this but personal safety did not define the movement.

Safety was one of the strands of the women and planning movement, with the discussion focused on the perception of feeling unsafe and how that disproportionately impacts women and how women moderate their behaviour to feel safe, whether taking a different route home or going out less (Trench et al.,1992). The focus is on either woman to change their behaviours; or planners moral obligation to '…create the preconditions for a safer environment… ' (Trench et al., 1992, p. 281), rather than resolving wider structural and cultural issues of patriarchy in society that ultimately lead to women's perceptions of being unsafe in the public space (Trench et al., 1992). The connection between women's feelings of safety and their consequent ability to access places and spaces freely was emphasised. The influence of safety on the women and planning movement comes from discussions within and outside the movement. These include government-funded safety programs and guidance, as well as discussions around the role of urban design in creating safer places (Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1996).

In recalling the women and planning movement of the 1970s, Morphet and Nisancioglu (2021) note the inclusion of personal safety and how it impacts women moving around the built environment. In the 1980s, the discussion incorporated safety in using public transport and safety in public spaces. Reeves (2022) reflects in 1986 that, Suzy Lamplugh increased the focus on safety for women working in property and built environment related professions. Suzy Lamplugh was an estate agent who went missing when she visited a property and was later found dead (Reeves, 2022). The event had direct impact on professional practice, advice after this incident was women should not undertake site visits alone, and should always go in a pair as a safety precaution.

Much of the women and planning work in government seemed to focus on safety (Little, 1994). From Women Design Service 'Safety Audits', Making Safer Places and 'Fearometre' approach in Greater London, Bristol, Manchester and Wolverhampton (Greed, 2007; WDS, n.d.; Cosgrave et al., 2020), to Circular 5/94 'Planning Out Crime' (DoE, 1994) and 'Safer Places – The Planning System and Crime Prevention (ODPM & HO, 2004) and the 1988 Home Office Safer Cities Project. Little (1994, 627-628) found that Manchester City Council, Durham County Council, London Borough of Lambeth, Leicester City Council and Southampton City Council all undertook work on women's safety but that the work was usually outside of traditional planning and lacked input from planners. Local authorities produced guidance on how planning could influence safety at Leicester Manchester, Gateshead, Sheffield and the London Borough of Southwark (Trench et al., 1992, p. 293).

Interventions varied, trying to solve the perceptions of safety in the public realm. One intervention targeted town and city centres and how to create natural surveillance. It targeted increasing and diversifying the activities through a mix of uses, especially at night, to do this (Trench, 1992). Another strategy tried to tackle the issue of perception of safety on public transport by introducing segregated transport schemes in Bristol in 1988 and Bradford in 1989 as well as a Lady Cab service in London (Trench et al., 1992, pp. 284-285). However, as Trench et al. (1992, p. 284) note, these schemes:

> *"…perpetuates the notion that women must operate under some kind of curfew*
> *and thus may actually contribute to increasing women's fear of crime,*
> *discouraging even more women from using public transport." (Trench, 1992,*
> *p.284)*

Additionally, the approach to solving women feeling unsafe at night is to include more lighting in public spaces. As Trench (1992, p. 289) argues, lighting "…is a significant and relatively cheap improvement". There is a significant focus on this initiative, arguable due to cost but also the fact that such interventions are visible to people, demonstrating local government and politicians' action in resolving safety issues for women.

The RTPI (1995, p. 5) PAN 12 Planning for Women addresses safety issues in 'Design: making places work well for everyone' and 'Mobility' sections. The first section includes a checklist of considerations for planners. In describing safety, the RTPI (1995) states:

> *"Women are particularly concerned about issues of personal safety and*
> *security…Many women feel vulnerable in getting around. As users of public*
> *transport and as pedestrians their movement is often constrained by the fear of*
> *attack…" (RTPI, 1995, p. 5)*

However, in the RTPI's Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, personal safety is not a key feature. It is included in a section called 'Facts' that relates to perceptions of safety impacting women's actions (Greed et al, 2003, p. 7). In a section called 'Examples of mainstreaming gender' it is mentioned at number seven on the list which relates to landscaping. The guidance on landscaping relates to ensuring that footpaths are accessible with buggies and crime and safety in relation to cycle paths (Greed et al, 2003, p. 8). Cycling is highlighted as an 'example' within the guidance, and it discusses increasing visibility along routes to improve personal safety (Greed et al, 2003, p. 8).

In 2007, to coincide with the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty in Great Britain, the RTPI produced a series of guidance with Oxfam. The Good Practice Note entitled 'Gender and Spatial

Planning' is the main guidance supported by a leaflet by Clara Greed called 'A Place for everyone? Gender equality and urban planning' (RTPI, 2007). In these documents, safety features more prominently. In the opening sentence of the guide, the RTPI states:

> *"Spatial planning can only deliver a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for all if it is sensitive to all needs".*
>
> *(RTPI, 2007, p.1)*

The GPN repeats the issues set out in PAN 12 (RTPI, 1995) around women's perception of and concern for personal safety (RTPI, 2007, p. 7). Greed's (Oxfam, 2007) leaflet provides advice on how planning can improve the feeling of safety, especially at night, through different measures.

As we have explored, the women and planning movement was broad. It focused on women's ability to live a full life with safety as a part of this. Within the women and planning movement, safety does not seem to be conceptualised as only relating to personal safety, it is broader. A common theme in the is the importance of children having safe play environments (RTPI, 1995; Greed, 1996; Greed et al.: 2003, 8); safe pedestrian access or safety from traffic as a pedestrian or cyclist (Greed, 1996; Greed et al, 2003, p. 8) and safe access for buggies and wheelchairs (Morphet & Nisancioglu, 2021). What is noticeable in some guidance is the positioning of safety within the documents; it is not always front and centre as the main issue affecting women using the built environment. For instance, it is only mentioned in passing in the Gender Mainstreaming toolkit (Greed et al., 2003). Within practice, at both national and local government, safety in public spaces is separate with its own programs, interventions, and guidance.

Safety within the Women and Planning movement: the present day

In the previous section, we explored the ways in which safety was included within the women and planning movement in the past. Here we turn to examine the ways in which it has been included in contemporary activity. In the UK we have seen a re-engagement with women and planning both in academia and practice (Horwood, 2022; Horwood et al, 2022). Within this re-engagement with women and planning issues in the UK we have observed a focus has been on women's safety in the public realm. Analysis provides us with a categorisation of engagement in the three distinct ways, defined by us as comprehensive, single issue and performative. It should be noted that we are not attempting to be exhaustive as this is outside the scope of this paper and further research is needed. Rather we are using these findings to identify and conceptualise trends we are observing in academia and practice.

Comprehensive

The 'Comprehensive' category refers to approaches that have considered women and planning issues broadly. These consider safety as one aspect of a whole range of challenges that need to be addressed for women needs to be met in the Built Environment. Two examples that exemplify this approach are the Greater London Authority's guidance 'Safer in Public Space: Women, Girls & Gender Diverse People' and ARUP's report 'Cities Alive: Designing Cities that Work for Women'. Both draw on broader ideas of gender sensitive planning (Damyanovic and Zibell, 2013), with the GLA recommending a 'gender informed' approach' to planning and ARUP recommending 'gender responsive' one.

The Greater London Authority (2022) planning guidance and toolkit 'Safety in Public Space: Women, Girls & Gender Diverse People' is based on long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion. In 2017, The Mayor's Good Growth By Design set out the intention to focus on diversity and inclusion in the built environment (GLA, 2017). Outside of planning, the Mayor's Night Tsar Amy Lamey introduced a Women's Night Safety Charter 2019 focusing on businesses operating at night (GLA, 2019). It asks businesses to sign up to a pledge which focuses on having a champion, communication, training, transparent reporting and designing of environments (GLA, 2019). The guidance does refer to the role of planning and urban design in making women feel safer at night but ultimately focuses on behaviour and structural changes as the main way to make change (GLA, 2019). Furthermore, the Mayor has focused on a series of adverts focused on getting men to recognise and change misogynistic behaviour (Mayor of London, 2023).

The 'Safer in Public Space: Women, Girls & Gender Diverse People' develops from this. The guidance and toolkit were published in September 2022 as part of the Mayor of London's Commitment to the UN Women's Safer Cities and Safer Public Spaces Programme and was informed by the University College London's Urban Lab (GLA, 2022). The guidance forms part of the Good Growth By Design guidance suite, and is phase 1 of a larger work programme. Phase 2 will include testing gender-inclusive projects across London and phase 3 is producing design guidance for built environment professionals (GLA, 2022, p. 20).

In the guidance, women's feeling of safety in the public realm is explained as a 'spectrum of experience' starting with *inconvenienced*, building to *ill at ease* and ending with *endangered* (GLA, 2022, p. 23). The guidance provides a broad definition of safety stating:

> *"A sense of safety is much more complex than avoidance of crime. Safety can be understood through three lenses: freedom from violence, harassment and intimidation; usability and sense of belonging".*

The spectrum of experience is then applied to several themes, explaining different experiences women have. The authors recognise some of the same issues identified earlier in this paper with approaches to safety:

> *"Many approaches to women's safety focus solely on minimising the perceived dangers of the city. This builds on the patriarchal notion that women are helpless victims who must be protected."*

Within this broad understanding of safety in the public realm and built environment the guidance is comprehensive in understanding women's experience. The guidance introduces the concept of a 'gender-informed approach' (GLA, 2022, p. 43) and provides a toolkit consisting of ten questions. The toolkit focused approach has similarities with the previous RTPI guides PAN 12 (RTPI, 1995), Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (Greed et al., 2003) and Good Practice Note (RTPI, 2007) discussed earlier in this paper.

ARUP worked with the University of Liverpool and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to produce 'Cities Alive: Designing cities that work for women' (ARUP, 2022). The report explores women's experience of cities through four themes - safety and security, justice and equity, health and wellbeing and enrichment and fulfilment, providing case studies from across the globe. It ends by setting out a 'gender responsive' approach through twelve distinct steps which take the user from needs analysis, to area wide planning, focusing on organisational structures and processes, reform and the inclusion of diverse actors in placemaking. (ARUP, 2022).

Within the discussion of safety, the report acknowledges that discourse has been *'…a narrow focus on personal safety…'* but asserts that there is a broadening of the discussion of safety (ARUP, 2022, p. 34). Within the definition of safety, the report sets out the dangers that occur for women are more likely to be exposed to include those of climate change hazards (ARUP, 2022, p. 32). Further in the report it discusses that safety and accessibility impact health and well-being in women (ARUP, 2022, p. 69). It cites the example of the mental strain women undertake by having to plan and think about accessibility and safety as the main cause (ARUP, 2022, p. 67). When discussing safety later, it puts this alongside comfort (ARUP, 2022, p. 98), in a similar way to planning guidance in London.

Single issue

In contrast single issue categorises policy responses that look at women and planning issues through responding to a single issue e.g. safety in the public realm. The example provided is the West Yorkshire Combined Authority 'Safer Parks – Improving access for women and girls' (Barker et al., 2022; WYCA, 2023). The West Yorkshire Combined Authority worked with Leeds University and Making Spaces for Girls on a project around how women and girls use public parks within the region (Barker et al., 2022; WYCA, 2023). The research and guidance are funded by the Home Office Safer Streets Fund.

The project focuses on safety and only within parks. The approach is comprehensive but only addresses one issue in one type of place. The reasons for this could be related to the narrow scope of the funding. It could also be limited to powers of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Mayor has, for example they have no formal planning powers akin to those in Greater London, Manchester City Region or Liverpool City Region.

Performative

The performative category is defined as those who are including women's safety but with limited engagement with the substance of this issue. The example provided is the UK government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for England. In December 2022, the UK government consulted on the 'Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to National Planning Policy' (DLUCH, 2022) which focuses on updates to National Planning Policy Framework in England. Question 56 asked:

> *"Q.56: Do you think that the government should bring forward proposals to*
> *update the Framework as part of next year's wider review to place more*
> *emphasis on making sure that women, girls and other vulnerable groups feel safe*
> *in our public spaces, including for example policies on lighting/street lighting?"*
>
> *(DLUCH, 2022).*

The proposal links to the Home Office 'Safer Streets Fund' (Home Office, 2022) which specifically focuses on interventions in public spaces that prevent violence against women and girls. In discussing the background, women and girl's safety, is put in the context of existing national planning policies on health, inclusivity and safety, as well as security and defence design measures (DLUCH, 2022). However, the focus is narrow and does not attempt to consider comprehensively women and planning issues.

Is a focus on safety a problem?

> *"By failing to educate future generations about gender inequality and the importance of gender mainstreaming, respondents commented that we have generated a belief that we are already doing enough to address gender inequalities." (Divine and Bicquelet-Lock, 2021, p. 12)*

Whilst issues of women's safety are of great importance, it is important to recognise that they are not the only concerns of feminist thought and activism. Feminism, and the women and planning movement within it has rich history with work undertaken by women to examine the impact of planning on women's lives and ways in which we could plan our places to better respond to women's needs (Greed, 1994; Little, 1994; Reeves, 2004). This body of work explores issues such as employment, transport, childcare, leisure and housing to provide a comprehensive examination of the ways the built environment does and doesn't meet the needs of women. It is a holistic engagement with planning practice through a gendered lens to highlight where planning practice can impact negatively on women's lives and where the opportunities to remedy this.

This includes within it an element of women's safety, and their right to access the built environment without the fear or experience of violence (Greed, 1994; Little, 1994; Reeves, 2004). This is an issue that has also been raised by feminist academics and activists for decades and remains a key issue in the wider feminist movement (Mackay, 2015). Important work has identified the ways in which women's lives are controlled by the fear of violence and how this impacts on women's lives (Pain, 1991; Smith, 1987; Valentine, 1989; 1992). However, it is also important that women and planning work is not conflated with women's safety with the result of other demands not being responded to.

A focus on safety can often become paternalistic in nature, focusing on vulnerability of women and how they can be protected (Beebeejaun, 2009; Wilson, 1991). Through this lens women are framed as a vulnerable group in need of special protection. Consequently, narratives can become focused on how women can modify their behaviour to decrease their risk, for example not walking alone in the dark. However, this focus can result in restrictions on women's freedoms and controls on their behaviour (Koskela, 1997).

Women frequently experience fear in public space due to the gendering of the city (Koskela, 1997; Kern 2020) with different experiences of fear to men (Smith, 1987). However, the formulation of this fear is subject to feminist critique. Valentine (1989; 1992) argues that the distribution of male violence against women contrasts with women's perception of danger, with more violent crime

experienced in private space from men women know rather than public space from a stranger. This fear impacts on women's use of public space.

A focus on women's safety in planning, directed solely at how planners can make public space less dangerous to women elevates this sense of fear. A narrative focused solely on solutions to the dangers of public space increases levels of fear experienced by women and so exacerbates the issue. It is important to note that this fear is real, with tangible impacts of women's ability to access the built environment and so should be addressed in policy-making. However, it should be included alongside other work to address women's safety.

This approach has been critiqued for reducing women's access to public space to ways in which this can be facilitated through the existing systems and structures rather than any significant change (Whitzman, 2008). Responses are often technical in nature, focused on how modifications to the built environment can be made to protect them, for example the implementation of CCTV and lighting (Beebeejaun, 2009; Whitzman, 2008). There is a danger that any response to the needs of women in the built environment stop there, with the belief that something has been done, and this is enough. Ahmed (2012) highlights the risk of actions that can be used to signal a commitment to equality and diversity, but which do not really result in meaningful engagement with wider feminist demands. Actions are performative in nature but do not really address the issue or take this further and as such they enable avoidance of the issue as action can be used to signal something has been done (i.e. with the implication that nothing more is needed). In this way a focus on safety and simple technical fixes can be a way of evidencing some limited action rather than needing to take more holistic action to respond to the wider transformative agenda of women and planning. This way of attempting to resolve issues of women's safety avoids engagement with the broader structural issues and with it the more complex solutions, as Kern (2020) so succinctly articulated "*No amount of lighting is going to abolish the patriarchy" (*p. 61*)*

Planning can have a role in other areas of women's safety. For example, when considering new developments ensuring open lines of sight so women can see more of their surroundings and predators are less able to hide, ensuring adequate lighting and route to escape may contribute to greater feelings of safety in public space. However, planning can also contribute to solutions to violence against women in private space. When experiencing domestic violence, a barrier to leaving can be a lack of affordable and secure housing, close to employment and other services. Planners can play a role in the provision of affordable units which women can access in their local area, ensuring continuity of education and employment.

If, as we argue, a focus on safety at the expense of other issues raised by the women and planning movement is problematic, it is crucial to find a way to broaden the discussion. If, as the authors observe, we are experiencing a moment where a consideration of how planners can respond to women's safety concerns is prominent, expanding conceptualisations of what is means for women to be safe is needed.

The Capability Model

As we have seen in the previous section, during this history of women and planning professional engagement with safety has been complex. It has been included as an issue that impacts on women's ability to live a full life in ways that are mediated by their interactions with the built environment. It has also explored safety including and beyond the focus on male violence against women and girls. More recently safety has been used as an entry point to engage with a broader range of issues (GLA, 2022) and has been identified as including risk such as climate change hazards (ARUP, 2022).

In this section, we will draw on the Capability Model (Sen, 1992) as a way of exploring these forms of engagement with women's safety and planning, and how they connect to the wider concerns of the women and planning movement. The reason for doing this is severalfold. Firstly, we can see how women's safety impacts directly on broader capabilities, as identified early in work on women and planning. Secondly, we can see how planning practice can put in place barriers to women's capabilities as a result of the lack of consideration of safety. Thirdly, we use this framework as a way of exploring examples of how planning practice can provide solutions to issues that relate to women's safety.

Within the capability model literature there is no single list of capabilities, indeed there is dispute over whether to identify a list of capabilities, with the recognition that they should be context specific. However, alongside this some have developed listings of capabilities that seek to have relevance across contexts. For the purpose of this paper, we want to be able to give examples of how the model can be applied in a specific planning context, and therefore for this reason we are using a listing given by Robeyns (2003). It is important to note that this is not the only way of conceptualising capabilities from a feminist and planning perspective, and indeed these could be disputed, with different models that are more applicable for different circumstances. The desire of this paper is not to be prescriptive but descriptive enough for the practical applicability to planning practice to be clear.

Robeyns (2003, pp. 72-74) identifies a list of 14 capabilities for gender equality in post-industrialised western societies:

FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

In the following section we select six of these capabilities, to show how they can be applied to women's safety in the context of the women and planning movement. It is important to note that this is in no way exhaustive but serves to provide examples of how the model can help us to work through these issues, in a way that centres the breadth of women's interactions with the built environment, and their consequent capabilities or lack thereof.

The application of the Capability Model to planning

Through this model, we can see that initiatives planners might take to improve the safety of women have an impact that extends beyond narrower safety issues. Rather than simply being an end in themselves, safety measures become a conduit for enabling women to use the city as full citizens; they are a way of ensuring women's full capabilities are met. The capability model thus provides a lens for making the connection between safety and how it intersects with the broader remit of planning activity, reminiscent of the earlier women and planning activity and recent initiatives as discussed earlier in this paper.

In addition, the model also invites questions of what it is to feel safe. This includes the prominent issue of the ability to access public space without fear of attack, alongside the right to be able to live a private life without a fear of violence. Additionally, broader concerns such as access to a safety network, access to independent income, access to secure public services, access to support network, and to be able to care for others are highlighted. These also contribute to feelings of safety; a woman living with her children in insecure housing may feel unsafe, exacerbated by a lack of access to a support network that could alleviate this. A woman who is unable to access employment opportunities due to their location far from her home with poor transport links may feel unsafe in her ability to sustain an income to support herself and her disabled partner. A woman who lives alone with poor access to transport options may feel unsafe in trying to move around the city to access services. All of these are issues upon which planners can exert influence. The capability model thus provides us with a way to expand the conceptualisation of safety to be broader that just accessing public space without fear of attack, and then explore this in a planning context.

In this section we return to Robeyn's (2003) listing of capabilities to explore the ways in which they can intersect with the work of planners, to provide examples of how the work of planners can address both concerns of women's safety and how they impact more widely on planning activity. This work is not exhaustive, rather, it provides examples of some ways in which the model could be applied to enable planners to consider their work within a women and planning context. Specific

local issues and concerns would need to be examined to take into account their specific circumstances.

Bodily integrity and safety is addressed within the built environment in both public and private space. In public space women should be able to access places without harassment or violence, and without fear. In private space, women should be able to live in housing without fear of violence, and leave unsafe living conditions. This intersects with planning practice, for example through the design of public space to reduce safety issues or the provision of affordable and accessible housing to gives women more options to leave unsafe living conditions.

Social relations are impacted on by the built environment in which they exist. They are built in places where people can live as part of a community, build and retain existing social networks. The existence of social networks can contribute to feelings of safety, where women are able to access support from others. For social networks to be sustained people need to be able to access housing in the areas where their network exists. Planning has a role to play in ensuring that affordable housing suitable for a range of ages and lifestyles is available in all areas. Social networks may also be supported through the provision of service needs across all ages, for example health and education services, which planning can ensure are accessible in all areas.

Not being able to raise children and take care of others in the locations where people live can impact on feelings of safety, for example where public space may not feel safe for children and teenagers to access, or where older people feel threatened. Where housing is not suitable for a range of ages and households, caring for others becomes difficult leading to concerns about safety for others who are not in proximity. Planning has a role to play in ensuring that different housing needs are provided for near to one another, for example through different sized units and affordable housing.

Access to paid work results in greater financial security a lack of which can impact on women's feeling of safety, for example through not being able to live in housing that feels safe and secure and not having the financial means to leave violent relationships. Employment opportunities that are accessible by public transport provide greater access to women who are higher users of public transport. Employment that is close to where people live, other services such as schools and childcare, and that are in areas that feel safe will also provide more opportunities to women. Planning has a role to play in considering the location of employment sites and as such can have a meaningful impact on the relationship between financial security and resultant feelings of safety.

In addition, the accommodation that women live in has an impact on their feelings of safety. Accommodation that is insecure, or poor quality or in locations that don't feel safe will impact

significantly on how women feel about their living circumstances. However, living conditions where residency is secure, in areas that feel safe, close to services and social network will increase feelings of security and safety. Planning policy and implementation can shape the units that are developed and therefore has a role to play in ensuring that safe, secure and affordable accommodation is available to all.

The ways we move through the city are gendered, with women more likely to make more complex journeys, trip chain and use public transport. As such access to safe public transport is crucial to their ability to benefit from the built environment. In addition, active travel solutions are experienced differently by men and women, with women more likely to feel safe in segregated cycle facilities. Planning has a role to play in ensuring that the locations of public transport facilities feel safe and so are accessible, alongside the provision of infrastructure that is gender sensitive.

In these ways we can see how planning practice can impact on women's safety is ways that extend far beyond simply CCTV and lighting, to a more holistic engagement with safety. In turn when safety is viewed through this wider lens we can better highlight where planning practice can impact negatively on women's lives and where the opportunities to remedy this.

Conclusions

As we have explored, there are differing approaches to the consideration of safety within the women and planning movement. We have argued that, whilst an important issue, a focus on safety at the expense of other aspects of the women and planning movement is a problem. However, we recognise that women's safety is a rightly a prominent issue within public discourse, and as such has increasingly become of interest to planners. Making clearer connections between safety and other issues raised by the women and planning movement will enable a broadening of the conversation we have explored a way of doing this. After initial grounded reflections on categorisations of activities focused on women's issues, we have drawn on Sen's Capability Model as a tool to develop practical examples of where safety impacts on women's capabilities that intersect with areas across the field of planning such as housing, employment, transport, communities and public space. As discussed in this paper, it is important to recognise local specificity. Whilst we have attempted to provide worked examples the detail of these will be specific to different locations and their specific issues and solutions. We suggest that the Capabilities Model provides a tool to do this, and a way to think about how safety can impact more broadly on women's lives and how planning can implement meaningful solutions.

We also propose that connections between women and planning work and wider planning practice should be highlighted in research and practice. Through the use of the Capability Model we have

shown how the women and planning movement's insights speak to many of planning's *wicked issues* for example secure and affordable housing, integrated transport, accessible employment and community building. These in turn speak to more general public interest priorities of planning for sustainability, for example 15 minute cities, the need for more affordable housing, a better public realm, more joined up public transport. As areas readily identifiable in planning practice, connection between these and issues raised by the women and planning movement, mediated through their connection to safety can enhance existing practice, as well as being a separate addition. The solutions advocated for by the women and planning movement for many decades perhaps would solve many of the issues planners continue to grapple with.

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Acknowledgements

Image info

Figure 1 capabilities for gender equality in post-industrialised western societies (Robeyns, 2003)