

## Feminisms and the spacialization of resistances: Keeping the fight alive

Since the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, an interest about studies in feminism and architecture was recaptured by some scholars in the Anglo-Saxon context influencing new generations to come. This reviving of women's studies in architecture had a more difficult path in other latitudes that lacked academic references in different languages, but it would soon blow up starting from the Mediterranean region. In 2014, the first international congress was organized in Seville, Spain, by scholar Nuria Alvarez Lombardero, around architectural practice. This initiative called *Arquitectas: redefining the practice* started with a small support from the University of Seville, Spain. Still, it courageously caught the attention of different researchers worldwide with similar concerns. The call for papers was answered by more than fifty proposals of all kinds that voiced a need to expose a resistance to obscurantism concerning the subject. Fourteen articles were selected and structured following the major themes: places of exclusion, rewriting the history of architecture, worldwide practices, and new forms of practice. Supporting these reflections, five women architects were invited as guest speakers to share their positions and experiences around the subject of practice, allowing a deeper conversation transcribed in the book *Arquitectas: redefiniendo la práctica* presented at the XIII Spanish Bienal of Architecture and Urbanism (Alvarez Lombardero, N. 2015). Gratifyingly, the congress became the inception of an extensive network of researchers and scholars that still operates today with more than 1,000 people connected worldwide.

Following this, the congress moved in 2015 to Lisbon, Portugal, under the title of *Matrices*, which evoked the idea of the matrix as an environment where “things develop, the models or patterns that shape formations, and they can also reinvent an environment”<sup>1</sup>. Larger in size than the previous event, this second international congress gathered new themes and researchers, expanding the previous pioneering one. Organizers Patricia Santos Pedrosa, Eliana Sousa Santos, and Maria João Matos set a series of presentation groups that allowed intersectionalities between researchers, original findings and fruitful conversations.

This growth continued two years later with the third congress, *More. Expanding architecture from a gender-based perspective*, hosted by the University of Florence, Italy, with a more ambitious aim to expand “architecture from a gender-based perspective incorporating feminist strategies” (Amoroso S., *et al.*, 2020). The #MeToo movement was starting to impact society, which was translated into a more precise and determined feminist statement written by the organizers Serafina Amoroso, Dafne Saldaña, Helena Cardona and Julia Goula. Following their intentions of expanding exponentially, the event included multiple presentations in different scales and themes, covering theory, history and practice around the subject of gender and architecture. Urbanism took an important place in the panel discussions and the parallel workshops. A search into a feminist perspective in cities, a fundamental interest of most organizers, urban practices permeated the debates and conversations. This ambitious expansion allowed more voices to speak, more themes to emerge, and intense discussion to occur, but the energy generated was dissipated afterwards. Years later, we started to see the outcomes of this congress with some recent publications and urban projects that were created.

As a reaction to this expansion, a fourth congress – *Fielding Architecture: Feminist Practices for a Decolonised Pedagogy* – was organized by Catalina Mejia Moreno and Emma Cheatle at the University of Brighton, United Kingdom, in 2019. It was set with a more concrete aim “to explore and question the practice of teaching

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<sup>1</sup> More information: <http://www.2ga.ulusofofona.pt/statement/>

architectural history and theory” from the feminist context with a critical perspective. Pedagogy came to the forefront of the discussion with concern about ‘alternative’ histories, other than the canonical perspectives taking feminist critiques and approaches out of the discipline of architecture as a starting point. Four main areas centred the discussion: 1. Critiques; 2. Contents; 3. Modes and sites of writing and research; and 4. Modes and sites of teaching.

Following this perspective on the spatial dimension of resistances, the last congress was organized in 2021 within the research project "W@ARCH.PT. Women Architects in Portugal: building visibility", retaining previous organizers as part of the scientific and executive commissions. Returning to Lisbon, this fifth International Congress Architecture and Gender proposed the discussion under the theme "ACTION! Feminisms and the specialisation of resistances". It took place in April 2021, online, due to the pandemic context, in Portuguese, Spanish and English. This edition hosted Indian architect and historian Mahdavi Desai, Spanish ecofeminist Dina Garzón and Brazilian architect and politician Joice Berth as keynote speakers. Mary Pepchinski moderated a special session on research projects with Anne Hultzsch (ETH, Switzerland), Eva Alvarez and Carlos Gómez (UPV, Spain), Svava Riesto, Henriette Steiner (UC, Denmark) and Patrícia Santos Pedrosa (CIEG-ULisboa, Portugal).

The Action! call for proposals was designed with five main thematic areas: 1. Equality between women and men and their spatial dimensions with diverse scales (body – house – city – macro territory); 2. Climate justice and (eco) feminists’ spatial praxis in the territorial embodiment of equality and women and girls’ roles in effectively defending territories and the planet; 3. Professional practices as feminist emancipatory processes of architectures, cities and spaces in a broad sense; 4. History, stories, and feminist methodologies in constructing amplified narratives; and 5. Spatial pedagogies – territorial, urban, architectural, among others – as alternative models with transformative potential. (Pedrosa, *et al.*, 2021)

In the parallel sessions, under these five themes, researchers from different origins presented around one hundred proposals. From these papers, the editors of this issue invited authors and researchers that were, in a way, representative. Thus, we organized this volume into three parts. The first part contains papers presented at the conference. The second part offers an interview with a group of women architects who presented their feminist project, ‘Mulheres em Construção’. Finally, we close this special issue with three reviewed publications linked to the international network behind the congress.

The first article in this publication is authored by Spanish scholars Carmen Bermejo Lorenzo and Ana María Fernández García. They propose a journey through the legislative development of gender equality in the different regions of Spain. Their research links each implemented norm with other political variables, administrative organization and visibility of women in urban planning and architecture. The article systematizes and reveals how the Organic Law 3/2007 has successfully or unsuccessfully incorporated the legislative changes regarding gender equality depending on each Spanish region. Likewise, they emphasize how the presence of women in political or technical positions and the vitality of active feminism have been indispensable agents in this changing process.

In a more specific, intimate and subjective sense in terms of visibility, self-realization and self-perception, the article presented by Ingrid Ruudi focuses the analysis on four case studies of renowned Estonian female architects. The paper compares and juxtaposes the public profile of women architects with their self-perception. The author analyses, through interviews, the professional goals and the possibilities of advancement of women in design in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The conditions of self-realization, the design objectives, the support networks, and the search for balance between work demands and high-level management with personal and family responsibilities are the approaches of this analysis that brings us closer to the difficulties of reconciling these different areas for vital development.

The experiences in everyday life, domestic and public, are important research data for the new production and reproduction of knowledge. It is from the work of the transnational research group ‘Urbanism, Architectures and Feminist Design’, born during the Covid19 pandemic, that the text “Incarnating the virus” emerges. This article by Rossana Brandão Tavares, María Novas Ferradás and Laura Sarmiento proposes – using the virus as a metaphor – to reflect on the questions that should be posed about architecture and urbanism by feminist thought. Through a

collage of voices and approaches, it proposes an epistemological questioning, with a transversal political dimension, about the hegemonic practices of architecture and urbanism.

The article presented by Julia Koepper, Martha Wegewitz, and Dagmar Pelger proposes new notions to the urban discourse concerning the experiences and feminist practices linked to the urban and territorial sphere in terms of spatial and environmental justice. Starting from the question of how a non-sexist city could or should be, the authors present an analysis of the urban space in Berlin, Germany, understood in systemic terms. Through the methodological application of mapping as a tool for diagnosis and critical cartographic analysis, the research reveals the possibility of a new typology of feminist spatial systems.

On a global scale, the logic of the capitalist system represents one of the most pressing problems for cities in spatial, environmental and social terms, which determine not only the belonging or exclusion of local spaces but also the dismantling of identities and shared ways of living. In this sense, Karin Reisinger's article presents observations on two mining communities in Sweden and Austria that seek new narratives to face a post-extractivist future. Their proposal focuses on how feminist practices of care, mutual support or maintenance are restorative and counterextractive practices. The author emphasizes the situated position as researchers towards new ways of building knowledge that connects, collaborates and contributes to the real worlds of communities and their maintenance and care strategies instead of extracting and dismantling. Women's history and contributions to architecture and cities, from alternative logics to the dominant ones, is one of the axes that, thanks to new and extensive research, allow us to reconstruct genealogies and consolidate references for the future.

The article by Cátia Ramos is an essential contribution to the history of Portuguese architecture, broadening the knowledge about the contribution of women architects to the country's development. The proposal is an initial biographical contribution about the Portuguese architect Maria José Abrunhosa de Castro (1949-1999), who was an important figure both in the SAAL-Norte process and in the work she developed in the city of Guarda. Studying Maria José Abrunhosa de Castro is to go against stereotypes of what it is to be an architect, focused on authorship and the solo studio. This architect's career is intense and diverse, with a very relevant political and civic dimension. It is also pertinent because it draws our attention to a woman who had her professional practice outside the country's major cities.

The last article, by Fermina Garrido and Mara Sánchez Llorens, works with Lina Bo Bardi, Marianne Gast, and Ray Eames in a dialogue that underlines how its archives were constituted and structured. They analyse the moments and ways the women creators made their first records. In a second moment, the authors make a register of the registers. In this dialogue, the author's reality of researchers/teachers appears as an essential dimension of the exchange.

A team of women architects developed the project 'Mulheres em Construção' (Women under Construction), between 2021 and 2022, in the Portuguese city of Aveiro. The promotion of the *Mulheres na Arquitectura* (Women in Architecture, Portugal) brought the women of the Bairro de Santiago training in various construction areas. Their interview, conducted by Patrícia Santos Pedrosa and Natália Fávero, seeks to make this feminist intervention better known, as well as its objectives, methodologies and challenges, ending this volume with indications and an experience, applied to actual territories and a community of women.

The first publication presented in the book review section is the intensive work of publishing the proceedings of the MORE congress, held in 2017, presented by Lia Antunes (Amoroso, *et al.*, 2022). The author frames the realization of this congress in Florence, referring to its genealogy. It is said that this book, in Italian, Spanish and English, embraces an essential diversity of geographies, reinforcing Southern Europe as the engine of these crossings and reflections, connecting the global North with the global South. Still, once again, the absence of African contributions is pointed out, implicitly demanding that those organizing the following editions manage to overcome this significant shortcoming. As the author says, it is a publication that provides clues about several possible paths in theory and practice.

Mónica Guáqueta presents us with a review of the publication *LINA* (Arantes, *et al.* 2021). The magazine was founded by a group of young women based on the co-founders of the FAUP's *Núcleo Feminista* (Feminist Circle

of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto) and co-founders of MAAD Collective. Number #0 of this magazine was published in Porto, Portugal, in 2021, with the theme ‘Onde estão as mulheres?’ (Where are the women?). The review is structured by the magazine’s themes, starting by explaining the relevance of the name LINA. We are thereafter taken through synopses of the essays, both visual and written.

Nuria Lombardero reviewed Maria Nova’s book *Arquitectura y género. Una introducción posible* (2021) and contextualized its emergence within other books focusing on similar fields published in Spain in the last decades. The review takes the reader through the book structure, engages in a critique of its positioning, but ultimately encourages the reader to engage with the book, praising its quality as a reference work.

Radically different research, practices, and pedagogies are part of the fight and building of the feminist paths that must go on to make a better and fairer world for women and girls. Our aim of giving visibility to the debates on women’s and girls’ unconditional right to spaces (urban and architectural), together with the necessary expansion and strengthening of our international networks, will always be a work in progress. This special autumn issue of *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* is a part of our contribution. We hope you will appreciate reflecting with us through the proposals that follow.

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