



women's planning network victoria inc.

Vantage

march/april 2008

Minister Madden launches International Women's Day 2008

On Friday the 7th of March, we held our annual IWD breakfast at the Pavilion Tea House in the Fitzroy Gardens.

Our forty guests enjoyed a beautiful breakfast while the Minister for Planning, the Right Honourable Justin Madden shared his impressions of International Women's Day and the important roles that women have played, and continue to play, both in the professional field and political arena of planning.

Minister Madden introduced Josephine Johnson, who is believed to have been the first qualified planner in Victoria. Josephine's story is a testament to the dedication and commitment that women have shown in pursuing academic study and professional qualifications and the long-lasting contribution that they have made to how planning is done and women's rights in the workplace.

Those of us under 40 probably take for granted the rights and opportunities we have enjoyed pursuing study and taking up full-time professional employment whether we are single or married but it was not always the case! Josephine's story also highlights that we have scant historical records of the women who have contributed to the development of planning over time, which has motivated the WPN to undertake a historical review of women in planning, to piece together what we expect to be a rich story of how women have shaped how Melbourne, and Victoria, looks today.



Minister Madden



Roz Hansen, Melinda Wealands, Kellie Burns, Lecki Ord and Minister Madden



Pene Smith and Josephine Johnson



Jana accepts her award from Roz Hansen and Kellie Burns

Now, back to the Minister's speech. A great surprise to WPN were the Minister's concluding comments, which included a pledge of \$10,000 to the Network to enable its research to document the history of Victorian and Melbournian women who have worked in, and contributed to planning over the past century. This research will be undertaken this year and completed for its launch to coincide with the completion of the celebrations for the Centenary of Suffrage and Planning Week 2008.

Following this exciting news, I was pleased to introduce Roz Hansen, Managing Director of Hansen Partnership and invited her to present the 2007 'Rising Star' scholarship, which was awarded to Melbourne University undergraduate planning student, Jana Perkovic. This scholarship provides \$5,000 towards an undergraduate student's HECS fees and was enthusiastically and gratefully received by Jana.

This year it has been decided to widen the student base eligible to enter a short essay on gender and planning (and to win the scholarship!), to include students studying courses within the wider realm of the built form environment.

The WPN looks forward to an exciting and busy 2008 and we look forward to seeing you at our events over this year.

Kellie Burns, WPN President

The revised WPN mission statement

At the WPN committee business planning session for the year in February, we reviewed WPN's Mission Statement and made some minor amendments to bring it in line with our role as we see it in 2008. Our revised Mission Statement is proposed as follows

- Promoting the role of women in all aspects of the planning and development process.
- Facilitating communication with Government related organisations, other women's groups and amongst Network members.
- Educating and informing its members, the government sector, employers of planning and development related professions, and the general public about the needs of women and the important role that women play in all decision-making processes.
- Raising awareness of women's perspectives on specific issues, and advocating gender balance in the decision making process.

- Supporting women's role in the community as individuals and as professionals.
- Representing and responding to women's issues as they relate to planning and development in both metropolitan and rural areas.
- Being an independent and non party political but politically active organisation.
- Sponsoring and mentoring young women and students in planning related professions.
- Researching planning issues and influencing policies, particularly those affecting women's aspirations and needs.
- Providing a forum for communication and networking for women in planning and related professions.

More happy snaps from the IWD breakfast....



Studying planning - reflections of a first year student and a full time mum!

**Sarah Austin, 2nd Year student, Bachelor of Urban,
Rural and Environmental Planning,
La Trobe University, Bendigo**

Challenging, inspiring, engaging and satisfying: this is how I viewed 2007 as a first-year student at La Trobe University, Bendigo, studying the new Bachelor of Urban, Rural and Environmental Planning degree. I was thrilled to be accepted, and to join around 20 students, the majority being male school leavers. There are five women; three of us are also parents, juggling the needs of our children. I'm a sole mum raising twin 10-year old boys, and I've returned to tertiary study after completing a degree in Media and Communication Studies almost 17 years ago. It's been a big challenge adapting to uni life, and juggling the logistics of studying, parenting and living in a small country town, an hour from Bendigo.

The course has a great balance of Planning and Environmental subjects. Introduction to Planning and Design, led by Senior Lecturer Trevor Budge, was a brilliant historical exploration of the development of cities worldwide – ancient to current day. I'm fascinated by history, so I enjoyed delving into past civilisations! We looked at the influence of different planning concepts and explored inspirational readings such as Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and Joel Kotkin's *The City*. Practical aspects included working with the City of Greater Bendigo, where we carried out a CBD Land Use Survey, recording how land is currently used. My map reading skills improved!

Introduction to Statutory Planning helped me to begin to understand Victoria's Planning Provisions, The Planning and Environment Act 1987, planning definitions such as 'use' and 'development', navigating online planning resources, and planning permit application processes. We visited VCAT and observed cases as they unfolded, studied the Mitcham Towers Appeal and the implications of the subsequent Supreme Court Decision. Touring the Docklands was fascinating (but why no school planned there?), and Melbourne's 60L Green Building (60 Leicester Street) was inspiring. We looked at the social, urban design and public transport integration challenges of 'Place Making' in Sunshine and Watergardens.

Principles of Sustainable Development with Lecturer Andrew Butt, introduced the complex interconnections of ecological, social and economic systems. I was surprised to discover that 'sustainable development' is not necessarily 'environmentally sustainable development'. Theories of economic development, ways of measuring sustainability, concepts such as intergenerational equity, and corporate practices of Greenwashing were also explored.

Another favourite subject was *World Views and the Environment*. We travelled through rich terrains of environmental philosophies and ethics - Deep Ecology, Eco-Feminism, Indigenous Worldviews, Judeo-Christian traditions, The Enlightenment, Romanticism, and gained some insight into the impacts of European settlement on Australian landscapes and towards Indigenous Peoples. I've begun to see the environment differently, and with even more respect.

My experiences as a student and of planning have only just begun

–there is so much more to learn! I've loved the smaller regional campus at La Trobe Uni in Bendigo. Smaller class sizes have meant we can ask (many) more questions, and our lecturers are supportive and approachable. Being in a core group of new planning students has been great: my classmates are fun, and there's a great relaxed rapport developing. It is much less stressful doing presentations in front of 20, instead of a lecture theatre of hundreds!

As a mother returning to study, it has been hard work juggling assessment and looking after my children while working part-time. I've had to seek out more support from friends and family, to deal with late night studying and being grumpy with my kids leading up to essay deadlines and exams. Regionally, there are plenty of work experience opportunities. There are severe regional shortages of planners and already I've been able to do paid planning work. I am excited by the future possibilities in planning, and look forward to more learning!



WPN Website Statistics Overview - 2007 to present

http://

Our website guru Gilda Di Vincenzo has compiled some statistics on how our new website was used during 2007 - with some interesting results!

In 2007 our relatively new website recorded visits from 878 unique visitors, with a total of 1173 visits between them. Usage levels varied over the year, notably peaking in March and July – possibly to coincide with events and research launch activity?

2008, however, has become much more interesting! Since the launch of our research on Affordable Housing for Women, downloads of the final report have steadily increased, particularly in 2008 – in fact, the research report document now exceeds the home page in terms of number of views – this provides indisputable evidence that people are interested in the research and are going directly for it rather than stumbling on it by chance when browsing the site. Since going online, the research report has been viewed (which generally means it was downloaded) 365 times and the practice notes and scoping paper documents have been viewed 35 times.

Unsurprisingly, most website visits were from users in Australia, however the table shows we have had visitors from all over the world!

The most often viewed page on the website was, again unsurprisingly, our home page. More tellingly, the 'events' and 'about us' pages were clearly the most visited 'internal' sections over the last year, but the affordable housing research material is matching this so far in 2008, and interest in the mentor program and rising star scholarship are also on the increase.

Our website is being found via search engines using a wide variety of

Monthly History 2007

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits
Jan 2007	0	0	0	0
Feb 2007	49	77	318	914
Mar 2007	100	121	403	1205
Apr 2007	58	75	265	822
May 2007	67	88	260	760
Jun 2007	61	75	259	758
Jul 2007	95	120	843	1560
Aug 2007	67	87	303	998
Sep 2007	68	91	307	990
Oct 2007	68	114	388	1527
Nov 2007	109	153	856	1703
Dec 2007	136	172	618	1668
TOTAL	878	1173	4820	12905

Monthly History 2008 so far

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits
Jan 2008	108	175	554	1531
Feb 2008	103	151	416	1307
Mar 2008	118	160	795	1745
TOTAL	329	486	1765	4583

search terms. In 2007, most search engine hits came from the phrase 'women's planning' (or a version of it) or by a search on a particular committee member name. Most people used Google to access our website. Take a look at the summary tables below for all the details.

Top 25 Most Viewed pages 2007

	No. of times viewed
Home Page	1035
Current Events Index	310
About WPN	259
Membership	199
Research and Resources Index	180
Mentoring Program	178
Contact Us	163
Links	149
Publications index page	144
Rising Star Scholarship	142
Affordable Housing Research index page	141
Vantage publications index	96
Affordable Housing research report download	66

Top 25 Most Viewed pages - 2008 so far

	No. of times viewed
Affordable Housing Research report download	299
Home Page	238
Current Events Index	109

Visitor location by country - 2007

Countries	Pages	Hits
Australia	2230	7668
United States	1934	3989
Unknown	282	304
Great Britain	96	212
France	84	92
China	26	114
European country	22	43
Hong Kong	16	61
Kenya	16	44
Canada	15	66
New Zealand	15	52
Italy	10	32
Japan	9	29
Phillipines	8	24
India	8	30
Denmark	7	21
Spain	5	14

Creating inclusive public space and why it matters: Citizenship, children, women, and that elusive question of safety

Third year Melbourne University student Jana Perkovic's essay that won her the 2007 WPN Rising Star Scholarship, which is generously supported by Hansen Partnership

Introduction

This essay will attempt to discuss the issue of women's presence in public space, and the societal understanding of the risk involved, through the lens of recent theoretical developments on children's independent mobility. The perceived danger of violence, particularly sexual violence, is frequently stated as the main reason women and children keep off the streets. While feminist literature asserts women's political stakes in claiming the street, both for themselves and other marginalised groups, of particular interest for this essay is the way in which children's street presence has been defined as important for their mental and social well-being.

While it has been argued that women's safety fears reflect not so much the likelihood of crime, but the potential gravity of offence (Whitzman, 1995), feminist work on children has focused more on the harm children suffer by having their mobility constrained. In other words, while women's absence from public space is justified by the reiteration of the frequency of violence, children's absence is questioned and contested. It will be argued that both women and children express the need for unstructured, free space to play in, explore and reclaim as theirs.

The argument will be two-fold: on one side, limiting spatial claims of women and children means limiting their participation in the community and thus their citizenship; on the other, safety claims of middle-class women, children and men are instrumental in limiting spatial claims, thus citizenship, of other marginalised people. The argument for inclusive space needs to focus on creating (subjective) comfort for everyone, rather than (objective) safety for some, that may be both exclusionary and undesirable.

The Problem

The recent Reclaim the Night protest in Melbourne reminds us that the issue of women and children's presence in public space is still pertinent. Even within the context of rising fear of crime across the board, women regularly profess feeling more unsafe than men, particularly in public space after dark, with fear of sexual assault featured relatively high, and limit their movement accordingly (Grabosky, 1995; NCAVC, 1998; ACCSA; Women's Safety Australia, 1996). Although statistics on women's independent nocturnal mobility have not yet been collected, observation confirms that a lone woman is not a regular feature on Australia's night-time streets. More recently, however, harsh reduction of children's spatial claims has been noted in western countries. In a landmark study, Hillman et al (1990) reveal that the median age at which any particular spatial freedom is granted to a child has increased by 2 ½ years since the 1970s. Fuelled by their parents' perception that children's safety has markedly deteriorated (Soderlind and Engwall, 2004; Valentine, 2004), children's play is becoming more home-centred, removed from public space into supervised interiors (Valentine, 2004). In one survey 45 per cent identify their children at serious risk of abduction, primarily by strangers (kidnapers and paedophiles), and 34 per cent at risk of traffic accidents (Valentine, 2004); these findings are replicated

by research in the UK, North America and Australia (Blakeley, 1994; Hood et al, 1996; Kelley et al, 1997).

The question of risk

Statistically, however, all crime rates have been falling over the last century, while the incidence of child abuse deaths has always been comparatively rare (Valentine, 2004). While children, and particularly women, are victims of unreported domestic violence, physical, emotional and sexual, they overwhelmingly experience it in their homes, from people they know (ACCSA, NCAVC, 1998; Women's Safety Australia, 1996). Research consistently shows no separation between the public and private realm when it comes to violence and fear for both men and women (Valentine, 2004; Whitzman, 2007): indeed, some consider the crude public/private divide greatly unhelpful in developing safety policies (see Whitzman, 2007). So why does society reiterate the danger of public space for both women and children so strongly, when the statistics point to a much more diffuse geography of violence?

Elizabeth Wilson (1991) notes that the presence of women in cities, particularly on the streets, has been limited both in western and non-western cities. In a variety of national, cultural and temporal contexts, women's movement is regulated by binarily categorising both women and spaces into 'private' and 'public', 'respectable' and 'fallen', 'controlled' and 'uncontrolled' (Pain, 2000; Walkowitz, 1992; Phadke, 2005). Phadke's work shows how safety concerns easily translate into effective surveillance: Mumbai women limit their movement out of fear for their respectability as much as for their safety (2005; 2007). The street is not a place for respectable women, the message goes. If they choose to frequent it, women forego any right to safety. It is still not uncommon to hear that "any woman walking alone after dark invites trouble", nor are court decisions that blame the victim unusual (Kanes-Weisman, 1992). Societal role in production of fear is well-documented: from exaggerated media coverage labelled 'terror talk' (Katz, 1995), to the simplistic messages fed to young people through the combined efforts of parents, schools, the police (Valentine, 2004). With the incidence of danger statistically low, but the danger constantly re-asserted, 'men control space' not through violence (Kanes-Weisman, 1992), but through relentless production of fear of violence.

Spatial exclusion of children replicates the discourse of paternalistic need for protection of the most precious and infantile family members from the ominous world;

(...) an adult space where children are at risk from 'deviant' others; a space in which the male body in particular is saturated with threat and danger (Valentine, 2004);

down to the dictate of respectability: parents who grant greater freedom to their children are criticised as 'bad parents' (Valentine, 2004). The overlap is considerable: discourse of women's sexual



vulnerability in 'public' space and a woman's 'place' in the home also shapes young girls' use of space (Saegert and Hart, 1978). In Valentine's work (2004), girls report a lower level of confidence in negotiating their safety in public space, and a greater fear of strangers. Boys are usually allowed to range further from home unsupervised, and spend more time outdoors, than girls (Hart, 1979; Katz, 1993). Katz (1993) concludes that the girls in New York may be more restricted in their ability to explore and engage with their own local environment than girls in the seemingly more restrictive Islamic Sudan.

It is important, however, to recognise the dangers inherent in this wide production of fear. Phadke recognises the instrumentalisation of the middle-class, 'respectable' woman in spatial control of marginalised groups. Women are socially conditioned to feel unsafe in 'male' space, but their presence is simultaneously desired, either as consumers (of a revitalised city centre or new shopping district) or as consumed (part of the big city spectacle) (Phadke, 2005; Wilson, 1991). This brings to the fore people's anxieties about both women's proper place, and the presence of other marginal citizens (Phadke, 2007) -not unlike the hotly debated 'public woman' of Victorian England (Hayden, 1984; Weisman, 1992; Wilson, 1991). The need to protect the middle-class woman's respectability is utilised to articulate 'risk' posed by marginalised groups (lower-class men, homeless, and sex workers) and limit their claims to space. Growing fear of crime has been credited for an increase in private security and gated communities, discriminatory laws against marginalised groups, from itinerants to the homeless, and a growing disregard for civil liberties, from Los Angeles to Mumbai, in the past twenty years (Jayne et al, 2006; Mitchell 2003; Pain, 2000; Phadke, 2007).

Citizenship and well-being

Feminist research emphasizes the close relationship between citizenship, access to the public sphere, and the right to speak for oneself (Soderlind and Engwall, 2004). Public space should be viewed not as static, but as brought into being through iterative performance of power and norms, unstable in meaning, and subject to redefinition and disruption (Valentine, 2002). According to Lefebvre (1996), the full right to the city would entail a continual and active process of appropriation (in the sense of use rather than ownership) of city spaces, the right to claim presence in the city. Queer activists have often adopted this strategy by 'doing public space' differently, asserting their presence, and disrupting the heterosexuality of space through the proliferation of queer behaviour in bars, districts, and main street parades (Hubbard, 2001; Valentine, 2002). Their civil rights were rightly understood not as the right to privacy, but the freedom to be public (Berlant and Freeman, 1993).

For Wilson (1991), the unstructured freedom of city empowers, offering women space to escape from rigid social roles, play with identity. Notably, children often prefer to play in flexible, open landscapes they can appropriate in imaginative ways, claiming their citizen presence in a way similar to queer activists (Moore, 1986). Phadke (2007) argues that the level of safety one feels is directly

linked to the level of claim one feels to a space, by legitimising one's presence: it certainly appears that children who spend more time in public space are better equipped to deal with danger, because they have greater place knowledge and local social capital (Valentine, 2004). Buchner (1990; in Valentine, 2004) bemoans children's street world, formed independently from adults and composed of children from a variety of backgrounds and age groups, increasingly replaced by integration into various peer-group social sets, often chosen and supervised by parents for particular purposes. Giving (young) people access to free, risky, unsupervised space, it is argued, is giving them the opportunity for developing physical, mental and social capabilities, self-reliance and creativity, providing them with privacy to experiment with their identities and develop their own notions of morality and empathy (Aitken, 2001). In the sense in which citizenship entails full membership in the community, not merely political but multilayered, and located in many spheres, (Wekerle, 2004), being granted full and free access to the street is a prerequisite for full citizenship.

Spatial solutions

Current shift in children's mobility may result in a generation of fearful public people, male and female, demanding ever stricter protection from 'deviant' populations. There are certainly indications that young Australians are more fearful than the elderly (Kelley, 1992, in Grabosky, 1995). However, the preservation of free, unstructured social space for all should remain the goal of social justice movements (Mitchell, 2003). So how do we, to paraphrase Phadke (2005), legitimise the presence of women and children without it being used to control and restrict access to other marginal groups? How do we argue for improved access, yet defend the legitimacy of the desire to court 'risk', and insist that 'risk' should be a matter of choice?

Although welcome, we should not limit ourselves to improvements in urban design that create greater safety for everyone: better lighting, signage and visibility, elimination of dead ends, passive surveillance afforded by active street frontages, better public transportation (Kanes-Weisman, 1992). We should work to reduce general fear of crime, but also aim to legitimise the presence of women and children in all space, at all times, and reduce the underlying reasons for selective fear-mongering. Efforts such as the Non-Crime Hotline campaign (Port Phillip Online) go a long way to address the underlying fear of crime that inhibits free movement. We should consider improving accessibility and comfort to children, parents with small children, elderly, disabled, non-English speakers, but also the homeless, and sex workers. Political gestures like Reclaim the Night should be supported and extended: in its current incarnation as an annual protest that actively excludes men, RTN does not stabilise a space and time in which the presence of women and children is legitimate. Bianchini (1995), discussing the rich tradition of inclusive night-life in Italy, proposes to extend passive surveillance throughout the night by committing to a '24-hour-city': extending the opening hours of shops, cultural and civic institutions, provision of evening

childcare facilities and public transport, as well as use of parks for family-oriented activities (with music, food stalls and appropriate lighting). Simple actions such as all-night provision of visible and safe public toilets for women would assert their right to the city stronger than all-night visible police presence (Phadke, 2005). Since children are equally excluded from the night-city and the daytime-city, every effort should be made to legitimise children's public play without necessarily structuring them in separate children areas (Katz, 1993; 1995). Diffusely extending inclusive time and space is more beneficial to the quality of our public space temporarily opening safety ghettos (such as the RTN march) that exclude large parts of the population. Implicit in this list is the claim that everyone across community, class and gender should assume the same risks when they access public space.

Conclusion

Fear of the male stranger is successfully utilised to limit both women and children's full participation in the society. While the perceived dangers are often complementary for the two groups (particularly the employment of sexualised stranger-danger), so is the articulation of importance of independent mobility. Research on women stresses their political rights and questions the power structures behind their confinement, while research on children focuses on the psychological damage and strongly advocates against fear. Both address the need for claim to unsupervised, uncontrolled space, and a dose of risk, noting that safety will be most effectively achieved through reclamation of public space. Simultaneously, however, both groups have the power to exclude other people through their own fear, if national and societal anxieties are played out through their protection; this adversely affects the very public space we need to preserve. As Gardner (1990) says:

(..) women's fear of crime in public places does not spoil public places for women alone, but it also spoils, in some larger sense, men for women and women for men and public places for everyone.

Any effort to legitimise and increase the presence of women and children in public must not work to exclude marginalised groups. Public space which excludes segments of society cannot be truly 'public'.

Note: References can be provided on request.

Articles and contributions

At WPN we are always interested in receiving contributions to Vantage from our members, and feedback on our events.

If you would like to:

- contribute an article for Vantage;
- let us know about a great event idea; or
- advise us of any news from our members,

please either give the office a call on 9347 4622 or email admin@wpn.org.au. We'd love to hear from you!

Committee news!

As this is our first issue since our new committee was formed, we'd like to introduce our new committee members for 2008:

Lenice White, Julie Reid (Treasurer) & Picha Djohan

Welcome to the WPN committee for 2008!

For this year we also have returning as committee members:

Kellie Burns (President) **Melinda Wealands (VP)**

Bron Hamilton

Gilda di Vincenzo

Denise Underwood

Shannon Lea

We are always looking to add new ideas and spark to our committee, so if you are interested in getting involved, contact the office and we'd be happy to talk to you more about your interests and what WPN can offer!

Recently we also farwelled our administration assistant Jode Cowie, and thank her for all of her hard work over the past couple of years.

We are pleased to welcome **Amber McQueen** to the fold as our new administration assistant. Don't hesitate to contact Amber in the office on 9347 4622 or email admin@wpn.org.au. Amber is in the office Wednesday and Friday afternoons, so feel free to give her a call and introduce yourself!

Our Events Calendar for 2008

What you have to look forward to over the coming months! Always check for details on our website www.wpn.org.au

April	Urban Design Walk
May	TBA
June	Fireside Chat
July	Movie Night
August	Bike Ride or regional event
September	Annual General Meeting
October	Planning Week breakfast and launch of the 2008 research
November	Mentoring awards
December	Christmas Breakfast

Stay tuned also for details of the relaunch of the Mentoring Program and how you may get involved in our Research into the History of women planners in Victoria!

Women's Planning Network Victoria Inc.

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