WOMEN'S ABSENCE FROM THE PUBLIC SPHERE: GENDER INEQUALITY IN PORTUGUESE ARCHITECTURE SCHOOLS

Leonor Matos Silva[1]

Dinâmia'CET-University Institute of Lisbon,
Lisbon, Portugal

Abstract

In Portugal, public university architecture courses have originally been designed by men and for men. The female universe is left out of the curricula and women are kept away from the top positions in the academic hierarchy. Should the presence of women be regulated? Is it possible to change the course of history? The cases of Lisbon, Coimbra, and Porto inform this paper's discussion, which dwells on the analysis of official statistics on application grades for higher education (1st cycle), number of students placed in higher education (1st cycle), and number of teaching staff in higher education (all university levels). Statistics also inform the discussion of programmes of the most gendered sensitive curricular units, namely History and Theory of Architecture. The postcolonial perspective guided the discussion of findings with reference to how colonial legacies continue to influence educational systems. The headline findings show that, although academia is sensitive to gender equality, there is a gap between what is carried out in the curricula in general and the extra-curricular or occasional investigation, and research that is carried out outside universities. These findings nuance knowledge production with implications of social mobilization, and build a case for activist research that promotes gender equity and

[1] Corresponding author: leonor_silva@iscte-iul.pt

inclusivity. Recommendations include curricula revision, policy reform, intersectional pedagogical approaches and research practices, institutional commitment, and community engagement.

Keywords: architecture higher education studies, gender inequality, syllabuses, Portugal

Introduction

This article is about the involvement of women in Portuguese architecture schools. The text is divided into two complementary parts: the first analyses the representation of women in Portuguese academia; the second observes the integration of women authors in school curricula. Three public architecture teaching institutions – the University of Lisbon, the University of Coimbra, and the University of Porto – were used as case studies. A postcolonial perspective related to education underpinned the study which tackles the thematic areas (TA) identified in the Call for Papers by questioning "concepts and values" (TA1) like equality and representativeness; "working conditions" (TA2) as applied to women academic's status within their professional path; "grey data areas" (TA3) as the case of the withdrawal of information derived from the difficulty of direct surveying researchers at various levels; and "misrepresentations, or under-representation" (TA4) that affects researchers since the early stages of their careers. In fact, architecture schools in Portugal are overrun with women; the profession tends to be half full. Why are they not represented in the same proportion in the public sphere? The premise that architecture remains a male-orientated discipline in

Portugal is discussed in this article. The subject is susceptible. In the past, there were very significant cases of gender bias in these schools, some of which were not publicly acknowledge. After the democratic revolution of 1974, which overthrew a conservative dictatorship and a colonial "empire", schools underwent a curriculum adjustment and the female presence increased. The existence of documented social issues such as the "glass ceiling" (the difficulty for women to reach the top academic positions) and moral harassment (which includes the phenomenon of "intellectual extractivism") (Laranjeiro et al., 2023) proliferated. Fifty years on, it is important to know what the current trend is. Nevertheless, in this field the most important relies on what is not yet understood, or what remains to be confirmed, proving that this issue has many nuances, and highlighting the importance of sources. This study was originally designed to be based on two types of sources: official statistics and direct surveys. Statistics were the ideal basis for supporting the findings. Thus, in the first phase of the research process, priority was given to the statistical base which, being very dispersed and uneven, required calculations and the systematisation of data in tables. It is also important to consider the complementary state of the art. In Portugal, there is little habit of making public introspective or self-assessments. The few generally have a flattering tendency (Paulino, 2014) or an agenda[2]. In contexts like the US, which generally 'digests' its history with resolve, academia has already come a long way with the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s, providing the rest of the world with a substrate for its own

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[2] Cf. Portuguese Research Project "W@ARCH.PT - Arquitetas em Portugal: construção da visibilidade, 1942-1986", https://warch.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/.

thinking. Accordingly, the premise that we live in a patriarchal society must be considered, recognising that women architects were, especially in the 20th century, 'in tow' of their husbands, that they adopted their surnames, that they were their husbands' former classmates at architecture school, that they worked in a pair, that they lived in their shadow from a very early age and until too late. Recognising all this, we also realise that the opposite – which would be to segregate women architects into a separate group solely to discuss their contributions – implies a distinction and excludes their achievements from mainstream architectural discourse. This is a current trend. Without taking either approach, this article offers data that can support a more informed analysis.

Background

Today, the presence and important influence that women have had on history of architecture is increasingly recognised. More and more women are being identified around the world who, trained in architecture or having worked in this field, have contributed to the development of the discipline's thought and practice. A role that was unjustly pushed aside by architectural handbooks in schools and which today is perhaps, and sometimes also unjustly, being overly celebrated in elite circles of academia, in a balance that is not always easy.

There is difficulty in accessing information about the female dimension in a discipline that is undeniably masculinised. But, in general, the statistics show a tendency of increase in their

representation in the profession. This is the case, for instance, of the UK, where, according to the Architects Registration Board,

> [Women] representation is improving over time: in 2021, almost half the new architects joining the Register were female. More younger architects joining the Register are women[3].

The absence of female authorship in curricula as well as in the profession requires a comprehensive reading of society; in this text, we acknowledge that architectural education in Portugal hasn't so far recognised and overcome the legacy of its colonial past, since it hasn't fostered, in general, an educational environment that is sufficiently inclusive and thoughtful in the eyes of a postcolonial education perspective. The absence of women substantiates a "phantom limb" in architecture disciplinary body; however, it is not reasonable to attribute the responsibility for this "invisibilization" to the male milieu. The photograph of Charlotte Perriand on her, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's chaise longue turning her face backwards: no one asked her to turn the head over, she had intended to do it herself (McLeod, 2005). We need to "face up" the fact that women themselves may not be feminists in the most general sense of the term.

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[3] Cf. "Architects today: analysis of the architects' profession 2022" in https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ARB-EDI-Report-April-2023.pdf.

Figure. 1. The designer Charlotte Perriand in the famous *Chaise longue basculante B 306*, 1929, credited to Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Perriand.

As later described, in architectural education in Portugal, the following phenomenon is currently happening: around ¾ of those enrolled on the main courses are women, half of the graduates are women, just under half are professionals, and very few women make it to the top of their academic careers. This latter assertion we know empirically, in the absence of systematised statistical data[4]. It's a classic or non-inverted pyramid in terms of representation, in which the base, where the students are located, is larger than the peak. The trend of recent years is in favour of a greater presence of women in the public sphere, but this is still a long way off. In the case of architecture, it's worth focussing on History and Theory of architecture, and other alike, where traditionally there are more women teaching and researching. Although there is free and public access to official lists of course

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[4] At ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, a group of researchers led by Ana Vaz Milheiro and the author of this paper applied to set up a project entitled "Observatory on Architectural Education and Gender". This project was not accepted for funding as it was not considered a priority among other competitors.

syllabuses, the authorship of these lists is not in the public domain, therefore the assumption that the respective departments are the most responsible for the objectives, contents, and bibliography stands out. Thus, in practice, the interference of the male elite over ¾ of young women is potentially enormous. Both in numbers and substance. Although there is obviously no direct relationship, the likelihood of sexual and moral harassment is much higher in schools where there is a pattern of male tutors and young female students. The male hegemony in positions of power is possibly matched by a "silent majority" of women who don't report it for fear of jeopardising their private and professional lives. And so, a vicious chain closes in on itself: the absence that generates inequality, which generates misunderstanding, that generates abuse of power, that sometimes generates reporting, which usually has no consequences.

The representation of women in Portuguese academia

Portugal is a country in the south of Europe, on the periphery of the old continent, and therefore where trends are less expressive and slower to arrive, for the better or for the worse. Portuguese society is typically western, with a Christian background and an essentially patriarchal family model. Since formally joining the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986, the political and economic regime has been based on a generic neoliberalism which in the 1980s favoured the creation of higher education courses, particularly private ones. The nation is currently celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese revolution of 25 April 1974 which overthrew an oppressive, dictatorial political regime,

fascist-inspired, that belittled women. Among the reasons for its decline was a fierce critique of the colonial legacy and an unjustified resistance to the liberation wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau (1961-1974), countries that, along with other African territories, were the last of a supposed "empire" that was already in decline. The mania for grandeur of some parts of society was not matched by a trace of architectural avant-gardism: on the contrary, the state promoted the "Portuguese house", which was supposed to stimulate the "God, country, family" ideal, of which the woman was a faithful builder. Despite the revolution, Portugal has remained a society with "gentle customs", as it is commonly called, perhaps because it has a certain "fear of existing" (Gil, 2004) that barred the imposition of human rights. Gender inequalities in higher education have increasingly been the subject of public protests, especially by students, aimed at combating moral and sexual harassment and promoting inclusivity (e.g. Rosas, 2020). In academia, the problem of non-observance of good conduct is particularly serious since teaching staff and students live together in an educated environment with an educational vocation. Biases occur in different areas: some of these, like the humanities, have been more exposed (e.g. Cabrera, 2019; Santos, 2022; Laranjeiro et al., 2023); the major problem lies in the contexts where they occur without being denounced, investigated, and extinguished. Because, as recognisable, the problem of gender inequalities can be ongoing and silent in many contexts and relates to diverse patterns of behaviour that are often considered normal – since they are within the "norm", which also occurs with endogamy, a

recurring practice in Portuguese higher education (DGEEC, 2023).

Findings

Table 1. Application grades (0-200) of those last placed by the general quota in public higher education architecture courses in 1998, 1st phase

Name of the establishment	Last-placed grade
Technical University of Lisbon – Faculty of Architecture	178,5
University of Coimbra – Faculty of Sciences and Technology	164,8
University of Porto – Faculty of Architecture	179,0

Source: DGES – Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal. Data collected from https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt
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Table 2. Application grades (0-200) of those last placed by the general quota in public higher education architecture courses between 2021 and 2023

Name of the establishment	2021		2022		2023	
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2
University of Porto – Faculty of Architecture	184,0	188,0	185,5	190,0	184,5	192,0

Source: DGES – Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal. Data collected from https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt
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One of the areas where inequalities in higher education would undoubtedly benefit from being studied in greater depth in Portugal is architecture. There are currently 16 courses, both public and private – which, for a country with around 10 million inhabitants, guarantees a good sample. Apart from Italy, Malta and Macedonia, Portugal is the country in the world with the most architects per inhabitant (Quirk, 2014). Looking at our case studies, we can see that they are unified by the fact that around ¾ of applicants to the programme are women (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of female students (in %) placed in public higher education architecture courses between 2021 and 2023, phases 1 and 2

Name of the establishment	2021		2022		2023	
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2
Technical University of Lisbon – Faculty of Architecture	58	93	67	63	68	100
University of Coimbra – Faculty of Sciences and Technology	64	82	59	90	74	67
University of Porto – Faculty of Architecture	72	50	70	50	73	75

Source: DGES – Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal. Data collected from https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt

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Since architecture is a historically and culturally male-centred discipline, how can this disparity be explained? We also know

that, according to INE (National Statistical Institute, Portugal)[5], in 2019, 57.9% of Portugal's graduates were women, and that professional practice has become more equal in terms of gender distribution. By 2022, according to the Architects' Council of Europe, women in Portugal would account for 47% of the working population among architecture professionals (data compiled by the organisation itself)[6]. Despite this, back in 2006, Cabral warned that "the rate of feminisation of architecture has been (...) slower than that of other professions" (2006, p.31). If we consider mathematical equity, women should represent 50 per cent of the architectural working force. This decline between the first day of school and the day they leave the profession, which logically involves many dropouts along the way, is something to reflect on.

This study researched the percentage of women in the teaching staff of public and private architecture courses. It is said, read and commented that the representation of women decreases in relation to that of men as the teaching career progresses, but there are no found publicly available databases, studies or statistics that are specifically designed to verify this hypothesis, which is unfortunate, given that the three courses observed above have ambitious equality plans for non-discrimination that aim to promote greater gender inclusion (See note 12). The only alternative is to examine the overall figures, which show a trend. Table 4 looks at all higher education courses, university, and polytechnic, public and private, and observes an upward trend in

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[5] Infographic available online at
https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpgid=ine_main&xpid=INE.
[6] www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/2022_Sector_Study_EN.pdf, p.94.

the total number of employees. In 2022/23, women represented around 46.6% of all teaching staff on average (18,741 in total), considering all levels.

Table 4. Total numbers of higher education teaching staff by academic year, and gender, 2020/21 to 2022/23

	Gender	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total	WM	36 473	38 667	40 183
	W	16 705	17 869	18 741

Source: Statistics of the Human Resources of the Superior Education, DGEEC, Portugal. Data collected from https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt
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As for the proportion of members of the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities, the annual total of women is 25.0% in 2021; 31.3% in 2022; and the same 31.3% in 2023, in a positive progression, but far from the 46.6% represented by female teachers in the whole of higher education[7]. Here again, the top positions are mostly male, despite the growing representation of women.

As far as architecture is concerned, considering the globalised world we live in, it would be worth taking as a methodological benchmark the type of study carried out by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture – ACSA (Chang, 2014). Its conclusion comes in the first sentence: "The farther up you look in the world of architecture, the fewer women you see." These are

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[7] Cf.
https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0004198&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2«

impressive numbers on the representation of women in the architectural academy. The webpage-report shows very explicit, well designed, and illustrative graphics which demonstrate, without any hesitation, an objective look at the under-representation of women in American institutions linked to architectural education, both the institutions themselves and those that award prizes, as well as professionals. Architecture schools and professional practice, although distinct today, have a common root. Their coexistence is inseparable; teaching is the key to reading the entire history and theory of architecture in modern times. Studying architecture culture necessarily means studying architecture school. Today, in Portugal, what mediates between the school and practice in legal terms is the Bar of Portuguese Architects. This institution is one of those responsible for the official accreditation of architecture courses and is therefore responsible for the approximately 27 000 architects practising in the country[8], including all recent graduates from the courses recognised (7) and accredited (14) in 2005 by the Bar itself[9]. Its responsibility as a state body and representative of the sector is notable. In fulfilment of its role, the National Council ordered a study in March 2023 (António, 2023). And yet, in this study, there is no weighting of the teaching factor or differentiation between men and women. There are 71 questions and a variety of parameters, none of which are related to gender or the original training institution, let alone themes related to inclusion or

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[8] Cf. https://arquitectos.pt/index.htm?no=101068.
[9]
http://www.oasrn.org/pdf_upload/Lista%20de%20Cursos_Acreditados_Reconhecidos%20
-%20Abr%202006.pdf.

discrimination. Is the binary separation of gender too sensitive to the current woke sensibility?

The integration of women in school curricula

Between the 1980s and the new millennium, Portugal remained an unequal and poor country, but this period was characterised by remarkable transformations and progress that brought it into line with the European Union's prosperity indexes. Contact with the outside world became broader and faster. Access to consumption (despite the arrival of the IMF in 1983) enabled the emergence of "fashions", a *media* explosion, and a generalised cultural euphoria. Architecture, particularly in the capital, was marked by the fleeting post-modernist movement, part of a broader "post-modern condition" (Lyotard, 1979). In Lisbon, things evolved enormously. With the 25th of April, the city's only architecture school definitively disconnected from its pedagogical duty and joined the political idea of mass training. Many teachers, especially those with the highest status, were not shy about acting in a machoist way, abusing the power they had under the community and society's look (Fernandes & Vilela, 2016, pp. 238-243). Pedagogically in ruins, stemming from the rottenness of the previous regime, the school never remade itself with the "window of opportunity" offered to it by the revolution (Silva, 2019). From a human, political and architectural point of view, confusion reigned between modern and post-modern values. In a context where there were more and more women students and teachers, between 1982 and 1986, the school hosted renowned male

architects and an unknown woman for four symposia about post-modernism (Silva, 2019, pp. 248-300). Lecturers included Michael Graves, Peter Eisenman, Pierluigi Nicolin, Franco Purini, Alessandro Mendini, Andreas Papadakis. Many more were invited; symptomatically, Robert Venturi and Aldo Rossi, later winners of the Pritzker Prize, declined the invitation. The woman, named Sharon Lee Ryder, was an American, a specialist in urban design, with an informative and structured speech, perhaps more conventional than the others. But stereotypically pragmatic (Boronat & Bella, 2022). These conferences were attended by young women and men students from other schools, such as the school in Porto, driven by the desire to have contact with leading figures whom they had only had contact with through periodicals.

There was a similar movement to the Soure Bienal, in the district of Coimbra. The first edition, in 1986, proposed a discussion on architecture and territorial design through initiatives such as workshops, a draft competition, and the presentation of communications (Jornal Arquitectos, 1986). In addition to the participants, architects from Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto came to Soure "just out of curiosity, to take a look at the atmosphere"[10], perhaps attracted not only by the programme but also by the male figures who oversaw the event, including Alcino Soutinho, Alexandre Alves Costa, Álvaro Siza, Domingos Tavares and Sérgio Fernandez, who were rooted in the north; Gonçalo Byrne, Nuno Portas and Nuno Teotónio Pereira, originally from Lisbon; and Pierluigi Nicolin, who had also attended the Lisbon Symposia

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[10] José Bandeirinha to the author, 20.03.2024.

mentioned above. While there existed peer gender intermingling on a geographical level, there was no gender representativeness or "gender equity" as we envisage it today in these top figures, however it was in those terms that the architecture course at the University of Coimbra was successfully inaugurated in 1988.

The Porto school of architecture, the other school with a secular tradition besides Lisbon, evolved in a more linear way than its Lisbon counterpart, despite its internal debates. There are countless theses – academic and "informal" – that affirm a coherence of a unique pedagogical path in this period (Moniz, 2011; Fernandes, 2011; Paulino 2014), and after it was called into question, past the legacy of leading figures from the years before the revolution, and at a time when the school was digesting its first Pritzker, Álvaro Siza, awarded in 1992. Between February and April 1990, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto presented the "Discourses on Architecture" conference cycle (which was revived in 2010 by Jorge Figueira, Carlos Machado, Eduardo Souto de Moura, João Pedro Serôdio, José Bernardo Távora, José Paulo dos Santos and Manuel Mendes) which "brought together a remarkable group of architects", according to the Faculty itself[11], including Fernando Távora and Álvaro Siza; James Stirling, Giorgio Grassi and Rafael Moneo; Jacques Herzog, Peter Zumthor and David Chipperfield; Bernardo Secchi; Kenneth Frampton, in other words, ten men and no women. Three of these 10 architects would later win the Pritzker Prize: Álvaro Siza

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[11] https://sigarra.up.pt/faup/pt/noticias_geral.ver_noticia?p_nr=739.

(1992), Jacques Herzog (2001, with Pierre de Meuron) and Peter Zumthor (2009).

It's worth focusing on the American Pritzker Prize when approaching the topic of women in architecture. The discussion of what is referred to by the public as "the Nobel of architecture" is not the aim of this second part of the text, but it is necessary to frame the critical feminist current in Portugal, which is distressed about the anachronistic framework that we can see in the teaching of History and Theory of the three schools under study. This approach is based on a wide range of Anglo-Saxon texts and ideas (Anthony & Gürel, 2006; Adams, 2012; Heynen, 2012) which argue that the Pritzker encourages the attitude of the architect-author who cultivates a public persona undermining architecture as an eminently collective practice, especially in a modernist perspective. The architects who visited Portugal before the turn of the millennium may not have been the most famous in the eyes of the *media*, but they were certainly important figures in the practice and theory of architecture. It could even be the case that the architect-person was a woman, like Zaha Hadid, who won her own Pritzker in 2004. And the most famous absentee, Denise Scott-Brown, partner, and wife of Robert Venturi (1991 laureate), who has had an important career as a teacher, frayed arguments about authorship in one of her most famous texts (Scott-Brown, 1989), in which she emphasises the authorship of architectural work, fuelling the "ideology" of the architect-as-an-author, in this case in pairs. Architect Lina Bo Bardi didn't win a Pritzker either, and she parted from the idea of belonging to an elite, but she is adored by the Brazilian academy. Giovanna Merli

did a collection on women as a research topic, noting that, "among the 9 049 architectural master's and doctoral theses registered in the national theses database, the Portal da CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel, Brazil), 70 of these theses are dedicated to Lina Bo Bardi" (Merli, 2024) which is extraordinary for one person, let alone a woman. The type of monographic approach on women has also been the most chosen in the Portuguese context (Roxo, 2016; Carvalho, 2020) and, if we look at it in the Latin framework that includes South America, there are numerous associations that publicise women architects outside the mainstream[12]. These use derivations of the word "invisible" (as a latent condition of women) that have become mandatory in the feminist lexicon to characterise and criticise a certain era (Cf. Laurino, 2018; Costa, 2023). But this activity can be limiting critical practice. For Willis (1998), a scholar on Australian women architects,

> The invisibility of women architects in mainstream architectural history to date has been a product of how architectural history is determined and constructed, rather than a deliberate attempt to exclude the contribution of women architects. Specific and deliberate instances of the exclusion of women architects in architectural history have occurred but the motivation for such exclusion is unclear (p. 60).

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[12] Cf. https://www.archdaily.com/990570/pioneering-women-architects-from-latin-america-to-spain.

Despite relevance in Willis' point, it is striking how such few women are on the syllabuses of the theoretical subjects in the case studies. According to the public programmes for History and Theory and alike subjects published online, we can see that, from the outset,

- in Lisbon, where one might think that, from what is known of its history, the teaching was more progressive and therefore featured more female authors, there are around 4 female authors in a total of 56 (spread over all years and all subjects, excluding electives), which represents 7.1%;
- in Coimbra, out of around 94 authors, 3 women were found, totalling 3.2%;
- in Porto, perhaps because the bibliography covers a greater number of authors, with a total of 130, the percentage of female authors rises to 8.5% with a total of 11 names.

The next table presents women authors (some of them practising architects), their birth and death dates, their dominant practice, and the bibliographic reference introduced in the syllabuses.

Table 5. Women authors in the bibliography of History and Theory alike curricular units in the year 2023/24

Name, (date of birthdate of death) Title of reference (Year)	Career (dominant activity)	Technical University of Lisbon - Faculty of Architecture	University of Coimbra – Faculty of Sciences and Technology	University of Porto – Faculty of Architecture
Bo Bardi, Lina (1914-1992) Stones Against Diamonds (2013)	Architect			

Colomina, Beatriz (1952-) X-Ray Architecture (2019) Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media (2000)	Architect, historian, curator, and theorist			
Jacobs, Jane (1916-2006) The death and life of the great American cities (1961)	Writer and political activist			
Jellicoe, Geoffrey Susan (1907-1986) The landscape of man (1975)	Plants woman, photographer, writer, and editor			
Latour, Alessandra Louis I. Kahn: Writings, Lectures, Interviews (Ed.) (1991)				
Milheiro, Ana Vaz (1968-) A construção do Brasil: Relações com a cultura arquitectónica portuguesa (2005)	Architect, Professor and researcher			
Molder, Maria Filomena (1950-) Rebuçados venezianos (2016)	Philosopher, Professor and researcher			
Nesbitt, Kate (1957-) Theorizing a new Agenda for Architecture - An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995 (1996)	Urbanist			
Paglia, Camille (1947-) Sex, Art and American Culture (1992)	Academic, social critic and feminist			
Schmid, Susanne W/ Dietmar Eberle & Margrit Hugentobler (eds.): A History of Collective Living (2024)				
Scott-Brown, Denise (1931-) Having Words (2009)	Architect, planner, writer and educator			
Silva, Raquel Henriques da (1952-) Lisboa Romântica. Urbanismo e arquitectura, 1777-1874 (1997) Lisboa de Frederico Ressano Garcia 1874-1909 (1989)	Historian and Professor			
Silvano, Filomena Antropologia do Espaço (2001)	Anthropologist and Professor			

Tostões, Ana (1959-) Cultura Arquitectónica e Tecnologia da Construção (2002) Os verdes anos na arquitectura portuguesa dos anos 50 (1994)	Architect, Professor and researcher			

Source: Public syllabuses of the architecture courses. Data collected in

https://www.fa.ulisboa.pt (University of Lisbon),

https://www.uc.pt/fctuc/darq (University of Coimbra) and

https://sigarra.up.pt/faup/pt (University of Porto); © Leonor Matos Silva

It is true that the disjointed data and figures are reductive. Architectural education in Portugal is based on an informal relationship with the students which often means that teachers don't update the official syllabuses, although they do provide specific bibliography as the school year progresses. The official lists are therefore not binding in terms of practice, which is of an experimental nature. The inclusion of female themes and authors also depends on the profile of the teachers, who may be more or rather less sensitive to the subject. Nevertheless, the difference between the current integrationist discourse (namely the official *plans for equality* of the three Universities[13]) and the curriculum in force is remarkable. And it contrasts with some extra-curricular events that, for some time now, have been, voluntarily or involuntarily in compensation, making up for this obvious and consequent gap. An initiative organised by the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Coimbra serves as an example. In 2010, under the coordination of Jorge Figueira, a group of students was challenged to draw up a profile of several significant

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[13] Lisbon:
www.fa.ulisboa.pt/images/20232024/QUALIDADE/Plano_Igualdade_de_Género_Inclusao_e_não_Discriminacao_da_ULisboa.pdf; Coimbra:
https://www.uc.pt/sustentabilidade/igualdade/PIEDUC2019_2023_web.pdf; Porto:
https://www.up.pt/portal/documents/11/UP_Igualdade_-_Plano_para_a_Igualdade_de_Genero_da_Universidade_do_Porto.pdf.

women architects. This topic had not been tackled before in a pedagogical context in Portugal. Various women authors were grouped together as historical vs contemporary, practical vs theoretical and foreign vs Portuguese. These included, from oldest to youngest: Eileen Gray, Lilly Reich, Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky, Jane Drew, Ray Eames, Lina Bo Bardi, Maria José Marques da Silva, Minnette da Silva, Maria Carlota Quintanilha, Alison Smithson, Zaha Hadid, Beatriz Colomina, and Elizabeth Diller. The work resulted in the first edition of the journal *Joelho* (Figueira, 2010) on the theme of "Women in Architecture", with texts by Jorge Figueira, Gonçalo Canto Moniz and Silvana Rubino, and a group of six students.

At around this time, Patrícia Pedrosa was writing a short but significant text for the 1st meeting of the EAHN-European Architectural History Network in Guimarães in 2010. Entitled "Being a female architect in Portugal: a short introduction to a long ride", this essay proposed an initial summary of the history of women architects in Portugal (Pedrosa, 2010).

In the capital, some architects who had graduated from the Faculty of Architecture but were completely disconnected – especially since there is no known reference initiative promoted by the school about gender sensitive issues (Silva, 2024) – and within the framework of the Bar of Architects periodicals, developed the thematic magazine *Being a woman* (Dias & Milheiro, 2011). The publication was part of a series that proposed one theme per issue. The entire edition *Being a Woman* was designed and prepared to include women authors (while in the other issues

participation was mixed). As such, the preparation was given special attention by Ana Vaz Milheiro (Interim editor), who wrote the editorial and a research article on Maria Carlota Quintanilha. All the other themed sections – from the cartoon chronicle, usually signed by a man, to architectural projects carried out by women, as interviews, highlights, bibliographical reviews, and so on – were written by women. It was an issue made by women and dedicated to women where essays by Beatriz Colomina and Mary McLeod, "points of view" by Odete Santos and Paula Teixeira da Cruz, a statement by Inês Lobo, could be found.

These three events held between 2010 and 2011 were important milestones for their pioneering nature. Still, prior to these events is one of the most important initiatives with regard to the subject of this work: in 1993, a short film was made and presented on public television by Manuel Graça Dias entitled *Women Architects*[14], in which he interviews Gabriela Tomé, Olga Quintanilha, Helena Roseta, Maria Manuel Godinho de Almeida, Luísa Pacheco Marques and Maria Soledade de Sousa – all of whom graduated from the Lisbon School of Architecture between the 70s and 90s. Graça Dias's first statement (and perplexity) back in 1993 was precisely the disparity between the number of women enrolled in the faculties and the representation they have in the profession. This film is little referenced in the literature; but the 2010-11 initiatives above mentioned are known for the regularity with which they are referred to and taken as examples of the Portuguese state of the art since, for many years, nothing

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[14] The film is available in the archives of the Portuguese Radio and Television (RTP) online: https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/arquitectura-e-decoracao/.

of the kind was published in architecture periodicals or conference proceedings. In 2022, the main bedroom of Eileen Gray's house E.1027 would be reconstructed by architecture students at the Porto school through the engagement in workshops. The result would be exhibited in one of the school's interior spaces, a travelling exhibition that was later relocated to Lisbon[15]. Like Gray's house, other activities did happen in Portuguese architecture academy related to women architects between 1993 and 2024[16]; but they were only possible due to the pioneer events stated. What we can conclude from this long description of events is that there is a gap between what is carried out in the curriculum in general and the extra-curricular or occasional investigation, or even the research that is carried out outside universities. Can we assume that teaching is conservative or simply not up to date about women?

Conclusions

At a recent conference on modernist women architects[17], a consensus was evident on two points: the difficulty of being a woman architect in a male-dominated world; and the difficulty of making women architects "visible". The two leading findings of this research are symptomatic of this tendency. Firstly, despite the high sensitivity towards gender equality within academia, there is a significant gap between theoretical commitments and

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[15] https://sigarra.up.pt/faup/pt/noticias_geral.ver_noticia?p_nr=67962.

[16] Particularly the WomArchStruggle project, launched in 2023 (https://www.womarchstruggle.com/).

[17] "Modernist women interior designers and artists: to deepen the reading of the different expressions of female creativity"; https://iscidconference2024.wixsite.com/modernistwomen.

practical implementations. This indicates that while policies and discourses may promote gender equality, actual practices and outcomes often fall short, revealing persistent "invisibilities" in the academic environment. Secondly, there is a disconnect between the representation of women in the formal curricula and the feminine investigations conducted outside the structured academic framework, whether occasional, extra-curricular, or independent research outside universities. This gap suggests that innovative, interdisciplinary, or non-traditional research on women architects might be the means to represent and support new formal academic programmes, pointing to the need for more inclusive and flexible research practices. While it would be unwise to rewrite or replace the classics, a bibliographical revision of the current curricula could be made introducing in the syllabuses texts and feminist women authors and their fundamental works, such as Gwendolyn Wright's Moralism and the Moral Home (1980) or Dolores Hayden's The Grand Domestic Revolution (1981). The introduction of gender studies in architecture in elective subjects would also be a complementary hypothesis: based on certain fundamentals, such as the theories and history of feminism and international law. These proposals are not so unattainable.

There are some important final considerations regarding the current state of discourse on gender equality in academia and society, particularly within the context of Portuguese society and the field of architecture. The pervasiveness of sexism across different social strata, including academic elite, often manifested in subtle forms such as gender bias in hiring, in the promotion and (under-)representation in curricula stands out. In summary,

this study enhances the literature by providing a focused examination of gender-specific challenges in architectural academia, advocating for curricular reforms that integrate postcolonial and feminist critiques which are essential to offer a comprehensive analysis of the systemic barriers faced by women in architecture. Specifically, it focuses on women in architecture, it highlights curriculum gaps, it offers empirical evidence on gender disparities, it recommends curricular reform while amplifying female voices in architecture. Finally, as a complementation of the existing literature, it intersects postcolonial and gender critiques.

Acknowledgments

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