

Tackling the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture

Het aanpakken van de onderrepresentatie van vrouwen in de architectuur

Elisabeth Peeters

Thesis voorgedragen tot het behalen
van de graad van Master of Science
in de ingenieurswetenschappen:
architectuur

Promotoren:

Prof. dr. Hilde Heynen
Prof. dr. Isabelle Doucet, Chalmers
University of Technology

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Abstract (English)

The underrepresentation of women keeps plaguing the architecture industry. This research offers some insight in how we can start to turn this around by looking what some are currently already doing about it. The thesis looks specifically at activists in Sweden, a country that is some steps ahead of Flanders. It offers possible ways of how to tackle the leaky pipeline phenomenon starting at architecture school, which actions are necessary and which limitations to look out for.

The research was conducted in three phases. The first was consulting existing studies and articles on the underrepresentation of women, on Sweden, and on the role of activism in architecture. Thereafter, the work of four feminist architecture associations in Sweden was studied, by combining public information, interviews, archives, and articles. Then lastly the topic was discussed with a few Flemish students from different as well as my own university.

The analysis of the work the feminist groups have done already shows some actions that are necessary, the influence the general atmosphere, in the country as well as at the university, has, the importance of a connection with the institution to create something that lasts, and the limitations the groups are faced with. The interviews with the Flemish students confirmed that currently not much is being done at school level or elsewhere to tackle the issue and that it is high time that changes.

The conclusion of this research is that Flanders is currently stuck in a vicious cycle that keeps reaffirming itself. The lack of action and awareness does not spark new actions, thereby creating the inertia we are currently stuck in. Something that will not change as long as we do not start making conscious choices to break away from it. What Sweden shows is that starting and addressing a precession issue are integral to get a positive cycle going. Actions spark new actions and keep the subject on the agenda. The industry must be challenged with new practices and students must be made aware of the sexist tendencies that are still plaguing the industry.

Abstract (Nederlands)

De ondervertegenwoordiging van vrouwen blijft de architectuurindustrie kwellen. Dit onderzoek biedt inzicht in hoe we dit kunnen aanpakken door te kijken naar wat anderen er al aan doen. Deze masterproef kijkt specifiek naar activisten in Zweden, een land dat Vlaanderen enkele stappen voor is. Het biedt mogelijke manieren om vanaf de architectuurschool het 'leaky-pipeline' fenomeen aan te pakken, welke acties nodig zijn en op welke begrenzungen we moeten letten.

Het onderzoek is uitgevoerd in drie fasen. De eerste was het raadplegen van bestaande studies en artikelen over de ondervertegenwoordiging van vrouwen, over Zweden en over de rol van activisme in de architectuur. Daarna werd het werk van vier feministische architectuurverenigingen in Zweden bestudeerd door openbare informatie, interviews, archieven, en artikelen te combineren. Ten slotte werd het onderwerp besproken met enkele Vlaamse studenten van andere alsook van mijn eigen universiteit.

De analyse van het werk dat de feministische groepen hebben gerealiseerd, toont al enkele acties die nodig zijn, de invloed die de algemene sfeer heeft, zowel in het land als aan de universiteit, het belang van een band met de instelling om iets blijvend creëren, en de beperkingen waarmee de groepen worden geconfronteerd. De interviews met de Vlaamse studenten bevestigden dat er momenteel op schoolniveau en elders niet veel wordt gedaan om de problematiek aan te pakken en dat het hoog tijd is om daar verandering in te brengen.

De conclusie van dit onderzoek is dat Vlaanderen momenteel vastzit in een vicieuze cirkel die zichzelf steeds weer bevestigt. Het gebrek aan actie en het niet aanpakken van het probleem leidt niet tot nieuwe acties, waardoor een zekere inertie is ontstaan. Iets dat niet zal veranderen zolang we geen bewuste keuzes beginnen te maken om eraan te ontsnappen. Wat Zweden ons toont, is dat het starten en aanpakken van een probleem essentieel is om een positieve cyclus op gang te krijgen. Acties lokken nieuwe acties uit en zorgen dat onderwerpen op de agenda blijven. De industrie moet worden uitgedaagd met nieuwe praktijken en studenten moeten bewust worden gemaakt van de seksistische gewoonten die de industrie blijven kwellen.

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1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction¹

In my time at architecture school, I followed thirteen architecture studio courses in total – of which I followed one as part of an exchange program. All together there were 22 design teachers of which only four were women, and I had the privilege of being taught by three of them, my first year being completely taught by male teachers. This is something that really stood out to me from day one at school, where are the female architects? Is there a space for them and why is it not here? One thing that made up for it was that at least 50% of my professors in my first year were women, which was not something my colleagues studying civil engineering could say. I started to count every semester and every year how many courses there were and how many were taught by women.

During my second year we were designing a public library. It was after reading a lot about bathrooms and the problems that transgender people face when using them, that I decided to have one big space for toilets in my library. Only my teacher did not agree with this being a good idea (also because it was mandatory by law to have separate toilets) and I started to wonder, who is architecture serving?

That semester in the course Architectural Theory 2, taught by Prof. Dr. Ir. Hilde Heynen, one part of the course was dedicated to teaching architectural theory with a perspective of gender and about the role of women in architecture. Some male students in the class did not think this was necessary, as women are not really experiencing discrimination anymore, I heard them say after one class. Who are they to judge the struggles women are faced with, when history was written by and for them?

¹ As the current situation of the architecture industry regarding gender (in)equality is something that will influence me and many of my fellow students personally I chose to start this master thesis on a personal note. Illustrating the experiences and observations that led me to this thesis research: a feminist study on Sweden's and Flanders' architecture industries. It was a text by bell hooks in her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* that inspired me to do that in this way and explain my position in this research. When hooks explains how she teaches it is preceded by a why, telling the reader about previous experiences and how this shaped her personal method of pedagogy.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Routledge

When I was designing apartments in my third years' architecture studio the option of designing an apartment with rooms of the same size was not discussed. Co-housing was limited to a few apartments sharing an extra space together, and most apartments were designed for families with a few studio apartments for one. Because I never thought of designing differently and because the teacher never taught us a different way. Should feminist design be taught in school, should the initiative come from the student? Even if they do not know any better?

In the master program I chose there were nine courses next to the design courses in the first year. This time only four courses in the whole year were (partially) taught by female professors. A decline carried over into my last year, where there is only one out of the four mandatory courses beside this master thesis that is partially coordinated by a woman. As the perspective that female educators have to offer, is to me invaluable, all the elective courses I followed during these years were at least partially taught and coordinated by women. Although if this was not something I had chosen, or if I had followed another master option entirely who knows how dire the numbers might have been? Should it be up to the students to surround themselves with female role models and a gender critical perspective?

During my last year I had the opportunity to go to Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden for one semester as part of an Erasmus Exchange. "But in Sweden they're quite a bit ahead of us [in terms of gender equality], are they not?" my grandmother said to me. When I arrived in Sweden and was getting to know the country and the school there was one thing in particular that stood out. The student association of the architecture students at Chalmers had a group advocating for gender conscious education. It wasn't only the architecture students that had this, for all students regardless of faculty two feminist groups are associated with the student union. And it wasn't only at Chalmers either. This stood out because at KU Leuven I only knew of one group dealing with racial, gender, LGBTQ+ and other inequality issues. It was only after three+ years of studying at KUL that I first heard of the group via a friend of mine. How come it is so active in Sweden? Why are there groups still necessary if, as my grandmother thought, 'in Sweden they are ahead of us'? Or is it part of the secret to a more equal society?

1.2 Posing the Problem

In 2016 Carolien Vermeiren researched the underrepresentation of women in architecture in Flanders and the 'leaky pipeline'-effect². The 'leaky pipeline'-effect brings to light how dire the situation of underrepresentation in the industry really is, by comparing the rate at which women more than men leave the field after they have graduated architecture school. It shows how the industry is not really changing with the times, as women have been making up larger parts of the student body at architecture school for quite some time now, and the number of female architects is not growing at the same rate. The underrepresentation is a problem that is present in every aspect of the field; in firms, in architectural history and theory, in education, in the design itself. It is ever present. Research has shown how important it is for anyone to have representation to know their goals or dreams are not unachievable, to have someone to look up to.

The underrepresentation of women in architecture and the building industry by large is not only a problem in Flanders. Sweden is a country that's generally viewed as very progressive. On Sweden's official website, subpage 'GENDER EQUALITY IN SWEDEN', there is a short timeline of all actions and laws that have been put in place in the strife for more equal rights for men and women³. The first change in law that is mentioned is one from 1250. To show that they have been working towards a more equal society for a long time. How does a country that has been working with gender equality for that long deal with these issues now?

With all their established changes in place one can wonder if any change is still necessary and if so, where. Activism is at the root of many societal changes, and Sweden is still home to many activists that are not settling for the current situation. And clearly even with all that has been institutionalised, activism is still active in the country with the first feminist government in the world. The Swedish women lobby '*Sveriges Kvinno Lobby*'⁴ serves as a reference

² Vermeiren, C. (2017). (Onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de architectuur in Vlaanderen.

³ the Swedish Institute. (2021) *GENDER EQUALITY IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/> on 4/10/2020

⁴ Sveriges Kvinnolobby. (n.d.) *Om Sveriges Kvinnolobby*. [About the Swedish women's lobby] Retrieved from Sveriges Kvinnolobby: <https://sverigeskvinnolobby.se/om-sveriges-kvinnolobby/om-organisationen/> on 17/2/2021

committee for the feminist government and has 47 sub-organizations. One of them is *Kvinnors Byggforum* an organization that is specifically serving women in the building industry. They come together to share their experiences and for example talk about “administrate problems from a power-critical perspective”.⁵

Also, in the world of academia a lot of attention is given to gender equality.⁶ This both by professors and other educators as well as students. The student organization of the faculty of architecture at Chalmers University of Technology even has a subdivision that works around gender equality in the program.⁷ These groups also exist at other faculties and other universities.

This brings us to the main question this thesis will try to answer: (How) can we tackle the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture with activism in education? There are different levels of activism to tackle these different ways in which women are underrepresented. What kind of actions are necessary and what are the limitations?

Some other questions that will be addressed include:

Why after all this time, is there still a necessity for these groups in Sweden or is it because of the number of organizations working with gender equality that Sweden has already come this far? Is this gender equality really there or is it only an image to the outside world? What is the current situation in Flanders?

What is the influence of these organizations in the building sector, at their institutions? How do they tie into the institutions? Is there a way to combine architecture and activism? What kind of activism can be done in the field, in the architecture?

⁵ Sveriges Kvinnolobby. (n.d.) *Informationsträff med Kvinnors Byggforum*. [Information meeting with Kvinnors Byggforum] Retrieved from Sveriges Kvinnolobby: <https://sverigeskvinnolobby.se/informationstraff-med-kvinnors-byggforum/> on 4/10/2020

⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender Equality in Academia and Research*. Retrieved from EIGE: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/legislative-policy-backgrounds/sweden> on 4/10/2020

⁷ A-Sektionen 2020. (2020). *Jämika Arkitektstudenter - JA*. [Jämika Architect students - JA] Retrieved from Arkitekturstuderandesektionen Chalmers: <http://www.a-sektionen.se/sektionen/utskott/ja/> on 4/10/2020

1.3 Methodology

To answer the question “(How) can we tackle the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture with activism in education?” and to find out what possible limitations of that could be, an understanding of the current state of affairs was necessary first. This happened through consulting international literature, documents on the Swedish government and a deep internet search.

Then the data could be collected, this happened in multiple steps. The first was a deeper internet and social media search on Sweden’s Feminist Architecture movements. Secondly activist groups could be contacted and interviewed. This was followed up by a dive into the archives of some of the interviewed groups. At last, data was gathered on the Flemish architecture education. All of this was then presented to Flemish student groups to gain an understanding of how the topic lives with them.

The participants for the first round of interviews were chosen based on the following criteria: the groups had to be feminist groups, they had to be working within the architecture field specifically and be in some way connected to education or institutions. Six groups were contacted, three were interviewed, and one participated in the form of sending articles and another interview. The primary criterium for the interviews with the Flemish student groups, was that they had to be connected to their architecture faculty, and that interviewees were a member of the student association. Due the pandemic all interviews were conducted via video calls, these were recorded with permission of the interviewees.

The interviews with the Swedish activists were first transcribed and then analysed with the help of NVivo. As I was going through the different interviews multiple times certain themes came to the foreground, also ones that weren’t explicitly asked about. The interviews were also brought in connection with the archives and other information. A similar approach was taken to analyse the second round of interviews, although here the interviews were originally conducted in Dutch. Only the quotes used in the text were translated to English. The interviews with the Swedish groups are added in attachment.

A deeper understanding of the connection between the groups and the institutions could still be gained by interviewing professors or other educators at the different universities, in Sweden as well as in Flanders. It could also be interesting to talk to other students and what their perception of the groups is. Some personal connection with interviewees, which is crucial for a depth interview, might have been lost as we were all in different rooms in front of our computers or phones. Another important note to make is the research and the development of the question was still in an early stage when the first interviews were conducted, and archives were only shared after the interviews. This may have prevented from going deeper into certain aspects of the research.

2 Literature Study

2.1 Underrepresentation

In 2016 Carolien Vermeiren, at that time studying the master 'Gender and Diversity' at KU Leuven, researched the underrepresentation of women and the severity of the leaky pipeline in architecture in Flanders for her master thesis. The topic was suggested by prof Dr. Ir. Hilde Heynen, who had noticed an important phenomenon: for quite some time now slightly more female students than male students are graduating as architectural engineers from the faculty of engineering science at KU Leuven. Despite this majority of female graduates, there continue to be fewer female architects actually practicing the profession.¹

Vermeiren found that internationally this topic had already been widely discussed, and the international literature confirmed the Flemish situation.² The underrepresentation of women in architecture continues to plague the industry globally. First a more international situation will be presented with numbers from the US, UK, Spain, and France. Then the Flemish followed by the Swedish numbers will be given in detail.

2.1.1 Underrepresentation of Women in Architecture in Numbers

Vermeiren's research painted a clear picture of the situation in Flanders.³ However as mentioned before, the underrepresentation of women in architecture is also a problem in the rest of the western world. A recent survey by the Architects' Journal even stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recession, the numbers in the UK have become quite alarming. With a growing pay gap, the profession has become less attractive: "men now earn on average £1,485 more than women in the profession, up from £1,326 last year. Female architecture staff with 11-20 years of experience have seen a 6 per cent drop in their average pay over the past year, whereas men with the same experience have seen a nearly 2 per cent

¹ Vermeiren, C. (2017). (Onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de architectuur in Vlaanderen.

² Ibid.

³ Women make up about one third of registered architects in Flanders, this is an important drop compared to the number of female graduates and one that does not seem to change. Furthermore Vermeiren collected numbers on architects mentioned in and authors writing for architectural journals and magazines.

Vermeiren, C. (2017). (Onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de architectuur in Vlaanderen.

increase.”⁴ This growth in the gender pay gap puts the profession at risk of “going even further backwards in terms of diversity – and that includes socio-economic diversity”.⁵ In the words of Kunle Barker “I think we would all agree with the uncomfortable truth: architecture is pale and male, but is there another problem? Is architecture also too posh?”⁶ Another article by Architects’ Journal stated that “as many women as men under 30 on the register but in all only 1% black.”⁷ Apparently there had even been an increase of 5% from 2018-2019 of white British architects, now making up 84% of architects. According to the 2011 Census the white British make up 80,5% of the population.⁸ Though not the focus of this thesis, the architectural industry clearly still has a problem not only with gender equality but with diversity in general. An older survey by the Architects Journal also showed that 79% of female and 73% of male respondents thought that architecture is still too male dominated.⁹ Of the 926 respondents, 710 were women and 216 were men, notably of these respondents 80% were under 40.¹⁰

In a comparative study between the UK, Spain and France held in 2012, Valerie Caven, Elena Navarro-Astor and Marie Diop found that “the comparative figures of women architects in each of the three countries are as follows: UK, 19% of qualified architects and 38% of new

⁴ Booth, E. (2020). *Salary and diversity research shows profession is approaching a sea-change*. Retrieved from Architects Journal: <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/opinion/salary-and-diversity-research-shows-profession-is-approaching-a-sea-change> on 5/2/2021

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pitcher, G. (2020) *As many women as men under 30 on the register but in all only 1% black, ARB data shows*. Retrieved from Architects Journal: <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/as-many-women-as-men-under-30-on-the-register-but-in-all-only-1-black-arb-data-shows> on 5/2/2021

⁸ Office for National Statistics. (2018) *Population of England and Wales*. Retrieved from Ethnicity facts and figures: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest> on 14/2/2021

⁹ Mark, L. (2014). *Sexual discrimination on the rise for women in architecture*. Retrieved from Architects 'Journal: <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/archive/sexual-discrimination-on-the-rise-for-women-in-architecture?tkn=1> on 5/2/2021

¹⁰ Mark, L. (2014). *Bullying on the rise in architecture school*. Retrieved from Architects Journal: <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/archive/bullying-on-the-rise-in-architecture-school> on 5/2/2021

entrants; France, 21% and 43%, respectively; and Spain, 29% and 57%, respectively.”¹¹ Important to note is that in Spain, while the numbers are indeed higher and women make up more than half of the new entrants the vertical segregation holds them back from promotions and higher pay. In the UK this vertical segregation seems to be a problem as well whereas in France many of the architects that are women work in the public sector and “thus enjoy comparatively higher salaries and greater employment security”.¹²

Across the Atlantic the situation does not seem to be much better. According to 2017 numbers by *The American Institute of Architects (AIA)* “just 21% of their membership identified as women”¹³. A survey by AIA brought to light that women largely agree on the fact that they are underrepresented in the industry. Men seem to be more divided on the issue, about half think women are well represented. This survey also shows that the problem of diversity is not limited to underrepresentation of women but also extends to people of colour.¹⁴

The underrepresentation of women in architecture only grows as we climb the management ladder. A survey by Art Magazine Dezeen provides numbers: Women hold only 10% of the highest management positions in the architecture field. Just three of the world’s 100 biggest architecture firms have female CEO’s. All three of these firms are Scandinavian, and two of

¹¹ Valerie Caven, Elena Navarro-Astor & Marie Diop (2012) A Cross-National Study of Accommodating and “Usurpatory” Practices by Women Architects in the UK, Spain and France, *Architectural Theory Review*, 17:2-3, 365-377

¹² Ibid.

When we compare these numbers to the ones Vermeiren found and used in her research, we have to keep in mind that Vermeiren did not count women working in the public sector as practicing architects. She only counted those that were registered as members of the Flemish Order of Architects.

¹³ Kendall Nicholson, E. (2020) *Where Are the Women? Measuring Progress on Gender in Architecture*. Retrieved from ACSA: <https://www.acsa-arch.org/resources/data-resources/where-are-the-women-measuring-progress-on-gender-in-architecture-2/> on 7/2/2021

¹⁴ AIA. AIA. (2016) Retrieved from Diversity in the Profession of Architecture: <http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-05/Diversity-DiversityinArchitecture.pdf> on 5/2/2021

them are Swedish: Tengbom and White Arkitekter. And only six firms have management duos that are half female.¹⁵

Vermeiren investigated and connected the data for women working in the field with the number of female students studying at architecture schools in Flanders, thereby connecting the age groups in a useful way and carefully mapping the 'leaky pipeline': even though women often make up around half of the architecture students, they are still underrepresented at firms. This is what makes the situation so problematic and creates a cause for worry. The problem is not just that there are fewer female architects but that the drop in female presence is so prominent, from university to profession. This phenomenon has been going on for a while and does not seem to fix itself. The issue and root of the underrepresentation of women lies deeper than attracting female students. Similar numbers as the ones in Flanders can also be found elsewhere. For example, in the USA *the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA)* investigated the disadvantages and inequality female students experience and how well the schools are doing in terms of representation. The study was first conducted in 2014, and the numbers were recently updated in a 2020 study. They charted the percentage for women in each position, from being a citizen (51%) to winning an AIA Gold Medal (3%). The *National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)* reported in its 2018 annual report that "46% of the 25,305 students enrolled in NAAB-accredited architecture programs (B. Arch, M. Arch, and D. Arch) in 2017-18 were female."¹⁶ They also noticed that the proportion of female students has steadily been growing for several years. Compared to the 21% of architects registered at AIA, however, we notice a huge drop in female presence from university into the professional field. Furthermore, the study also provided numbers regarding the teachers, directors, and other educators in ACSA member architecture schools. 33% of 496 top school positions (directors, heads, and chairs) were held by women. Out of 110 deans at ACSA member schools only 31% identified as female – which is 12 percentage

¹⁵ Fairs, M. (2017). *Survey of top architecture firms reveals "quite shocking" lack of gender diversity at senior levels*. Retrieved from Dezeen: <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/11/16/survey-leading-architecture-firms-reveals-shocking-lack-gender-diversity-senior-levels/> on 5/2/2021

¹⁶ Kendall Nicholson, E. (2020) *Where Are the Women? Measuring Progress on Gender in Architecture*. Retrieved from ACSA: <https://www.acsa-arch.org/resources/data-resources/where-are-the-women-measuring-progress-on-gender-in-architecture-2/> on 7/2/2021

point more than 5 years prior. Of the more than 5000 educators working at the ACSA member architecture schools (including both Canadian and American schools) 38% of the faculty members identify as female, with only 40% of these women being tenured compared to 55% of male professors.¹⁷ The proportion of female faculty members is however 10 percentage point higher than the number of registered female architects, compared to that 21% even the top positions at the schools seem to be doing quite well.

Across the European architecture faculties women make up more than 50% of the architecture students according to *Architects Council of Europe (ACE)*.¹⁸ In the UK the number of female architecture students starting an architecture education is growing. The *RIBA* education statistics from the academic year 2017-2018, provide the following numbers: 51% of entrance students in 2017 were women (at that time the highest number on record). However, at part two, the second year, female students make up only 45% of the student body. Confirming that, according to *RIBA*, “the gender separation of the profession has early roots.”¹⁹ The drop-out rate of female students is about 2-3% between part one and two and then another 2-3% between part two and three. The representation of female staff at architecture schools is about the same as in the US, with 35% of the staff identifying as female.²⁰

2.1.2 Underrepresentation of Women in Architecture in Flanders in Numbers

In her research about the Flemish situation, Vermeiren gathered multiple kinds of data. To start Vermeiren collected statistics showing by age the number of women practicing the architectural profession as registered members of the *Order of Architects*, the association of registered architects comparable to the UK’s *RIBA*. In analysing that data and connecting it to the relevant age groups of graduate students an important phenomenon revealed itself: *the*

¹⁷ Kendall Nicholson, E. (2020) *Where Are the Women? Measuring Progress on Gender in Architecture*. Retrieved from ACSA: <https://www.acsa-arch.org/resources/data-resources/where-are-the-women-measuring-progress-on-gender-in-architecture-2/> on 7/2/2021

¹⁸ ACE. (n.d.) *Work Groups Area 2*. Retrieved from Architects' Council of Europe: <https://www.ace-cae.eu/practice-of-the-profession/work-groups/> on 7/2/2021

¹⁹ Mirza & Nacey Research. (2018). *RIBA Education Statistics*. London: RIBA. Retrieved from: <https://www.architecture.com/-/media/GatherContent/Education-Statistics/Additional-Documents/Education-Statistics-2017-18.pdf>, 7/2/2021

²⁰ *ibid.*

leaky pipeline. Just over half the graduates of the different architecture schools in Flanders are women, however just over 50% of starting architects are men and women more often than men quit the profession. These women might not necessarily leave the industry, but they often stop working (at firms) as (full time) architects and are thus not registered anymore as such. In total around one in three architects registered with the *Order of Architects* is female, however the percentage of male practicing architects gradually grows bigger by age category. The crucial age category is between the ages of thirty and forty, when most women seem to leave.²¹

Secondly, Vermeiren made a database showing how many of the authors, architects and all other people mentioned in *A+* (Flemish architecture periodical) and *Yearbook Flanders* were women, and how many of them were men. She used issues from *A+* over 3 periods of three years (from 1992 till 1995, from 2002 till 2005, and from 2012 till 2015) and Yearbooks from 1994 until 2014. The results were disappointing: in the magazine *A+* only 10% of all the architects, academics and other people mentioned were women compared to 90% men, of the authors 24% were women, 76% were men, and only 5,7% of the articles were about women compared to 22,7% of articles about men. In the yearbook while the number has slowly been going up, only 20,9% of all people mentioned were women, the rest were men.²² This trend is also visible when we look at recipients of architectural awards: only 16% of winners are women.²³

2.1.3 Representation of Women in Architecture in Sweden in Numbers

As a first introduction to the Swedish architecture industry, the Swedish numbers will also be presented and discussed more in depth. Sweden is somewhat of an outlier when it comes to

²¹ Heynen, H. (2017). Where Have all the Women Gone? Women's Visibility in Architectural Culture in Flanders. *Frau Architect*, 259-263. (C. B. Mary Pepchinski, Ed.) Wasmuth.

Vermeiren, C. (2017). (Onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de architectuur in Vlaanderen.

²² Ibid., p55-58

²³ Heynen, H. (2017). Where Have all the Women Gone? Women's Visibility in Architectural Culture in Flanders. *Frau Architect*, 259-263. (C. B. Mary Pepchinski, Ed.) Wasmuth.

women in architecture. Female students are dominating the architecture schools²⁴ and women even seem to be overrepresented in the profession.²⁵ With 58% of architects being female, according to a 2018 study by ACE, *Architects Council Europe*, Sweden has the largest proportion of female architects in Europe followed by Greece, Croatia, Norway and Finland.²⁶ In 2018 the architects' salaries made the national news, when for the first time women were earning on median 300 SEK more per month than their male colleagues as a result of the disappearing gender pay gap.²⁷

An interesting distinction between 'architecture education' and 'civil engineering and architecture' is made in a study about men and women in higher education. This study with data from 2014-2015 shows that from the 400 students starting 'architecture education' in 2014, 66% were women whereas from the 573 students starting 'civil engineering and architecture' 49% were women. Thus, revealing a disparity between the more technical variant of the architectural education and the more artistically inclined.²⁸ In general, it is women that dominate the Swedish architecture school, not achieving the country's 60/40²⁹

²⁴ Klingberg, E. (2019) *Sex av åtta arkitektskolor har inte jämn könsfördelning*. [Six out of eight schools of architecture do not have an even gender distribution.] Retrieved from arkitekten: <https://arkitekten.se/nyheter/sex-av-atta-arkitektskolor-har-inte-jamn-konsfordelning/> on 7/2/2021

²⁵ Erskine.se. (n.d.). *Kvinnliga arkitekter tjänar mer än manliga*. [Female architects earn more than male.] Retrieved from Erskine: <http://www.erskine.se/kvinnliga-arkitekter-tjänar-mer/> on 14/2/2021

²⁶ Mirza & Nacey Research. (2018). *Architects in Europe*. Retrieved from Architects' Council of Europe: https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New_Upload/7_Publications/Sector_Study/2018/2018_ACE_Report_EN_FN_1_OK.pdf on 14/2/2021

²⁷ Stjernberg, M. S. (2019) *Fortsatt jämställd trend i branschen*. [Continued equal trend in the industry.] Retrieved from arkitekten: <https://arkitekten.se/nyheter/fortsatt-jamstalld-trend-i-branschen/> on 14/2/2021

²⁸ UKÄ. (2016) *Kvinnor och Män i Högskolan*. [Women and Men at the University] Retrieved from Universitets Kanslers Ämbetet: <https://www.uka.se/download/18.5d85793915901d205f9a852/1487841854015/rapport-2016-10-14-kvinnor-och-man-i-hogskolan.pdf> on 7/2/2021

²⁹ The 60/40 goals means that both men and women should make up at least 40% of "decision-making boards, committees and panels involved in peer reviewing, recruitment etc." [1] When a group is overrepresented by making up more than 60% of the whole, it is considered dominating. While not an official quota it is a way to achieve quantitative gender equality that is broadly applied in Sweden. This counts for all domains, "education, work, recreation and positions of power" [2] and in both ways. The practical application is however not so clear as the policy might suggest.

[1] European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender Equality in Academia and Research*. Retrieved from EIGE: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/legislative-policy-backgrounds/sweden> on 4/10/2020

goal of gender distribution. An article by *Arkitekten, Swedish Architects' Trade and Membership Magazine*, published in 2019 explains that this is in fact a result of the Swedish education system,³⁰ which will be further illustrated in section §2.2.5. It also becomes clear in the article that even though the students are largely women, the culture is still inclined to favour men. "Female lecturers, supervisors and professors are underrepresented, and few women are highlighted in the history of architecture."³¹ reports Agnes Janfalk, a master student at Chalmers during the time of the study. To back this up with some numbers, in 2015 *Arkitekten* published an article titled '*Flest män bland professorerna*' [mostly men among the professors]. Even though there is an even distribution between the genders when it comes to all the employed educators at the different architecture schools - 300 educators in total - of the professors only 32% are women – 16 of 50 professors. Thereby severely underperforming compared to practicing architects. Katja Grillner, dean of KTH school of architecture, adds that there is a continued increase in the proportion of female professors.³² At Chalmers they are also aware of this inequality and have thus installed a gender equality policy as well as a code of conduct for educators and guest lecturers.³³

Curious is that with such a significant proportion of female students - at Konstfack, University of Arts Crafts, and Design even up to 82% - still only 58% of architects identify as female.³⁴ While this number is hugely better than in the USA and even Flanders, it shows that

[2] Statistics Sweden. (2018). Women and men in Sweden 2018. Stockholm. Retrieved from https://www.scb.se/contentassets/4550eaae793b46309da2aad796972cca/le0201_2017b18_br_x10br1801eng.pdf on 7/3/2021

T Numhauser-Henning, A.(2015)*The policy on gender equality in sweden*. Retrieved from european parlement: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU\(2015\)510011_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU(2015)510011_EN.pdf), on 7/3/2021

³⁰ Klingberg, E. (2019) *Sex av åtta arkitektskolor har inte jämn könsfördelning*. [Six out of eight schools of architecture do not have an even gender distribution.] Retrieved from arkitekten: <https://arkitekten.se/nyheter/sex-av-atta-arkitektskolor-har-inte-jamn-konsfordelning/> on 7/2/ 2021

³¹ ibid.

³² Jensfelt, A. (2015) *Flest män bland professorerna*. [Most men among the professors.] Retrieved from arkitekten: <https://arkitekten.se/nyheter/flest-man-bland-professorerna/> on 7/2/2021

³³ Klingberg, E. (2019) *Sex av åtta arkitektskolor har inte jämn könsfördelning*. Six out of eight schools of architecture do not have an even gender distribution.] Retrieved from arkitekten: <https://arkitekten.se/nyheter/sex-av-atta-arkitektskolor-har-inte-jamn-konsfordelning/> on 7/2/ 2021

³⁴ Ibid.

proportionally more women than men are still leaving the profession. Even with a majority of female architects the industry indeed still tends to favour men. It shows that more needs to change than just inspiring young women to go to architecture school. A fundamental change in the industry and culture from as early as university is crucial.

2.1.4 Importance of Representation, Necessity of Role models

It has been argued by some feminist scholars that if we believe that women's everyday life and experiences are truly different, then it is women who best represent their own needs. It is therefore important that women are given a seat at the table – or better several seats. While it is important to note that even with a 60/40 distribution gender equality has not been established it is necessary that women are adequately represented.³⁵

Representation is not only necessary to make sure women have a say in their own 'gender-specific' needs. We need adequate representation of women on all levels, meaning as architects, but also as managers, as educators, as architectural writers, as award winners, etc. to provide role models and mentors for future generations. In a 2016 study '*Diversity in the Profession of Architecture*', the AIA asked about, among other things, reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the field. The answers were divided by gender. One of the reasons, they discovered, was the lack of female role models agreed 61% of female and 43% of male respondents.³⁶ There are more reasons given for why women are not adequately represented: they are held back in the profession, they are not respected by their male peers, they are not paid the same as their male peers, there is a lack of parental leave...³⁷

It starts early, this idea that men should create and build. Even before we know it boys are encouraged to imagine. Boys get Lego blocks and construction sets, thereby teaching them basic physics, construction, and technology. Girls get dolls and mini-houseware items thereby

³⁵ Stockemer, D., & Byrne, M. (2012). Women's Representation around the World: The Importance of Women's Participation in the Workforce. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65(4), p802-821.

³⁶ AIA. AIA. (2016) Retrieved from Diversity in the Profession of Architecture: <http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-05/Diversity-DiversityinArchitecture.pdf> on 5/2/2021

³⁷ Vermeiren, C. (2017). (Onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de architectuur in Vlaanderen.

teaching them nurturance and empathy.³⁸ An important contribution to stimulate little girls was made in 2011 with the introducing of Architect Barbie. While the doll was scrutinized for several reasons -not the least being its outdated drawing tube- it might inspire girls to try a “fabulous career”.³⁹ However, women need to be stimulated to remain in the field a lot longer than when they are just little girls. This will only happen if the work environment stops favouriting and catering to men and gives women equal opportunities, without having to conform to the male ideal.⁴⁰

In multiple works it has been posed or indirectly shown that the architect is often assumed to be male. Much like the term ‘public man’ seems a pleonasm, so does the term ‘male architect’. Whereas all too often when the work of an architect, who happens to be female, is discussed she is referred to as ‘woman architect’, thereby confirming that the reference architect is indeed male.⁴¹ Andrew Saint, in his book *the image of the architect*, be it unconsciously, portrays the architect as a hero. This idea comes forward in how the architect is typically depicted.⁴² The male architects’ masculinity is what makes him great. The ideal architect is healthy and strong, as opposed to the “weak, female (body)”.⁴³ His machismo also stresses his dominance on the building site. As opposed to a female architect often being the only woman on the building site.⁴⁴ Take for example Mies van der Rohe posing proudly with his model for Crown Hall or Rem Koolhaas visiting the construction site of the Seattle Library,

³⁸ Brown, C. S. (2015) *Target is Right on Target About the Use of Gender Labels*. Retrieved from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/za/blog/beyond-pink-and-blue/201508/target-is-right-target-about-the-use-gender-labels> on 8/2/2021

³⁹ Cilento, K. (2012) *Architect Barbie/A Social Experiment*. Retrieved from ArchDaily: <https://www.archdaily.com/263765/architect-barbie-a-social-experiment> on 8/2/2021

⁴⁰ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

⁴¹ Burns, K. (2012). The Woman/Architect Distinction. *Architectural Theory Review*, pp. 234-24.

⁴² Saint, A. (1983). *The image of the architect*. Yale University Press

⁴³ Sandercock, L. (1998). *Introduction: The power of History. Making the Invisible Visible*. (L. Sandercock, Ed.) Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

⁴⁴ We should note however that women report to experience more sexist behaviour at the office than on the construction site. Or better they more easily find ways to deal with the “overt sexism” on site than the other more subtle discrimination women often experience at the firm, such as lower pay and lack of opportunities for promotions.

Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

both pictured below. The power lies in the image and the portrayal of the architects, the creators.



Figure 1: Mies van der Rohe, Crown Hall

Modernist Architect Mies van der Rohe standing behind his model for Crown Hall. The architect is depicted as brave, a hero for breaking norms and embracing technology and modernity with his designs. He is proud of what he has achieved and stands tall behind the model. Photographer Arthur Siegel; courtesy of Chicago history museum.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312303955_Critical_Dimensions_in_Architectural_Photojournalism_Contributions_to_Architectural_Knowledge/figures?lo=1, 10/3/2021



Figure 2: Rem Koolhaas, Seattle Central Library

Rem Koolhaas (in the back) on the site of the Seattle Central Library. This image shows how the male architect establishes presence on the building site. It is difficult to imagine a female architect being depicted in the same way. Photograph courtesy of OMA

<https://www.djc.com/news/co/11142519.html>, 10/3/2021

It is also important to acknowledge that the female role models we could have are often forgotten, they are buried, and their achievements are attributed solely to their male counterparts, husbands, or colleagues. For example, when Robert Venturi won the Pritzker Prize in 1991 his partner Denise Scott Brown, with whom he had been working for 22 years at that time, was only briefly mentioned.⁴⁵ Apparently, the guidelines did not allow for two people to win the prize together. However, “In 2001 Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron shared the award, while male-female duo Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of Japanese firm SANAA became joint-laureates in 2010.”⁴⁶ In 2013 Scott Brown stated that “They owe me not a Pritzker Prize but a Pritzker inclusion ceremony.”⁴⁷

This is not the only time women’s achievements were not recognized. Another moment in ‘recent’ architectural history and an issue that many feminist theoretic writers address is the

⁴⁵ Foundation, T. H. (n.d.). Laureates. Retrieved from The Pritzker Architecture Prize: <https://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/1991> on 10/2/2021

⁴⁶ Frearson, A. (2013) Robert Venture calls for Pritzker to recognise Denise Scott Brown. Retrieved from Dezeen: <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/04/04/robert-venturi-calls-for-pritzker-to-recognise-denise-scott-brown/> on 10/2/2021

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

association of modernism with white middle-class men. While Bauhaus was supposed to be accessible to both men and women, this gender equality at Bauhaus seemed surface level at best. Indeed, women were welcome at the school, but they were not allowed to pursue the 'superior' mediums like painting, sculpting and architecture. Because according to school founder Walter Gropius "men thought in three dimensions, while women could only handle two".⁴⁸ Women were therefore restricted to following the weaving classes.⁴⁹ Nevertheless there have been women to make important contributions to modernist architecture. Gwendolyn Wright wrote about the power systems in modernism and the cultural biases in her paper '*Women in Modernism*' in an effort to address the "related myth that there have been few women, and no significant women modernists in architecture".⁵⁰ Wright also found that when she made an effort to include female designers in a survey of American modernism, according to her it "wasn't so difficult".⁵¹ The real problem was that they were deemed negligible designers and their names were forgotten.⁵²

So, is the issue really that there are no female role models or have women not been deemed worthy enough to be role models? As Heynen poses in *FrauArchitekt, Over 100 Years of Women in Architecture* as a reason for women leaving the architectural field, there is the association and idea of the male architect as 'genius'⁵³ and therefore as role model. Heynen

⁴⁸ Gotthardt, A. (2017) *The Women of the Bauhaus School*. Retrieved from Artsy: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-women-bauhaus-school> on 10/2/2021

⁴⁹ This is indeed a problem in itself, but the underlying problem is explained by T'ai Smith: "Weaving's so-called femininity at the Bauhaus is certainly related to its association with a collective of women, but this association itself is inextricable from the medium's lack of distinct formal marks -ones that would point back to the hand of the artist. It is not just coincidental that the school steered women away from the fields of individual mark- or form-makers, like mural painting or cabinetry since these were more productive of celebrity figures. In the hierarchy of mediums, textiles are most often anonymous, less easily linked to a creator's "style" and "hand" using common methods of connoisseurship."

Smith, T. (2010). A Collective and it is Individuals: the Bauhaus and its Women. In *Modern Women* (pp. 159-172). New York: MoMA.

⁵⁰ Wright, G. (2007). *WOMEN in MODERNISM*. New York., p1

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p6

⁵² *ibid.*, p6

⁵³ Christine Battersby explains this concept of genius as a term coined in the 18th Century as a merging of the Latin words 'genius' and 'ingenium'. During romanticism qualities that were previously thought of as 'feminine' (e.g. emotion, intuition) and therefor lesser became revered and valued. Men that possessed these qualities were deemed geniuses and superior. And yet female artists were deemed inferior and not allowed to create.

references Naomi Stead when linking this to the concept of authorship and the mystique that surrounds it. “Whereas architecture in fact comes forth from the joint efforts of a large group of people—...—many awards (on the highest level, e.g. the Pritzker Prize) honor authorship, assuming that the qualities of the work can be hailed back to the creativity of the person behind it. The mystique implicitly assumes that this person is male rather than female.”⁵⁴

In *Where are the women architects*, Despina Stratigakos notes that when male architects are judged their gender is often not an important part of their achievement or failing, and if the male architect did manage to fall short in some way, this was deemed an individual failing, not because he was a man. “By contrast, a women architect who was considered a professional success was often seen to have achieved this despite her gender”.⁵⁵ This is also made clear as Stratigakos delves into how Zaha Hadid’s Pritzker prize win was reported so differently on than any male winner.⁵⁶

The concept of ‘symbolic annihilation’ was first introduced in the 70’s. Feminist scholars coined the term “to describe the absence, underrepresentation, maligning and trivialization of women by mainstream media.”⁵⁷ The concept may have been conceived in the field of media studies but is now used in a multitude of contexts such as museums, galleries, popular media etc. The annihilation of women as role models and the resulting underrepresentation has serious and far-reaching consequences for the perception of gender roles and the treatment of women in their day-to-day life.⁵⁸ This kind of exclusion from media and institutions, and the misrepresentation of discriminatory groups can result in “anger at, alienation from and disinterest in these cultural institutions.”⁵⁹ Thus explaining the need for

Battersby, C. (1989). Gender and Genius. In J. Tanke, & C. McQuillan, *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics* (pp. 559-570). Bloomsbury.

⁵⁴ Heynen, H. (2017). Where Have all the Women Gone? Women’s Visibility in Architectural Culture in Flanders. *Frau Architekt*, 259-263. (C. B. Mary Pepchinski, Ed.) Wasmuth.

⁵⁵ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Caswell, M., Migoni, A., Geraci, N., & Cifor, M. (2016). ‘To Be Able to Imagine Otherwise’: community archives and the importance of representation. *Archives and Records.*, 38:1, p 5-26

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p4

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p10

and importance of female role models in architecture and better representation of female architects.

And to again quote Stratigakos: “Role models boost self-esteem by countering negative stereotypes that cast doubt on a person’s abilities to perform well in the profession. They increase motivation for career advancement and success. They foster a sense of identification with a field, combating alienation. The scarcity of female role models in architecture is thus profoundly damaging.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

2.2 Background on Sweden

As we are specifically looking at Sweden and what gender equality groups have realised there, it is necessary to know some of the socio-political background. First some numbers on Sweden will be given, such as the female employment rate and the gender pay gap. Of course, we look beyond the numbers as well with the implementation of policies and their consequences, taking a closer look at the implementation of RUT, tax deductions for maintenance and housework. Some of the most relevant institutional machinery will be further explained, notably Sweden's policy for parental leave. When we compare Flanders to Sweden later it will be necessary to know Sweden's history with gender equality, keeping in mind that they have been actively applying a gender perspective on their policy making since the 1970's. This and a few other differences in governance make it so that the comparison should happen most carefully, as will be explained in §2.2.3. The Swedish education system will also be briefly explained as this might be unknown to some readers.

2.2.1 Gender Equality in Sweden?

Gender equality in Sweden seems a given to most of its citizens. It has become part of Sweden's self-image. So much so that Sweden has become *the* model for the gender equal society. Indeed, if we look at it from a quantifiable perspective Sweden as well as the rest of the Nordic countries does remarkably well. In the equality index⁶¹ given by *EIGE, European Institute for Gender Equality* Sweden has been Europe's front runner since the numbers were first introduced in 2013.⁶² Sweden's evolution compared to a few other EU-countries however has been quite a bit slower but their score of 83,8 is 15,9 points higher than the average of the EU-countries.⁶³ Furthermore, Sweden's female employment rate of 78,3% is of the

⁶¹ "The Gender Equality Index is a composite indicator that measures the complex concept of gender equality and, based on the EU policy framework, assists in monitoring progress of gender equality across the EU over time."

European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender Equality Index*. Retrieved from EIGE: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/SE> on 15/2/2021

⁶² European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender Equality Index*. Retrieved from EIGE: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/about> on 28/2/2021

⁶³ European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender Equality Index*. Retrieved from EIGE: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/SE> on 15/2/2021

highest in Europe.⁶⁴ Moreover 47% of parliamentary seats are held by women. There are however also areas in which Sweden is not doing as well as some other EU-countries, in 2018 the gender pay gap stood at 10,7%⁶⁵ whereas the lowest pay gap, currently in Luxembourg, is 'only' 1,3%.⁶⁶ The Swedish Women Lobby is actively fighting to close the gap with a yearly campaign that calculates how many minutes of the day women are effectively working for free.

Of course, data only goes so far, the statistics do not reveal cultural tendencies, such as who is taking care of housework or family errands. An article by Linda Lane and Birgitta Jordansson published in March of 2020 titled '*How Gender Equal Is Sweden? An Analysis of the Shift in Focus under Neoliberalism*' discusses this more in depth. How equal is Sweden really when we do not just take into account the quantifiable data? This article will be used to briefly explain some key points in Swedish gender equality policy and its changes with the shift from the Swedish welfare state to a neoliberal society.

The writers of the article, Lane and Jordansson⁶⁷, criticize Sweden's gender equality for being too white, heteronormative, and focussed on working mothers. Disparities and inequalities between women were dismissed by focussing only on the group '*women*'.⁶⁸ However, in more recent periods, with the progression of the welfare state to a neoliberal society, the focus has shifted to the woman as individual. Recently there has even been an increase in gender and

⁶⁴ OECD. (2012) *Closing the Gender Gap ACT Now Sweden*. Retrieved from OECD: <https://www.oecd.org/sweden/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Sweden%20FINAL.pdf>, on 15/2/2021

⁶⁵ the Swedish Institute. (2021) *GENDER EQUALITY IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/> on 4/10/2020

⁶⁶ Belgian Federal Government. (2021). *Gender pay gap*. Retrieved from STATBEL: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/wages-and-labourcost/gender-pay-gap> on 27/5/2021

⁶⁷ They are not the only ones to do so, an interesting critical stance on Sweden's gender equality comes from Lena Martinsson, Gabriele Griffin and Katarina Giritli Nygren who together wrote the book *Challenging the Myth of Gender Equality in Sweden*. They delve deep into the policies of the country, and issues they find within those policies. They want to expose the weak points in Sweden's gender equality and challenge it to do better.

Martinsson, L., Griffin, G., & Giritli Nygren, K. (2016). *Challenging the myth of gender equality in Sweden*. Policy Press.

⁶⁸ Lane, L., & Jordansson, B. (2020). *How Gender Equal is Sweden? An Analysis of the Shift in Focus under Neoliberalism. Social Change*, 50(1), pp. 28-43.

class differences caused by lack of consensus about what gender equality actually means. It has been interpreted in different ways. “Depending on political and/or feminist views, definitions of the concept were rooted in completely different understandings of relationship between the sexes.”⁶⁹ There is for some a feeling of having reached equality, so much so that progress has slowed down or stopped completely.

An important development in the Swedish domestic life was the implementation of RUT “(Cleaning, Maintenance and Laundry)”⁷⁰ tax reductions in 2007. The goal of RUT was to get more men and women to work on equal terms by providing subsidised domestic help and thereby making a better work-life balance possible. In reality the result of RUT is not at all so straightforward. In many of the (high-income) families where RUT-workers are employed men’s help usually reduces to nothing. In addition, research showed that with the implementation of RUT “a new category of racialised female migrant workers at high risk of exploitation, discrimination”⁷¹ was created. And still, care for the home and the family fell largely on the women’s shoulders. Thereby with RUT a failure to “change cultural norms”⁷² was exposed.

With the shift from the welfare state to the neoliberalist society a new kind of feminism and gender equality was introduced. From a neoliberal feminist’s point of view gender equality has indeed been achieved: for them inequalities are there as long as the opportunities for men and women are different. And in a neoliberal society everyone is ‘free’ to make their choices, thus also choices made as a result of gender stereotypes are ones that individuals freely choose. With RUT the competition between women is embraced and augmented. The

⁶⁹ Lane, L., & Jordansson, B. (2020). How Gender Equal is Sweden? An Analysis of the Shift in Focus under Neoliberalism. *Social Change*, 50(1), pp. 28-43.

⁷⁰ Skatteverket. (n.d.). *ROT and RUT work*. Retrieved from Skatteverket: <https://www.skatteverket.se/service/ankar/otherlanguages/inenglish/businessesandemployers/startingandrunningaswedishbusiness/declaringtaxesbusinesses/rotandrutwork.4.8dcbbe4142d38302d793f.html> on 15/2/2021

⁷¹ Lane, L., & Jordansson, B. (2020). How Gender Equal is Sweden? An Analysis of the Shift in Focus under Neoliberalism. *Social Change*, 50(1), pp. 28-43.

⁷² *ibid.*

neoliberal feminist dismisses the importance of the work that is often done by migrant women in RUT-employment do and disparities only increase.⁷³

According to Lane and Jordansson RUT has caused for the Swedish gender equality debate to become active once more. And for old and new questions to be raised (again). With one of the most important “when are we going to demand that men take responsibility for unpaid care and household work?”⁷⁴ RUT shows that cultural change is something that also Sweden still needs to work on, and that gender equality goes beyond policies even if those policies are well intended.

2.2.2 Institutional Machinery: Feminist Government and Gender Mainstreaming

With the understanding of some developments and their consequences in the Swedish gender equality policy behind us, it is necessary to take a closer look at some of the country’s institutional machinery. Because yes, the country is not perfect and the new policies have not always worked as intended, but Sweden has already taken big steps institutionally and established some very positive systems, such as the Feminist Government and their implementation of Gender Mainstreaming.

Sweden’s government is the first Feminist Government in the world. This means that gender equality is a central theme in all policy making and the allocation of resources. “In practice, this means a commitment to building a society in which women and men, girls and boys can live their lives to their full potential.”⁷⁵ The feminist government’s goal is for everyone, regardless of gender, to have equal capability in shaping their lives. Through policy the government wants to tackle “inequality” and “inhibitive gender roles and structures”.⁷⁶ In its policy making Sweden uses a tool called ‘Gender Mainstreaming’. *EIGE, European Institute for Gender Equality* defines it as “a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Lane, L., & Jordansson, B. (2020). How Gender Equal is Sweden? An Analysis of the Shift in Focus under Neoliberalism. *Social Change*, 50(1), pp. 28-43.

⁷⁵ Government Offices of Sweden. (2020). Gender equality policy in Sweden. Retrieved from Government Offices of Sweden: <https://www.government.se/information-material/2019/03/gender-equality-policy-in-sweden/>, on 7/3/2021

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.”⁷⁷

The government introduced six goals in working toward a more equal society: equal division of power and influence, economic equality, equal education, equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care, equal health, and stopping men’s violence against women.⁷⁸ While all goals are important, a few of them will be further explained, specifically in relation to the architecture industry.

The economic equality goal means that “women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to paid work which gives economic independence throughout life.”⁷⁹ In Sweden many women, more than in other EU-countries, work in so called ‘gainful employment’ meaning they are steadily employed and earn enough to support themselves financially. Even so, when families start to expand and children are born, it is often the woman who cuts back on hours. And generally, they do this out of necessity, many would actually prefer to work more.⁸⁰ Half-time work when there are children in the mix and women not receiving proper parental leave is given as one of the main reasons why women leave architecture and why they cannot advance to higher functions.⁸¹ Sweden’s current parental leave policy wants to tackle precisely this and tries to reduce this inequality between the sexes. Currently both parents are together entitled to 480 days of paid parental leave for each child, both parents automatically have to use 3 months. The remaining 300 days can be divided between the parents however they want. Right now, this distribution still happens quite unevenly, but they are encouraged to do this as equally as possible. This policy ensures

⁷⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *What is gender mainstreaming* . Retrieved from EIGE: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming> on 11/2/2021

⁷⁸ Statistics Sweden. (2018). *Women and men in Sweden 2018*. Stockholm. Retrieved from https://www.scb.se/contentassets/4550eaae793b46309da2aad796972cca/le0201_2017b18_br_x10br1801eng.pdf, on 7/3/2021

⁷⁹ Government Offices of Sweden. (2020). *Gender equality policy in Sweden*. p2. Retrieved from Government Offices of Sweden: <https://www.government.se/information-material/2019/03/gender-equality-policy-in-sweden/> on 7/3/2021

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p7

⁸¹ Vermeiren, C. (2017). (Onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de architectuur in Vlaanderen.

that women can keep working with equal opportunity⁸² and is one other countries should take note of. Alexandra Hagen, CEO of White Architects, Sweden's biggest architecture firm, even states this as one of the key reasons why she was able to rise to this position. "The first of two factors that let me progress in this senior role was shared parental leave... As my husband took half the responsibility for childcare, I was away from the office for a shorter length of time."⁸³

Another key point in the gender equality policy focuses on toxic masculinity and violence against women. With this Sweden's government wants to address gender stereotypes and involve men in working toward a more gender equal society. "Men also need to become much more involved in sharing unpaid domestic and care work, in breaking the gender segregation of the labour market, in promoting talented women in business and in preventing violence against women."⁸⁴ And it is this promoting of women that Hagen gives as the second reason of her progression despite her having two young children, stating that "To achieve equity in practice, it is precisely this sort of leadership vision that is sorely needed; the ability to see your employees as multifaceted people with commitments and interests that need to be balanced with those of the company."⁸⁵

To conclude: even if some scholars are justifiably critiquing the Swedish government and even if these policies do not mean a societal nor an industrial change, they are important and crucial steps toward a more equal society.

⁸² Government Offices of Sweden. (2020). *Gender equality policy in Sweden*. p2. Retrieved from Government Offices of Sweden: <https://www.government.se/information-material/2019/03/gender-equality-policy-in-sweden/> on 7/3/2021

⁸³ Hagen, A. (2017) *Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of Swedish society*. Retrieved from dezeen: <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/12/18/we-cannot-truly-serve-our-diverse-communities-if-we-ourselves-do-not-reflect-this-diversity/> on 11/2/2021

⁸⁴ Government Offices of Sweden. (2020). *Gender equality policy in Sweden*. Retrieved from Government Offices of Sweden: <https://www.government.se/information-material/2019/03/gender-equality-policy-in-sweden/> on 7/3/2021

⁸⁵ Hagen, A. (2017) *Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of Swedish society*. Retrieved from dezeen: <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/12/18/we-cannot-truly-serve-our-diverse-communities-if-we-ourselves-do-not-reflect-this-diversity/> on 11/2/2021

2.2.3 Sweden Compared to EU and Flanders: Why We Should Compare Critically

The article *'The Promise and Pitfalls of Gender Mainstreaming'* by Diane Sainsbury and Christina Bergqvist discusses the comparison of other countries to the Swedish 'most likely case'. "A most likely case is one where we would expect positive results."⁸⁶ Gender mainstreaming, be it not by that name, was already part of the Swedish policy before it was officially introduced by the EU. Gender equality has been a part of Sweden's governance since the 1970's, whereas it has been part of the EU's policy since the 90's, when it gained importance and traction in 1995 at the UN Women's Conference. As a result, Sweden has somewhat of an advantage over other EU-countries. So, when we look for example at how gender mainstreaming has been implemented in Belgium and Sweden, we have to take into account this head start they had and be most careful when comparing the two.

From the start of implementing an equality perspective into their politics, this way of working was applied in multiple fields of policy making. In 1972 Sweden installed the Jämställdhetsdelegationen (an Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Equality between Men and Women), who surveyed the gender equality implementation in multiple areas, and later the Minister for Gender Equality, supported by an under-secretary of state. In the 1980's this was followed by establishing the Division of Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Ombudsman. Sweden's government works in such a way that the government has a collective responsibility, so the Minister for Gender Equality's jurisdiction and influence is much bigger than if the ministers each only had individual responsibility.⁸⁷

Another factor to consider is that at the start of its gender equality policy Sweden was a welfare state which heavily influenced the politics they conducted for gender equality, such as parental leave and paid childcare.⁸⁸ The focus of these policies has shifted with the current neoliberal government and also lies elsewhere for other non-socialist countries.

⁸⁶ Sainsbury, D., & Bergqvist, C. (2009). The Promise and Pitfalls of Gender Mainstreaming. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11(2), pp. 216-234.

⁸⁷ Sainsbury, D., & Bergqvist, C. (2009). The Promise and Pitfalls of Gender Mainstreaming. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11(2), pp. 216-234.

⁸⁸ the Swedish Institute. (2021) *GENDER EQUALITY IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/> on 4/10/2020

The article by Sainsbury and Bergqvist warns us, as Mary Daly did as well that “the Swedish experience should not be used as a model for other countries since many of them do not have the same set of favourable preconditions, such as the wide diffusion of egalitarian values, the dominance of leftist parties and the dramatic increase of women in elected, appointed and party positions since 1970.”⁸⁹ As we later compare the Swedish situation to the one in Flanders, Belgium and find that we should use their work as an example, we should take into account this warning and the socio-political contexts in both countries.

2.2.4 Activism in Sweden: Atmosphere and Platform

Since 2018 Sweden’s most well-known activist has been Greta Thunberg who has become the image of the Climate Crisis.⁹⁰ Environmental activism is of course not the only cause being fought for. Sweden declaring itself the first feminist government in the world happened after a history of feminist activism. As has been stated before, there is long tradition in the strife for a more equal society by for example installing laws, such as the prohibition of rape and abduction in 1250, the right to birth control and legal abortion in 1938, paid maternity leave in 1955, and so on. In 1970 Sweden’s Alva Myrdal even became “the first woman to hold a high position in the UN”.⁹¹ And still feminist movements are very active, keeping the topic relevant and fighting for progress.

With Second wave feminism in the 1960’s came new collectives and initiatives. At the end of the 1960’s, Swedish feminist collective ‘Group 8’ was founded. “In 1967, eight women met at a gender role seminar in Uppsala. Together they formed a feminist group under the name Group 8”.⁹² Their group grew in numbers and in 1970 more than one hundred women came

⁸⁹ Sainsbury, D., & Bergqvist, C. (2009). The Promise and Pitfalls of Gender Mainstreaming. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11(2), pp. 216-234.

⁹⁰ Woodward, A. (2020) *Greta Thunberg turns 17 today. Here's how she started a global climate movement in just 18 months.* Retrieved from Insider: <https://www.businessinsider.com/greta-thunberg-bio-climate-change-activist-2019-9?r=US&IR=T> on 17/2/ 2021

⁹¹ the Swedish Institute. (2021) *GENDER EQUALITY IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/> on 4/10/2020

⁹² Kvinnohistoriska. (n.d.). *Kvinnans Plats*. [The Woman's Place.] Retrieved from Stockholms KvinnoHistoriska: <https://www.kvinnohistoriska.se/kvinnansplats-grupp8> on 17/2/2021

together in Stockholm in front of the City Museum to talk about women's liberation. They fought for multiple issues, for more women to go to work, for better birth control, for better preschool and childcare.⁹³

The Swedish Women's Lobby (SWL) was founded in 1997 as an 'umbrella organization' for other women's groups in Sweden. The group is part of the European Women's Lobby and works for "a gender equal society within Sweden, the EU and internationally."⁹⁴ It was established by the government and serves as a reference body. They make sure that the gender equality perspective as mentioned in §2.2.2 is indeed applied to all policy making and other contexts, economically and socially. The work they do is based on Feminist ideals and has as its goals to provide women with a better position within society and equality between all genders.⁹⁵

The Swedish Women's Lobby has 47 member organizations under its wing to provide them with a bigger platform. The organizations can apply to be member if they exist of at least 80% women. In return the organizations get a whole list of benefits, among other things: "Access to loans from Sweden's Women's Lobby's premises subject to time and availability ... invitations to participate in campaigns, appeals and debate articles ... Invitation to the annual chairman meeting where you can raise your questions to the board and other organizations in the Swedish women's movement ... Opportunity to be seen on Sweden's Women's Lobby's website and social media".⁹⁶ Among the organizations are '*Dea-Föreningen För Kvinnohistoriskt Museum*' ('*Dea Organization For Women's History Museum*'), '*Gröna Kvinnor*' ('*Green Women*'), '*Lönelotsarna*' ('*The Payroll Pilots*'). They all have different objectives within the fight for gender equality and many have an intersectional approach to their work.⁹⁷

⁹³ Kvinnohistoriska. (n.d.). *Kvinnans Plats*. [The Woman's Place.] Retrieved from Stockholms KvinnoHistoriska: <https://www.kvinnohistoriska.se/kvinnansplats-grupp8> on 17/2/2021.

⁹⁴ Sveriges Kvinnolobby. (2018) *The Swedish Women's Lobby*. Retrieved from European Women's Lobby: <https://www.womenlobby.org/The-Swedish-Women-s-Lobby?lang=en> on 17/2/2021

⁹⁵ Sveriges Kvinnolobby. (n.d.) *Om Sveriges Kvinnolobby*. [About Sweden's women's lobby] Retrieved from Sveriges Kvinnolobby: <https://sverigeskvinnolobby.se/om-sveriges-kvinnolobby/om-organisationen/> on 17/2/2021

⁹⁶ *ibid*.

⁹⁷ *ibid*.

One of the member associations is the *Kvinnors Byggforum (KBF)*, established in 1981. It is an organization for women, non-binary and trans people active in the building industry -not just architects. KBF wants to be accessible for many, from engineers and project leaders to artists and architects. They offer a place to talk openly about experiences and give each other advice. Through multiple events, workshops, readings etc. *Kvinnors Byggforum* wants to connect and work towards better work environments and progress in the equality debate.⁹⁸

Sveriges Arkitekter, the Swedish equivalent of the Flemish *Order of Architects* also has a committee for gender equality and diversity, Arkitekt(h)en. By using 'hen' in the name, the Swedish word for they/them, the committee wants to question who the architect of the future will be. The committee was established in 2015 as a reference body and support for the union "in the work of increasing gender equality and diversity within Sweden's Architects, the union and architecture."⁹⁹

There is even a Feminist political party, that almost made it into parliament. Feminist Initiative was founded in 2005, as one of Sweden's 11 political parties. FI does not have any seats in parliament because they need at least 4% of the votes to hold one. In 2014 they received 3.12% of the votes, which is the most the party has ever received. The party's policies are summarized as follows: "equal rights regardless of sex, age, disability, sexual orientation or skin colour/ethnic background."¹⁰⁰

With these (governmental) initiatives and even with the Feminist Initiative party the political charge surrounding feminism is much less outspoken, and the topic of gender equality remains relevant and part of the conversation on all levels. Constantly new groups are forming to improve on society and work on specific and gender related issues.

⁹⁸ Kvinnors Byggforum. (n.d.). *Kvinnors Byggforum*. [Women's building forum] Retrieved from Kvinnors Byggforum: <http://kvinnorsbyggforum.org/kbf/> on 23/3/2021

⁹⁹ Sveriges Arkitekter. (n.d.). *Arkitekthen*. Retrieved from Sveriges Arkitekter: <https://www.arkitekt.se/om-oss/arbetsgrupper/arkitekthen-utskottet-for-jamstalldhets-och-mangfaldsfragor/> on 23/2/2021

¹⁰⁰ the Swedish Institute. (n.d.) *POLITICAL PARTIES IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/political-parties-in-sweden/> on 19/2/2021

2.2.5 Swedish (Architecture) Education

As has been mentioned in §2.1.3 the Swedish education system plays an important role in the representation of female architecture students and therefore by large female architects. The school system is funded with tax-money and attendance is mandatory for everyone from 6 till 16 years old.

The mandatory school years are divided into four phases: preschool year, years 1-3, years 4-6, and years 7-9. After that there is the possibility to go to Gymnasiet, upper high school, which goes from year 10-12. Gymnasiet offers 18 national programs, of which 6 prepare students for university. Each program has its own entry requirements but passing grades for mathematics, Swedish, and English are needed for all. If a student does not meet the requirements, they can instead follow an introductory program.¹⁰¹

After Gymnasiet students can apply for university. First, they have to, again, meet certain entry requirements depending on the university and program. General requirements for bachelor studies are a Gymnasiet diploma and fluency in English. Then the programs can have individual requirements. In case a student does not meet these, some programs offer an entrance test. Usually, a portion of students is selected from those who meet the requirements and then a portion is also selected from those who pass this test.¹⁰²

For the architecture program at *Chalmers University of Technology* for example a portion of students is admitted based on grades and some are admitted after taking the architectural test. This test is not only in use by Chalmers but also by the other main Swedish architecture schools, Lund University, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, and Umeå University. “The architectural test consists of two parts. First, the applicant completes a home assignment that is sent to the school of architecture where the test is desired to be completed. If the result is

¹⁰¹ the Swedish Institute. (2021) *EDUCATION IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/education-in-sweden/> on 16/2/2021

¹⁰² Swedish Council for Higher Education. (2020) *Entry requirements*. Retrieved from University admissions: <https://www.universityadmissions.se/en/entry-requirements/> on 16/2/2021

good, the applicant is called to the actual architect's exam, where a number of tasks must be solved in two days.”¹⁰³

How is the system playing a part in the representation of female architecture students? Young women tend to go to universities or other higher education more frequently and generally they have better grades in Gymnasiet. Chalmers takes in 75% of new students based on grades, KTH, Lund and Umeå take in about two thirds of new students this way.¹⁰⁴ Women in general make up a larger portion of that group. With the rest of the students that are taken in based on the architectural test the distribution tends to be more equal. At many architecture schools the equality distribution of 60/40 is not met. The schools are working on this but in the words of Kia Bengtsson Ekström “I am no stranger to looking at how to increase the proportion of male students. The distinction that arises in the event of an unequal gender distribution is problematic. But gender equality is a complex issue. It is also about which references we highlight and what our standards look like.”¹⁰⁵ They should not just look at how to increase the proportion of male students, but how they can do so with the same demands for quality and increasing diversity among students in general.

¹⁰³ Chalmers. (n.d.). *Arkitektur*. Retrieved from Chalmers: <https://www.chalmers.se/sv/utbildning/program-pa-grundniva/Sidor/Arkitektur.aspx> on 16/2/2021

¹⁰⁴ Klingberg, E. (2019) *Sex av åtta arkitektskolor har inte jämn könsfördelning*. [Six out of eight schools of architecture do not have an even gender distribution.] Retrieved from arkitekten: <https://arkitekten.se/nyheter/sex-av-atta-arkitektskolor-har-inte-jamn-konsfordelning/> on 7/2/ 2021

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

2.3 Architecture and Feminism: Where, Why and How?

Architecture and Activism have a history of being intertwined. Architecture can never be neutral, but how can design and other aspects of architecture be used in an activist way? Every choice has an implication, conscious or not, and every line has a consequence. On every scale architecture influences the life of everyone, in the layout of a house, in the appearance of a public building, the planning of street lanterns. Architects, educators, and scholars have used their position and knowledge to make activist choices in design, teachings, and writing that influence our lives in a positive way.

In the 70's and 80's there was a general surge in feminist activism, so too in the architecture industry. From 1975-1981 seven women set up a summer program in the United States 'Women's School of Planning and Architecture' with a critical stance toward the education and "the role academia played in maintaining and reproducing structures of power and privilege".¹⁰⁶ The summer program wanted to teach women how they could break away from that power and the stereotypes, giving them new tools to implement in their architecture.¹⁰⁷ In what other ways has activism been used already in education, design and increasing representation and what have been the results? When is a choice one of activism?

2.3.1 Feminism in Education

Feminist educators are highly aware of the underrepresentation of women in the field and at architecture schools. This is a crucial point in developing an awareness for these issues. Not only underrepresentation of women but also the consequences that come with it. At schools, young minds are still being shaped and certain types of behaviour and ways of designing are being taught. Here students form a foundation for their future endeavours, any "discriminatory attitudes"¹⁰⁸ they are taught will find their way into their future practice.¹⁰⁹ The drop in female presence should be addressed at school and "we need to better prepare

¹⁰⁶ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

female graduates for the professional conditions they will encounter.”¹¹⁰ How can activism and feminism be part of the education?

There is no one correct way to conduct a feminist education, but many feminist educators are inspired by bell hooks¹¹¹ (stylized in lower case) on the topic of feminist pedagogies. She writes why feminist pedagogies are important for her to engage students and enhance learning practices. For hooks feminist education is a place for everyone, where no one is more or less respected than the other. It looks to break with an established structure of power and a culture that only values outcome. “Feminist education - the feminist classroom - is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgment of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university.”¹¹²

In the UK only 1 in 40 heads of architecture schools is a woman. “Women heads can be counted on one hand”¹¹³ writes Harriet Harriss. This number is absolutely astounding when we compare it to how many young women start architecture school. As has been stated before, there are slightly more female educators than heads of school, but they still only make up 35% of staff. This makes it hard for inclusive and feminist pedagogies to prevail at schools. Harriss also explains that “for a mistress pedagogue in a position of influence, explicitly promoting feminist pedagogies can often be discredited as “subjective”, “personal”, and “politicizing””.¹¹⁴ They are afraid of speaking about these topics as it might reduce chances of moving up the ladder. This is however missing the point of the feminist pedagogies in the way Harriss sees them, which strive for inclusivity and breaking the traditional power structures based on inequalities. They also strive to focus on other things like our interconnectedness

¹¹⁰ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

¹¹¹ hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Routledge

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Harriss, H., Lange, T., & Scott, E. (2017). Making Trouble to Stay With: Architecture and Feminist Pedagogies. (K. Reisinger, & M. Schalk, Eds.) *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), 89-99.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

and working towards a collective goal. According to Harriss feminist pedagogies will be the counterweight necessary to bring balance to today's climate.¹¹⁵

An issue with architecture that Lila Athanasiadou mentions is that students are encouraged "to adopt pre-existing positions rather than to forge their own, and make for a teaching practice that is based on the transference rather than the transduction of knowledge".¹¹⁶ The students do not develop their own views and beliefs and soak up knowledge like a sponge instead of thinking critically about it. Something bell hooks also warns us for: "At this historical moment, there is a crisis of engagement within universities, for when knowledge becomes commoditized, then much authentic learning ceases."¹¹⁷ The schools now care only about the outcome whereas often feminist pedagogies care often more about the process of the trajectory.¹¹⁸

Feminist activism in education so far has gone beyond the idea of gender equality and demands a shift of how current education is constructed as a whole. Feminist pedagogies address a power culture that is taught to and imprinted on young minds and means to change it. Feminism can thus become a 'method' of doing and 'exploring architecture' and all it has to offer.¹¹⁹ It can create a different environment for architects to develop themselves that they take with them into their practice, influencing even beyond the classroom and long after university days are over.

¹¹⁵ Harriss, H., Lange, T., & Scott, E. (2017). Making Trouble to Stay With: Architecture and Feminist Pedagogies. (K. Reisinger, & M. Schalk, Eds.) *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), 89-99.

¹¹⁶ Athanasiadou, L., Lange, T., & Scott, E. (2017). Making Trouble to Stay With: Architecture and Feminist Pedagogies. (K. Reisinger, & M. Schalk, Eds.) *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), 89-99.

¹¹⁷ hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Routledge

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Lange, T., & Scott, E. (2017). Making Trouble to Stay With: Architecture and Feminist Pedagogies. (K. Reisinger, & M. Schalk, Eds.) *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), 89-99.

2.3.2 Activism and Design: Implementing a Feminist Perspective

When designing with a feminist background, the aim is to create spaces for everyone, to be aware of and sensitive to inequalities. This is something Iradj Moeini talks about in Field¹²⁰ when explaining how her students worked in a participatory design setting with abused women. Participatory design makes the designer experience environments through another lens. By communicating with the women “they had developed their individual ideas of how to address the specific issues of their users, not only by sheltering them from further abuse but also by designing gender-conscious spaces.”¹²¹ Thereby not designing solely from the point of view of the ‘expert’ or the ‘genius’, the architect is forced to experience the context as a person first and foremost.

How does one go about designing with awareness of inequalities and gender-conscious spaces? For instance, on the scale of the city, a start would be designing public spaces with the consciousness of women’s discomfort when using these spaces alone at night. Urban planning is much like all forms of design not a neutral act. Many public places are for the most part not designed by women and therefore often are not designed with (the fear and paranoia) women (experience) in mind. A practical example of this is that often there are more public toilets for men than women- although this is more of a problem in the US.¹²² This is rooted in history and the ideology of the two spheres.¹²³ The public space has historically been a male dominated space, outdoors was the man’s designated place and indoors was the woman’s place, always living in a house owned by a man. Thereby creating the idea of ‘the public woman’ versus ‘the public man’, which reminds again of the importance and implications of language. Leslie Kern writes in *Feminist City*, “If women had to be on the streets of the masculine city then those streets and stores had to be designed as ‘feminine’.” She continues by saying “These spaces of consumption were open to women because in many

¹²⁰ Moeini, I., Lange, T., & Scott, E. (2017). Making Trouble to Stay With: Architecture and Feminist Pedagogies. (K. Reisinger, & M. Schalk, Eds.) *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), 89-99.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² For more on this specific issue: Overall, C. (2007). Public Toilets: Sex Segregation Revisited. *Ethics and the Environment*, 12(2), 71-91. and Greenaway, P. (2009). Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender (Gershenson O. & Penner B., Eds.). PHILADELPHIA: Temple University Press.

¹²³ Heynen, H. (2007). *Vrouw in de Stedelijke Ruimte, Ruimtelijke organisatie en gender*. RoSa.

ways they didn't challenge women's association with the home and the domestic sphere. By shopping for clothing, décor, and art, women were fulfilling their roles as caretakers of the hearth".¹²⁴ Today these are still the sort of spaces where women feel safest and where women are 'allowed to be'.¹²⁵ There is a necessity for more (public) places in the city where women feel safe. However, with capitalism prioritizing men, and all their needs in the city, the changes in city planning that women and other discriminatory groups need, seem a long way off.¹²⁶ To create real change and design with a gender-conscious perspective, women need to be valued in society. Their contribution in the public space is necessary and they form an important piece of the puzzle that is society.

On a smaller scale these ideas can also be applied. With the use of style or the designing of spaces. Most of the time apartments or other dwellings are designed with the idea of a family in mind. With some smaller rooms for the kids and one *master bedroom* – again: language! – for the parents. These types of housings do not leave much space for other ways of living. One interesting design comes from Luzia Hartsuyker, where in her design for an apartment building, the rooms in the apartment all have the same size arranged around the central spaces for communal use such as kitchen and living room. This creates a much broader audience that could live there. It could be a family, but it could also be a few friends sharing a flat.¹²⁷ It allows for different ways of living and defies the norm of the nuclear family, where the father goes to work, and the mother stays home with her 2-3 kids. How can such designs be popularized if it is possible to do so at all? Hartsuyker's "women friendly"¹²⁸ homes were never widely spread. Possibly a popularization of this kind of design should be preceded by a cultural change.

¹²⁴ Kern, L. (2020). *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*. Verso Books.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Ghisleni, C., & Delaqua, V. (2012) *How Can Gender Impact the Future of Urban Life*. Retrieved from Archdaily: https://www.archdaily.com/956585/how-can-gender-impact-the-future-of-urban-life?ad_source=search&ad_medium=search_result_all on 23/3/2021

¹²⁷ Heynen, H. (2001). *In de ruimte gevestigd: gendermodellen in architectuur*. KU Leuven.

¹²⁸ NAI. (n.d.). *ENRICO EN LUZIA HARTSUYKER*. Retrieved from Nederlands Architectuur instituut: <http://schatkamer.nai.nl/nl/ontwerpers/enrico-en-luzia-hartsuyker>, 12/5/2021

It becomes clear that every choice has an impact even if a designer is not aware of it. Conscious design choices are needed, and architects should know what the consequences of their choices are. Should the making of these choices more consciously be taught to us in school, or is it something that an architect develops during their career and only out of personal interest? In the book *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism*, Thomas Fisher takes this up. With the rise of different kinds of activism in architecture and design must come a reform and re-education of the profession.¹²⁹ Jenni Reuter, professor at Aalto University, agrees and states that architects can be activists by making conscious choices and “my most important task is to help young architects to become talented agents of change”¹³⁰.

2.3.3 Activism for Representation

In section 2.1.4 of this literature review it was made clear why we need women in architecture and why we should expose and look for female role models in architectural history and theory. According to Andrea Merret, as she writes in answer to the question “what forms might feminist pedagogy take in architecture and who are its potential protagonists (imaginary or real)?”¹³¹, one essential aspect of feminist pedagogy is the representation of female architects in architectural history and theory. Students have to be presented with the contexts and forces that have shaped architecture and the contribution of women in it. We must actively go looking to include more women in teachings. For many years feminists have been writing books about female architects, exposing their work and giving them the credits they so deserve.¹³² However they have yet to be introduced in the general course syllabi.

One problem with exposing women’s work is that their work is often only exposed in books discussing female architects, thereby stressing again the idea of the women architect vs the architect. We need historians to put the women’s work right next to that of their male

¹²⁹ Fisher, T. (2008). In B. Bell, & K. Wakeford, *Expanding Architecture: Design as activism*.

Wertman, A. (2015). *APPARATUS X: ACTIVATING THE ARCHITECTURAL ACTIVIST*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University. Retrieved from https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/10837, 23/2/2021

¹³⁰ Reuter, J. (2020) *Architecture Activism*. Retrieved from Helsinki Design week: <https://www.helsinkidesignweek.com/series/architecture-activism/> on 23/2/2021

¹³¹ Merret, A., Lange, T., & Scott, E. (2017). Making Trouble to Stay With: Architecture and Feminist Pedagogies. (K. Reisinger, & M. Schalk, Eds.) *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), 89-99.

¹³² *ibid.*

colleagues as equal, and actually rewrite history. How does one go about reconstructing architectural history and understanding how it was constructed, reanalysing and re-concluding? Rewriting history by including women's voices and all the contributions they made throughout history requires time and effort. This feminist history makes history for everyone and by everyone, not just the average white man. Showing that 'others' have and will always be there.

In 2013 an online campaign was started for Denise Scott Brown to win her Pritzker prize in retrospect. But as she herself said, that is not all that is required.¹³³ The Scott Brown campaign raised an enormous awareness all over the world. However, as Stratigakos writes "the erasure of women architects from the historical record and the lack of information and public awareness about their work will not improve in the digital age unless more women in architecture actively engage with the new information and communication technologies to ensure their own visibility"¹³⁴. Stressing that the material should also be made accessible to a broader public, that women should dare to put themselves on the foreground, and how that can happen with tools like Wikipedia,¹³⁵ that are free, widely available, and usually the first items to come up in an internet search.¹³⁶

The Flemish architecture institute actually started a Wikipedia campaign to place more female designers with an important influence on Belgian heritage in the spotlight. The Women Wiki Design project is a collaboration between "heritage institutions, designers, academia and the Wikipedia community"¹³⁷ to bring the knowledge to a broader public.

¹³³ Frearson, A. (2013) *Robert Venturi calls for Pritzker to recognise Denise Scott Brown*. Retrieved from Dezeen: <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/04/04/robert-venturi-calls-for-pritzker-to-recognise-denise-scott-brown/> on 10/2/2021

¹³⁴ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

¹³⁵ Stratigakos also brings to the attention other issues within Wikipedia, where women and people of colour are only part of a subcategory and not the main one. they are 'women authors', 'African American authors', not just 'authors'. Men also make up a larger proportion of Wikipedia writers and editors, and editors are often more critical of articles about women.

Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

¹³⁶ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

¹³⁷ VAI. (2020). *Wiki Women Design, oproep*. Retrieved from Vlaams Architectuur instituut: <https://www.vai.be/nieuws/wiki-women-design> on 2021, 5 25

Through so called *edit-a-thons* the VAI invites all who are interested to help close the gap between the amount of male and female designers currently written about on Wikipedia.¹³⁸

The profession itself also needs changes if we are to break the trend of representation in history. In 2005 *Building Design* set up a campaign “50/50 campaign for more women in architecture”¹³⁹ to address the underrepresentation of women in architecture firms. Why is this the case and how can we help it? Well intended, but as Gill Matthewson justly criticizes in the article *Nothing Else Will Do*, the campaign was too superficial, and the results of it were not clearly determinable. What can really make the architects profession attractive, what can make women want to stay working as architects? There is a necessity for a general improvement of work conditions, such as less unpaid and overall better hours and higher pay. However, as Matthewson concludes a new call for improving representation and conditions with necessary background in sociology, business and anthropology is imperative to establish true equality.¹⁴⁰ In order to make changes in the profession a true *cultural* change is needed but what is the role of activism in this change? How can campaigns go deeper? Can activism address the real problems? Do we need activism to challenge the status quo?

¹³⁸ VAI. (2020). *Wiki Women Design*. Retrieved from Vlaams Architectuur instituut : <https://www.vai.be/pers/wiki-women-design>, on 25/5/2021

¹³⁹ Matthewson, G. (2012). “Nothing Else Will Do”: The Call for Gender Equality in Architecture in Britain. *Architectural Theory Review*, 17(2-3), pp. 245-259.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

3 Introducing the Swedish Groups

Architecture schools play an important role in the underrepresentation of women in the architectural profession because, as Stratigakos writes, “Women leave architecture school poorly prepared for the gender discrimination they will face in the professional world”¹. This is why we are now looking at what can practically be done in architecture school. As was stated before, Sweden is one of the only countries in Europe with an overrepresentation of women in the architectural profession, nevertheless the dropout rate for women is still higher than that of men after university. Sweden’s policies concerned with gender equality and the atmosphere surrounding it were explained already. Also briefly explained was the existing platform for feminist activism in the country. Some of the ways feminist activism is necessary to bring about change and how it is already applied in architecture (schools) were then presented as well.

In this chapter the different sections of the literature review are brought together. In the sense that we are looking at the work realised by feminist groups in the architectural industry in Sweden. The groups presented here are all to a certain level connected to an architectural education. Their work (until now), as well as a brief history, and their connections to institutions will all be presented. §3.1 Groups in Educational Bodies deals with the groups directly connected to educational bodies, by educators as well as students. §3.2 then introduces art and design collective MYCKET whose members were all at some point teachers (at KTH or KONSTFACK, University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm²) and still work with institutions.

¹ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

² Alves Silva, M., Bonnevier, K., & Kristiansson, T. (n.d.). *MYCKET*. Retrieved from MYCKET: <https://mycket.org/MYCKET> on 4/3/2021

3.1 Groups in Educational Bodies

The groups presented in this section are all in some way connected to the architecture faculty of a university. There are three organizations whose work will be discussed, each one of them connected to another school. Sweden has, in total, four important architecture schools: Umeå University, Lund University, Chalmers University of Technology, and KTH Royal Institute of Technology. At three of the four schools (Chalmers, KTH, and Lund) the student union of the architecture faculty (the A-section) has a representative or group for gender equality. At Umeå University, the School of architecture has a student union together with the Institute of Design. Their gender representative also has other responsibilities such as student finances and general well-being.³ The university of Lund also had, until recently, a feminist group of architecture students separate from the A-section. For this study the gender representatives at Chalmers, KTH and Lund, as well as the independent group at Lund, were all contacted. The representative from Umeå was not included as they are not specifically connected to the architecture faculty, nor are they specifically concerned with gender equality in the education. The representatives at Chalmers and KTH, and the independent group from Lund all expressed their interest in taking part in this research. The representative from KTH eventually dropped out. From the four groups or representatives that were contacted two decided to participate, from separate schools. This immediately suggests that even though there might be someone responsible for tackling gender inequality in the school and the education, that does not necessarily mean these groups are active in this role.

If we look at KTH in detail, there might be an explanation why the students are not engaging with those issues in the same way as the other groups. The current dean of the architecture school is professor Katja Grillner, who has been working from the ground up, always being outspoken on gender issues.⁴ Grillner together with Katarina Bonnevier, Brady Burroughs, Meike Schalk and Lena Villner started the feminist group FATALE.⁵ Their work at KTH will also be presented. To ensure continuity even when outside interest lessens from the students, Grillner is also coordinator of the course Architecture and Gender, which was originally

³ Design Section. (2015) *Hem*. [home] Retrieved from Design Section: <https://www.acc.umu.se/~nt-ds/> on 24/3/2021

⁴ Grillner, K. (n.d.). *Katja Tollmar Grillner*. Retrieved from KTH: <https://www.kth.se/profile/grillner> on 24/3/2021

⁵ FATALE. (n.d.). *FATALE PROJECTS*. Retrieved from FATALE: <http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com> on 17/3/2021

initiated by Thérèse Kristiansson, Meike Schalk and Ramia Maze. Hélène Frichot is also connected to the course. This already established network of educators working on the subject of gender at KTH's school of architecture could explain why the students at KTH as opposed to those at Chalmers or Lund seem not to be that engaged with equality in the education. The group FATALE was not available for an interview thus the presentation of their work is solely based on the information they shared on their website and other secondary sources, shared by one of the members.

3.1.1 By Students: FemArk (2016-2020) and JA (2013-present)

The information gathered and presented on the student organizations at Lund University and Chalmers University of Technology is based on interviews with current and previous members and archives provided and made accessible by the groups (after the interviews). The social media pages of the groups were also consulted as this is their main way of communicating about events and accomplishments in the school. The first group that is introduced is FemArk, the student association based at Lund University. First FemArk's second board was interviewed together, this was then followed up by an interview with one of the founding members. The members of FemArk could give a clear reflection of their work over a longer time as they had been members during several years. The second group is JA, previously Genusgruppen, which is the gender group active at Chalmers. JA was also interviewed as a group. During the time of the interview, they had been active members for 3 months, however because of the COVID-19 pandemic they had not been able to have any in person events. I was unable to get into contact with founding members of this group. Due to the pandemic, these interviews were all conducted via videocalls.

3.1.1.1. FemArk, Lund University (2016-2020)

FemArk was an organization at Lund University founded by architecture students working for gender equality at the architecture faculty and in the education. The association was established on the 22nd of September 2016 and disbanded on the 27th of February 2020.⁶ Their purposes were:



Figure 3: Logo FemArk, courtesy of FemArk

Archive FemArk

⁶ FemArk. (n.d.). *FemArk*. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FemArk.Lund/>, on 1/3/2021

- “- To work to promote norm criticism and an intersectional gender perspective in the architecture program at Lund University;
- to work to promote an inclusive study climate in the architectural program at Lund University;
- to further train the association's members in feminist issues and critique of norms; and
- to provide a discussion forum on these issues.”⁷

FemArk was founded as an independent organization. They were not connected to their university's A-Sektionen – the student association of the architecture faculty - nor the department. They had a board which made the financial decisions and held final responsibility. “We had the board and then we worked in project groups. So, if I wanted to do something, I could start a project group and then I would discuss with the board ‘I want to start this group’. Then this group had autonomy to decide what they wanted to do. If they needed money for something, then they had to ask the board but otherwise they would do their thing and then report back.”⁸ It also allowed them to try out many things that could be quickly set up and disbanded, for instance at one point they started a reading group that did not really catch on.⁹

The association was founded as some students felt that a gender perspective was missing from the studies. One of the founding members explained it as follows: “My friends and I started making jokes that we should make a note, every time someone mentioned Le Corbusier, compare it to how many women architects that they mentioned, that it was so funny that they never mentioned women. And we were so tired of all these old men being mentioned because we were sure that there must be women out there. ... We had these lectures, like the university trying, they had one lecture every semester about women architects, and just talking about female architects, mainly female architects and not just architects that happen to be women was also so tiring.”¹⁰ It was not just about applying a

⁷ FemArk. (n.d.). *Feministiska arkitektstuder lund*. [Feminist architecture students Lund] Retrieved from LinkedIn: <https://se.linkedin.com/company/feministiska-arkitektstuder-lund-femark-lund> on 21/10/2020

⁸ FemArk Members 4 (12/11/2020). FemArk Second Board. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

⁹ FemArk Founding Member. (26/11/2020). FemArk founder. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹⁰ *ibid*.

gender perspective to the education, stressing the idea that feminism is for everyone: “It was really important to talk about inclusiveness in terms of availability and accessibility”.¹¹ One instance at school that stood out to her and was part of the reason for her to start FemArk was about adding a ramp in a design: “One of my professors said, because I suggested a ramp: “No, you always have to weigh your artistic freedom and accessibility” and I just thought: that means that you're a really terrible architect if you can't do both and have this both in your head at the same time.”¹²

Thus, the students set out to add themselves what they thought was missing in the education. To fill in those gaps that they thought needed filling, what they wanted to learn in school but didn't. Overall, the reception of the group was a positive one: “They would come to our lectures or whatever, and even the teachers were like ‘Oh, what is this? Maybe you can help us?’ Because they wanted to be inclusive and teach modern things that they just didn't know how.”¹³ For the first lecture that FemArk organized the room they booked would even turn out to be too small. The group addressed the underrepresentation of women on different levels. They found multiple ways to apply a gender perspective to architecture and the education; the group organized lectures,¹⁴ film screenings, workshops, anything they found would be a valuable addition to their education and tried to put female architects in the spotlight.

¹¹ FemArk Founding Member. (26/11/2020). FemArk founder. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ In *Where are the Woman Architects*, Stratigakos explains the importance of inviting female guest lecturers and the agenda behind public lecture series: “The conversations that do not happen in architecture schools also extend to public lecture series. These talks are an integral part of the pedagogy of architecture schools, a way to promote intellectual exchange and to expose students and faculty to “luminaries” of the profession”[1] In a survey conducted in 2013 by Lori Brown and Nina Freedman it was discovered that “62 percent of [the 73 architecture schools in the United States that were taken up in the survey] invited just one woman or no women at all to speak”[1]. Many women when invited do not talk about gender related issues but other topics that might be a bigger part of their work as architects. Of course, as Stratigakos also mentions the male lecturers are not expected to talk about any gender related issues either, but if women do not speak out on these issues, then what? Lectures where women reflect on the influence their gender has on their experience as architects, or where they focus on female histories are few and far between? They are however extremely important to prepare students for their future and spread awareness about the current state of the industry.

[1] Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

In January 2017 FemArk started to promote an architect of the month. The project came in a way as a direct result of why they had originally founded FemArk. Each month posters would be hung up at school and a post would appear on FemArk's social media in which they shone the spotlight on a female architect and her life and work. This was a way to introduce the students to female role models, to balance out those (mostly male) they were presented with in class. One member of FemArk's second board explained that "it was quite effective actually because it was a way of being present at the school. A lot of people only knew that we did that."¹⁵ The architects they chose to promote were from all parts of history and all parts of the world. An extra effort was made to present the students at Lund's architecture school with the Bauhaus Women. In 2019, FemArk gathered information and a collection of some women that attended the infamous school to celebrate 100 years of Bauhaus.¹⁶

2017	01 – January	Julia Morgan
	02 - February	Greta Magnusson Grossman
	03 - March	Tatiana Bilbao
	04 - April	Sheila Sri Prakash
	05 - May	Yasmeen Lari
	10 - October	Lina Bo Bardi
2018	11 - November	Kazuyo Sejima
	01 - January	Hilary Sample
	02 - February	Farshid Moussavi
	03 - March	Odile Decq
	04 - April	Eileen Gray
	05 - May	Ellen van Loon
2019	09 - September	Nathalie de Vries
	10 - October	Denise Scott Brown
	11- November	Högni Sigurðardóttir
	12 - December	Minnette de Silva
	01 - January	Norma Merrick Sklarek
	02 - February	Lilly Reich
2020	03 - March	Octavia Minor
	05 - May	Carme Pigem
	10 - October	Dorte Mandrup-Poulsen
	11 - November	Patty (Patricia) Hopkins
	12 - December	Ingrid Wallberg
	02 - February	Katarina Bonnevier

Table 1: Architects of the Month, FemArk



Figure 4: Architect of the Month, January 2017, Julia Morgan. Courtesy of FemArk

"Morgan was both a trained engineer and the first woman to graduate from the French school École des Beaux Arts. She then became the first certified female architect in California. During her active career, she designed over 700 buildings. Today, she is acclaimed for her style of mixing innovative design with historical references. In 2013, she was awarded the United States' most prestigious architecture prize, the Gold Medal (AIA Gold Medal), for her highly impressed life's work and also the significant impact she has on the architectural profession."¹⁶

In 2018 FemArk set up a workshop with their teachers on March 9th. This workshop was based on one the members had had earlier with Arkitekt(h)en.¹⁷ Before the workshop FemArk had

¹⁵ FemArk Members 4 (12/11/2020). FemArk Second Board. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹⁶ FemArk. (n.d.). FemArk. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FemArk.Lund/>, on 1/3/2021

¹⁷ For more information about Arkitekt(h)en see § 2.2.4

sent a survey around the school. Then, with quotes taken from the survey they wrote out assignments based on situations that had occurred at the school.¹⁸ The assignments were sorted into 4 themes based on Sweden's seven grounds of discrimination: health, inclusive architecture, representation, and social sustainability. The idea was to analyse the situations from a gender perspective and see how they could be handled in another way. After the workshop the teachers each got a checklist,¹⁹ to take with them and use for lectures and other work with students.²⁰

The same year FemArk collaborated with the university in setting up the Architecture Symposium of 2018, centring around the theme *EXPANDING ARCHITECTURE – Critical perspectives acting from within*. LAS 2018 addressed “architectural interpretation and creation as a matter of non-orthodox practices, presenting experiences from architectural practice where architectural design and disciplinary reflection have challenged the conformal narratives of architecture and its culture.”²¹ They invited speakers to expose architectural practices that work on the topic of diversity. “working with aspects of ‘home’, including the urban, societal or political conditions that situate architectural processes oriented towards lived worlds. Housing, and its architectures and built environment thus becomes a way of framing a discussion on diversity and architectural practices’ opportunity to deal with social and cultural differences.”²²

Then to expand the reach of their learnings and teachings FemArk started FemArket, a magazine about design and feminism, with a broad range of materials such as essays, interviews, articles, artistic interpretations etc. With FemArket the group hoped to go beyond and take the discussion outside of the campus. This was part of their approach to work ‘inward, outward and in between’. The first issue was released in May 2019, its central theme being ‘Windows’.

¹⁸ FemArk Members 4 (12/11/2020). FemArk Second Board. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹⁹ The checklist they mentioned is one they received from a teacher at KTH and is mentioned again later in §4.1.1. see [A-5]

²⁰ FemArk Members 4 (12/11/2020). FemArk Second Board. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²¹ FemArk. (n.d.). *FemArk*. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/420313681715222/> on 1/3/2021

²² Webtext_LAS18, Archive FemArk

One of the FemArk project groups was working to improve diversity of students at the school. They started to think of ways the school could be more accessible and inclusive, not only in terms of gender. The goal of the Representation group was to collect and spread information about the education and the entrance test to find out how these influence the accessibility of the school. The format might not give everyone an equal opportunity currently. As previously explained only a small portion of students is admitted via the entrance test for architects. To know more about how others work with these issues they got in contact with Arkitekter Utan Gränser, an organisation working for a more sustainable built environment connected to Chalmers, who introduced FemArk to initiatives both by students and teachers happening at their own school.

In the table that follows an overview of all the events FemArk organized is given. This includes the lectures, the panel discussion, the symposium but also events such as FemFest and group Picnics. The group put up informal events as well, for the members to come together and talk about their shared experiences and values, to extend the reach of the group and find new members, and to build a network with other groups at the school. FemFest was organized as such an event. This was a way to implement the in between part of their vision to work “outwards, inwards, and in between”.²³ FemFest was a collaboration between FemArk, FemJur -the feminist group of the law faculty- and FemiLund²⁴ -feminist group for all students at Lund- to build connections with other students at Lund, across faculties, and share experiences. FemFest was also an answer to the traditional *sittning*, a formal dinner at which they sing traditional student songs which is an important part of the student life in Sweden.²⁵ At these events they still wondered ‘how can we do this with a feminist perspective’. The group had discussed earlier to participate in the university’s *nollning*, an initiation week for new students with all sorts of activities, to build up a network and try to compete with other associations at the school for the attention of new members, but ultimately decided against it.²⁶

²³ FemArk Members 4 (12/11/2020). FemArk Second Board. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²⁴ FemiLund. (n.d.). *Femilund*. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/femilund/>, on 1/3/2021

²⁵ Studentlund. (n.d.) *Evenemang*. [events] Retrieved from Studentlund: <https://www.studentlund.se/event/how-to-sitting-sittning-kristianstads-nation/> on 3/3/2021

²⁶ FemArk Members 4 (12/11/2020). FemArk Second Board. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

17/11/2016	FemArk: Lunchföreläsning med Banar Sabet (FemArk: Lunchlecture with Banar Sabet)
18/01/2017	Filmvisning med FemArk (Film screening with FemArk)
25/01/2017	FemArk: LunchFöreläsning med Victoria Perocovich-Gutierrez (FemArk: Lunchlecture with Victoria Perocovich-Gutierrez)
23/03/2017	Ljusworkshop! (Light workshop)
20/05/2017	Picknick och Prideparad (Picnic and Prideparade)
22/09/2017	Lunchföreläsning: Kvinnors Byggforum (Lunchlecture: Kvinnors Byggforum)
23/10/2017	FemArk lunch lecture: Oivia Daigneault Deschênes
09/11/2017	Workshop with Arkitekt(h)en
07/12/2017	Julmys med FemArk (Christmas cosiness with FemArk)
12/12/2017	FemArk presenterar: Vem äger det offentliga rummet? (FemArk presents: Who owns the public space?)
25/01/2018	Filmvisning Citizen Jane- Battle for the City
19/01/2018	Årsmöte FemArk (Year meeting FemArk)
21/03/2018	Lund Architecture Symposium – Expanding Architecture
25/04/2018	Discussion Group – Performance
16/05/2018	Lunchföreläsning med Ragnhild Claesson! (Lunchlecture with Ragnhild Claesson!)
24/05/2018	Knyttis-picnic!
13/09/2018	Infomöte med FemArk! (info meet with FemArk!)
05/10/2018	FemFest!
18/10/2018	KICK OFF
15/11/2018	Filmvisning I höstmörkret (Film screening in the autumn darkness)
01/12/2018	Workshop med Mycket! (Workshop with Mycket!)
10/12/2018	Glöggmys (Hot wine cosiness)
17/12/2018	Out in the open – Raquel Lejtregger
18/02/2019	Årsmöte FemArk 2019 (Year meeting FemArk 2019)
27/02/2019	Studiebesök till Sofielunds Kollektivhus (SoKo) (Study visit to Sofielunds Kollektivhus (SoKo))
08/03/2019	8 mars på Mejeriet (March 8 at the Dairy)
30/03/2019	Workshop med Dis/Order!
17/05/2019	Avslutning med picnic (End with picnic)
22/10/2019	INTRO Workshop
28/10/2019	Lunchföreläsning med Rebecca Rubin – White Arkitekter (Lunchlecture with Rebecca Rubin – White Architects)
05/12/2019	Extra Årsmöte! (Extra Year meeting)
08/12/2019	Study trip to Louisiana with FemArk!
29/01/2020	Skamlöst mutanda med TÅRTA (Shameless mutation with CAKE)
31/01/2020	FemArk söker ny styrelse! (FemArk is looking for a new board!)
27/02/2020	FemArk's årsmöte! (FemArk's year meeting!)

Table 2: Overview Events, FemArk²⁷

²⁷ FemArk. (n.d.). FemArk. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FemArk.Lund/>, on 1/3/2021

3.1.1.2. Genusgruppen/JA, Chalmers University of Technology (2012-present)

The feminist group at the architecture faculty of Chalmers University of Technology was founded in 2012 under the name Genusgruppen (gender group). There were five founding members. The next year they grew and started to work in smaller groups. Genusgruppen became a part of the A-sektionen in 2015 and installed two mandatory positions in the group. Being part of the A-sektionen also meant extending the influence the groups held in the education, moreover it helped to ensure Genusgruppen's further existence as a group. In 2019 the group officially changed their name from Genusgruppen to JA, Jämlika Arkitektstudenter (equal architect students). This went together with a rebranding and an update of the logo, website address and social media handles. The goals that the group set for itself and continues to strive towards are mentioned in their workplan: "During the year, the Strategic Group conducts advocacy work regarding gender perspectives on education. This is done through dialogue and meetings with program managers, teachers and other relevant staff....In other respects, we intend to network with other schools of architecture in Sweden. During the year, we will work for the exchange of knowledge and experience with other educations."²⁸



Figure 5: Logo Genusgruppen until 2019, Courtesy of JA

JA Archive



Figure 6: Logo JA from 2019 onwards, courtesy of JA

JA Archive

Genusgruppen was established because some students found that a gender critical perspective was missing in the education. This perspective should eventually become part of the education without the help of Genusgruppen/JA. So far, their continuous work has resulted in adding a course to the curriculum and publishing a yearly 'Fanzine', which was

²⁸ JA, (n.d.), Verksamhetsplan Arkitekturstuderandesektionens genusutskottet läsåret 2014 FINAL.pdf, JA Archive

connected to the course for four years.²⁹ In 2014 they were one of the winners of Chalmers' Award for Gender Equality.³⁰

The first big event was set up in 2013, when Genusgruppen organized the theme day in March for international women's day. The theme was Architecture and Gender. Their second Genusdagen on the 20th of March of 2014 was a whole afternoon set aside "for talks on gender in the A-Sektionen".³¹ They held discussions on multiple topics, such as the role of gender in the school. Since then, the theme day has been a yearly event. The group wrote about this event for an article published in Sveriges Arkitekter "Gender Day was a success with up to a hundred visitors and a panel discussion with teachers, doctoral students and architectural scientists could continue for hours. It became a proof of how much interest actually exists among the students and we started working more intensively towards school and education."³²

Since 2014 Genusgruppen has been publishing their Fanzine, an idea that came out of the theme day the year before. The first two issues were centred around female architects to address a lack of representation of female architects within architectural history. It was added to the first year's Architectural history's course literature. The fanzine had contributions from other architecture schools.³³ The first edition of their Fanzine was released on the 23rd of May 2014, at their 'Vernissage för Fanzinet.' Since then, they have released four new issues of the Fanzine, in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, no new edition was published in 2020, it was however completely ready for printing. The magazines were connected to the content of the architecture and gender course once it was installed, although the content of the magazine has become subject of change.³⁴

²⁹ A-Sektionen 2020. (2020). *Jämika Arkitektstuderanter* - JA. [equal architect students - JA] Retrieved from Arkitekturstuderandesektionen Chalmers: <http://www.a-sektionen.se/sektionen/utskott/ja/> on 4/10/2020

³⁰ JA. (n.d.). JA. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jamlikaarkitektstuderanter/> on 3/3/2021

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ A-Sektionen 2020. (2020). *Jämika Arkitektstuderanter* - JA. [equal architect students - JA] Retrieved from Arkitekturstuderandesektionen Chalmers: <http://www.a-sektionen.se/sektionen/utskott/ja/> on 4/10/2020

³⁴ JA board, 2020-2021 (25/11/2020). JA. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

The course VEMS RUM (whose room) was first taught in 2016. The year after, the name of the course was changed to 'Architecture, gender and norm creative design'. The purpose of the course is defined as follows: "- provide tools for critical interpretations and creation of architecture from feminist and intersectional perspectives. Central issues in the course are how we shape architecture and how architecture shapes us and who is given space in the room; - introduce methods for critically analysing and questioning normative notions and expressions in architecture; - introduce central gender scientific concepts and make non-normative architects visible in history."³⁵ The course has been taught as an elective in the architecture school's bachelor program. This academic year (2020-2021) the course is not being taught because of necessary restructuring as the complete responsibility has been taken over by the school and does not lie with the group anymore. One of JA's members explains "It is actually a good step that the faculty wanted to take full responsibility of it and that's something that our organization has worked for. So that it shouldn't be based on a student engagement because say that one year no student wants to be in JA the course should still be going."³⁶ Nevertheless, the future of the course remains uncertain and it might be adopted into the curriculum in a more continuous way, as opposed to a separate course. The members of JA illustrate the influence of the course as they all state it as the main reason for joining the group, "it opened my eyes to how the architecture world is and what needs to be changed. Also around the education."³⁷

JA also works closely with the faculty, apart from the course: "We maintain a constant dialogue with teachers and program managers in both the bachelor's and master's programs and work to be involved and influence literature and course content in the future."³⁸

One of JA's ongoing goals since the beginning has also been Anonymous Critiques. To have critics not focus on the person presenting the design but, on the design; the design should be

³⁵ Chalmers. (n.d.). *Kursplan*. [course plan] Retrieved from Chalmers: https://student.portal.chalmers.se/sv/chalmersstudier/programinformation/Sidor/SokProgramutbudet.aspx?course_id=30191&parsergrp=2 on 3/3/2021

³⁶ JA team, 2020-2021 (25/11/2020). JA. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ A-Sektionen 2020. (2020). *Jämika Arkitektstudenter - JA*. [equal architect students - JA] Retrieved from Arkitekturstuderandesektionen Chalmers: <http://www.a-sektionen.se/sektionen/utskott/ja/> on 4/10/2020

criticized based only on the design itself, not who is presenting it. In 2019 the group wanted to research the influence of gender on the types of commentary that students receive during critiques. They first made a list of architects and tutors that had been invited before for student work crits. These people were divided in two groups. The two groups were both sent the same email and survey to fill out, but they received different files to critique and base their survey answers on. Both groups were to critique the exact same design, even the exact same poster presentation but for one group this design was attributed to a female student and for the other it was attributed to a male student. It was also important - as to not influence the survey answers - that the judges did not know it was a survey sent out by the gender group but a general survey by the architecture school. The follow up of this research is unclear. Did they not finish it yet, did they abandon it, were they unable to get proper answers? If completed the results of this survey could expose a gender bias if there is one.

Beside the theme day, Genusgruppen invited guests and professors for workshops and lectures. They also organize informal events to expand the reach of their work and talk to potential new members. An overview of all events is given in the following table. Through the years there has been a change from a more outwards approach to a more inwards one "I can't think of anything that happened when we are in it right now, but we found old articles that people from this group had written to the local newspaper. So, I think the earlier years maybe they had a more outside, outgoing approach and made articles and stuff. They reacted to stuff that happened in the city. But I don't think we have seen it in recent years if you understood what I meant. ... now it is more that we work with lectures in school and extra courses during evening but before maybe they had a more outside approach, more activist."³⁹

³⁹ JA team, 2020-2021 (25/11/2020). JA. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

20/03/2014	Arkitektur och genus (Architecture and gender)
23/05/2014	Vernissage för Fanzinet (Vernissage for the Fanzine)
11/03/2015	TEMA: Arkitektur & Genus (Theme: Architecture and gender)
25/03/2015	Camilla Andersson: AbNormal
03/10/2015	Panelamtal på Feministiskt forum 2015
21/10/2015	Gästföreläsning: Gender, power and the city (Guest lecture: gender, power and the city)
18/11/2015	How to make yourself a feminist design power tool
04/02/2016	Vårkänslor med Genusgruppen! (spring feelings with the gender group)
09/03/2016	TEMA: Genus och Arkitektur (theme: gender and architecture)
19/04/2016	Genusgruppen's nya fanzine (The gender group's new fanzine)
26/04/2016	Aspning Genusgruppen
31/05/2016	Fanzine Releasefest
02/03/2017	Making Space – Film and Discussion
08/03/2017	Temadag: Genus och arkitektur (themeday: Gender and architecture)
24/04/2017	Genusgruppen's nya fanzine! (the genders groups new fanzine)
05/05/2017	ASPA GENUSGRUPPEN
01/06/2017	Releasefest Fanzine!
15/09/2017	Öppet lunchmöte
06/12/2017	Hemsiderelease // QUIZ // Genusgruppen // Okidoki
07/03/2018	Chalmers Architecture Genderday 2018
09/04/2018	Tacofrossa I Röda!
17/04/2018	ASPA Genusgruppen // QUIZ på Henriksberg
22/05/2018	Releasefest! // Genusgruppen // Oceanen // 22.05.18
17/10/2018	TYCK TILL med Genusgruppen
19/12/2018	Filmbisning av Citizen Jane med Genusgruppen
28/01/2019	Genusgruppen wants YOU!
11/02/2019	Speak Up – Talk about Equality
11/02/2019	Lunch Lecture: Images that change the world
06/03/2019	Genusdagen – 2019 – Tema Staden
06/03/2019	Underbar Genusbar
08/04/2019	Aspirate Genusgruppen
28/05/2019	Releasefest // Genusgruppen // Oceanen // 28.05.19
12/12/2019	Filmvisning!!
21/01/2020	Arkitektur, genus och normkreativ design
20/02/2020	Ler-workshop med JA
11/03/2020	Genusdagen: För vem formas rummet?

Table 3 Overview Events, Genusgruppen/JA, until academic year 2019-2020⁴⁰

⁴⁰ JA. (n.d.). JA. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jamlikaarkitektstuderer/> on 3/3/2021

3.1.2 By Educators: FATALE (2007-2012)

FATALE (Feminist Architecture Theory – Analysis, Laboratory, Education) was started in 2007 by architects, researchers, and educators, Katarina Bonnevier, Brady Burroughs, Katja Grillner, Meike Schalk and

FATALE

Feminist Architecture Theory – Analysis, Laboratory, Education

Figure 7: Website Header FATALE

<http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com>

Lena Villner. At that time Bonnevier had just finished her dissertation, with Grillner as supervisor.⁴¹ Schalk had just finished a Ph.D. in Theoretical and Applied Aesthetics of Landscape Architecture.⁴² Villner was Associate Professor for Architecture History.⁴³ And Burroughs was a “PhD-candidate and teacher at KTH School of Architecture”.⁴⁴ They formed FATALE when at a certain moment they felt they had to; they just could not ignore these themes any longer.⁴⁵ FATALE was connected to the school of Architecture at KTH. The group pursued “research and education within, and through, feminist architecture theory – a critical practice where gender acts as a significant analytical category, often through the intersection with other power relations.”⁴⁶ As FATALE was nestled within the institution they could not only spread their knowledge about the relationship between gender and architecture through the school but also directly influence the damaging practices that start in architecture school and follow the students into their practice as architects. Changing the institution from within and working up. They each had their own background and experiences that they brought into the work they would eventually realise together.⁴⁷ FATALE had an extensive list of goals and issues they wanted to bring to light, criticize, teach, etc. They mapped out how they wanted

⁴¹ KTH. (n.d.). *CV and publications*. Retrieved from KTH: <https://www.kth.se/profile/grillner/page/cv-and-publications> on 24/3/2021

⁴² Schalk, M. (n.d.) *Meike Schalk*. Retrieved from KTH: <https://www.kth.se/profile/meike> on 14/5/2021

⁴³ FATALE. (n.d.). *Contact*. Retrieved from FATALE: <http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com/p/contact.html> on 14/5/2021

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ FATALE. (2012). *fatale critical Studies in architecture*. *Nordic Journal of architecture*, 90-96.

⁴⁶ FATALE. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from FATALE: <http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com/p/who-we-are.html> on 17/3/2021

⁴⁷ “Feminine Practices (thematic issue of the architectural magazine *Mama* in 2000)2; the anthology *On Architecture: An Ongoing Conversation* (2002 and 2005) (man to man), a course in Gender studies, Stockholm university; *Architecture Is Male* (tabloid paper, Swedish Museum of architecture, 2003); the dissertation: *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture* (2007). A research studio on queer feminist architecture, called *Jalousie*, first run in 2004, had a queer feminist perspective and was developed by Katarina Bonnevier on a student initiative.”[1]

[1] FATALE. (2012). *fatale critical Studies in architecture*. *Nordic Journal of architecture*, 90-96.

their group to grow, realizing that without more support their influence would in fact be quite limited. FATALE has not worked on projects together since 2012, however the members are still active in feminist research and design, for example through MYCKET (§3.2.1) and continued practices at KTH.⁴⁸

FATALE was responsible for multiple courses on the topic of gender and architecture. In 2009 they started the master level design studio: Critical Studies Design Studio. The courses they planned were first run as a test in the year 2008/2009. The Critical Studies program taught new strategies for design with a gender conscious and feminist perspective. It gave students and experts in art and architecture fields a chance to be in critical discussion, “build conversations, and share experiences on architecture and feminism today.”⁴⁹ The program existed of four courses each focussing on other types of practices, strategies and locations: Feminist Design Tools, Dialogical Interventions, Participatory Mapping, and Altering Practices.⁵⁰ The four courses each had three central themes, “positioning”, “participating and collaborative work”, and “altering practices”.⁵¹ In conducting them FATALE applied the notion of an *altering practice*, a term they borrowed from Doina Petrescu, which is used specifically as a focus in the last studio course and also throughout the entire master’s course load. Altering practice is both about understanding how a project can change its environment and how we have the power as architects to bring about social transformation.⁵² Besides the Critical Studies courses FATALE also ran some elective courses, such as a “lecture series” and “experimental writing and studio course with international guests.”⁵³ They stress the importance of building a network across borders.⁵⁴ At the time KTH also started a course in Architecture and Gender currently under the leadership of Grillner and Hélène Frichot.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ FATALE. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from FATALE: <http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com/p/who-we-are.html> on 17/3/2021

⁴⁹ FATALE. (2012). fatale critical Studies in architecture. *Nordic Journal of architecture*, 90-96.

⁵⁰ FATALE. (n.d.). *FATALE PROJECTS*. Retrieved from FATALE: <http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com> on 17/3/2021

⁵¹ FATALE. (2012). fatale critical Studies in architecture. *Nordic Journal of architecture*, 90-96.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ KTH. (n.d.). *Architecture and Gender: Introduction*. Retrieved from KTH: <https://www.kth.se/social/course/AD236V/> on 14/5/2021

FATALE also organized a workshop and lecture series, salons, presentations... outside of KTH. Their lecture and workshop series was called *Feminist Futures*, where they invited guests as well as lecturing themselves. They organized one workshop at KTH, where they imagined what Feminist Futures could be. It dealt with what it is like working in Sweden “It is sometimes said that Sweden is of the best countries in the world in terms of gender equality, but contrasting the current situation with a future where gender structures are completely different can make it easier to see what is being done today”.⁵⁶ Furthermore, FATALE arranged several salons opening the floor up to “intersectional topics with relation to architecture and gender”.⁵⁷ Some were part of a series and continued process called Anthology Works, wherein they explored ‘feminist space’ and invited to the salon Jane Rendell and Doina Petrescu, whose writings were also the inspiration for the salon.⁵⁸ During the Salons they had an open dialog with everyone involved, students, lecturers, anyone else interested. In their teachings FATALE underlined the importance of writing in relation to architecture (and feminist practices) as they want their students to be prepared for multiple paths to follow after their studies. Fiction writing specifically, can be used as a tool to expose different aspects of performer and observer.⁵⁹

When faced with the question “What troubles you most about where architecture seems to be heading to nowadays? What sort of transformation is desirable? How to trouble architecture?”⁶⁰ in an interview by Dirk van den Heuvel and Robert Gorny, Katja Grillner, Hélène Frichot and Brady Burroughs each bring separate but important kinds of trouble to the foreground. Grillner suggests looking first beyond the world of architecture, as teachers they find they have a duty to teach students about the complexity of the environment. “We can teach architecture students to zoom in and out, and to shift positions, both within themselves, and to understand the complexity of the site and situation in which they might find

⁵⁶ FATALE. (n.d.). *FATALE PROJECTS*. Retrieved from FATALE: <http://fatalearchitecture.blogspot.com> on 17/3/2021

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ The books that inspired FATALE are Doina Petrescu’s *Altering Practices: Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space* (2007) and Jane Rendell’s *Gender Space Architecture* (2000).

⁵⁹ Burroughs, B., Bonnevier, K., Grillner, K., & Frichot, H. (2017). Between Delft and Stockholm. 119–128. (D. v. Heuvel, & R. Gorny, Interviewers)

⁶⁰ Ibid.

themselves working.”⁶¹ Frichot then raises that they have to keep letting themselves be heard, and “make a fuss”.⁶² They should keep pushing, together they can generate change. Burroughs finishes off by proposing to turn inward and look critically at how they as teachers might be propagating the system without even knowing, realizing that they must remain aware of what (unintended) consequences their actions might have, “when we sit in design juries ourselves, adhering to the way it is always been done; same set-up, same criteria, same discussions, same values, because we may be able to inflect a new tone or exchange (but hey, we also have bills to pay, so we need this gig!)”⁶³

FATALE thus created a moment of intense feminist practices which influenced them as members but also all the students which could partake in their courses and studios and even a more general public who could attend the lecture series and salons. It was also an important step in establishing the current feminist network active at KTH.

They wrote about the future of architecture and gender: “FATALE’s wish for the future is that this discussion on architecture and gender reaches out even to everyone who works hard in architectural offices, where many who are still affected by old power structures but deem the discussion to be more of an academic concern. And that offices and construction firms take an interest in and open up to this discussion to make way for change on an everyday basis.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Burroughs, B., Bonnevier, K., Grillner, K., & Frichot, H. (2017). Between Delft and Stockholm. 119–128. (D. v. Heuvel, & R. Gorny, Interviewers)

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

Burroughs raises other examples of these moments where elements clash and the choice is not always clear.

⁶⁴ FATALE. (2012). fatale critical Studies in architecture. *Nordic Journal of architecture*, 90-96.

3.2 Art and Design

3.2.1 MYCKET (2012-)

MYCKET (stylised in capital letters) was established as an art and architecture collective in 2012 by founders Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier, and Thérèse Kristiansson. Over the years two new members joined the collective: Ullis Ohlgren joined in 2016, and Anna Märta Danielsson in 2018. They are scholars, artists,



Figure 8: Website Header Mycket

Screenshot March 17th 2021 from the Mycket Website: <https://mycket.org>

and architects who develop their work and research with an intersectional approach and through a queer-feminist, anti-racist lens.⁶⁵ After teaching at various institutions for some time they felt it was time to get out there and start realizing projects themselves. “We were so interested in proposing ourselves, not just critiquing and not just teaching, but actually trying to build these things that we were imagining or talking about.”⁶⁶ They use alternative methods of design that are not yet widely used in the architecture industry. MYCKET is in that way practicing what they used to teach and showing the importance and implications of a different kind of practice. The projects they realise are somewhere between the worlds of Art and Architecture. Their research often goes beyond the obvious trail. The name of the collective explains itself, “‘MYCKET’ means much in Swedish and that is how we like it; much is more.”⁶⁷ The members of MYCKET, Alves Silva, Bonnevier, Kristiansson, each already had a history in activism before starting the collective, both personally, in other groups, at institutions... They find ways to fill gaps in each other’s thinking.⁶⁸

The group works independently but does have collaborations or research in connection with institutions. Like their research on the queer club scene. For the Clubsenen project MYCKET received an artistic research grant from the Swedish Research Council. The project⁶⁹ started

⁶⁵ Alves Silva, M., Bonnevier, K., & Kristiansson, T. (n.d.). *MYCKET*. Retrieved from MYCKET: <https://mycket.org/MYCKET> on 4/3/2021

⁶⁶ MYCKET, (7/12/2020). MYCKET. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

⁶⁷ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2021). *When walls Speak. Girls Like Us* (13).

⁶⁸ MYCKET, (7/12/2020). MYCKET. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

⁶⁹ Alves Silva, M., Bonnevier, K., & Kristiansson, T. (n.d.). *Clubsценen act 1: Lalasalon*. Retrieved from MYCKET: <https://mycket.org/CLUBSCENEN-ACT-1-LALASALON> on 4/3/2021

in 2012 and consisted of 13 'Acts'.⁷⁰ MYCKET investigated the queer nightclubs and explained it as "an investigation into spaces and activities that have been, and still are crucial to people, who haven't had, or currently don't have the freedom to act as they wish – where the relation between the social interplay and the material conditions are intimately connected."⁷¹ The project was recently brought together and published in collaboration with queer magazine Girls Like Us in February of 2021. The project delved deep into the history of the queer club scene, they brought forth crucial players and even went so far as to recreate some clubs which once gave many queer people a sense of belonging. With this project MYCKET also mapped out clubs in the physical space and its changes throughout the years. They noticed that many clubs have closed down not only due to hate crimes but also due to gentrification⁷² of certain areas. Places where the queer scene was once very lively and pride flags were hoisted high, are now privatised and the flags along with the bars and clubs disappeared. MYCKET addresses these issues and poses that "the collective struggle is the only possible approach"⁷³ to "bring equality to everyone in the city".⁷⁴

Recently MYCKET have started a new collaboration project with Linnaeus University "Troll Perception in The Heartlands",⁷⁵ funded as well by the Swedish Research Council. Linnaeus University is a smaller university in Småland, without the prestige of the universities in the big cities. This opens up opportunities for MYCKET to explore unexpected and unconventional topics. The new project will investigate folklore and mythology in and from southern Sweden.

⁷⁰ Alves Silva, M., Bonnevier, K., & Kristiansson, T. (n.d.). MYCKET. Retrieved from MYCKET: <https://mycket.org/MYCKET> on 4/3/2021

⁷¹ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2021). When walls Speak. Girls Like Us (13).

⁷² Gentrification is also discussed by Leslie Kern in *Feminist City*. She discusses it in relation to safety and the contradictions it brings along. Many areas when they are redeveloped with the idea to make women feel safer then gradually push out other women, single mothers, immigrants. By creating spaces like coffee shops, and other second homes that are crucial to the mother's life, they will also attract hipsters and other folk. One coffee shop turns into two and a produce supermarket to appease to the mothers but slowly diners and small shops, bars and (fitness) clubs are shut down and like the Other are forced out of the areas. It is a combination of some people feeling safer but others suddenly unable to pay rent and deemed undesirable in what was once the only place in the city they could feel at home.

Kern, L. (2020). *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*. Verso Books.

⁷³ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2021). When walls Speak. Girls Like Us (13).

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

It is connected to an imagining otherwise course which is part of a Design + Change master program at Linnaeus university.⁷⁶ The focus of the research is to look into another way of sustainable living. How can we change our relationship with the earth and what can the trolls teach us? “How can we imagine other futures where we don’t abuse the planet but live in relation to the earth, and we’ve been very interested in critical indigenous studies or the Sami culture⁷⁷ of thinking of coexistence with nature”.⁷⁸ Even in this project which on the surface might not seem as the most obvious for a design collective like MYCKET, they find ways to implement their ‘anti-racist, queer feminist’ views when looking into the trolls. The troll mythology is based on some very site specific but also some very universal legends. The stories are told globally in different versions. ‘Glocal’ is the term they use to express this combination for things that are at the same time *local* and *global*. The trolls often also do not conform to western ideas of families and gender. The trolls MYCKET looks at act in that way really queer. They move as a ‘pack’ and have ways of aesthetic expression beyond the western tradition. The trolls are gatherers and alchemists and “they often make wonderful things of trash... trying to use trash and do something with it? That’s queer aesthetics”⁷⁹ to challenge the narrow idea of beauty. Mythology like the trolls’ allows them to bring these ideas into important cultural aspects of the countryside, to introduce certain themes beyond the urban environment.

The use of trash is a returning theme for MYCKET. In 2018 MYCKET did a workshop with the members of FemArk (§ 3.1.1.1). This ‘Dream Castle workshop’ was one that originated as part of the Clubsennen research which they continued to work with for many years.⁸⁰ The idea came from an admiration for artist Niki de Saint Phalle, and her exhibition *She – A Cathedral*⁸¹ at

⁷⁶ More about the program: <https://lnu.se/en/programme/design-change-master-programme/vaxjo-international-autumn/>

⁷⁷ Sami are an indigenous people that have been living in Scandinavia and parts of Russia for over a thousand years. Gradually throughout history they have lost more and more land.

the Swedish Institute. (2021). *SAMI IN SWEDEN*. Retrieved from Sweden: <https://sweden.se/society/sami-in-sweden/> on 16/3/2021

⁷⁸ MYCKET, (7/12/2020). MYCKET. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ Tellgren, A. (2018) *Remembering She – A Cathedral*. Retrieved from Moderna Museet: <https://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/remembering-she-a-cathedral/> on 16/3/2021

Stockholm's Moderna Museet (Modern Museum). The exhibition hall had the shape of a woman, which one would enter through her vagina. MYCKET wanted to pay tribute to this display of art, which then, in 2018, happened 50 years ago, and de Saint Phalle's way of working. They also came across American artist Rachel Shannon who works with inflatable structures. "We wanted to make it almost a tribute project about how we imagine that we can build our cities together and with big sewing circles or building together, and we invited Rachel Shannon to come and share with us how to build these inflatable structures."⁸² For the inflatable structures they gather recycled plastic bags, old sails, umbrella fabrics, to give these items that would otherwise be trash another life. MYCKET also uses these workshops of building structures together as a way to connect with people and share ideas, not always through talking but also through doing. They call this D-I-G - Doing in Group. "With everyone's little input, it is just a beautiful and fun way of illustrating how we maybe actually could be more involved in building the environment that surrounds us."⁸³

D-I-G is a way of working they also used in their project Kepsen på Råslätt in Jönköping, Southern Sweden. They also briefly wrote about this project in the Girls Like Us magazine.⁸⁴ Kepsen means 'ball cap' in English, the project is thus named very fittingly as the pavilion is a giant purple ball cap on five stilts. The Ball Cap was built for the Mix Dancers Academy. The housing company of the community also wanted to address the lack of meeting places for "female-identified people".⁸⁵ It came together out of a process of participatory design and collaboration with the dancers and the Academy, who "were dancing here long before Kepsen was built."⁸⁶ MYCKET organized what they called 'dance-paint-workshops.' It almost speaks for itself: during the workshop they were dancing and painting at the same time, while also testing if a certain place was a good dance spot. "At Råslätt, the D-I-Gs also functions as a site analysis anchored by the people who live here."⁸⁷ MYCKET stresses the importance of the social interactions that happened during the creation of Kepsen, from the first sketches and

⁸² MYCKET, (7/12/2020). MYCKET. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2021). When walls Speak. Girls Like Us (13).

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2021). When walls Speak. Girls Like Us (13).

dreams to the final material result. For them it was an important way to engage with the local community, who really wanted this project to happen.⁸⁸

In 2013 MYCKET wrote an article for the cultural and feminist Bang Magazine⁸⁹ discussing modernism and aesthetics. As they were discussing the role of aesthetics, Bang explains the way the magazine itself is designed, where appearance is secondary to substance: “design is the last thing to be set.”⁹⁰ MYCKET writes in response “Don’t you also find that problematic, though, saying that one shouldn’t base things on appearances? MYCKET struggles with this quite a bit, we think we have to base things on appearance! Or we will end up in modernism by default. The aesthetic expression is crucial to how one is meant to feel, interacting with design and architecture.”⁹¹ MYCKET elaborated on what this expression means in architecture: “You don’t want to put gender or gendered words when discussing things or discussing aesthetics, but somehow you also have to.”⁹² They do not want to conform to the gendered stereotypes where for example girls only like pink, and glitter. Girls can and should like whatever they want but what if that is in fact glitter and pink? During the Kepsen project the dancers of the academy who mostly identify as girls were asked to show MYCKET some reference projects they liked which were in fact shiny and glittery. Here we bump into an interesting phenomenon; where in general society women are often deemed inferior, so is everything connected to femininity. For example, pink and glitter are deemed kitsch or immature, and are also stereotypically viewed as feminine. They are not the aesthetic expressions that are upheld by certain power structures, such as modernism which has been promoted by white upper/middle class men and is known for the idea that ‘less is more’. Things like colours, patterns, textures, and other things that do not fit into the ‘less is more idea’ are often tied to (expressions of) class, race and gender and therefore viewed as ugly and naïve. Architecture and gender “create and recreate situations, relationships and

⁸⁸ We talked about the importance of engagement from the participants, and their interest in the project, to realise something that everyone feels represented by and to get their ideas out in the open. They are the ones that will use that what comes out of this project and they are the local specialists of the community.

⁸⁹ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2013). Circumnavigating and Crushing. BANG, 29-33.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² MYCKET, (7/12/2020). MYCKET. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

values.”⁹³ MYCKET finds the relationship architecture and gender, but also class and race, have and do not have with each other has to be called out. Kristiansson admitted in the Girls Like Us magazine that it took some years to erase the conformist kind of thinking about architecture.⁹⁴ They do not want to categorize aesthetics but recognize the trickiness of the situation, which is clearly illustrated with the Kepsen project.

Kepsen was the first project MYCKET realised on commission, one that might carry them more into the architecture world. “Well, I guess that's why we're in this between sphere between art and architecture, because it is more like art money that funds our architecture, and this Kepsen actually the first commission to work, we get where we... .. Yeah, we're not really in the architecture world in that sense, not because we don't want to, but we haven't been picked up by that world, and what funds us is art money, so that's tricky. But I'm wondering, I feel like now that we did this Kepsen på Råslätt, I feel like also there is open architectural offices who have contacted us and are interested in collaborating.”⁹⁵ As the industry becomes more openminded towards processes such as participatory design, and really implement the user's ideas, practices like MYCKET's become increasingly relevant.

In their own way all of these groups have had some kind of influence, on their colleagues, on their teachers, on the students, on their clients, ... with their feminist practices and gender critical perspectives on the education and the industry. Practices like these are invaluable and necessary to tackle the leaky pipeline from day one in the education of a future architect.

⁹³ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2013). Circumnavigating and Crushing. BANG, 29-33.

⁹⁴ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2021). When walls Speak. Girls Like Us (13).

⁹⁵ MYCKET, (7/12/2020). MYCKET. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

4 Analysis

In this chapter the work of the groups will be studied more closely. The questions posed in the beginning of this thesis “(How) can we tackle the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture with activism? There are different levels of activism to tackle these different ways in which women are underrepresented. What kind of actions are necessary and what are the limitations?” have already been partially answered. In the previous chapter the actions that are taken by the groups were presented, as well as the levels on which these groups are active. They organize different activities and start new initiatives to address the different ways of underrepresentation. Other questions and ideas that were raised earlier on, such as the limitation they might face or the paradox of the many activist groups still active in the field of gender equality in a country that is internationally viewed as exemplary on the topic, will be addressed here.

In §4.1 Connection and Friction with Institutions we will see how the atmosphere – on a small and larger scale- and feminist activism contribute to the awareness and how that then raises concerns which lead to more activism. The connections these groups have with their institutions will be addressed and fleshed out, as they play important roles in the achievements of the groups. The efforts of the student groups, JA and FemArk, will be put next to each other and taken under a loupe to discover which kinds of initiatives are crucial for their cause. Section §4.2 Limitations of Activism sheds some more light on the possible limitations the groups might face, and what could hold them back from realising their initial vision. Things like economic power or competition between student groups can influence what they are practically able to achieve.

In this analysis, I will often use quotes from the interviews I conducted. Each interview is added in attachment and has a number. To avoid an abundance of footnotes every quote will be marked with the number of the corresponding interview: [A-1] for FemArk’s second board, [A-2] for FemArk’s founding member, [A-3] for JA’s 2020-2021 team, and [A-4] for MYCKET

4.1 Connection and Friction with Institutions

Each of the groups presented have/had very different connections to the institutions they work with. All these different ways of connection surely have an impact on what the groups are able to achieve within these institutions, both in terms of education and general atmosphere. What a group like FATALE is able to accomplish in the school is of a different level entirely than a student association, as these activists have in a sense ‘infiltrated’ the system. The student associations face a heap of extra challenges to create lasting change if it is at all possible. Not only the connection with the university affects the organisations, also (the changes in) the general political climate might play into the effect the groups can have on the architecture education.

Well-established connections with the university and the student unions give the student groups more opportunities. It means establishing lasting changes, such as the course JA managed to set up as elective or FemArk having a workshop with their teachers. Although the connection with the university and the unions can also cause friction, JA is for example not entirely certain of the future of their course and how it will continue and FemArk’s subpar relationship with the A-section created some unnecessary negative tensions.

4.1.1 What is in the atmosphere?

Interestingly besides (the members of) FATALE, KTH has been home to many more feminist educators, architects... such as Hélène Frichot, Thérèse Kristiansson, Catharina Gabrielsson, Helena Mattsson, and Karin Reisinger. In 2016 the 13th international AHRA conference took place at KTH around the theme *architecture and feminisms, ecologies, economies, technologies*.¹ The school has in the past decades been an incubator for developing feminist views and critical discussions surrounding architecture, the education itself as well as the professional practices. Naomi Stead, teacher at Monash University² and member of Australian group Parlour, admitted to Brady Burroughs,³ member of FATALE and teacher at KTH, that

¹ More about the conference: <https://architecturefeminisms.org>

² Stead, N. (n.d.). *Professor Naomi Stead*. Retrieved from Monash University: <https://www.monash.edu/mada/about-us/people/naomi-stead> on 21/3/2021

³ Burroughs illustrates this encounter in Burroughs, B., Bonnevier, K., Grillner, K., & Frichot, H. Between Delft and Stockholm.

the kind of work FATALE managed to do would be impossible to do with her students in Australia. What is it in the specific atmosphere at the architecture school of KTH and Sweden by large that makes these movements and practices possible? There is a clear interest from the students. And 'Feminism' does not seem to have the same connotation and charge as it does in some other places.

In 2014 the school created a document titled 'KTH SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE – RULES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY'. It was a collaborative effort from students and teachers that was "carried out through a range of workshops involving both staff and students".⁴ An important contribution was also made by the Gender Equality Society, a student organization which had been recently established at the time.⁵ Since the original document was drawn up in 2014, it has been revised in 2017. The second version was in use from 2018-2020. "The most important driving force in our equality work and our work to ensure diversity is our core values [sic]. The School of Architecture must be inclusive by offering all of our students and employees equal opportunities. The more perspectives we have, the richer our study programmes and work environment will be."⁶ The rules also state that it has been mandatory since 2015 for all teachers to follow gender equality training. To help educators in how to work with students and build their syllabi, the document also contains a checklist on gender

⁴ kth. (n.d.). *KTH SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE – RULES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY*. Retrieved from KTH: https://www.kth.se/polopoly_fs/1.772194.1574023221!/KTH%20SCHOOL%20OF%20ARCHITECTURE%20-%20RULES%20ON%20GENDER%20EQUALITY%20AND%20DIVERSITY.pdf, on 21/3/2021

⁵ This group might be the one FemArk also mentions during their interview, however there was nothing to be found on them via social media. From the FemArk interview: "3: I remember when we had that workshop with the teachers and there was a teacher who said - she was the one inviting us I think - but she said, 'You know you're not the first, we have done this before'. We were like 'yeah we know'. But that's the thing: it always goes up and down.

1: Yes, I remember she mentioned 'there was a group like you guys, but they were in Stockholm.'

3: And that was when we first started getting engaged in FemArk and were on the rise.

1: from what I understood these groups were a bit less formal and less structured. So, there was this ambition of 'we are here to stay'. You know we were registered as an organization; we had a bank account; we had all these formalities so there was an ambition to keep it going." [A-1]

⁶ kth. (n.d.). *KTH SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE – RULES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY*. Retrieved from KTH: https://www.kth.se/polopoly_fs/1.772194.1574023221!/KTH%20SCHOOL%20OF%20ARCHITECTURE%20-%20RULES%20ON%20GENDER%20EQUALITY%20AND%20DIVERSITY.pdf, on 21/3/2021

equality.⁷ This checklist was later also used by FemArk and then shared with the teachers at Lund. There is an awareness that these issues should stay part of the program because even if the interest lessens, the relevance does not.

The general atmosphere in Sweden is crucial to take into account. MYCKET explains how the state and the activist groups reinforce each other, the platform is there, and the state provides subsidies. It is an important market; every company needs a gender representative. They strongly encourage everyone to get involved, there is for instance an interesting Feminist group called MÄN, which is a group for men working to stop violence against women.⁸ The threshold to start new groups or initiatives is apparently quite low says one founding member of FemArk “That is a positive aspect that it is so open compared to other countries, so it is okay to start those groups and not... Some people think you're crazy, but most people don't. I think it is a part of the freedom, really.” [A-2] Both the freedom and the supportive relationship between state and feminist initiatives uphold the seaming paradox which was suggested to exist. The freedom and general atmosphere make it easy to start up new collectives or organisations working around gender equality. There also seems to be more awareness surrounding gender related issues in Sweden, this assures that attention is still given to this topic even if so much is already being done.

Furthermore, a more global political climate plays an important role in the interest people have for gender equality, or how relevant they find it. The members of FemArk’s second board explain that when they joined the group the Me-Too campaign was at its height. “I think feminism was really on the agenda at that time. It was Me-Too and everything was very... So, it felt very natural for me at least to join and get this feminist perspective on architecture I think.”[A-1] And later “I think what we said before with the Me-Too wave also because we weren’t so conscious at that time, but I think it was also cool because it was the thing that everyone was talking about. Feminism was very in, you know?”[A-1] Although more of an offhand remark, in the interview with MYCKET Me-Too was also mentioned when talking

⁷ More on KTH’s specific atmosphere after FATALE and the “gender equality society” can be found in Åberg-Wennerholm, M. (2017). The Gender-Eye Approach. *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture*, 7(1), pp. 101-113.

⁸ MÄN. (n.d.). *About MÄN*. Retrieved from MÄN: <https://mfj.se/en/home> on 22/3/2021

about changes through the years and a shift in the profession away from the 'genius architect' "...there is a shift, because there's also a shift of these white men taking credit for everything, right? With Me-Too and everything it is like somehow, I feel like everything is lagging, but still that many people know in a way that it is so unsustainable." [A-4] She explains that campaigns like Me-Too can be helpful to spark interest in general society and that they can show how ideas are represented in design and art, gender related problems, such as under- or devaluing women's work, harassment, and sexism, are not just in society but also in the architecture world. Gender ideas are enforced by design, you can see someone's theory and ideas on gender equality be translated into their own interior. For example, as MYCKET discusses aesthetic expression in BANG "The sequins and the faux fur are, perhaps stereotypical, expressions of a queer camp aesthetic. It is so delightful to just embrace those impulses, and instead of having the small, accentuated item in your home, the faux fur throw pillow, why not just go with fur on the walls, the floors, the ceilings, just cover everything in fur."⁹

It does however seem that the better these groups are established within the institution the less the impact or interest will fluctuate with the political climate. Furthermore, the fact that the general atmosphere is so open could explain how only four or five people can start these initiatives. So even if one group has to disband now, that does not mean that a new group will not be established in some years and stick around for a longer time with new vigour. This again feeds into the paradox of the seemingly established gender equality and the activist groups still actively working to improve it.

4.1.2 How far can students go

If the initiative comes from the students, there is an extra hurdle of being heard. Both FemArk and JA have expressed the importance of being seen by the school, for their teachers to realise that certain knowledge and ideas were present within the school and involve the students in bigger events.

When FemArk held a workshop with their teachers they established their position within the school and with the teachers. FemArk's second board explains how they gradually built a

⁹ Bonnevier, K., Kristiansson, T., & Alves Silva, M. (2013). Circumnavigating and Crushing. BANG, 29-33.

relationship with the institution “We had the workshop with the teachers. The teachers have an educational day, it is part of their program and we took over the day and had a workshop with them. And then there was at the same time, during the same week, we had also organized together with some teachers at the school a symposium that we told you about before. It was called *expanding architecture*. We were part of the whole process of who we wanted to invite, the graphics, everything. So, I think in a way that was when the school started maybe hearing what we meant, what we wanted.”, “For me it was really - it gave me confidence and I think it was good to know that the teachers listened to us as students. And that they wanted to know what we had to say”[A-1] and “When I talk to teachers about [the workshop we did with them] they were surprised that this knowledge was inside the school, cause I think it is so common for people that have been working a long time that you always hire something to learn something, or you look so far away to learn something and this was like something they could do basically for free with their students that they were used to teach so that was really, really nice to see that they were taking it really seriously”[A-2].

JA explains this in relation to the faculty recently taking over the course they organized “It is actually a good step that the faculty wanted to take full responsibility of it and that’s something that our organization has worked for. So that it shouldn’t be based on a student engagement because say that one year no student wants to be in JA the course should still be going.”[A-3] They do still raise some concern with how the faculty will eventually deal with this. It seems that a lack of communication can be frustrating for the association as they don’t know what will eventually happen with all their past work: “now it seems like maybe they don’t take full responsibility for it and want it to be more like part of the curriculum which is good. But they say that that might be further down the line. We’ll see, they say that they’ll take the responsibility, we hope they will.”[A-3]

JA is quite strongly connected to the school, which is how they can work towards for example anonymous critiques: “We also have meetings with the head of the architecture school. So, the teachers and the head of each program, once every month or so.”[A-3] They also admitted that they think the school might not keep the topic on the agenda if they would no longer be present while making the sidenote that this past year may not have been representative regarding the regular priorities: “We’ve unfortunately not been able to have those meetings

nearly as often as we hoped because of the workload on the head of programmes, and they just haven't had the time for them. The school does have an equality representative but still it unfortunately seems like these meetings are very dependent on our existence. I don't think the questions would be entirely forgotten about, but they don't seem to be that high of a priority either. But then again this has been a very uncommon year so maybe equality is a higher priority normally. The engagement of the teachers seems to be very varied some. I think that whoever ends up being the next head of programme of the architecture bachelor will be very important for whether questions of equality will be prioritized. It is difficult to judge how this is handled normally based on the past year but I do think that JAs work is needed to keep equality on the agenda.”[A-3] JA also works with other gender associations to reach a wider audience: “We have meetings twice every semester with JämK for [everyone] and all the other equality committees at the school. We haven’t had any collaborations with anyone yet. Partly because of corona and it’s really hard to do anything right now. But yes, we do have meetings with them and previously I think there has been more collaborative stuff.”[A-3]

A second difficulty the student associations face is the continued stream in and out of students, always having to recruit new students to keep the group going and learning the ropes of the organisation. It is an uncertain future when it always depends on the interest of the new generation of students. As one of FemArk’s founders admitted: “We really thought that this would be something the first board would do and then this would die like no one would be interested in this. So, when Nora and the rest of the second board came, and were like, ‘okay, we know how it feels, we know that some of these perspectives are so lacking in this school, but here we are’. It was so nice to welcome others into what we were missing when we first started.”[A-2] FemArk as we now know ended their organization with the second board for a few reasons one of them being there was no one interested in taking over, they clarified themselves “I think one problem with FemArk and why it died was because we were very - we were a group of friends. So, the first board was a group of friends basically. Then we took over as a group of friends. And it is because we have the same values, and we get together, and we have the same interests. So, it is weird that it gets that way but I think that was - we were kind of isolated. We were not represented in different groups at the school and that is something that we could have done better”[A-1].

The members of JA all got involved in the group after the course sparked their interest for these issues, as they all attended it in their first year. Here we directly see the impact the education can have on the students when they become aware of the role gender plays in architecture already in their education. They want to expand on this knowledge and share it with their colleagues. "It was really inspiring and just interesting to, well, to actually get to learn about... Because it was not- It was centred around architecture but there was also some gender theory and all kinds of different design too, not really related to architecture. Yes, it was really interesting to get to learn about all of that and it is probably part of the reason why, at least I joined JA." And "Yes, for me personally it opened my eyes to how the architecture world is and what needs to be changed and also around the education. So, for me it was also the main reason why I engaged in this group." [A-3]

An interesting difference between JA and FemArk is the connection they have with their A-Section (the student union of the architecture faculty), and the influence this has on what they can achieve. JA is connected to the A-Section. This connection in a way gives a reassurance that they might exist for a longer time. It also strengthens their connection with the education and thus can help create a lasting change even when JA would not be active anymore. FemArk was not connected to their A-Section. Even though this was a conscious choice it is one they might not make again. Or one they might handle differently. The A-Section in Lund already had a position that works with inclusivity, according to one founder of FemArk: "When we started, it was just empty, they were asking does somebody want to? They were looking for someone to start it, and then it was so weird, when we had been - when FemArk was one year old, and they still didn't have anyone to fill that position. They emailed us, you can fill this position, we were like, sure, but we're going to do it as FemArk, we can't disable our group just to re-brand it as JämlikA, because it would be totally unnecessary. And then they weren't interested. ... All we really cared about... We wanted to do our lectures and our activities as easy as possible and without any extra work that we didn't care about, it could have been easier, I think if we found a way to work together. But yeah, it worked anyways." [A-2] Their disconnection from the section opened up some opportunities as the second board explained: "They didn't want to have to answer to the union and they wanted to have more autonomy. Because the other group they have to answer to the board, the

student union board, and they have to answer to someone else so FemArk had the opportunity to reach out and work with the municipality and different things.”[A-1] On the other hand, the disconnection also caused friction: “We had a lot of people in our class that were involved with this JämlikA sorority. They were like, what are you doing? They even told us ‘oh, you can’t have this room’ or something about that, we could not rent a room at the school or something, which in Sweden, it is law that if you have this kind of group, the university has to provide somewhere to have meetings, so it is... Oh, it was so weird.”[A-2]

4.1.3 Evolving Efforts

Looking closely at what the groups are doing, we can see some similarities in the issues they are trying to tackle and how. FemArk’s main goal throughout all their initiatives was learning what they had actually expected to in school. They did this in multiple ways: by organising workshops about alternative design practices, lectures on feminist architecture and even lectures with the bigger organs in the architecture industry in Sweden such as Arkitekt(h)en from Sveriges Arkitekter and Kvinnor Byggforum. By inviting these activist groups or designers, the students behind FemArk could expand their education and their toolbox for their professional career. “When I applied for an internship, it was really important to me to be at an office that at least aim to work with the social approach, I would say... And I really, in my applications, I wrote almost only about FemArk and this is what I did, and this is what I want to do, and I think it was really positive for me, and I also know that that’s what got me my internship at White, where I still work, and it was really useful for me just being like, this is something I’ve done parallel to my studies and this is something I would like to explore, and I’ve managed to work with projects that have this social-inclusive focus quite a lot...” [A-2] And “I’m doing a masters now and I see how there’s a group in my studio that is working with gender issues and I want to help them because I have so many references and ideas. And I feel here maybe it is not something that is so explored, and I realised how much I learned. And it was really outside of what we were doing in class.”[A-1]

On the other hand, when we look at the events JA has organised through their active years, we can see that before the course, which started in 2016, their events were comparable to the ones FemArk organized (lectures, workshops, panel discussions). After the course was installed however the topics that would be discussed in those events were mostly covered

there. This was also one of FemArk's eventual goals: that the university would take over and give attention to these topics. JA works very closely with the faculty and has been active for a longer time, for that reason they can start to raise other questions such as anonymous critique, and norm critique, focus on the atmosphere in the school. These are questions FemArk also started to raise with their Representation group or the workshop with the teachers as they got more established in the school environment.

However even with the teachers' interest in what they were and their willingness to listen FemArk's second board did not get the feeling that the school itself was changing all that much: "I think towards our last year I felt that there was kind of a feeling of that we were not necessary anymore or something that we had raised this question, and everybody knew.

3: they were kind of getting tired of us.

1: like 'yeah okay you're being annoying'"[A-1]

4.1.4 A Shift of Actions

Another phenomenon that needs to be focussed on is the shift that is happening within the groups. For some of them the focus of the group might change from gender equality and underrepresentation of women to a general inequality and inclusivity. Addressing problems in the architecture industry can change into an alternative practice and a shift away from that industry altogether. When feminism is applied not only on the way women are treated in the workplace, how they are represented in history, ... but on the design and industry by large it can bring about alternative ways of working and feminist practices, leaning more to participatory processes and architecture that does not necessarily end up in periodicals. Are they limiting themselves from being represented in a more general architecture history, or architecture magazines? Could it be a conscious choice not to partake in those star-architecture practices?

This introduces another paradox: the more broadly the feminist ideas are applied on the industry, the further they are carried from star projects and the question of representation. MYCKET really embodies this alternative practice, but it does take more time and it influences their entire 'life economy'. When asked about practicing in the capitalist white society and navigating the industry as activist, MYCKET answered "I guess that's why we're in this

between sphere between art and architecture, because it is more art money that funds our architecture, and this Kepsen is actually the first commission to work we get where we... We've drawn like small villas for people or friends or renovations and stuff, but it is the first permanent structure we get to build, and I guess it has to do with... Yeah, we're not really in the architecture world in that sense, not because we don't want to, but we haven't been picked up by that world, and what funds us is art money, so that's tricky.”[A-4] The industry is not ready to completely embrace the alternative practices, and a change is only happening slowly. One of the founding members of FemArk, who is currently working as architect in a more traditional setting mentions doing what she can from that position. “I've managed to work with projects that have this social-inclusive focus quite a lot, but I haven't been involved in any activism outside work, I've only focused on what I can do in my job”. [A-2] Both ways of influencing the industry are necessary but they require different levels of devotion. Some activists focus specifically on the underrepresentation of women, and other types of activism within the set industry and some focus on really changing the industry altogether.

4.2 Limitations of Activism

In the interviews certain themes concerning different kinds of limitations came forward, this happened without really asking about it. Limitation is used in the sense that some things might limit what the organization is able to accomplish, such as an incomplete feedback loop or lack of economic support. Some can be so damaging that it causes the organization to disband, such as interest or lack thereof, and some behaviours can be limiting without organizations realizing, such as use of certain language. These 'limitations' are of course also intertwined and influence each other. Competition between certain student associations or even economic power can limit interest in the groups, lack of interest can then result in a lack of motivation or even a lack of members. It is crucial to take these into account as they show the fragility of activism, and its achievement.

4.2.1 Feedback

On multiple occasions the feedback loop is not complete. Either because the students leave the school and therefore do not know what the situation is after they have implemented some kind of change, or because the students do not know what it was like before, so they do not know if their predecessors' actions realised anything. This inability to close the loop makes tracking changes nearly impossible. The current members might not be able to follow up on what past members have wanted to change. And past members do not know if their work achieved anything at all.

During the interview with JA the disconnection with previous years achievements of the group was brought up several times. There are old protocols that the group can use as reference but what they have managed to change is not documented thoroughly. JA also expresses some information not being passed on properly. "That is actually kind of interesting with how, when you look back at old protocols from meetings with the teachers and stuff and the old conclusions of what has been done during the year. It is almost, the questions that have been raised have been basically the same for 6-7 years and there doesn't seem to be that much that has actually been managed to be changed. Or some things, I think things are changing but quite slowly." [A-3] And about the course "I think it was a collaborative work but we're not really sure since this year we don't have that responsibility, so we haven't gotten all the

information from the last year.”[A-3] Later they mention an apparent increase in female tutors: “They also made a list, [in] 2015, with female *handledare*, tutors and I feel- because now we have a lot of female tutors - maybe they did something there that actually changed but I don’t know because we don’t know how it was before and they haven’t really written down. They haven’t really before talked about what we have done, from the past. What has changed, that kind of stuff but it is very interesting if they did something that made it more equal to the teaching.”[A-3] The incomplete feedback loop also makes it difficult for the groups to take credit for their actions. They are sure there must be an influence the group has had but they cannot say to which extent. And if a certain formula was used to change something significant like appointing more female tutors works, they would not know what it was or which the important steps were to create this change.

With FemArk this issue was brought up as well, only this time in reverse. For previous members it is almost impossible to know what their impact has been. Even if the experience at the time might have been that the groups work was indeed beneficial, for students who are only engaging with these groups for a short amount of time, it is impossible to track the evolution of their actions, and know if there is still need for their work. The founders of FemArk do not know the current situation “I know it took a lot of energy. And I would not really say that someone has to do it. The ideal world would be that the university is good enough, so we don't have to be there. We even had that in our documents of our goals. And the purpose of the organization was ‘We should do this until we don't have to, and we really would not want to have to’. But for me, it was really fun and it was a good experience. But I don't know, I think only someone doing the architecture program right now could answer it, because maybe something has happened but I would be surprised if there was no need for it.”[A-2]

4.2.2 Competition

Something students also mention is the competition with other groups (that are not that politically charged). They have to compete for the students’ interest. As was discussed before in §4.1.2 this can also create unwelcome and unproductive tensions. This limitation of competition mostly came up in the interviews with FemArk. They discussed the sort of competition they experienced and some ways they tried to tackle that.

“Student associations they are very short lived sometimes and they die and come again because it is depending on the students. We’re only there for 3-5 years and I think it is a lot about status also in the student life. And when we started FemArk, was kind of a cool association in some way, but the guild or the A-section not that much, I don’t know if you should speak about it in this way, but it was kind of like that and I think the A-section got much more active during our years. And that was very fun because we had a great student life, but it also made FemArk... We had to compete about the interest and about the students.” ... “But also, many people were interested, and they came and talked with us and we introduced the subjects. And then there’s this, you can be interested but if you should join you have to gain something and maybe they gained this from another association or they already went to parties or they already had friends.”[A-1]

One way they discussed to try to engage with new members was to organize a traditional event, the Swedish nollning, in a feminist way. This can show new students that the association also cares about its members and what it means to apply a gender perspective on student traditions. “We had a lot of discussion about the nollning. Do you know [it]? When you’re a new student, and you get to know everybody else and there’s a lot of events during three or four weeks during the first semester. And that was something that the previous board before us had talked a lot about to have a FemArk or feminist nollning in some way? Because I think during the nollning there’s a lot of traditions as well and a lot of pressure on the new students and you have to be a part of this role. And you’re new in the city. You don’t know anybody. And it is kind of a secure position. And I think FemFest was - we never arranged this nollning - but FemFest was our take on that. To make a sittning and a social event.”[A-1]

4.2.3 Interest

Interest in what these groups are trying to achieve is crucial, as it might affect the motivation the members have to keep working towards their goals. More interest can result in more people joining them. Groups like FATALE and MYCKET with continuous members are not as susceptible to a lack of interest influencing their work. The student associations however depend on the interest of new students constantly to ensure the existence of their group. The competition with other groups can really damage this.

As FATALE knows, for example, the group cannot achieve what it wants alone, there has to be interest in what they are doing because this can inspire others to join or start their own groups. "To counter stagnation, normalization, hierarchization, the group FATALE needs to expands [sic] beyond its original five members. New teachers and researchers can join the group, or new fatale groups will develop in other places in the world. FATALE wishes to spread out as an embodied and living archive of queer/feminist architecture, to dispose for good of the oppressive structure of the world."¹⁰

The student groups also raise this limitation.¹¹ From FemArk's second board: "As we could see that FemArk died, [it] was because people weren't engaged, and we could not continue the more intellectual work because we didn't have any members and I think you have to co-work with these two to get members interested, so you can continue to, I don't know, spread the word." [A-1] And from JA: "I didn't know that I was going to join the group until they basically- Someone needed to do it otherwise the group would not exist. But the subjects we work with have always been- I've always found them really interesting. For me personally I had no interest of really joining any other group but this one was the only one that I had any interest in really." [A-3]

A member of JA also talked about how interest in what this group was doing at their school eventually resulted in them becoming a member themselves. "We had a workshop, when we started first year which was with JA which got me started to thinking about [it] and also the course as well. But I was already engaged in other things so I wanted first to let other people join if they wanted because I didn't know if I would have time but then, same as Linnea said,

¹⁰ FATALE. (2012). fatale critical Studies in architecture. *Nordic Journal of architecture*, 90-96.

¹¹ In March 2021, as opposed to when they were first contacted, the gender equality position of the A-section at KTH is even vacant. "During the Winter meeting a new Equality Student usually is elected but this year we had no candidate. We are now searching for someone who would like to work with these important questions. Do you want to work with equality, inclusion and equal treatment? Do you see that our chapter could be improved in any way, regarding these matters?"

Arkitektursektionen. (n.d.). *SÖKES: JML-ANSVARIG STUDENT*. [WANTED: JML-RESPONSIBLE STUDENT] Retrieved from arkitektursektionen: <https://arkitektursektionen.se/sokes-jml-ansvarig-student/> on 29/3/2021

no one had applied at first and then I felt *This is really important. We need to keep it going.* So, then I felt that it was necessary, so I joined and I'm glad for it." [A-3]

For the student groups it is therefore crucial to engage with the other students at their school in a way that groups with established members do not have to worry about (as much). This can be quite difficult because these feminist groups or the positions for the representatives in the union are more politically charged than for example the committee for the masters students. The students might not be interested in organising these kinds of events outside of their education themselves, even if they might stop by when it is happening. The step from showing up for lectures that are organized by the student groups to helping organize those lectures seems to be too big for many. This might be because some students are more interested in organising activities that are just for fun, or it might be due to the feeling that gender equality has been established already, which would not be surprising in a country like Sweden. Maybe it is even a combination of both. FemArk's second board recalls this kind of atmosphere during their last year "I think towards our last year I felt that there was kind of a feeling of that we were not necessary anymore or something that we had raised this question, and everybody knew." [A-1] Although, with the constant coming and going of new students, it does not seem too unlikely that a new organization can start up in a few years, continuing FemArk's work and taking on old and new challenges.

The design collective MYCKET counts on the interest and contribution of others in their work in a different way. As one of their returning ways of working is what they call D-I-G they rely heavily on their users, what they can bring into the conversation and the design. MYCKET cares deeply about the relationship they have with the participants in their projects as this can ultimately make or break a project. "It is also really the same with participation, it is depending on the groups, and if the group feels that they really have an interest in the issue and that they will gain something. No, but I feel like in a lot of projects... it was such a blessing for us in this project and Råslätt dance group because they had. ... This area Råslätt in the commune on the used Club and the dance school who together applied to the art agency to get help, so in that case, you also had some motivated participants, it was their dream. Their desire... I feel like we sometimes... Actually, when we worked in Gothenburg was with the Playa and with Frihammen, but that was more tricky because no one had a particular interest

really in that area, and here we could really focus on this group that was all going to organize and work with them, or of course it becomes easier kind of I'll say in the relation to..."[A-4]

4.2.4 Economy

The student groups are non-profit organizations, their lack of economic backing determines what they can do in a very direct way. When FemArk started, they came face to face with this fairly quickly. "We just called, emailed, we were... And we were surprised that it was so easy, especially a lot of people that we wanted to invite, they were activists, so they would be very used to do things for no or very little money, and they had this personal drive to really do it, so it was a nice surprise that it was... Yeah, it was just emailing people and some were like, okay, we can come and it would be 10000 crowns and then we knew we could not afford it. So, it was really easy just emailing or calling saying, you want to come here."[A-2] In this way the work the students are able to do cannot be a substitute in the long term for what the education is missing. "And I guess that's why it would be best to have it from the university, so then it would... because all our activities were always... You always knew that it was like, okay, this is FemArk this is like a bit cheap or a bit weird or in the night or something, like it is not really comparable to the usual education".[A-2]

Although on the other hand, some of the uncertainties surrounding JA's course are also of economic nature. Once the subject is adopted by the school, it does not mean the work is over. It is a process that demands constant attention and follow up. "There have also been some economic problems surrounding it that it costs too much money and it is not prioritized so that's probably a reason why they might not be holding it this year, sadly."[A-3]

In their professional practice MYCKET have to base their choices on economic power as well, for them it is a way of life, "what made us be able to put time in it was when we got the grant for the, for researching on the queer club scene, because I mean how if you're not paid... You will never be able to develop really... That's so much about economy. And I mean it is what we're struggling with all the time, also I feel like if you're going to do this other kind of architecture, these other kinds of processes, it takes so much more time, it is slower or more costly or..."[A-4] Additionally they explain that money and time are the main reasons why alternative design practices like theirs are not more widely used by big firms and are taking

so long to spread. But that they are noticing a change, however small. “I feel like most architecture offices, they would not have - or they don't think that they could afford to have this kind of practice, but maybe then they can take in sometimes and collaborate like White and these big offices. They do work - a lot of places work with participatory planning processes, but to *really* do it, I feel like they feel they don't have the money to, but somehow. With urban Agenda 2030 and the UN goals and everything, I think that there might be something happening. That the architecture world and the planning world and the entire world of course also... Somehow, it is changing, isn't it?”[A-4]

4.2.5 Importance of Language

The importance of language came up in different ways, only those ways that it can limit the actions of the groups directly or indirectly will be considered here. FemArk confesses that the use of the word ‘feminism’ may have contributed to some of the alienation from the rest of the school. Other people whom femark also wanted to be a part of their group, did not feel represented by them. As one of the founders elaborated “I think if we would have started FemArk now, I would probably suggest another name and not because I don't believe in it anymore, because we had to spend so much time just saying... Okay, this is about being inclusive. That's like what we talk about. It is not about - we heard so many stupid things like, Oh, you do this only because you hate men, and blah, blah... It is like, Yeah, even if I think it is obvious that everyone should be feminist, it is only a word to me at least, and it is annoying to put your energy and talking about that, that feels... It is just so obvious.”[A-2]

FemArk's second board described how they experienced a difficulty in engaging people, as they were unable to give a clear definition of what the group did. “I think also because we didn't have that much of a clear - we had a vision, but the association was very much what you as a member made it to be in some way. And the other parts of the section. We could not really present a clear ‘this is what you are going to do when you join FemArk’. It was more ‘what do you want to do, are you interested in feminism’. ... We were doing a lot of stuff and, yes, we were project based which worked really well but it was also hard to explain that in some way. So, I think that was hard for people to understand what we really did.”[A-1] Here language can limit, because if someone needs some more convincing finding the right words

can be crucial. It is difficult to capture a person's interest if they do not clearly know what the group stands for or what is expected of them once they join.

MYCKET explains that they often use different language when working in participatory design settings, changing the words that could be limiting. "We almost never use... When we talk to people in general, we don't say, 'we do queer feminist architecture', because it doesn't mean anything like, what the fuck does it mean for them? So, we're more interested in places... We talk about *jämlika*, equality, equal places and places for everyone. Because you're right, even if that's where we come from and we think that that's the same, it just alienates, it can alienate people if we say it, so really, we changed our terminology because it creates a really unproductive distance. So, I think that you can choose the word to use and still say what you actually think, I think without alienating, and then that people shouldn't be offended by using feminist. That's also another question. You know that you will get a lot of unnecessary reactions, you can maybe say the same thing, but not use some trigger words, although it is a... So, it does help." [A-4]

4.2.6 Other

One issue that is specific to the past year and a half for the student groups is the COVID-19 pandemic. They can of course hold meetings online with teachers and might be able to organize some online events, but the reality is that these are new challenges they have to deal with. When groups organize events of course the students can choose themselves if they want to go or not, but by moving everything to the digital space we are faced with the difficulty of the echo chamber. Not in the same capacity as it happens in certain online groups but where students would normally at least encounter other people, especially in the international master programs, they are now sitting in front of their computer day in and day out and only meeting those people they want to see. They are not seeing posters of events anymore that might spark interest, or even the posters like FemArk had of their architect of the month. They cannot walk past a lunch meeting by chance and think they might join. And this might not be an issue for older students, for those close to graduation that have spent years already roaming halls and getting to know their peers, but it can be problematic for students that grow up in remote parts of the country, never really straying far from their home base that spend their first few university years barely getting to know other students,

and maybe not even moving into student dorms yet. They might not even be aware these activist groups exist at their university and the contribution they make. Immediately in the interview with JA it was brought up the first time, “Yes, we have meetings twice every semester with JämK for [everyone] and all the other equality committees at the school. We haven’t had any collaborations with anyone yet. Partly because of corona and it is really hard to do anything right now. But yes, we do have meetings with them and previously I think there has been more collaborative stuff.”[A-3]

5 Gender and Architecture in Flanders

The main reason why the feminist groups in Sweden stood out so much was because in all my time at university I had only heard of one group working for diversity at KUL. In this chapter we investigate the Flemish universities and the architecture educations to get an idea how far the education and awareness still have to go in Flanders. Is the situation in Flanders really so dire? Are students aware of the challenges that female architects are faced with?

First the situation is presented as is in §5.1 Activism and Architecture in Flanders. A look is taken at the role gender plays in the architecture education in Flanders and the student associations connected to it. Here attention is brought to the responsibility the bigger organs in the industry' such as the Flemish *Order of Architects*, have in the underrepresentation of women. In §5.2, following the situation sketch, the roles of students, the education and other institutions were discussed with Flemish students from different universities. They shared their opinions and experiences and were also presented with some data gathered in this and other research. The last section, §5.3 Why the Disparity, then addresses the difference between Flanders and Sweden. How come the interest in these themes differs so much in these two places?

5.1 Activism, Education, and Architecture in Flanders

How do the education and the students work around the subject of gender and architecture in Flanders? We take a moment to investigate the different Flemish universities, the student associations, and national organizations. This will give a quick introduction to the current situation and an understanding how much time is dedicated to the topic in the education and the industry.

5.1.1 Gender as Part of the Architecture Education

To get to know the situation on the teaching of the subject 'Gender and Architecture' the syllabi of the courses Architectural theory or similar were consulted. The architecture schools included in this search were KU Leuven, both the architecture programs and the engineering architecture program, U Ghent, U Antwerp, U Hasselt, and the Free University of Brussels-VUB. A word search for 'gender' was applied on the course syllabi available via the institutions. It was found in 3 of the 7 programs. The courses were 'Architectuur theorie, deel 2'¹ at KUL -which is part of the engineering architecture education- 'Architectuur van het wonen' and 'Stad en Diversiteit'² at UA, and 'Cultuurwetenschappen'³ at U Hasselt.⁴ This is only counting those courses that are a mandatory part of the program. It shows a great need for change, that this subject becomes a mandatory part of the education at every university. The work of the feminist groups in Sweden shows that even in a short time they can realise change as long as the faculties are willing.

Elective courses form an important step in making the subject a part of the mandatory program, they can also expand on the topic if was only touched upon briefly before. Looking

¹ KU Leuven. (n.d.). *Architectuurtheorie, deel 2: "Tendenzen en vertogen 1965-2000"*. Retrieved from KU Leuven: https://onderwijsaanbod.kuleuven.be/syllabi/n/H01V6AN.htm#activetab=doelstellingen_idp796576 on 1/4/2021

² U Antwerpen. (n.d.). *Studieprogramma van de bachelor architectuur*. Retrieved from Universiteit Antwerpen: <https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/studeren/aanbod/alle-opleidingen/architectuur-studeren/bachelor/studieprogramma/> on 1/4/2021

³ U Hasselt. (n.d.). *Cultuurwetenschappen 3*. Retrieved from Universiteit Hasselt: <https://uhintra03.uhasselt.be/studiegidswww/opleidingsonderdeel.aspx?a=2020&i=2338&n=4&t=01#anker35658> on 1/4/2021

⁴ The list is based on the information about the course that is made available online, of course this can be incomplete. For example, when I spoke to some students from U Ghent they told me about a course called 'bijzonder vraagstuk' (special issue) in which the students work on a topic for a semester. The topic is chosen from a list, so they depend on the topics that the professors have to offer. Since a few years there is professor who offers some on the topic of equality, in a broader sense.

at the elective courses in all those programs only one course on the subject of gender and architecture was found when applying the same filter. The course 'Modernity and Urbanity: Capita Selecta from Architectural Theory and Criticism. Critical Analysis of Texts and Projects' (an elective course at the department of architecture of KUL) dedicates some time to the subject of gender related to architecture, even if it is not mentioned in the online syllabus. Another version of the same course taught as elective in the master in gender and diversity can also be followed by architecture students and is titled 'Modernity and Urbanity: Capita Selecta from Architectural Theory and Criticism. Gender, Diversity, Power and Urban Life'. Here 'gender' is included in the title and an extra workshop on the topic is included. Obviously, some syllabi might not be complete or cover everything that is taught in the course. Although, when choosing electives, a complete syllabus seems even more important. How would a student, wanting to know about the role gender plays in architecture and the industry, be able to choose an elective when it is not made clear in the syllabus which subjects will be breached. At this time, gender does not have a (prominent) place in most of the architecture educations in Flanders.

5.1.2 Necessity for Activism? Is there a Platform?

From my point of view, a grand change in the Flemish architecture education still seems quite far off. Although some universities might have somewhat of a lead over others, it should not depend on the university whether or not female students are prepared to enter the industry as women. Of course, students can choose which university they go to, and in Flanders even more freely than elsewhere – without the preselection process and with the geographic accessibility – but the students would not know this is something they have to take into consideration when making that choice because the industry itself does not pay attention to it, nor stress its importance.

Flanders has both the Order of Architects as a leading organ as well as the NAV – Network Architects Flanders - who supposedly represent the interests of the architects. However, contrary to Sveriges Arkitekter's Arkitekt(h)en neither of those organisations make any mention of gender equality being a working point. Even if an article is published on the issue,

it is not something they seem to be overly concerned with.⁵ The influence both of those groups have is nation-wide, extending further than the universities because every practicing architect in Flanders has to be registered with the Order of Architects. They have an important role to play in addressing the underrepresentation of women and the leaky pipeline. They can not only teach students but also teach practicing architects to change their damaging practices. Both JA and FemArk have worked with professional feminist association in the building industry, FemArk described the experience “I think there were 2 moments [where I learned most]. One was a workshop we had with a person from the architect’s association, you know, architects Sweden. I don’t know if you guys remember this workshop.

4: You mean the Arkitekt(h)en workshop?

2: I remember that one too, and I talk about it a lot I think, when I... Sometimes I mention it.

1: The thing is I don’t really remember what we did but I remember this feeling in the room of ‘ah so nice that we all have this experience’. That we share this view of how things are and that we want to change. I don’t know, there was this feeling of in a way of we understand.”

[A-1]

At the universities themselves the platform for feminist activism is almost non-existent.⁶ Zooming in on the architecture faculties it is in fact non-existent. The architecture student associations do not concern themselves with gender related content, but even the bigger associations such as VTK who claim to represent the interest of all the students make no mention of gender.

⁵ NAV. (2018) *RUIM 1 OP 3 ARCHITECTEN IS VROUW, BIJ STAGIAIRS ZELFS MEERDERHEID*. Retrieved from NAV: <https://www.nav.be/artikel/1589/ruim-1-op-3-architecten-is-vrouw-bij-stagiairs-zelfs-meerderheid/> and

NAV. (2018) *STEEDS MEER VROUWEN WORDEN ARCHITECT (MAAR NOG LANGE WEG TE GAAN)*. Retrieved from nav: <https://www.nav.be/artikel/1386/steeds-meer-vrouwen-worden-architect-maar-nog-lange-weg-te-gaan/> on 1/4/2021

⁶ At KU Leuven, there is one group which concerns itself with feminist issues: the KU Leuven Feminist Society (<https://www.facebook.com/KULFeministSoc/>). There is also another group, UNDEVIDED for KU LEUVEN, which looks into inequality and social issues in a broader sense (<https://www.facebook.com/UNDIVIDEDKULeuven>). Both only came to my attention when I was well into my architecture studies. As I discussed with of the founders from FemArk the groups here seem to be more hidden from a bigger audience, more secret than those in Sweden. I only came across them when I actively went looking for them, not by accident which is something that did happen for the students at Lund and Chalmers.

So, the short answer to the title question if activism is necessary in Flanders and if there is a platform would, if I were asked, be 'yes' and 'no'. Of course, just because it is not there now does not mean it cannot be there later. As the students of FemArk and JA proved, the efforts of a small group of enthusiast and passionate activists can create quite the change. If not on a big scale yet, then at least for those involved. "I think that, but maybe we already talked about it, but you were interested in how this, even though this association had a short life, how it affected (things) and I think that it is also how we take it with us and even though we wanted it to be more broad and for more people to engage I still think that we still can have an impact on that in our professional life.

2: And I think that the teachers and students at school saw us do different things. They carry these subjects with them also.

1: Yeah, we got a lot of comments from them and I recently got an email from one of the assistants from the studio that was 'hi I still think of the things you did', and that brought questions for him, also how education works and educating from underneath and these kinds of things." [A-1]

5.2 In Conversation with Flemish Students

After gathering the data that has been put forward in these previous chapters, and to expand on it as well, some final discussions were organized with some Flemish students. Thinking back on some of the initial questions: What is the current situation in Flanders? How come the difference in activism between Flanders and Sweden is this big? How does gender fit into Flemish academia? The aim here was to know how this topic lives among the Flemish students, how important and relevant they find it and if they care enough to work around this topic themselves. And to get a grasp of they already know about the role of gender in architecture and to which extent it is a part of the education.

For these moments of discussion five student associations connected to different Flemish architecture faculties were contacted, three participated: KU Leuven's Existentz,⁷ U Antwerp's Modulor, and U Ghent's De Loeiende Koe. From Existentz two master students, one male and one female, were interviewed together. From Modulor one male bachelor student was interviewed. Lastly, from De Loeiende Koe two master students, both male, were also interviewed together. No questions were given beforehand, just the general topic of gender and its influence in the architecture industry. This allowed me to capture genuine initial reactions as I presented the interviewees with the data, and to get an understanding of what they already knew. The different discussions were held in Flemish, the quotes used here were translated to English.

It could be interesting to get a better insight of the Flemish schools than what I was able to do here. This could be done by interviewing the professors, heads of faculty, and getting a complete overview of the contents of the courses, getting into contact with the other universities that are not a part of this thesis. An important note is that the gender of the students that were interviewed could play a role in their perception of gender equality at the universities. Interviewing a bigger pool of students could therefore generate a more accurate understanding.

⁷ Existentz is the association connected to my own education. The questions I asked the students at the other universities concerning the content of the education hence varied a little from how it happened in the other interviews.

5.2.1 Introducing Flemish Groups

U Ghent's De Loeiende Koe is an association created to support the students and create a bridge between students and teachers. They talk about deadlines, problems or shortcomings in the curriculum and are there to represent the students. It is "a working group [established] on the initiative of the Architecture & Urban Planning department that should function as a dialogue between students and teachers within architecture education."⁸ They often have meetings with the faculty. One of the students shared that they find when themes such as gender are discussed that it is handled in a respectful way "If, for example, it is the education committee - you can talk to professors about education there - if such themes come up, then you actually notice that the professors or the people who make decisions often have the right discussion and the correct arguments and such. So, I feel that we as students don't have to say *what are you doing now? That is no longer possible.*"⁹

U Antwerp's Modulor was established in 2012¹⁰ together with the faculty, as they really wanted to know what lives among the students. "Modulor is the faculty association of design sciences within the UA. We are responsible for architecture, interior architecture, product development and conservation restoration and the master urban design as well."¹¹ The interviewee told me that "I do know that the faculty and the different courses also find it quite important to know what is going on with the students. That is why there are also functions within the faculty for the students, to follow meetings with them and if there is a topic where the opinion of a student is needed, then they are present, and then they are really listened to as I personally experienced."¹²

Existenz was established in 1994 by a few students, initially looking at the city where they were studying and where it could improve. The group is quite detached from the education and it is only made up of master students. The student representatives for the architecture education that are part of the faculty council are instead connected to the union of the

⁸ De Loeiende Koe. (n.d.). *de koe*. Retrieved from de loeiende koe: <https://www.dlk.ugent.be/de-loeiende-koe/>, 6/5/2021

⁹ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹⁰ Modulor 2021. (2021). *Modulor*. Retrieved from Modulor: <https://modulor.me>, 6/5/2021

¹¹ Modulor. (23/4/2021). Modulor. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹² *ibid.*

engineering faculty. Existenz is more about using what they've learnt instead of expanding or connecting to the education. "I have the feeling that we usually just go a little further and indeed usually come up with things on the spot that indeed try to approach that boundary between spatial... Create a bit of an experiment based on what we have learned so far. I still haven't figured out an overarching goal. ... But I do think playing a bit, applying a bit of studies with architecture, learning about other aspects."¹³

An important distinction between the groups is that Existenz only consists of students in the first master year, De Loeiende Koe is open to all architecture students and Modulor also represents other design educations beside the architecture education. This has an impact on the relationship the groups have with the education, the faculty, and the other students. This also makes that the stream in and out of students happens at a different rate. Existenz for example is made up of an entire new group of people every year, which also means goals and views on activism can change every year. De Loeiende Koe on the other hand has a little more consistency as it consists of students across all years, but then also works without real 'membership'. The groups all have different goals and a different role to play at the school, which could make it easier or harder to make gender a central theme in the group.

5.2.2 Activism and Gender Among Flemish Students

To start they were asked some general questions about the current gender balance between the students and between the professors and studio teachers. Among the students the gender distribution is always about 50/50, or there is no prominent dominant gender. Whereas among teachers and professors there are almost always a lot more (mostly older) men, than women. Before being presented with the data they were also asked about their current perception of the role gender plays in the architecture industry. Other topics that were discussed were the role and goals of the group, and if activism is a part of that, the education, and how it deals with activism and gender, the role of bigger organisms in the industry, and futures of the education, the industry, and the groups.

¹³ Existenz. (27/4/2021). Existenz. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

The groups in Flanders do not specifically work around the theme of gender. Members of U Ghent's De Loeiende Koe could organize a lecture or write a publication around it but only if there's a specific interest. Even if gender is not actively part of DLK's working points or goals, it can be put on the agenda, it just really depends on the current members. The interviewees told me in response to the themes they work around: "But it is also something where everyone is free to write what they want. Last year there was one publication called 'gender in de blender' I think, and then they- One of the girls in our class who was interested in it, had a conversation with Luce Beeckmans, the professor who focusses on that, and that conversation was published."¹⁴ Those themes are mentioned but it strongly depends on the people engaged. If that person had not been on the editorial board, that piece probably would not have been there."¹⁵ When asked if they themselves would do something about it as students they didn't feel they would know how or that it was their biggest interest "Personally, to use the word activism, I would not profile myself as an activist, but I do think it is important to keep asking yourself if you do (keep the subject in mind), because it is necessary."¹⁶ They did know of some students in their class who concern themselves with equality and diversity, and also wrote about it in their publication. There is however no guarantee that the topic is mentioned

Modulor explained that the possibility to work around gender is there and that they might even be open to other initiatives as well but that currently no one is, and they would not necessarily know how to start. "I think that is certainly possible [to work around gender]. It is the 'taxi' function and the function lectures that then mainly choose the topics that are discussed or try to make contact with lecturers who then choose what they are going to talk about. But looking specifically for those topics could definitely be mentioned. ... Possibilities [for new initiatives] are certainly there, but I think it depends on who joins the Union. This year I now have a 'tutor' function, but that's because I proposed it last year, as there wasn't one last year. But so, we are quite open to those initiatives, but someone has to come forward

¹⁴ De Loeiende Koe's interview with Luce Beeckmans for their publication:

<https://www.dlk.ugent.be/2019/11/11/de-redactie-loeit-uier/>

¹⁵ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹⁶ *ibid.*

with and want to expand on it.”¹⁷ Again there is no guarantee, but it could at some point become a fixed position.

Existenz does not see how they could make it one of their ‘topics’, as they have already found their niche. It is also difficult for this year’s Existenz members to know what next year’s members might do, as they are essentially their own group, made up of different people. There is very little consistency in Existenz’s concerns. Some years the groups might focus more on some activist and socially relevant topics, and other years they might focus mostly on creating something fun for the students. The interviewees did talk about a misstep when they were organizing a previous event concerning the speakers they invited. “We already messed up with that in the first semester. We received an email from a professor that we also had to find a woman, we also actually did that, but it is indeed something to look out for.

2: We just hadn’t thought about it and then that email came and I thought *we really just did where we always promise to be open to everyone- we really just did it ourselves*. But we did rectify that and now it has stuck with me and in the future I will really think about it better.”¹⁸ Even if the topic is not necessarily gender or another kind of activism the group could and should still take up the responsibility to challenge the current white-male standard where they can. Not just the topic matters but the people who discuss it do as well.

The groups currently do not think about gender as something they want to prioritize. De Loeiende Koe offers freedom to whoever wants to, to write and work around it, but they do not see it becoming a permanent part of their working points. The same problem presents itself when looking at Modulor. Here it could someday become a permanent position but only if someone proposes this, which is not likely to happen soon. Existenz had no idea how they might make gender a part of their work. The example they gave however already shows how they could make it a working point. Even if the groups do not have gender as a main topic, they should still be applying a gender conscious perspective on their projects, not only when just a few students are working with it once in a while. It will not happen naturally, and those

¹⁷ Modulor. (23/4/2021). Modulor. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

¹⁸ Existenz. (27/4/2021). Existenz. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

choices should be made intentionally and deliberately. However, the students might not be aware when and where those conscious choices are needed.

5.2.3 Gender in Flemish Architecture Schools

After discussing the role the groups each have at their school, what their goals are and if they are working around gender, some questions were dedicated to the education: if gender is currently mentioned, how much, and if there is a place for activism in the education.

At U Ghent a lot of the responsibility seems to lie with the students to bring gender into their education. Several times they mention that students are welcome to bring their own focus into the education, during design studio's and something called Special Issues (Bijzondere Vraagstukken), a small research that lasts one semester during the master. "What is also the case with the special issues, it is also in a way the aim that students really want to focus on them and then they can also mention that *look we now want to focus more on that in this semester within the thing that is offered or that aspect or* - So there is certainly room for students to put their own focus within the subject and actually start their own research afterwards. Although that does not happen often, it must be said, but it is possible."¹⁹

At U Antwerp gender is mentioned in the online syllabus of two courses 'Stad en Diversiteit' and 'Architectuur van het Wonen'. However even in those courses the role of gender is not really addressed in a way that it becomes clear that there is still a problem in the industry. "I think it should be discussed more often. At the moment, the Flemish architecture institute is also doing a bit more work on putting women in architecture in the spotlight. Whether that will come in the education, I think probably, but then probably just a little more history will have to be brought up first, before that can actually be put into the subject matter."²⁰

At KU Leuven gender is mentioned in the syllabus of the course 'Architectuur theorie, deel 2'. Even though this course was part of my own education as well, I really wanted to know if other students remember how gender was introduced there. One of the members from

¹⁹ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²⁰ Modulor. (23/4/2021). Modulor. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

Existenz recalls when she first learned about the leaky pipeline phenomenon during this course. “[I remember] how they opened my eyes, the numbers that were shown then. If I think that is going to change? I think so, I think that in any case there will be a little more awareness about all those gender issues, partly thanks to Hilde Heynen and the fact that she is already teaching us in class. That is something really good, that there is certainly already awareness. But I don't feel that I'm pushed into a box or something because I'm a woman, and an architect, and that I won't get featured in the magazines, because I don't have any fears about that. ... Yes, I think that has stayed with me because I am a woman and because those figures really just shocked me. That again it is something that women have to lose out on. It was really just an eye-opener.”²¹ The eye-opening experience corresponds to my own feelings during that specific lesson. Her male colleague didn't recall that specific lesson more clearly than others in the course. This could suggest that as it does not directly influence male students, they would forget about it more often and not be extremely concerned about it. There is no personal consequence for them as there is for female students.

The students from U Ghent find that a critical perspective on current practices throughout the mandatory classes is welcome, maybe even more than currently present “But yes, the critical note was also missing in that way and I also think when you talk about activism- I think that you should talk more often about a critical aspect. That this is more important in an education than yes, explicitly, always putting the theme on the map, although it is certainly necessary.”²² And “And sometimes those little things that do open your eyes are, so to speak, those critical notes that are very, very important within the fixed discourse, I think. To open your eyes without constantly- The subject was not gender and architecture, but just showing the right things within the fixed discourse. And I also think that when it comes to quality education, that is one important condition.”²³ To them continuously applying a critical perspective is more important than always openly and explicitly pointing towards the issues at hand. But if it is never explicitly mentioned at which extent gender still influences the architecture industry today, how can students really become aware of it? Both ways of

²¹ Existenz. (27/4/2021). Existenz. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²² De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²³ *ibid.*

addressing gender are important; addressing it in a specific course or lesson but not limiting it to that and showing that it is always relevant and present. That it is not just a historic problem, and that it still shows itself in the present-day industry.

The interviewees also mention the importance of the professors teaching certain courses, and that the content is susceptible to who is teaching. From U Ghent: “I think a lot also always depends on the individuals, on the professor who teaches the course and that they themselves - that's not a matter of being open to it - but are aware of it or some kind of consciousness... If I had had another architectural history professor, I would never have heard Eileen Gray's example, probably”²⁴ And from the KU Leuven students “Yes, perhaps the university has a role in that, perhaps rather instead of that it is just because professor Heynen finds it important, to integrate it more into the trajectory.”²⁵ As long as gender is not a mandatory part of the education, the way and how often it is mentioned will remain (more or less) susceptible to the professor. And by extent the university the students attend. Making gender and architecture part of the general syllabi across universities and countries of course goes hand in hand with a rewrite of history.

We have thus established that probably the only education that currently offers female students a glimpse into their future as architects is KU Leuven's Engineering Architecture education. Not necessarily because the university sees it as one of their main priorities but because the professors do. Professor Heynen, who teachers the ‘Architectuur theorie, deel 2’ course, dedicates time to gender and its relation to architecture, while many other professors who teach architectural theory do not. The course content being this susceptible to the teachers, is cause for concern as there is no guaranteed continuation if someone else were to teach the course nor is there correspondence between different schools. At U Ghent the students could learn about gender and the various ways it plays a role in the field, but it is their own responsibility. Although this is not a topic that should be reserved for just a few students, as many students then would never find out how relevant and varied the topic really

²⁴ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²⁵ Existenz. (27/4/2021). Existenz. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

is. And it might just be the people that do not have any special interest in the topic that need to learn about it the most.

5.2.4 Role of Institutions

Lastly to get into a discussion about the role of Flanders' leading institutions in the architecture industry (the universities, as well as organisms in the industry) the interviewees were presented with the data gathered by Carolien Vermeiren and then with how the Swedish Groups tackle these subjects. They were surprised that gender still plays such a big role in the architecture industry. "The thing is I don't pay any attention to that because I don't really have any problems with that in my environment or have anything like *what that person says is not okay*. So, if I really did not know about the whole problem, I would say that in my environment the problem is not there, but indeed just think about it once and hear the things you say: okay, it is like this and so and so that was certainly interesting"²⁶ and "I also mainly think that I am often simply not aware of if things would go wrong because I am simply not confronted with them. Of course, I don't have a glass ceiling to break through. And I can think that it is no longer there or it is less, like the fact that I was still actually surprised to hear that the higher positions, within the architecture office and the responsibilities apparently still go to men. Because I am not confronted with it myself, I think if a woman from our course participated in the conversation, I would probably open my eyes even more, because I would not realise what was going on. But in that respect, I am glad that this way I am somewhat confronted with reality."²⁷ As students they are not yet confronted with the realities of the work environment, and male students specifically will not experience this first-hand or have to think of their own future when hearing the numbers. Important is that they are aware of the situating and their privileged position and are keen to learn more about (their role in) it.

To the students it was not entirely clear which role the universities can play in tackling the gender imbalance. They thought that the Order of Architects and the NAV had a bigger responsibility. Existenz thought it should come from higher up "Yes, perhaps the university has a role in that, perhaps rather instead of that it is just because professor Heynen finds it

²⁶ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²⁷ *ibid.*

important, to integrate it more into the trajectory. And indeed, also to reflect on that - again a lecture by a man, again a tutorial by a man. But I think that the problems should also be tackled structurally at a higher level. But every person who has been informed is one step closer to addressing the problem.”²⁸ In different interviews the Flemish Architecture institute (VAi) and their Wiki Women Design²⁹ project were mentioned as well. They saw the VAI as an important factor in raising consciousness. From De Loeiende Koe “I think that education, but also the cultural sector certainly have a role to play in raising awareness or continuing to raise awareness or bring the matter to the attention and VAI is working on that. You have probably seen that they are making wiki pages of female architects, so that people can simply find information about those people more easily? While you often have to search in very specialized books, how should I say that, [to find] a reference to the person.”³⁰ And Modulor “I think that the university can certainly provide a starting platform, but that in any case that is something that the architecture world must also include in order to really get a kind of drive in it. I think that the Flemish Architecture institute can then form a strong pillar in this to really give it a start.”³¹ One of the students from Existenz viewed this as more of symbolic effort and didn’t see how this could change anything.

This confirms that the national leading organs clearly have a role to play in properly preparing female students for their future as architects and to tackle the leaky pipeline problem. None of the interviewees saw how the education or the university plays a role in this, but then again either they had no idea that there was still a problem with female architects quitting the industry after university or those that knew were glad to have learned it when they did. Which makes it clear that the education does play an important part in changing the industry. Before anything else, the next step in tackling this ongoing leaky pipeline phenomenon should be to make sure that female students at least know what they are facing. Then a broader approach should be applied, by making gender a permanent and conscious part of the curriculum, by presenting students with female role models etc. - as they did at KTH (see attachment [A-5]).

²⁸ Existenz. (27/4/2021). Existenz. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

²⁹ VAI. (2020). *Wiki Women Design, oproep*. Retrieved from Vlaams Architectuur instituut: <https://www.vai.be/nieuws/wiki-women-design>, on 25/5/2021

³⁰ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

³¹ Modulor. (23/4/2021). Modulor. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

5.3 Why the Disparity?

What could be the reason for the difference in interest between Swedish and Flemish students? Maybe the current generation is not as critical as generations past or maybe they are not that interested in activism. Although De Loeiende Koe just a few weeks ago organized a project week around the theme architecture and activism. Existenz stems from a place of activism and even if it fluctuates some years, those themes do become prominent sometimes. Perhaps the inactivity when it comes to gender inequality is due to a feeling that among students there is no inequality. The students are not yet confronted with the realities of the work environment, and often they do not learn about it in school. They focus their efforts on other themes of injustice, such as disaster architecture, environmentalism, urban vacancy, reuse... How come the Swedish students do highlight gender equality so specifically? Is it because they are so aware of changes left to be made? Is it because the leading organisms are also addressing it? Is it because the hurdle is so low? Is it because the political charge around feminism is not as pronounced? Whatever the case, the students in Flanders do not care enough to establish a group or committee with gender as its main focus. Or those who care might not have the numbers to start anything. Many however, think they do not have to consider it at all.

The spreading of information and awareness has yet to lead to a further problematization of the issue at hand, as it is still at quite an early stage. By assuming gender equality is an established fact and not keeping it in mind constantly they can fall into traps. When institutions or organizations do not carefully and intentionally make certain choices, they will keep reinforcing the current imagery of the architect and to whom students, architects, or the general public should listen. They might think a discussion panel made up of only women is too extreme or too feminist but then unconsciously the opposite might happen, as it did with Existenz. Every institution, organism, group, or collective, on every level, carries the responsibility with them to make those conscious choices when organizing a panel, when composing a magazine, when electing board members...

Through these interviews the previous findings and initial assumptions were confirmed. Most schools are indeed currently not taking up their responsibility in teaching students about the gender imbalance and its continued hold on the architecture industry. Many students don't

realise gender still has an influence in the work environment and do not think gender inequality exists at the universities. And the Flemish architecture field is suffering from a standstill. This will not change if the institutions do not start raising the alarm bell and do not realise the problem will not solve itself.

6 Conclusion

In the beginning of this study, I set out to answer a series of questions, triggered by what I was seeing and experiencing around me first in Flanders and then later in Sweden. Mainly this thesis tried to answer how we could tackle the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture with activism in education, which different levels of activism there are, which actions are necessary and what their limitations are.

First, I had to get a deeper understanding of what was going on in Sweden, a country that is an international symbol for gender equality. The more I looked into the country and its gender equality approach, the more organizations, lobby's, representatives etc. I kept finding. On all levels. This raised some more questions: why after all this time, is there still a necessity for these groups in Sweden or is it because of the number of organizations working with gender equality that Sweden has already come this far, and keeps going? And what could explain the Flemish paralysis, as it is trailing behind Sweden (and the rest of the Nordic countries) in terms of gender equality and yet not doing much about it? The Swedish paradox in terms of actions and realisations is one we had to understand on a deeper level if we want to use it as an example for Flanders.

By looking at the work of gender equality groups in the architecture field, both in the industry and in the architecture education, the disparity between Flanders and Sweden became even more prominent. In Sweden three of the four main architecture schools have a gender equality group connected to the faculty. And on industry level, there are two groups working on gender equality, one connected to Sveriges Arkitekter, the Swedish association of registered architects, and one to unite women across the whole construction industry. In Flanders neither of those exist. No real action is being taken by the leading organisms, nor by the students or universities. Through interviews and by diving into the archives of some of these Swedish groups, I have tried to answer some more questions such as what the influence of these organizations is; what we can learn from them; how they tie into the institutions; how they found a way to combine architecture and feminist activism in their education and/or practices...

Lastly, to understand the situation in Flanders a little bit better and go beyond my own education, some final interviews were organized with Flemish students. Through those interviews some more light was shed on how some of the universities tackle the gender topic, and how the students engage with it. The interviews confirmed the initial view of the current state of affairs. There is a general inaction which leads to more inaction. There is little to no awareness of the different ways in which gender has an impact on the departure of women from the industry. The institutions are not educating the students, nor the broader industry on the topic. Furthermore, the students generally are not faced with gender inequality yet, or if they are it is not experienced as such. Largely the students, universities, and national organisms are not making it a priority, and big change does not seem to be coming soon.

6.1 The Swedish Paradox

What made not only the existence but also the number of these feminist groups so peculiar at first was that Sweden from an outsiders' perspective seemed to have it all figured out already. Some numbers and policies confirmed that they are well underway with their gender equality, but that cultural change is something they are also still working on. It became clear that the relation between feminist activism and the level of gender equality is not a linear one. A report commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 'Equality between men and women', explains the phenomenon of gender equality fatigue: "A recurring theme of these essays is the need to maintain awareness of gender equality as a political and policy issue, and ensure that it remains a priority for action in the coming months and years. Otherwise, there is a serious risk of 'gender equality fatigue', with many people assuming that the most important battles have already been won and that gender equality is now a reality so there is no need to do much more."¹

With a government that has named itself the first feminist government in the world, that has organizations, reference committees, and policies, in place on all levels, gender equality constantly remains a part of the conversation. Sweden made sure that the gender perspective is central in its policy making. By keeping the gender equality debate active and on people's minds, there is an awareness for those things that still need changing. That awareness in turn sparks more actions. This way they can keep moving the discussion forward. Not that 'gender equality fatigue' does not happen in Sweden, but as long as enough people keep pushing for progress and awareness the risk of it taking the upper hand lessens.

To demonstrate that action leads to awareness, which leads to more action. One of the founding members of FemArk explained that the university did dedicate time to the topic before they started, "And we had these lectures, like the university trying, they had one lecture every semester about women architects, and just talking about female architects, mainly female architects and not just architects that happen to be women was also so tiring."²

¹ European Union. (2015). *Visions for Gender Equality*. Retrieved from EU: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/150902_vision_report_sep_en.pdf, on 17/4/2021

² FemArk Founding Member. (26/11/2020). FemArk founder. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

These lectures only caused them to hope it could be more. The students didn't settle, and with the knowledge given to them were inspired to push for more.

Something else to keep in mind is the economic market behind gender equality in Sweden. All companies and workplaces, even universities, have to hire or appoint an equality representative, a valued position. The state also provides subsidies for initiatives and companies working with gender equality. They not only encourage people and companies to start initiatives, but also diminish the limitation that economic power might pose for the groups. This makes it very easy for new initiatives to keep establishing themselves.

The atmosphere, economic backing by the government and the various policies in place might have diminished the charge around the word 'feminism'. This then may have created that freedom to start new associations dealing with gender. Ranging from the general national associations Swedish Women's Lobby to the MÄN group, from the Kvinnors Byggforum to FemArk and JA. The freedom combined with the awareness of the steps left to take makes it almost normal for the student unions to have equality representatives, for only a few students to get together and start a new initiative.

6.2 Actions and limitations

By looking at the work feminist groups in the architecture field in Sweden are doing this research has presented the reader with some actions that could be taken to help tackle the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture. In 'Where are the women architects' Stratigakos writes about the role of architectures schools in the continued underrepresentation of women in architecture.³ The work of the different groups provides female students with some of the missing preparation they need before entering the architecture field as women. For the student groups these actions start with lectures about female architects and feminist architecture. They work with the bigger organisms in Sweden such as Arkitekt(h)en and Kvinnors Byggforum, two groups working for gender equality in the industry, to learn about feminism in the construction industry and work environment. They bring students into contact with some of the female architects that are missing from the mandatory syllabi and history books, via posters or magazines. They introduce the students to female role models both contemporary and historic.

The student's initiatives show that they know something is currently amiss in the industry and that there is an interest from the students to know more about it and maybe even change it. They might (help to) start elective courses on the topic of gender and architecture or inspire teachers to do so. The group FATALE, of which the members are educators themselves, brought students in contact with feminist architecture practices by installing a master with a feminist focus. They also introduced their students to a network of feminists. And brought feminist architecture to a broader public. All the feminist activity at KTH's school of architecture eventually reached its peak with the ARHA conference. MYCKET shows what an alternative architecture practice might look like in the field, by practicing now what they used to teach before. They apply a queer feminist perspective on their research, on their teachings, and on their practice. They also experience how difficult it is to be picked up by an industry that is so set in its traditional ways, and how slowly it is changing.

The architecture practices that these groups promote are often very different from those currently taught and upheld by most of the leading institutions. The groups not only present

³ Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where Are the Women Architects?* Princeton University Press.

the students with female role models, but they will often take this further and introduce students to feminist architecture and an alternative feminist practice. This practice and the architecture it produces inherently carry the designer away from architecture institutes and other things like magazines, which help spread the name of the designer and their achievements. It is difficult to be picked up by a world that is not yet ready for these alternative practices. The alternative practice values participation, inclusion, equality, usage... The goal here is not to make 'l'art pour l'art', art for the sake it, but to make something for the users. Although those same values are not upheld by the traditional practice, where authorship and star architecture still prevail, "competition" and "self-promotion" make careers, and the team behind the project is often forgotten. Architecture culture still values "individuality", "originality" while still being "classic", and fitting within the preferred aesthetic.⁴ The students, teachers, designers, and activists take up different roles in this discourse. Either they try to change an institution from within and work up or they tackle it from the outside by completely embracing the feminist architecture practice and showing the traditional culture how it could change. Either way it is a slow process, and recognition from the architecture world does not come easily.

What these groups set as their goals and what they can achieve in reality is separated by a range of limitations. These limitations obviously differ between the groups. The student groups are a lot more fragile and susceptible to being shut down than groups with established membership, or groups with continues interest like FATALE, MYCKET and even Arkitekt(h)en. In the worst case the limitations make it so that the groups cannot realise anything or have to stop, like FemArk had to because of a waning interest and the school sending a feeling of superfluity. In other cases, such as a limited economic power the groups have to adapt and do what they can within that frame. Another kind of limitation might be something that they can control and change in their behaviour once they are aware of it, for example by changing the language they use when working with others. Some things are specific to just the student groups because of their changing members and the systems they have for saving information throughout the years. The constant changes make for an incomplete feedback loop, new

⁴ Heynen, H. (2012). Genius, Gender and Architecture: The Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize. *Architectural Theory Review*, 17:2-3, pp. 331-345.

members do not know exactly what those before them did and old members have no idea what their actions turned out to accomplish. They might also have to compete with other groups for student's interest which can create unproductive tensions and extra difficulties where they shouldn't be.

The different connections these groups have with the institutions they work with also play a part in what they can do. KTH, where the members of FATALE taught, has an established feminist atmosphere. Because of their positions they were able to install master studios and some members even continue to teach an elective course in gender and architecture. Moreover, at KTH feminist practices found their way into the entire curriculum with the KTH gender equality checklist because of the broader network. When MYCKET works with institutions, like they are doing for the troll project with Linnaeus University, they do so through their queer-feminist, anti-racist lens. This way the subject is applied onto topics that may be unexpected. In both of those cases they as educators can directly ensure this perspective is indeed applied. When the initiative comes from the students and they want to take it further than organizing lectures and workshops parallel to their education they need support and a dialogue to develop with the school. From then on, they can start working on problematic practices in the school through workshops or meetings with teachers, educators, program directors. And if the groups can stay active long enough and find teachers that are open to it, they might be able to install an elective course themselves.

Elective courses form an important part of introducing the subject of gender and architecture into the architecture schools, and they give students options if they want to know more. However, if no mention is made about it in the mandatory curriculum, electives are not enough. The students from U Ghent agree "1: In that respect, it is indeed perhaps more important that those themes are continuously interwoven over the five years in studio, design in the other subjects, than that it is indeed in one course with the danger that it may remain in that constraints of that one course and that the rest disappears. That is a difficult exercise, that as 2 says, it is important that all of these are - both equality of people and the climatic impact of building, as well as social impact - that things that are just constantly brought to the attention.

2: Of course, yes, that's the question. We are not yet at that point in our society and then the question may be how do we get there? And then perhaps a special course can be a good starting point in the hope that it will penetrate deeper in the long term.”⁵ Electives are thus an important start to introduce the subject in the school and an essential extension once it is part of the education.

⁵ De Loeiende Koe. (19/4/2021). De Loeiende Koe. (E. Peeters, Interviewer)

6.3 The Flemish Situation

The phenomenon of the gender equality fatigue might be more present in Flanders. Many students seem to be unaware of the underrepresentation of women and the 'leaky pipeline' phenomenon. Currently none of the Flemish student associations at the architecture schools put gender on the agenda. They do not work around gender, not even with a sub-committee, and if they want to address the issue, they often do not really know how. The Flemish student(s) (groups) currently do not realise all the ways in which gender inequality manifests itself. By not making conscious and intentional choices, they unintentionally keep reaffirming the current standard. They keep falling into the same traps, time and time again and need to start challenging the status quo instead. There is not just one way that the groups can start to become more gender conscious. With every lecture, every workshop, every project they can keep a gender perspective in mind. Not necessarily by making it the specific subject as it might not be the groups' main interest but by thinking of who to invite, who to reference, who to write about... With those deliberate choices they will already send an important message and play their part in breaking with the status quo.

The fact that so few of the universities make gender's role in architecture a part of their curriculum does not put it on the agenda either. Either the option to learn more about it is not there or if it is the responsibility lies with the students. Currently the extent to which gender is part of the curriculum also depends a lot on the professors. Additionally, none of the bigger organisms concern themselves actively with gender equality either. This confirms the idea that there is nothing much to do about it. The general lack of action has caused a standstill. While in Sweden the exact opposite has happened.

What could explain this immense difference between Sweden and Flanders in their ways of dealing with the current situation; the first keeps pushing forwards and the second has settled for a subpar condition. The difference is not only visible when we look at how the students address the problem, but also nation-wide. There's a difference in public interest and public involvement. Could it be because of the atmosphere surrounding gender equality? Do the policies Sweden has in place play an important role in the architecture industry, for instance how the country has organized its paternity leave? Could it be that acts of discrimination based on gender are more often recognised as such and not dismissed? Are issues related to

gender inequality taken more seriously in Sweden? Could it be because of how the industry is structured practically? Does Flanders' self-employment status not leave women with enough space to also think about influencing the industry? Maybe many do not realise the problem is still there as those most vulnerable to it do not have free time to tackle the issue. Many disadvantages could be attributed to a combination of self-employment, cultural tradition, and sexism. Could Sweden's Arkitekt(h)en and Kvinnors Byggforum be a key factor here? They specifically represent those that are vulnerable and do not have time to do it themselves and offer them a platform. All those possible reasons separately might not be enough to explain the disparity but put them all together and they could have quite a big influence.

To sum up; due to the current inaction Flanders architecture industry is stuck in a vicious cycle. In Sweden activism has spread more awareness and sparked new actions to keep pushing the discussion forward, this creates a positive cycle. In Flanders the lack of action has caused many to think gender equality has been realised, which does not spark new initiatives, this way Flanders has ended up in a negative cycle. How can we start to break away from it and move towards a more positive cycle? Key elements are the activist groups on the different levels, who all have different roles to fulfil: the students try to establish change in the school environment, the teachers can use their positions to bring feminist architecture to the students, the groups in the industry challenge the current practices, support the working architects, and target the field at a higher level. The atmosphere and support from the different Swedish institutions on the different levels, makes it so that they are able to realise change and keep progressing. Even if the universities themselves change quite slowly, the students can push for that change to happen faster, with help and knowledge from professional groups and activists. To find out more about those factors it could be interesting to compare the working lives of (female) architects in Sweden versus those in Flanders and to look at the environments after university; What is the difference in workload, the difference in hours, and pay, how is gender equality part of the offices and environment in theory and in practice, what is the influence of the different paternity leave policies, how much have the activist groups really realised? It could also be interesting to talk to more students in Swedish universities, to hear their view on both the student groups as well as the profession and what they know about the gender disparity.

The path to fixing the leaky pipeline might not be entirely clear yet but as Rebecca Solnit writes on this topic in her book 'Hope in the Dark': "Making an injury visible and public is often the first step in remedying it, and political change often follows culture, as what was long tolerated is seen to be intolerable, or what was overlooked becomes obvious."⁶ The first step has already partially been taken, by exposing the problem and clearly putting it in undeniable numbers. The next one is to educate students, and other important players, about the problem. Then gender can become part of the conversation and be put on the agenda of the leading institutions and organisms again. We have to actively play a part in making the underrepresentation undeniably clear and showing all the ways in which it is present. This also means putting the spotlight on those women, who may not be registered architects but fulfil crucial positions behind the scenes, at city planning departments, the Flemish architecture institute... Their work is not valued, their contribution often underestimated, and thus not written about. The current criteria for what are considered significant contributions play an important role in the cycle of the underrepresentation of women in literature.

We must challenge the industry and break away from the standard. Who knows what will happen next? I do not think that the members of FATALE knew when they started that KTH would become such an active incubator for feminist activity in Sweden's architecture industry or that JA's five founding members thought that they would still be around 8 years later having installed their own course in the school. They've been faced with limitations and other obstacles but managed to achieve things regardless of those. What is important is that they started, they acted and addressed a pressing issue. Maybe this research will just sit on a shelf and gather dust. Or maybe it can change something, however small, and maybe it already has by sharing what I have learned with the interviewees, with my colleagues, and with you, the reader. Because as Solnit writes: "It is the belief that what we do matters even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact, are not things we can know beforehand. We may not, in fact, know them afterward either, but they matter all the same, and history is full of people whose influence was most powerful after they were gone."⁷

⁶ Solnit, R. (2016). *Hope in the Dark*. Canongate Books Ltd.

⁷ *ibid.*

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Attachments

A-1 FemArk second board

Background

Interviewer: Elisabeth Peeters,

Interviewees: FemArk second board

Time and day: 18:00 12/11/2020 zoom

The interview with FemArk took place in the evening at 18:00 on 12/11/2020. At that time this research was still in its early stages. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the interview was conducted via Zoom. Everyone was sitting apart from each other. Before the interview I had consulted the groups social media pages thoroughly as this was their main way of communicating. In an email to schedule this interview I had also asked about possible access to an archive which I was given during the zoom call before the interview.

Interview

Now I think I can try and share screen again. Yes, here.

Okay, how should we go through it [the FemArk google drive]?

1: Well maybe first we have to explain a little bit how our structure was, because then you will understand this better. We had the board and then we worked in project groups. So, if I wanted to do something, I could start a project group and then I would discuss with the board 'I want to start this group'. Then this groups had autonomy to decide what they wanted to do. If they needed money for something, then they had to ask the board but otherwise they would do their thing and then report back. These are... In a way these folders are these projects. [about the folders in the google drive] So there was this one *workshop med lärarna*, *architect of the month (månadens Arkitekt)*, *a party we had (FemFest)*, *Arkipelago*. All of these are different project groups in a way. And then I think it is mostly pictures, or you can go (through it), I don't remember.

3: I went through it just before this zoom meeting and it is not that much information, because it is a lot of just if we wanted to do a google (form). So, some folders are kind of empty, but I think *månadens arkitekt* has a lot, and the reading group has a lot. I can just say that we have a different drive as well, that is the drive for the board.

3: I was saying that we also have a different drive but that was only for the board and we can't share all of the materials in that drive because it is member information and stuff like that. But we have the *mötes protocol*... Yeah the meeting notes or whatever, and I think that might be interesting for you. So all of that is public and we also have our resume where all our events were made. And I can put that one in this drive as well, so you can see that.

Okay that would be great! Right now my main source is Facebook, and that's not great.

1: yeah we also have ?, which is the rules for the organization and that kind of stuff, like what our goals are. The more formal documents.

3: but you can access that drive through Facebook in the about section at our page.

So, this is monthly architect, so I'll just ask again. How did it start?

3: It was the first board who started (it), who came up with the idea. I just think it started because a lot of what they wanted to do and we then wanted to do is raise awareness of representation about women in architecture and this was - I think just to have posters at school - an easy and fun way to do that.

1: and they always tell the story that they started FemArk because, I think it was in history class, they started to count how many times women were mentioned and then realized how bad it was. So I think this project was in a way coming from that. And it was quite effective actually because it was a way of being present at the school. A lot of people only knew that we did that, they were like 'ah FemArk yeah I've seen your posters'. So even though it was a small thing it was very effective.

You also did events, and you had more let's say intellectual (events) you know the lectures and the film screenings and then also stuff like FemFest. How did you put the gender perspective into things like FemFest?

3: hmm like less intellectual happenings or? I think that was - we did that as we went on - an idea to work outwards, inwards and between. And in between was about working with other associations. And that was important for us because we wanted to build up some kind of network with other student associations and other feminist associations. And FemArk, or FemFest; we arranged that party together with FemJur. I don't know if you know but they are law students. And with FemiLund which is an overall for all education's association in Lund. So that event was mostly to build up some kind of community between students.

2: and the association FemJur, also helped with the starting of FemArk. I think that the first board members looked a lot at the rules of their association and the more formal documents of FemJur.

1: but we also did other stuff, more fika and this kind of stuff, more social activities. Because we are also... I mean, we also wanted to do something with our members so to say.

4: kind of looking at creating a platform with people who shared the same, how do you say, values that we did. Students at school who were thinking about the same things as we did during lectures and stuff like that

3: Because I think to... and it is also when you have an association... As we could see that FemArk died, was because people weren't engaged, and we could not continue the more intellectual work because we didn't have any members and I think you have to co-work with these two to get members interested, so you can continue to, I don't know, spread the word.

1: with social activities, they would come to our lectures and these kinds of things.

3: but I think also just to get the more... To do a social event but with a feminist angle, we were kind of interested to see how to make a more, maybe secure environment and social life or to be open with the values and take it to a social room.

1: yeah, in the case of the FemFest, I remember that was something we discussed a lot. It was a sittning, I don't know if you know what that is. It is a kind of formal dinner thing that students have, it is part of the student life in Lund. There's a lot of rules and

2: and traditions

1: and this kind of stuff. So we wanted to also take this format and do it in our way. The girls from FemJur had some songs for the sittning. We did this stuff, with a feminist perspective or had standup with feminist standup comedian and this kind of thing. There was also a... it wasn't just meeting people.

3: and I think also it was... Because we had a lot of discussion about the nollning. Do you know (it)? When you're a new student, and you get to know everybody else and there's a lot of

events during three or four weeks during the first semester. And that was something that the previous board before us had talked a lot about to have a FemArk or feministisk nollning in some way? Because I think during the nollning there's a lot of traditions as well and a lot of pressure on the new students and you have to be a part of this role. And you're new in the city. You don't know anybody. And it is kind of a secure position. And I think FemFest was - we never arranged this nollning - but FemFest was our take on that. To make a sitting and a social event.

What would you say is the most influential event that you did?

1: It is hard because influential. I think, because we have different goals and maybe in the goal of actually changing the school and what the teachers thought and these kinds of things. I would say that it was when... It was a period, a very short period where we did 2 things that were big and that was: we had the workshop with the teachers, the teachers have an educational day, it is part of their program and we took over the day and had a workshop with them. And then there was at the same time, during the same week, we had also organized together with some teachers at the school a symposium that we told you about before. It was called *expanding architecture*. We were part of the whole process of who we wanted to invite, the graphics, everything. So, I think in a way that was when the school started maybe hearing what we meant, what we wanted. But personally, for myself that wasn't the most enriching moment. I don't know how the others think, but for myself that wasn't where I learned most.

what was?

1: I think there were 2 moments. One was a workshop we had with a person from the architects association, you know, architects Sweden. I don't know if you guys remember this workshop?

4: You mean the Arkitekt(h)en workshop

2: I remember that one too, and I talk about it a lot I think, when I... Sometimes I mention it.

1: The thing is I don't really remember what we did but I remember this feeling in the room of 'ah so nice that we all have this experience'. That we share this view of how things are and that we want to change. I don't know, there was this feeling of in a way of we understand. And then we also had this workshop that we organized together with the municipality of Malmö for involving children in urban planning. And that was the.. I think I learned a lot about how things work in the real world. And how much impact you actually have.

4: That was a really interesting experience, and we had that opportunity through FemArk so we would never be able to that (otherwise). It was me, 1 and 3 who were participating in this. We had continuous meetings during how many months? Four, five months? Before actually doing the real project and it was a really interesting process and we could also involve what we did in FemArk before and use that in the discussions and in the work. So, it was maybe the first time that we really got out from school to actually do something with the knowledge that we gathered during the three years in FemArk.

3: I think that was very nice, because as 1 said you started FemArk, I think we all started the first weeks or something of the first year. And you got together with this feeling of being in a room with people with the same values and with this... I think for me it was really important because I found this aspect of architecture that I thought was interesting and that gave me more to the education as well and to be able to start out in this room with your classmates and friends and then to, during the 3 years, do different events and eventually end up with the municipality. It was really cool, and I think self-evolving as well. And it was very nice as 4 said as well, to get the stuff you learn and to take it out and then just show it.

and did all of you join first year?

All: yes

And was it something that was already a big interest for a longer time? What made you join the feminist group?

3: I think feminism was really on the agenda at that time. It was [#]metoo and everything was very... So, it felt very natural for me at least to join and get this feminist perspective on architecture I think.

2: yeah I agree and I think that I also, I knew feminist values before from earlier but not how to use it in architecture and I was very curious about 'how do you, what is feminist architecture, or is there some'. I think like that

How did you learn to apply it in architecture, or what was your biggest takeaway of the architectural side?

3: how do you mean?

So, you have the feminist perspective on architecture but how did you... because the monthly architect is a way to apply it to architecture but were there different ways that you apply it to designing spaces for example?

2: I think there is the question of representation and work environment and that sort of thing, but there is also 'how do you design something and can you do that in a feminist way?'. Are there certain feminist questions to work with? And I think we saw a lot of examples on that, we had different lectures and I remember when disorder - do you know that? -

1: it is a landscape architecture studio

2: and also, Mycket (came). And I think I learned a lot from just watching them and see that maybe you can do architecture in different ways, and also how do you, for whom do you build. To just think of who you design for is very important and I think that can change a lot in the process and make a different building. Something like that.

1: For me it was also... Maybe the most important part was just realizing about design decisions you know, also lives and structures in society and how this works both ways. Just realizing that and then how you can see that in many different levels. Of course, we were focused on this issue of feminism but we also had an intersectional approach and we also had for example, people in villages in how they experience things in the public space. And so, to have this overall view of how power structure is also represented in architecture and also how we design within this power structure.

2: I remember that one workshop we had with focus on disabilities of certain kinds. I think of that workshop quite a lot that was a very - I learned a lot that day.

1: I think maybe it is important to mention that we had kind of different objectives. So, we wanted to change how things were in the school, but we also wanted to educate ourselves, kind of the premise was 'okay the school is not giving us this perspective so we're going to find it ourselves and also bring that into the school'. So, there was a lot of just having our own agenda in what we were learning.

And you mentioned the workshop with the teachers. For example, what did you do that day that was so influential?

1: Someone else wants to answer?

3: I think it was partly because we were quite new at FemArk. None of us were in the board, so I think it was partly that we just got to be in that position. For me it was really - it gave me

confidence and I think it was good to know that the teachers listened to us as students. And that they wanted to know what we had to say. So the workshop was with ArkitektHen, as we talked about before. We invited her here and she spoke about how the Swedish architects work with equality in different ways and then we did different exercises with the teachers where we, where they... It was, how do you say, a situation. They got a situation prescribed to them and then they had to say how they would handle it and say what was being handled wrong and right in this situation. And I think that created a lot interesting conversations

1: and we had done a survey prior to that also. We took quotes from the survey. If I don't remember wrong, we took exercises from the school.

3: We had different parts of the workshop.

1: And then they had to look at the exercise and see what was wrong.

3: So it was basically to invite them to this room and to put on the equality glasses and to look at 'okay this is the situation that has happened in this building and how can it be done in another way' and this is an exercise.

2: but I also think that all those teachers who were there they - then they had these questions with them. And I think that every time they saw the FemArk poster or something it was - I think we introduced ourselves very well in that workshop.

3: And then they also... We handed out a checklist from KTH. It is a teacher at KTH who has done it. We handed it out to all the teachers and it is about how you create an exercise or

2: Assignment

3: Assignment to the students and points to go through to see that you have different perspectives in that assignment.

1: And how you address people and lectures and this kind of stuff. There was for example one teacher that had it on her door of her office, I think she still has it. And they also said that they identified us. So then we were the FemArk girls. Some occasions they would come and say 'you are in FemArk right' so I think that was important.

3: it was important to establish a relationship with the teachers as a group.

How is the group established in the rest of the school, comparing to other student groups?

3: I think a lot of people... I think one problem with FemArk and why it died was because we were very - we were a group of friends. So the first board was a group of friends basically. Then we took over as a group of friends. And it is because we have the same values and we get together and we have the same interests. So it is weird that it gets that way but I think that was - we were kind of isolated. We were not represented in different groups at the school and that is something that we could have done better.

4: I also think we did a lot of things or we had a lot things going on too. We were trying to recruit people, but I think from my perspective there was also a lot of, how do you say, groups that were more into arranging maybe dinners or parties and maybe that was a little bit easier to join for students at school. It didn't have anything to do with studies, that was more about spare time.

2: There's a lot to choose from in the student life and there's- maybe we should mention that there's also a certain part of the... How do you call it? Our student union at the school?

The A-section?

2: Yes, the A-section. Well, there is a - they have different parts and one of the parts deals with equality issues but it is very focused on the school and the school environment, but that part was not active. They didn't do anything when we started. And I think that they started

FemArk also because maybe they wanted to do different stuff than the already existing thing but also that they didn't do anything and there was no interest.

1: They also wanted to have more autonomy, economics. They didn't want to have to answer to the union and they wanted to have more autonomy.

2: Because the other group they have to answer to the board, the student union board, and they have to answer to someone else so FemArk had the opportunity to reach out and work with the municipality and different things.

3: And I think that, as you wrote in your email, Elisabeth, about student associations, they are very short lived sometimes, and they die and come again. Because it is depending on the students and we're only there for 3-5 years and I think it is a lot about status also in the student life. And when we started FemArk was kind of a cool association in some way. But the guild or the A-section not that much, I don't know if you should speak about it in this way but it was kind of like that and I think the A-section got much more active during our years.

2: Much more popular.

3: Much more popular. And that was very fun because we had a great student life, but it also made FemArk... We had to compete about the interests and about the students.

1: And I think what we said before with the [#]metoo wave also because we weren't so conscious at that time, but I think it was also cool because it was the thing that everyone was talking about. Feminism was very (in), you know? But I would say that most of the people in the school knew who we were but didn't really know what we were doing or maybe had a hard time - I think we were a bit private of our meetings even though we didn't intend to or this kind of thing.

3: I think we got more isolated than we wanted to be, and we didn't really know how to break that isolation maybe.

2: Yes, but also many people were interested, and they came and talked with us and we introduced the subjects. And then there's this, you can be interested but if you should join you have to gain something and maybe they gained this from another association or they already went to parties or they already had friends.

3: I think also because we didn't have that much of a clear - we had a vision, but the association was very much what you as a member made it to be in some way. And the other parts of the section. We could not really present a clear 'this is what you are going to do when you join FemArk'. It was more 'what do you want to do, are you interested in feminism'.

4: It is so many different things

3: We were doing a lot of stuff and, yes, we were project based which worked really well but it was also hard to explain that in some way. So, I think that was hard for people to understand what we really did.

1: But I would say that when we did lectures and this kind of thing that it was always very popular, the room was always filled. But sometimes, I don't know, there were some people who were very interested that only like this particular subject or sometimes maybe master students we didn't have a lot of contact with because we were in the bachelor. So, it was - they were very interested, but they didn't engage in organizing stuff.

3: But I feel people really engaged on a more, I don't know. Maybe you were not that engaged as a member, like fixing events and stuff, but you were a listener. You participated when it was easy events to participate in.

1: I think towards our last year I felt that there was kind of a feeling of that we were not necessary anymore or something that we had raised this question, and everybody knew.

3: they were kind of getting tired of us.

1: like 'yeah okay you're being annoying'

So, in five years' time when it is a whole new group attending university, start again?

3: But I remember when we had that workshop with the teachers and there was a teacher who said - she was the one inviting us I think - but she said, 'You know you're not the first, we have done this before'. We were like 'yeah we know'. But that's the thing: it always goes up and down.

1: Yes, I remember she mentioned 'there was a group like you guys, but they were in Stockholm.'

3: And that was when we first started getting engaged in FemArk and were on the rise.

1: from what I understood these groups were a bit less formal and less structured. So, there was this ambition of 'we are here to stay'. You know we were registered as an organization, we had a bank account, we had all these formalities so there was an ambition to keep it going. **You mentioned that you're project based and then also in the drive you see the maps of the different activities, but so for every new activity would you form a group of people that wanted to work on that event?**

1: Yes.

3: Yes exactly, and no one from the board had to be a part of that group, it could only be members or sometimes even people that weren't members.

2: But usually there were several board members in the groups

What was the best aspect of being a member of FemArk?

1: I can start, well, of course for me also the social part, but I would say that I realized how much it shaped my education. I would care more about FemArk than doing the stuff for school most of the time. And I think I had very conflicted feelings of 'oh, I'm not doing my best because I'm active' but that was also very important education for me of being a part of the group. Both because we learned to organize things, you know just that is a - yeah it was a challenge. And then also the perspective. I'm doing a masters now and I see how there's a group in my studio that is working with gender issues and I want to help them because I have so many references and ideas. And I feel here maybe it is not something that is so explored and I realized how much I learned. And it was really outside of what we were doing in class. So, I don't know in a way it is like I left what we were doing in school a bit on the side, but it gave me and all of us I think another education that we did ourselves.

4: Yeah, I agree totally! First the social part to take part of a group where people actually were thinking about things in the same way as I did. But also the fact that we were actually educating each other during three years doing all of this stuff that we did. And we met a lot of people in the profession that we would not have met if we would not have been doing FemArk. So a lot of things, a lot of things that we would not have done if we didn't have FemArk.

3: Yeah, I really agree, and I think now when you have some perspective to it. Because I could feel when we were in the middle of FemArk, it could become a lot of pressure or it could be stressful and it was a lot of stuff to manage, but of course it was also super fun. But now when I have the perspective to look at it - I think I was just talking about it a couple of days ago. It was such a huge part of my life during those years and I'm so happy for the time that we spent in the group and just the time I spent to all the boring stuff as well. Because as you say, you learn to organize and you get all these... You get these names and all the people in the architecture field. I think mostly for me it was to find this.

When I started architecture, I didn't really know what I was doing because I started straight from the gymnasium and I didn't know anyone that was an architect, so I was just jumping on

the subject and I got in and I was like 'okay let's go.' But then I was like 'this is too artistic and that's not my thing really' so I was not disappointed, but I was kind of surprised. But then I found FemArk and that was - I think that was a big part of why I stayed at the education. Because I realized I could put the social perspective on architecture. And I realized I could make something else out of it than the - what the education gave me and that was really important for me.

2: I really agree with that and I also felt that now I know this different part of architecture that I could not imagine before, and we also... It is because of us, because we explored that, that I know these things and I - It was cool to, 'okay I don't know how to do feminist architecture or what it is, how do I get to know that and how do I - how can we make a workshop with people from the school regarding these subjects'. And just that challenge to try and I don't know, try and make these things. Yeah I learned a lot.

3: And I still don't. I can feel that it is very abstract when you talk about FemArk, when I talk to people about it that haven't been in the association. When I just say, 'yeah it is about feminist architecture' and everybody is like 'what is that?' and I can't really describe it, or I don't know. But I feel it is very, a quality in architecture and how you get this very *flexiflexi* thing to be a room or a built thing. Maybe you don't know exactly how to do that because you haven't been in FemArk, but you have seen an architecture from a different view and you have explored it, and you have, I don't know...

1: But also learning that architecture is not enough or that.

3: Yeah, maybe more that, how to add different subjects to architecture.

4: Broaden the role of being an architect, that being an architect can be a lot of different things. It is like we have an extra toolbox of perspectives to apply on different things.

1: That was also something we talked a lot about: our role and how to. Maybe what we felt was that, especially in the first years of the program, there's this picture of who is an architect and who is a success and that was very nice for us to take other role models and see that there were other people doing very interesting stuff and they were not this focused on doing 3D and they were also having very interesting careers.

Other than the fact that your view on architecture is influenced by your years at FemArk do you think that it is a kind of activism that you'll also take with you in other parts of life?

2: Sometimes, but for me not that much. Maybe in conversations with friends but not on social media or anything like that. Yeah, it is something. Feminism is kind of always somewhere in the back of my mind but I don't think I - there are more outspoken feminists, really, than me.

3: I think it is very different from person to person, because 1, you have engaged in more activism associations since FemArk ended. For me and 2 for example, we haven't and I don't think I have that much activism in my life right now. Because now I'm on an internship and it is very everyday life as an intern in a big architecture firm. But I think I know I have that experience with me and I can miss it so I think maybe that will make me go and search for this associations or these places where I can get these perspectives again. Maybe not an activist behavior, but just where you get these places where you can talk about it and you can make something with architecture but in a different nonconventional way maybe.

1: I've been more politically active maybe, not a lot specifically on feminism that much. I was more writing city. It is only now that I'm engaged in a group that works with gender issues but I always think that maybe I would have never dared to get into that if it wasn't for the experience in FemArk because it gave me confidence.

3: I think it is a lot about taking changes, because I saw now that the ??? - they have this thing with the red cross. Do you say red cross? And women who have been in violent relationships and I think - and that was like obviously you can't be an intern because you have to be older and it is for 3 years and I'm not living here in three years - but I think that's an example how I would maybe engage in these questions again and dare to take the chance because I have an experience with FemArk. And I think a lot of people would just see this news and not think they would be, they could be a part of it.

As an outsider Sweden looks very equal, and gender equality is a very big thing, do you experience it being like that or is it kind of just a portrayal to other countries?

2: Maybe 1 has the best answer because you have lived in different countries.

1: Yeah, I'm not from Sweden, I'm from Uruguay and I moved when I was eighteen and then now I'm living in Italy which is also the other spectrum. And maybe for me, it was a process where at the beginning I really felt 'wow this is...', and I still think that especially now being in Italy that there is a lot of gender equality in Sweden compared to other countries. But it was interesting after also being inside that to also see the stuff that is not, and how maybe there's a lot of stuff that is more on the surface in other places. In Sweden it is more underneath but it is still there. Everyone is very politically correct, and I see now how it is difficult for example here in Italy to be a student and a woman and they just talk over you and stuff. That would never happen in Sweden but then it was interesting because we could also get deeper in some stuff. When, I sometimes feel when I'm discussing this stuff with people from Uruguay for example that they are still in one level of the discussion, that in a way it is very superficial. Maybe because it is also more urgent and that we were in another level of the discussion that was maybe more structural. But I would say also, we also experienced some stuff in the school of people writing things over our posters so it is not like everyone is - this stuff also happened in Sweden.

I'm actually also quite finished with the questions that I had so I don't know if there is any important things that you still want to mention.

1: I think that, but maybe we already talked about it, but you were interested in how this, even though this association had a short life, how it affected (things) and I think that it is also how we take it with us and even though we wanted it to be more broad and for more people to engage I still think that we still can have an impact on that in our professional life.

2: And I think that the teachers and students at school saw us do different things. They carry these subjects with them also.

1: Yeah, we got a lot of comments from them and I recently got an email from one of the assistants from the studio that was 'hi I still think of the things you did', and that brought questions for him, also how education works and educating from underneath and these kinds of things.

Background

Interviewer: Elisabeth Peeters

Interviewees: Founding member

Time and day: 12:00 26/11/2020 zoom

The interview took place in the evening at 17:00 on 26/11/2020. At that time this research was still in its early stages. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the interview was conducted via Zoom. Before the interview I had consulted the groups social media pages thoroughly as this was their main way of communicating. I had also already interviewed FemArks later board and was therefore already more familiar with their work.

Interview

Can you tell me a little bit about why you started the group, how the process went?

Yeah, absolutely. So I think it was... I started architecture school in 2015, it must have been, and then a year in or something like that, just my friends and I started making jokes that we should make a note, every time someone mentioned Le Corbusier, compare it to how many women architects that they mentioned that it was so funny that they never mentioned women, and we were so tired of all these old men being mentioned because we were sure that they were there must be women out there. And also it felt like, at least for me, I studied law before and I was like, I thought that was really old school and stiff and coming to architecture school, me and also a lot of my friends, we were thinking this would be so politically open or... I don't know. We were surprised that it was so like old man-ish. So it started as a joke. Like, ha, ha. This is so funny. We only talk about Le Corbusier until it wasn't really funny anymore... And we had these lectures, like the university trying, they had one lecture every semester about women architects, and just talking about female architects, mainly female architects and not just architects that happen to be women was also so tiring. And for me personally, of course, I think about these things too, but it was more like the rest of my friends that started this group that had this feminist approach, and then knowledge really... I wasn't that educated about it, but for me was really important to talk about inclusiveness in terms of availability and accessibility, since I've worked with people, disabled people, and I also have one of my closest friends, friends, she gets by in a wheelchair. So it comes very natural to me to think about being inclusive, physically, like really thinking about accessibility, and that was something I was also surprised about coming to architectures school that it was... I remember one of my professors were like, 'cause I suggested a ramp, and she was like, No, this is like... You always have to weigh your artistic freedom and accessibility, and I just thought that means that you're a really terrible architect if you can't do both and have this both in your head at the same time. So I was really frustrated, I was maybe mostly frustrated about that, and I thought Okay, if we should do something to have an impact on our education, it could both be...

It is so close together, just like being more inclusive... It is about, of course, gender it is about everyone, disabilities. So the start of it was, I think for me, it was a bit different than from my friends 'cause they were more focused at least from my perspective on the female/male perspective. And also one of my friends in the school, she had a close friend before that just

started like this... 'cause we're called FemArk, they're called FemJur. So they're the law students' group for having seminars and lectures, basically everything we do, so we had a lot of inspiration from them, and I also knew about them since I studied law before in Upsala, and I think they started in upsala. That was 10 years ago, maybe, I don't know. So it was really inspired by them like you can go be in a school that's really old and not have everything you want, but you can do something about it. And like, this is the way to do it. So it was really easy for us to just talk to them and be like, Okay, how do you start? What do you do, what do we need? There was a system in order already, so it was very influenced by them too, so I don't know, it was a joke and we started talking about it, and the FemJur came up with an inspiration, and then we had me and this friend that knew the person that was responsible for FemJur at that time, we just met for coffee and were like, Yeah, sure, why not. We can just try it. And if it fails or if we have a lecture, no one comes. That's okay, 'cause it was like for us very much to just do something...

How was the first reception of the group?

We were so nervous when we were like... We had this lecture, I don't even remember who we invited. We took the smallest room in the school, 'cause we were like, no one's gonna be here, and it was so crowded, everyone came and it was really, really nice, but at least in Lund, we had this really strong. What's it called the nation? A student organization. It is connected to the faculty or something, it is like, nolning. These people that arranged the nolning and they have all these traditions and it is... I don't know. In Lund, they have the traditional dinners and they have a lot of prices, some things that... It is a lot of ceremonies, and they really do valuable things, but they also do, in my opinion, some things that are for fun, but it is only for fun. So I don't know, we had a really strong group that did these things in Lund, and they really didn't like that we started. Since they had a part of their group, that was like for being inclusive and it could have been when we talked about starting this group, we thought about doing it through them, but then we realized that this also would mean that we would have to sit in meetings and talk to them about the next party, and the next... A lot of things that we didn't really care about. And I think, it was some tension, we really tried to talk to them and have them... We could really work together, we wanted to work together, but I think they were the only ones that were like, Oh, what are you doing here? But most of the students in the school were just like fun... They would come to our lectures or whatever, and even the teachers were like, Oh, what is this? Maybe you can help us, because they wanted to be inclusive and teach modern things but they just didn't know how. So it was good mainly, I would say.

The other group also mentioned this, they have the JämlikA I think it is called but they said that it wasn't very active.

No, when we started, it was just empty, they were, does somebody want to? They were looking for someone to start it, and then it was so weird, when we had been - when FemArk was one year old, and they still didn't have anyone to fill that position. They emailed us, you can fill this position, we were like, sure, but we're gonna do it as FemArk, we can't disable our group just to re-brand it as JämlikA, 'cause it would be totally unnecessary. And then they weren't interested.

Yeah, I emailed that person, I guess, as well, 'cause there's someone now, but I still haven't

gotten a response like two months later

All we really cared about... We just like... We wanted to do our lectures and our activities as easy as possible and without any extra work that we didn't care about, it could have been easier, I think if we found a way to work together. But yeah, it worked anyways.

What would you say are the main themes that occurred during events, and activities.

For us, the first year was just trying to understand how to have meetings and how to organize things, and how do we even book a room in the school, and can we borrow a projector or something, but I think it is difficult to have a theme... It was most about learning how to arrange things and very focused on lectures, we really tried to think about... 'cause one of the goals was just to educate ourselves and the members of this group, so we also built the organization so that we could start things and then disable them fast, so if, for example, we have this reading group that started and was not active a lot and it is quite nice to have a structure that worked that way so we could do something for half a year and then not do it at all, and then do it once. We also had, I think it was maybe only one panel discussion, so it was... I don't think there was a theme really. It was trying to fill the gaps that we thought was missing from our education really, things that we expected to learn, but that we didn't learn.

How did you find ways to connect to the architectural field?

We just called, emailed, we were... And we were surprised that it was so easy, especially a lot of people that we wanted to invite, they were activists, so they would be very used to do things for no or very little money, and they had this personal drive to really do it, so it was a nice surprise that it was... Yeah, it was just emailing people and some were like, okay, we can come and it would be 10000 crowns and then we knew we could not afford it. So it was really easy just emailing or calling saying, You wanna come here.

And what was the best aspect of being in FemArk

For me, it was the meetings, I think, not really the events, but to just sit together and talk and be mad together and be happy together and really find the community. I would not necessarily say that I learned a lot from the lectures... Or of course, I learned things, but the best thing... Yeah, the best thing it was really having a space in school that was for us and that we could form and where we could also... It was so nice when... 'cause we really thought that this would be something the first board would do and then this would die like no one would be interested in this. So when Nora and the rest of the second board came, and were like, Okay, we know how it feels, we know that some of these perspectives are so lacking in this school, but here we are welcome to us. It was so nice to welcome others into what we were missing when we first started. So really the community, I would say.

And there was this workshop with the teachers

Yeah, I wasn't involved in that one, or I wasn't involved in planning and doing it, but... Yeah, that was a big thing too.

Do you think it made an impact?

Oh difficult to say, 'cause we left. Most of us left to do internships too, so I haven't had any of those teachers since, but I think it made an impact just by... I noticed how the teachers had respect for us as a group, and I don't think it is necessarily connected to the group, it is more about Nora and Lisa and all the people that did the workshop that they... It was nice to... When I talk to teachers about it, they were surprised that this knowledge was inside the school, 'cause I think it is so common for people that have been working a long time that you always hire something to learn something, or you look so far away to learn something and this was like something they could do basically for free with their students that they were used to teach, so that was really, really nice to see that they were taking it really seriously.

And I ask about personal question. Was inequality something that bothered you for a longer time, or did it just start with the counting of the names?

You mean for a longer time in school or personally since... Did I ever think about it before architectures? Yeah, I definitely thought about it, but I also think I had my biggest awakening at the school, 'cause I hadn't been around that many friends before that were so educated in the subject. And for me, I'm from a very small town in the north of Sweden where it is like... I didn't know the word feminist until I was like, I don't know, 16, 18, way too late, I think, and still could not really grasp what it was about until long after I'd left my home town, and for me, coming to architecture school, I had never before been surrounded with so many people that knew these things and were like, they had known it for such a long time, and I really think that there is some comfort and some... There's greater knowledge in thinking about it for a longer time, so for me it was like, I really learned from them just only by the time perspective that... They knew this for a long time, and for me it was like, is it really like this... Is it only me? I don't know, I was questioning myself more and to meet them, it was like, Oh, okay, this is a real thing. So it was quite new to me. Compared to others, I would say that, yeah, it is difficult to compare.

But yeah, it is also, I feel that the word feminism, even with a lot of women, it has a very bad connotation... And I think it is really weird that even a lot of women who believe in this idea that they don't want to call themselves the feminist, and I don't know, but I think... That's very strange to me.

Yeah, to me too, we had this exercise at work last year, and if you agree, stand up. And one of the questions was, 'Are you a feminist?' And almost all of the office stood up and my boss still sat down and I was like- She's a female- I was like, Who are you? But it is like, I know that her values are the best... Yeah, it is different. That's something else for some people, and it really is... It is sad that it is become the bad word too, I think if we would have started FemArk now, I would probably suggest another name and not because I don't believe in it anymore, 'cause we had to spend so much time just saying... Okay, this is about being inclusive. That's like what we talk about. It is not about - we heard so many stupid things like, Oh, you do this only because you hate men, and blah, blah... It is like, Yeah, even if I think it is obvious that everyone should be feminist, it is only a word to me at least, and it is annoying to put your energy and talking about that, that feels... It is just so obvious.

Yeah, yeah, and I think a big problem maybe here as well, but at least in Belgium is that a lot of people are like, Oh, but we don't need it anymore, because everything is equal now, and I think I heard some guys saying after we had just had a lesson, in architectural theory about Feminist architecture. And I was just like, Did you not pay attention during this whole lecture?

I had the same experience with fellow male student is like... After one of those lectures and he was like, Oh, this was so irrelevant, I was like, Oh yeah, I get why you think it is irrelevant, but it is you that needs to listen to it the most...

Yeah, exactly. I remember one of the guys, he went in to a discussion with the professor or he disagreed with her, but she's done extensive research in the field, and then I asked him two years later Do you remember that? And he said, Yeah, I realize now I was wrong.

That's nice though.

I don't know, I feel like the work that is maybe left is very... A lot of the practical issues are maybe solved trying to have equal pay and stuff like this, and women are going to work now, but a lot of things are just very institutional and how you still... I still feel uncomfortable when I'm walking alone at night in the dark, and it is just... those kinds of experiences. Yeah, I think a lot of people don't realize that that is still a problem that we should be tackling, and those are still ways that... I mean, show us that we still need Feminism.

I also think that it is a lot of things that you can't measure. Your example, equal pay, or like Women in leading positions, it is so easy to take off the boxes and measure it and then say, Oh look, we have progress now it is equal, but like the dynamic between men and women, and I feel like almost every day in my workplace that some men, they don't listen to women the same way, and some men get more respect or more time to talk or whatever, and to measure that and to know that, Okay, now we're equal... It is not gonna happen ever, I think...

No, I had this discussion and we were talking about, do you think it is good to have quotas, how many women should be in leadership positions, and I think in a way, it is not good because it makes, I guess, men angry but I think that if you're letting it occur naturally, I don't think it will occur naturally. No.

No, I agree, definitely. Yeah, it is a bit frustrating sometimes because they're in this loop like, yes, it will be angry, and so I will not have positive effects, but we're not gonna get there otherwise...

No, like in my dream world, if we force people to have women in leading positions, hopefully the man would be like, okay, this works, she has great ideas, and then it will be like an effect where it was accepted, but I don't know if you're super angry, it is probably not gonna happen that you're also open to... This is nice. New perspectives. Not exactly...

Did you continue to work with some kind of activism after FemArk

Not Really... When I applied for an internship, it was really important to me to be at an office

that at least aim to work with the social approach, I would say... And I really, in my applications, I wrote almost only about FemArk and this is what I did, and this is what I wanna do, and I think it was really positive for me, and I also know that that's what got me my internship at White, where I still work, and it was really useful for me just being like, This is something I've done parallel to my studies and this is something I would like to explore, and I've managed to work with projects that have this social-inclusive focus quite a lot, but I haven't been involved in any activism outside work, I've only focused on what I can do in my job

Do you miss it that kind of work?

Yeah, I do that. Yeah, absolutely, I do it. It is a really nice experience to just be like, What do we wanna learn? Let's set up a lecture or whatever... Yes, it is very, very free. And also to be aware that in the first year we had basically no money, but you can still do quite a lot for just like a pen and a paper, or just talking to each other, inviting someone. That's interesting.

And yeah, it seems like a lot of people did come to your lectures and stuff, even if they didn't... Maybe want to be in the board.

Yeah, it was really like... We had no active members, really, it was like the board, and then they wanted to come to things, but it was also like we could have lectures where there were more than 100 people coming and in our school... I don't know how many we are. It was like half of the school, it was a lot of people, but then sometimes we would have an event and it would be us and five more like the board and maybe 10 people. And so it was really like this up and down. And I think that has to do also with people not being... they think it is nice, but they don't care enough to arrange the lecture or really do something.

Maybe in cases like that, the name and I guess maybe the main purpose is kind of... Yeah, something holding them back, even though they are interested in what you're doing...

Yeah, I could think that's probably right, and I think it is also probably something to do with attention 'cause we had a lot of people in our class that was involved with this JämlikA sorority. They were like, What are you doing? They even told us like, Oh, you can't have this room Or something about that, we could not rent a room at a school or something, which is like in Sweden, it is law that if you have this kind of group, the university has to provide somewhere to have meetings, so it is like... Oh, it was so weird. So I think that was something too, some of those people came to our lectures, but I don't think they would do it, or... I don't know,

I mean, it is sad. That kind of stuff. That kind of tension, makes a great initiative then resolve into nothing. Do you think that they still need for it?

Definitely, yes. But I think also... Or I know it took a lot of energy. And I would not really say that someone has to do it. The ideal world would be that the university is good enough, so we don't have to be there. We even had that like in our documents of our goals and the purpose of the organization was like, We should do this until we don't have to, and we really would not want to have to. But for me, it was really fun and it was a good experience. But I

don't know, I think only someone doing the architecture program right now could answer it, 'cause maybe something has happened but I would be surprised if there was no need for it.

Yeah, they're probably still mentioning le corbusier as much, probably... Yeah, I think we already answered the next question, but Sweden like the most gender equal place, I've asked a few people now, if they think it is really like that, and the answers kind of differ, but I wonder what your answer is...

I guess it depends on what you compare to 'cause comparing to a lot of other countries, it is a huge difference and we are so spoiled in this country, like I know I feel a positive difference in Sweden and a lot of the time compared to in other countries, and also, what would you hear about other places in the world, but... I don't know, I feel like it is connected to what we talked about before, it is necessary, as long as we feel unsafe when we walk outside, it is necessary as long as... As long as we feel this difference in how we are treated, it doesn't matter if it is like the big or the small things, of course, it sucks more if you're not able to work or you don't get equal pay... That's awful. And in Sweden, that's not a huge problem anymore, but it doesn't mean... We don't have to think about it.

No, yeah, yeah, because we had a lot of... And that's also something that stood out me when I was starting to research like what would I research. There's a lot of groups working for gender equality in Sweden, I think 47-ish sub-organizations, and it is just something that was really... In a way, it made sense, because I guess if you have all these groups working towards a more equal society and tackling these issues all the time, is that you'll make changes, but it was also kind of contradictory in the sense that if it already is so great, how come there are all these groups... So yeah, I guess that's kind of it.

But I think the groups come from... That is a positive aspect that it is so open anyway, like compared to other countries, so it is okay to start those groups and not... Some people think you're crazy. But most people don't. Yeah, I think it is a part of the freedom, really? And not really. I think it is... Of course, it is most organizations are a movement with a goal, but it is also this community that I like what I like about FemArk most. I don't really know how to put this, but I think it both serves the purpose, activism as actually making a change, and it also serves the purpose as like, This is where I meet my friends, this is someone that understands me and like a social purpose somehow.

Yeah, also connection with other people... Sharing your values. I think also, if I look at Belgium right now, I think there's one organization kind of dealing with at my university, student initiative dealing with all the issues of inequality, race, gender, sexuality, but it is only one group, and the only reason that I found it was because my friend introduced me to them after she went looking for them, they're not very... They're secret. You have to really wanna know about this, and now I see that they are quite active, but I only know about them because of them, uh, and it is not like the university is saying, Oh, there is this group, even though they're... The university's official equality group, and I think that's just very weird to me because then here I was looking at the groups at these different universities here, and it is just a lot easier to find them... If I'm comparing the situations, I think there's a very different... Yeah, maybe view and acceptance of these initiatives.

Do you think that's the reason that there... They are so private that... I was just thinking about what we talked about before. We were tired about talking about the feminist word, maybe they don't have... Maybe they don't get the room to do what want to do if everyone that doesn't want there, knows that they exist.

Yeah, I think there's a big disillusion in Belgium of it being a lot more equal than it is, I think it has a lot... I think it has a lot of good things. Our former prime minister was a woman, we have the first transgender minister now, and I think we're doing a lot of good things, but I also think that those are like they are important, but I don't think those are reaching the majority of people who are still very backwards thinking in a lot of ways. And we noticed it a lot. And in terms of racism, when it was the Black Lives Matter protests in America this year, and obviously it comes to Europe and it opened up this whole conversation also in Belgium. Then you have these conversations with people that you're like, Oh, so this is what you really think, and then it is maybe not about feminism, but I think it says a lot about a person. It is about other issues. And I think that happening at those Black Lives Matter protests, I think created this moment that you had to talk about it, but what's happening, now with Feminism is as like, Okay, it is equal now we don't have to talk about it anymore, so it is just we don't talk about it anymore. And if you talk about it now, I don't think I've ever had, or maybe with one person that is not a woman, an actual conversation about feminism that was constructive where I wasn't feeling like they're mocking me, and it just feels like maybe it'll also be good for them and for me as well, for this to be a constructive conversation...

Yeah. And yeah, I think also in architecture, there is just so many hidden ways to deal with it that people don't really want to look at or they don't see it as a problem, and it is also this issue of language and I guess more... You have to be willing to see and change your way of working... Yeah, yeah, absolutely. But I think, yeah, initiatives like FemArk offering these new ways of teaching or saying, here's how you can look at it differently, I think it is good that you get that during your education while you're still shaping your view on architecture and how you design and all these things. So that you're not set in your way and you're still creating... Yeah. And I guess that's why it would be best to have it from the university, so then it would... because all our activity were always... You always knew that it was like, okay, this is FemArk this is like a bit cheap or a bit weird or in the night or something, like it is not really comparable to the usual education, I think it would have... I would have preferred to learn those things in school, not being like, this is my activism and what I want do. Yeah, I don't know, it gets filtered somehow.

Here at Chalmers they started the course, it was from the Feminist group that started the initiative, and now it is the first year, and they just told me yesterday that the professors have actively taken over, they're not sure if it is going to happen this year. The course, but now it is in the hands of the professor and that was kind of the goal all along, was to have been out of their control kind of...

I think in ways like that, you can see that... Okay, they're open to it, and if you're persistent. Yeah, that it is kind of sad, that it has to come from the students' initiative in a way.

Background

Interviewer: Elisabeth Peeters,

Interviewees: JA team 2020-2021

Time and day: 12:00 25/11/2020 zoom

The interview with JA took place during the lunch break at 12:00 on 25/11/2020. The lunch break lasts until 13:15, so there was already a set time constraint. At that time this research was still in its early stages. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the interview was conducted via Zoom. Everyone was sitting apart from each other. Before the interview I had consulted the groups social media pages thoroughly as this was their main way of communicating. In an email to schedule this interview I had also asked about possible access to an archive which I was given access to after the interview took place.

The interview

Maybe it is easiest if you first kind of explain the practical situation. How you're connected to the school, how you form a board. This kind of stuff.

4: Yes we're from styret from the student union. We mostly work with... I don't even know what it is called in English. But styret.

3: board

7: Student board of the architecture section.

4: But we also have meetings with the head of the architecture school. So the teachers and the head of each program, once every month or so.

Bachelor and master programs then? And do you work with other gender associations at the school?

4: Yes, we have meetings twice every semester with JämK for [everyone] and all the other equality committees at the school. We haven't had any collaborations with anyone yet. Partly because of corona and it is really hard to do anything right now. But yes we do have meetings with them and previously I think there has been more collaborative stuff.

Is there- Because you have the board and then, do you have the subgroups or is it more project-based work that you do?

4: Within our group? We don't have any project groups really, we've divided up certain responsibilities between people but we don't. When we, so far, we've only had meetings the whole group. And we're 9 people so.

7: I can add to that, that previously a couple of years ago they had more group-based work, like a group for the course or a group for the meetings with the teachers and such but right now we- I think they might have been more people then.

4: Yes the group used to be way bigger a few years ago but right now we're nine people.

7: which is more than last year.

4: Yes, it is more than last year. Last year they were four I think

3: I also think that there were so many like a few years back because the people got engaged in the activities, but they were not a written [member] or officially in the committee or in our group. So it more ??? people when we need to.

4: Yes, I think so too.

1: All the committees or what they're called in architecture are small groups, it is the working team and sometimes you have members that show support. Like folta??? are a team of maybe eight working but they have a supporting group to show the interesting in their committee.

And when do you join? Is it a bachelors groups or a master group or does it matter at all?

4: We're all in the bachelor. We're all in the second year actually but technically someone from the master could join. So, it can be mixed but right now were just from the bachelor.

7: It is an election by all the students who choose who can sit. Normally there is not- Or when we applied there wasn't enough to even- There wasn't a choice but definitely people from all classes can join and sometimes people from the first year even join after a while.

Because you're part of the A-section group as well

All agree.

Do you know why the group is formed originally?

4: I don't quite know specifically. I haven't found anywhere where it is written down, a reason why it was formed, but I'm guessing people just felt a need for it, that there needed- That there were things in the education that needed to be changed or that there was a need to just discuss, have a platform, to discuss gender and architecture and intersectionality and subjects like that but we haven't. Yes, I don't know if there's a more specific reason.

3: Haven't we seen that there are reoccurring questions if you look back at old, old texts from groups before us that we need to have more diverse discussions during lectures. They are these questions that are still appearing now as they did before.

4: Yes, that's true.

3: continuity in problems that need to be fixed

4: Yes, that is actually kind of interesting with how, when you look back at old protocols from meetings with the teachers and stuff and the old conclusions of what has been done during the year. It is almost, the questions that have been raised have been basically the same for 6-7 years and there doesn't seem to be that much that has actually been managed to be changed. Or some things, I think things are changing but quite slowly.

1: And I found the first *werksamhedsplan*, what's it called? Project plan for the group. Maybe that can give some answer to why they started. So, they wrote that during this year the strategic group is doing a work based on, or a project plan with the purpose of sex and gender and they wanted, needed, the dialog between the head of program, teachers, and other relevant persons and the concrete of what they is did is that this group will invite guest speakers in, during the spring to look over the literature in the library at our school, make statistics over the *handedare*, tutors, and what kind of perspective they had and also network between other architect schools in Sweden.

And what do you feel is the purpose now for you?

4: Well basically continuing to raise the questions that have been. That the group has been working for previous years. Like anonymous critique and, or generally working towards more equal and norm critical and diverse education. And yes, just continuing the work that has been going on for the last few years and also raising awareness surrounding norm creative and norm breaking architecture

1: And also to supervise the work that is done by the teachers and the whole section to see that they always have a gender perspective in their lectures.

4: Anyone else have anything to add?

7: I think you said the most but keep moving the discussion forward. Architecture is about making rooms for everyone so it is very strange that the discussion about making it as

inclusive as possible is not so widely spoken of and I think the course that we have for example that our group created a couple of years ago is a really important step towards that and making that discussion. And more open and widely- Yes, as I said it is really important

Yes, I guess you already answered my follow up question kind of. But how do you relate it to the architecture field? I mean there's this question of creating spaces for everyone but there is also representation and... What are the topics that you try to work with and how?

4: Well yes, I think it is just or mostly creating spaces for everyone and making sure that there is representation within the education and the examples that are taken up in the courses and the presentations and stuff and that there is diversity.

Because you also do this fanzine¹, are you still doing it?

7: We hope so.

4: Yes, we hope so, last years' fanzine didn't get published because of corona so we were hoping to, for us to publish it during the fall. Turns out we can't really do that because of corona still but hopefully we will at some point publish last years' fanzine and hopefully we will do a new one too in the spring. But it is also since the last few years it is been based on what's been done in the course and we won't be responsible for the course anymore or at least not this year, so I guess it is a bit unclear whether we'll be able to do it or not.

And how come you're not responsible for this course anymore?

7: It is actually a good a step that the faculty wanted to take full responsibility of it and that's something that our organization has worked for. So that it shouldn't be based on a student engagement because say that one year no student wants to be in JA the course should still be going. So it is a good thing but now it seems like maybe they don't take full responsibility for it and want it to be more like part of the curriculum which is good. But they say that that might be further down the line. We'll see, they say that they'll take the responsibility, we hope they will.

4: Yes, and there have also been some economic problems surrounding it that it costs too much money and it is not prioritized so that's probably a reason why they might not be holding it this year, sadly.

And when was it first installed, the course?

7: I found, I think it was 2015, the spring of 2015? No maybe yeah 2016 I think spring. Or does anyone else?

6: I think they had it 2014 and 2015 I think when I looked at the -

7: Really? I don't remember it. I should be spring 2016, they started the course 'Vems rum' and then in 2017 they changed its name to architecture and gender.

And have you attended already or is it later?

7: Yes, I think all of us did last spring.

[everyone agrees]

And how was it? Can you tell me a little more about how it was being a student in it and then now? Did it inspire you in some way to join the group?

[everyone agrees]

4: Yes, it was really inspiring and just interesting to, well, to actually get to learn about- Because it was not- It was centered around architecture but there was also some gender theory and all kinds of different design too, not really related to architecture. Yes, it was really interesting to get to learn about all of that and it is probably part of the reason why, at least I joined JA.

¹ I brought it up because I had read before that the fanzine was about representation of female architects in a way.

8: Yes, for me personally it opened my eyes to how the architecture world is and what needs to be changed and also around the education. So, for me it was also the main reason why I engaged in this group.

And normally the group would plan it together with the professors or would the group just organize the whole course?

7: I think it was a collaborative work but we're not really sure since this year we don't have that responsibility, so we haven't gotten all the information from the last year.

6: But I think they say something about that in the verksamhetsplan.

4: But it is probably been in collaboration with Lena Falkheden. Yes, it has been, I'm quite sure.

So then the fanzine is based on the course but did they immediately start the fanzine when they started the course as well?

6: I think so but I'm not sure. But we only had the fanzine brochures. We only had them two years prior to this one but I don't know if they had a fanzine before that.

7: Yes, I'm not sure if it was connected originally because the first two fanzines was based on female architects. A full long fanzine on just that subject. I think it was even two of them. Because the first fanzine is from 2014 I think which is before the course started from what I understand. All the information we have is from like old, old documents in the drive and it is not really clear as to exactly what date and such.

Do you know of any influential events in the history or maybe last year? What would you say is the most influential? Maybe also to you guys personally?

3: You mean that happened to the committee or that the committee reacted to?

Can be both, yes, around the association?

8: For me it is gender equality day that we hold every year in the spring when we invite guest speakers and have some workshops and last year we watched a part of a documentary. Except for the course that was important for me.

4: I don't know, I don't really know if there's been any dramatic events that the group has reacted to as far as I know at least.

3: I can't think of anything that happened when we are in it right now, but we found old articles that people from this group had written to the local newspaper. So, I think the earlier years maybe they had a more outside, outgoing approach and made articles and stuff. They reacted to stuff that happened in the city. But I don't think we have seen it in recent years if you understood what I meant.

Maybe it went from a more activist association to more projects and events?

3: Yes, and now it is more that we work with lectures in school and extra courses during evening but before maybe they had a more outside approach, more activist.

6: They also made a list, 2015, with female *handledare*, tutors and I feel- Because now we have a lot of female tutors, so maybe they did something there that actually changed but I don't know because we don't know how it was before and they haven't really written down. They haven't really before talked about what we have done, from the past. What has changed, that kind of stuff but it is very interesting if they did something that made it more equal to the teaching.

Did you all join this year, the group? And I mean the course was one source of inspiration, but did you have- Was it a longer interest that you already had that you knew *okay I want*

to join the gender equality group, because I think that it is not the most popular group maybe to join?

4: Well I at least, I didn't know that I was going to join the group until they basically- Someone needed to do it otherwise the group would not exist. But the subjects we work with have always been- I've always found them really interesting . If- for me personally I had no interest of really joining any other group but this one was the only one that I had any interest in really.

7: Yes I- From the- We had a workshop, the first, when we started first year which was with JA which got me started to thinking about [it] and also the course as well. But I was already engaged in other things so I wanted first to let other people join if they wanted because I didn't know if I would have time but then, same as Linnea said, no one had applied at first and then I felt *This is really important. We need to keep it going.* So, then I felt that it was necessary so I joined, and I'm glad for it.

8: What was the workshop because I didn't get in contact with JA before the course this spring. I didn't see them at all during the fall last year.

7: We had a workshop during the ??? where we created pavilions in groups and I don't know if it was that clear but it was then Genusgruppen held it. The previous years genusgruppen and I talked to them a bit afterwards. And they also showed the fanzines and other literature so.

Nice, does anyone feel like you want to add anything.

[They shake their head no]

What is the best aspect of being a part of JA for you?

4: Well for me I guess just being a part of a group where we actually-We do actually have some power to change things. We do get to talk to the heads of the programs and we do get to voice what we want changed and maybe, obviously it can't always be changed or it won't always. And the things that are changing are taking a really long time but just also having a group of people that also share this interest.

8: And also being able to spread the word to the other students in the school through the course and gender equality day.

Will you be able to organize gender equality day this year?

8: We hope so, it is in march so it really depends on how the situation- How it is going then.

6: And I mean we probably could do something over zoom

7: It will happen, but we don't know if it will be on the school or on zoom, I think.

Would you continue to work with some kind of activism after the group. I mean obviously it is still a while away but maybe this lit a spark?

4: Yes, I think I'd like to. I don't know how or exactly what I'd want to do but I do want to continue working with this in some way. Because I just think it is really important.

3: I think maybe not that I'm going to work with it in an activist way, but the thinking process with architecture and gender and equality, it is always going to be there in your own work I think. So maybe you can, we can show it in our work in process and our own works but I might not use it in an activist way.

Because the course was really inspiring, what was the most important thing you take away or took away from [the course] or maybe the moment that most inspired you?

1: For me it was a lecture on the different ways that you can do a study or how you see science and how you take on knowledge. Because I studied nature science in the gymnasium and we always claim fact because the study is done and the result is truth. And then we had a lecture about this. It is an old discipline that's been for many many years and I've never talked about that the consequence or the result can change depending on where you do it. It is never a

fact because it can always vary and that was really- That changed the whole ground I was standing on. That was the whole way, particularly in nature science, that we work so to hear another aspect of that was really interesting.

4: Yes, I also think that that lecture was really interesting and inspiring, and I think what I take away from the course, just that thing. How intricate the different power structures and structures of what's considered fact and knowledge, how things can seem so... How you can feel so sure about something and how something can seem like it is always been that way when really it is a result of our social structures. And that it is just important to try to see through it and try to understand it.

And then I have I guess not really a question about the group but more about Sweden in general. So as an outsider Sweden seems the most gender equal place on earth almost. Do you think that that's actually the case or that it is mostly a portrayal or perception by other countries?

4: I don't know, that's a really hard question. I think we might be good compared to other countries but I'm not sure.

3: We're not done, we're not finished yet. There's always more stuff you can work on. We exist as group so that must be a result of a need for change but other countries are probably pretty good.

7: I think it is a relative question as well, depends on what type of subject you look at and how you compare it. It's also hard for us, I think, to know exactly because we haven't lived for extended periods in other countries and experienced. We can only know what we have read and seen but yes. Even though if Sweden would be the best it doesn't make it less important to keep on working.

But yes groups like yours exist but I mean either there's a lot of awareness surrounding the subject because of groups like yours pushing to raise that awareness and that kind of makes it better or is it the other way around?

1: I see what you mean but I think that sometimes we don't reflect on things that have been going on for long time. I'm still- I would still be called a female architect when I go and work and not just an architect and we always- we still do books that are *female architects* and so I think that to see that to call out these types of problems also make people aware and makes people more nonaccepting to them. And even though they would not normally react because well yes I am a female and I'm also an architect but sometimes it is hard to reflect that no one calls the male architect a male architect. So, I think it is the small things in the language that need to change and the underlying perspective that we have on the different genders doing their work.

No that's an important point. I agree. Is there anything that you would like to add that I haven't asked about yet?

7: I think on the last question I could just ask if it is based on Sweden or not the connection between gender studies and architecture. Even though it now seems like an obvious connection it seems like it hasn't been going on for really long. Of course there's been individual examples of it and because of that I think it is important to lift the international discourse about it. But even though- For example there's a Swedish student who studied in Scotland who contacted us because she was inspired and has started a magazine in Scotland about architecture and individuality or something. I don't remember but - And wanted our help with that and I think that's pretty cool because it is a new subject it is - We can help how

do you see *poverka* effect. How it is internationally as well, even though on a very small scale maybe.

Follow up question

As you said in the interview you have meetings with the head of programmes every month or so, but I was wondering if say one year JA doesn't exist if is there a guarantee that those meetings continue between the teachers themselves or that the gender perspective is still applied on the education. Is there some way that it would still be on the agenda? Do you have the feeling the teachers care enough to continue on their own?

we've unfortunately not been able to have those meetings nearly as often as we hoped because of the workload on the head of programmes, and they just haven't had the time for them. The school does have an equality representative but still it unfortunately seems like these meetings are very dependent on our existence. I don't think the questions would be entirely forgotten about but they don't seem to be that high of a priority either. But then again this has been a very uncommon year so maybe equality is a higher priority normally. The engagement of the teachers seems to be very varied so I think that whoever ends up being the next head of programme of the architecture bachelor will be very important for whether questions of equality will be prioritized. It is difficult to judge how this is handled normally based on the past year but I do think that JAs work is needed to keep equality on the agenda.

A-4 MYCKET

Background

Interviewer: Elisabeth Peeters,

Interviewees: MYCKET

Time and day: 14:00 7/12/2020 zoom

The interview took place in the afternoon at 14:00 on 7/12/2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the interview was conducted via Zoom. Before the interview I had consulted the MYCKET website, as well as the few articles I could find.

Interview

Yeah maybe I'm interested in hearing about what your is connection with institutions, cause you mentioned the workshop that you did.

We've been both me, [and the other members], we taught a lot before we also started MYCKET, Katarina was actually a full time teacher or professor at KTH and Marianne was at Konstfack and I had this other project called the new beauty council and I taught a lot of art institutions too. Then we somehow just thought it was too time consuming and wanted to build architecture ourself or like propose you know get in like proposing and didn't feel possible to combine with full time teaching. Because we love teaching it is always so fun to meet the students because it is a way of meeting people who have a lot of input and ideas and stuff. In order to have more time to develop our research and to write and to propose we don't teach, we don't have any like full time employments teaching we just do lectures or come in and give workshops and critics and stuff like this. I think it has a lot to do with time that if you have a job like this it is so hard to manage your own stuff kind of a little bit.

Actually we're going to be, now we're starting - it is like I almost forget because it is so new - we got a new three year artistic research grant and artistic research is always tied to an institution so we're going to be tied to linneaus universitetet in smalland. They have this imagining otherwise course and super focused on sustainability and home economics and cultural care and stuff. So, we're going to work with those students there within this new research project that's- sounds very flaky- but getting trolls perspective. We're going to try to dive into Swedish mythology and folklore and the like saga's in order to try to see things that we can't kind of imagine right now, that are beyond what we know about sustainable living. We know we should how we can build sustainable homes or permaculture gardens or what not, what we can do but we need even more. I mean it has to be, I think, like the holistic kind of how can we imagine other futures where we don't use, abuse the planet but live in relation to the earth. When we look we've been very interested in critical indigenous studies or like the Sapmi culture of thinking of coexistence with nature but we're not Saamie and we're not from Sapmi. We're from southern Sweden so we're also trying to look locally from the roots where we come and where we also live part time. We just live in Stockholm part time and part time in the countryside in Östra Götland. So look there, it is maybe only 50 years ago that people still believed in trolls and had a relation to a kind of living forest with other creatures that are alive and animated so that becomes the start. Anyway when we do that we will also work with students and institutions actually

In what kind of program can you teach that kind of courses

It is students from visual communications + change it is called, it is master students and I think they have a program called Design + change, so that's linnaeus universitetet. I think linnaeus universitetet seems super fun to be honest, it is like they're not so, they can do lots of fun stuff cause maybe it is no prestigious if you're in Stockholm or Gothenburg and they have lots of really fun researches who live in tiny houses or who really with their lives try to also be the things they research. So design + change, I guess you could look at linnaeus universitetet. We're really happy to be coworking with these people. It is also that when we approached them with this project about the trolls they were like 'oh yeah we've been thinking about trolls' really that's so fun that someone has been thinking the same.

It seems to me very far away from I would expect to

I get it but it is also like these trolls, I mean we have this anti-racist and queer kind of starting point and for us I guess we're going to have that queer anti-racist perspective when we look at folklegend and trolls. It is also like the most folk legends they are the same all over the world, it is only 2% that are Swedish specific everything else is retold but in another way in another part of the world. It is also like folk music is actually like super international but it is also been hijacked by nationalist parties that to like folk music and trolls and stuff that's the Swedish soul, but actually the Swedish soul is everywhere and everyone's soul, it has no borders. it is also putting another perspective, another reading of existing folk legends and stuff.

my uncle bought my grandma a troll in Norway and she loves it

it is funny Norway I mean, cause in Iceland people really believe in trolls actually, like they really when they build their highways they take precautions. you know they have these magic trees and they have to build the highways around and also in Norway it is a little bit more. In Sweden the folk legends are still alive in some areas but have died out in others but Norway and Iceland are still troll connected. but I think there here too we just have to dive more into it

That's really interesting, I hadn't really heard about trolls in Sweden yet but I think it is because I'm in Gothenburg and I don't really meet people from the countryside

Linnaeus universitetet who we're working with there in småland, and we're in Östra Gotland and they did a press release about that like 'oh we have these millions now to make our project' lots of people from Småland contacted and 'yeah we want to collaborate with you about this. but none no-one from the capital, like no one from big cities and it is just interesting because I guess we're also really interested in coming away from the urban environment because we're so bored of this binary, rural urban, but actually things are much more fluid and maybe people just one generation ago were rural and then someone's in a city and the kids. It is very much fluid. And I'm thinking if we're going to have sustainable lives a lot more people will have to live on the countryside and produce food. Lots of people will just have to produce food actually locally if we should live more sustainably. We're interested in thinking also what lives and how can we create other kinds of countryside and what kind of

stories about living on the countryside because now all the attractive life stories, or it is so much focused on the urban environment.

How can you apply this queer, anti-racist loop on the trolls?

Well one thing I think is the thing that these in a way site specific stories, they are tied to a little rock or a mountain but at the same time they are told all over the world but in different versions. That for me is really important from this kind of transnational, no border perspective. It is the same with, if you look at textile and you look at Swedish old textile, the patterns and stuff and if you look over the world they look very similar because people have been crocheting and making and dying and when you colour dye in red beets or Safran or mushrooms it is been done in the same way and so something really interesting they were connected really in our habits of living. Making clothes telling stories all over the world. Since I mean in MYCKET we're so against the idea of the nation state it is just a very new invention that we should have borders that are called Sweden or Norway etc. So we're also a lot more interested in that way of being, at the same time super local. I'm here where we live down in Stalingrad in Santa at the same time, and be particular about that space, but at the same time, we're very global and tied to the entire Earth and all the animals and mountains and everything on that Earth...On the planet. So there's a good terminology, glocal, which means that your global and local at the same time. So that was that. And the queer is like... In many, there are different folk stories where the trolls, they are neither female or male, they're something else, and their families are not consisting of one male troll and female troll and two troll babies. They're like a pack, they're a pack of different and they still have a familiarity. It is also like that the trolls are beyond our gender system so in that way, I mean not always, but in the ones that we look up, we find these trolls are act really queer, that also... They're not interested in the aesthetic rules that exist in the rest of your... The rest of modernism, but they like... They're really... What we love with them is that they're often alchemists like trolls they often gather stuff and they make wonder things, wonderful things of trash, you can even... There's like you say, katguld cat gold, it is when the rocks look like God, they have that as jewellery, it is about also seeing trash as resources. and also within the wood industry mostly, you cut down a tree and you use maybe 20% of the tree for construction and the rest is, is like second grade to ones for other things, but it is like it is so idiotic, it is.. Everything could be used really, so we're really interested in looking at the particular things and also with in Saamie architecture, you build different structures. When you really go out and look for a tree that is like that it has to be a tree. For example, Birch, you find over a certain height in the mountains and then they start growing really funny, they start bending over, and then if you find two bend over pieces, you can make a circle in that circle you can put on the top of your teepee. To really being more like using everything super local and trying not to produce new and trying to use trash and do something with it, but... And that's like queer aesthetics, I think the idea of there's this extremely narrow idea of what beauty is and what's fresh or what's clear to really challenge that and look at other aesthetics, and there has been in time, it is just that our time now feel so... I guess maybe all people feel so during their time of living, but that you're so narrow everything, so small, but I think the world is more... We could live so much larger, have so much more variety...

I was going through the pages yesterday of the MYCKET archive, I saw... I don't know if it was in an article or in one of the pages. They've always tried to define what beauty is, and

ugliness has only been defined as the opposite, and I thought that was really interesting. I never really thought about that.

Like ugliness is the negation of beauty kind of... Yeah the theory around beauty is so interesting to look in to like for example, I have some friends who have built forest. It is like a little bit permaculture, but it is more like when you try to use perennials and plant in ways as a forest structure, so you could have food producing by itself in the end. And they have that in a suburb of Stockholm. But people first were so opposed because they thought it looked messy, but the messiness was just natural, actually, it was just that you put the leaf seed, then you have to - it is not well ordered, and then it looks messy and we have created an idea kind of during our time that that would be bad when actually it is just a really lively garden that is doing really well... Anyway, but I think things are changing now. Just the thing with that, not everyone is cutting their grass lawn, right, there's a movement for the bees and insects that we have to let our grass grow and actually, I think also down in Ostra Gotland people mown the grass and don't live sustainably per se just because they live in the countryside, they don't. Of course, but that actually people have started letting their lawns grow and it looks messy or untidy or whatever, but there's a fashion in it, and then people accept it, so... That's cool. I think that it is changeable our idea about what is beautiful, or ugly is changeable, for sure. Yeah, that's promising at least.

I also, I had this interview with FemArk a few weeks ago, and there was also a workshop you had with them, and we talked about it a little bit about... It was one of the workshops, I think it was from clubsenen, that you also did with them about dream castles.

Did we build a dream case with them?

Yeah, I think so.

That was super nice. Yeah, the dream Castle workshop. Well, I guess it was a project we worked with for many years in one way. It started a little bit with that. We worked... It was interesting because you asked about the institutions, actually we work with institutions all the time, that's how we get paid, we're not anti institutional... We think that also the institutions are going to work with... They might need changes, but you can also change from within institution, it is a structured... We worked up.

So we weren't architects at that point when we did the club scene project, and it was 50 years ago, Nikki de Saint Phalle made the big exhibition of the modern museum called she. Have you heard about it? Yeah, so the big body, when you went in through the vagina and all that. Yeah, okay. So it was 50 years ago. She did it and we sat right there and we love Nikki de Saint Phalle, and we wanted to make a tribute project about how also we love the way she works, she's made this fantastic place in Italy called Giardino dei Tarocchi. Anyway, so I love her way of using carnival expressions and the way of building also John Tango course, and then we came over, this American artist called Rachel Shannon. She did this beautiful inflatable structures, and then we... Right, we wanted to make it almost like a tribute project about how we imagine that we can build our cities like together and big sewing circles or building together, and we invited Rachel Shannon to come and share with us how to build these inflatable structures. And we had a huge one-week sewing circle workshop where we did some of the biggest structures, and it was also great because it was people from different

disciplines who all wanted us to learn how to do this, and then also... And also the idea that you can actually make these inflatable structures of trash or of reusing, sealing sales. How would you say button, the sales or you can use the trash umbrella fabric, those are also good for holding air. Then as we started also exhibiting the project, we also almost did our sewing workshop or a taping workshop, the sowing is a little bit more tricky or it needs more time and stuff, but what people really can do and really fast to tape together inflatable structures, so we got lots of recycled plastic bags and stuff, we're sponsored with that from a municipality, and then you can just tape together in a couple of hours inflatable structures that you can then walk into and sit in, so that's also been a way of just meeting people and talking about our environment, how we live together, we've done it with a newly arrived immigrant groups or elder home or youth club or FemArk. It is just something nice about also meeting people, not through words always, but through doing, and people do so differently, you have these plastic bags and you have tape, but then how you decorate and how you... People do differently. And then everything becomes a unified structure, but with everyone's little input, it is just a beautiful and fun way of illustrating how we maybe actually more could be involved in building the environment that surrounds us.

We are now, in my studio it is social inclusion, it is a lot of participatory design, and so it is very interesting to see that you don't need all this background to have interesting ideas...

No for sure. No, absolutely. People are mostly like, we've been... We call these workshops when we do like that, we call it DIG, doing in group, and when we build this last project that I don't think we have images of it on our web page, we're like the worst at the communication. We finished the dance place in Råslätt, and I can actually send you images, it is like a build giant steel cap with neon LED lights in the seems, and when we did that project, we were not also with digs and painting together. And then we designed and we asked them, and they draw, and we draw and they draw and we draw and, we said no and we said yes... And everyone, every month, we talked it over, but also initially just to get the feelings. I think people not having to talk about everything, but just to see what happens. Also where we did these workshops at two different locations to try out like, Oh, how does it feel to dance outside here in this neighbourhood, how does it feel to demonstrate... Stuff happens that you didn't expect. People come and you talk and someone brings Food... You kind of understand how does this space work. So I think this just inviting people to some kind of doing gives a lot more than you could have expect... Maybe if it works really bad some cases, maybe it doesn't work so well. Moving on, like that. So have you've also been doing that with a specific project in Gothenburg then?

So we're working with Angeredsgymnasiet...Yes, one of their classes is something with sustainable sustainability, and we have a collaboration with that class about sustainable renovation of the school, and it was really difficult kind of because it is a very... The setting is, it is mandatory to participate, but a participatory process, and that has been like a kind of a process throughout the semester, you can't build a participatory process upon a mandatory setting. At first, it was really difficult to get ideas because of the power structure, and it is really difficult to break that as outsiders, and then we gave them the choice, if you want to participate, you can come with us and we can create together, and then they kind of had all these ideas and we talk to them and very often said, I don't know why I did this, but I did this.

It is also really the same with participation, it is depending on the groups, and if the group feels that they really have an interest in the issue and that they will gain something. No, but I feel like in a lot of project, it was such a blessing for us in this project and Råslätt dance group because they had. No, that Kepsen Do you know of them? They do public art, they're like the state or organization for public art in Sweden, they had a project called Art is happening konsthender, which was like a commission by the government to invest art in million home program areas like Angered, and they did a public call where several society could apply to organizations, etcetera, school could apply to get funding and be helped by an artist or architect to realize their dream. So the project has got a lot of critic, but I think in our case, it worked really well, because I think it was actually a great way of engaging civil society, so in our case, it was... This area Råslätt in the commune on the used Club and the dance school who together applied to the art agency to get help, so in that case, you also had some motivated participants, it was their dream. Their desire... I feel like we sometimes... Actually, when we worked in Gothenburg was with the playa and with Frihammen, but that was more tricky because no one had a particular interest really in that area, and here we could really focus on this group that was all going to organize and work with them, or of course it becomes easier kind of I'll say in the relation to... Should you pay people to be put so much of an economy and time and people invest in processes... Right, but it sounds fun that they were more... That they were more engaged then Once you said It is not obligatory, but you can join if you want.

Yeah, definitely, because it was like breaking a power structure and their power with the teacher, it is because it is kind of a challenged school. So they have this thing where if they don't like it, they just leave class, and so when we ask them if you come with us, you can't come with us if you want to, that power to threaten us that way, but if I don't like it, I'll walk out. That kind of fell away.

Yeah, again, it is right. It is for sure. I get it. That sounds good. So you've been doing workshops with them around what they can do with their school and... Yeah. Okay, sounds great.

I have some questions about the activism and maybe what was your first case of activism?

I guess we're all... What was our first... I mean me and Mariana, we were queer kids much earlier than Katarina in that sense, but I don't know, it is hard for me to talk for them in a way, I know that Mariana was part of pride. Then they are aware of a queer or being part of a queer activism from early on, Katarina came out later, but I know she's been engaged in environmental questions and stuff, but for me, I think I was first an environmental activist already being a vegan when I was a teenager and stuff like this, but then also when studying architecture, first looking into sustainable architecture, but then also being hit with same modernist structures within that male domination pretty white class. So it was also really disappointed and then so simultaneously looking at... I went to KTH while Katarina was doing her doctoral on queer, thesis behind straight curtains, I started understanding... Or wait, I'd been feminist also, of course, since I was maybe 17, 18 or something, so all this parallel, but I could not really get it into one thing, I guess. So yeah, I guess I started pretty early understanding the gender inequalities, and once you understand those on a personal level, I guess you also really starts in the racial inequalities and class inequalities. Right. Or how did it

start for you? You think activism? Are you...

I think it was more like reading when I was maybe 15, 16, a lot of stuff on the internet. And then that was like, yeah, this happens to me as well. Wait, that's not normal. And then I was speaking a lot about it with my friends from high school, and we were very angry and we were very loud about it that we were feminists because in a way, the word has a very bad connotation, like a lot of girls in our class, they didn't necessarily want to define themselves as a feminist, and we were very loud about it, and a lot of people didn't appreciate it. And yeah, I guess it started with feminism because that's what I first understood or what I first could relate to, and then, I don't know, with all these other questions that I maybe could not relate to all of them, but as more and more things come up... Yeah, you can't really ignore it anymore, and then...

You start with your own experiences, and then once you see that it is maybe that how you see how a white supremacist capitalist structure can co-exist, right? I'd say it was the same, for me, I guess it is a little different. Mariana, her parents are from South America, so I guess she's been dealing with questions of racism also more parallel, whereas I haven't... Not on a personal level. So started understanding that a little bit later, and still is I think for us, we're three people working together, it really helps us to help each other with the blind spots for each other, experiences of... because I'm in, brought up in upper middle class environment, Mariana's really working class, immigrant parents who fled the dictatorship in Argentina and Brazil, and to always remind each other of the different things one doesn't see... because you take it for granted now that's been also good experiences to have that very close to you, not as someone who just shouts at you from distance or you know it can be kind of rough atmosphere also within feminist or intersectional environments is that you're missing, is this perspective or that, but to actually have that very close from someone who lets you be wrong, but tells you and you can change, you can change, you can widen your understanding of things kind of...

Yeah, it is interesting to think about when it starts... and what was the spark to start the collective?

Well, I'd been working with this new beauty Council project for a couple of years, but I felt really a little bit lonely because it was like a collective, but I was doing most of the work that's just sad, I don't want like working alone, so it wasn't fun and also was very theoretical, it was a lot about the institution critique and just theory, like the Arctic omissions were theory, but actually I like doing stuff. So also crafting. And then I met, I knew Katarina because she was teaching a KTH And we had also of friends, because she's much older than me, but we had common friends, I got to know her, and then Mariana also took one of the courses in gender and architecture that Katarina was holding and I thought that Mariana was so cool. I was afraid of her as she can be like a little harsh, but then somehow she contacted me and was interested in what I did, I was like, Okay, I have to... We have to start working together. And it was the time in everyone's life where we were so interested in proposing ourselves, not just critiquing and not just teaching, but actually trying to build these things that we were imagining or talking about. So that's how we came together. And then once we did a competition and we were... And then we were in an exhibition we did a little project, but then actually what made us be able to put time in it was when we got the grant for the, for researching on the queer

club scene, because I mean how if you're not payed... You will never be able to develop really... That's so much about economy. And I mean it is what we're struggling with all the time, also I feel like if you're going to do this other kind of architecture, these other kinds of processes, it takes so much more time, it is slower or more costly or... And how can we deal with that? But now, yeah, now we got the new research grant, so that's great, but we also live our lives... We really are cost-effective with how we make our lives happen, we share apartments with other people or we share cars, we share resources in order to not to have a full-time employment to support us, but we can go by with less money. I guess that's almost an activist choice also, because it is going to influence your pension, it is going to influence your entire life economy, but for us it is like, this is the only way we can live our lives, somehow... So it is how you do it. But of course, if we would not get these grants big grants that we get sometimes it would be very hard, but then you'd have to take another job and then do this other on the side, which would just... It would just give you less time to actually develop this other thing... I feel it is a lot about that for people, how to understand how you can manage life economically and still do what you think is right to do... Right.

Yeah, and I wonder, how is it to practice architecture in the capitalist white society, because we see a lot of how it is very difficult to navigate being an activist at the same time as practicing architecture.

Well, I guess that's why we're in this between sphere between art and architecture, because it is more like art money that funds our architecture, and this Kepsen actually the first commission to work, we get where we... We've drawn like small villas for people or friends or renovations and stuff, but it is the first permanent structure we get to build, and I guess it has to do with... Yeah, we're not really in the architecture world in that sense, not because we don't want to, but we haven't been picked up by that world, and what funds us is art money, so that's tricky. But I'm wondering, I feel like now that we did this Kepsen på Råslätt, I feel like also there's open architectural offices who have contacted us and are interested in collaborating. So I feel like most architecture offices, they would not have afford or they don't think that they could afford to have this kind of practice, but maybe then they can take in sometimes and collaborate like White and these big offices. They do work a lot of places work with participatory planning processes, but to really do it, I feel like they feel they don't have the money to, but somehow. With urban Agenda 2030 and the UN goals and everything, I think that there might be something happening. That the architecture world and the planning world and the entire world of course also. Somehow it is changing, is not it? Just five years ago, people were still environmental deniers. I feel like you could... Right, people were just buying everywhere and it is just five years ago, and then with Greta Thunberg and everything and there's been, such a lot of consciousness have been in the last year, so maybe it actually will change also. What do you think... because the architecture world is very white and sexist and modernist, but I feel like some ideas cannot stay anymore and there all these courses the... Of course, you're doing a Chalmers stuff happening still.

Yeah, I think this course that I'm doing now, I think it is super interesting, and I'm very surprised that it gives me hope that the course exists, and that there are people like my teachers that are working towards changing more and more towards this ideal, but at my university, at home might kind of sometimes miss that in the architecture classes... It is still a little bit of an afterthought.

Sometimes, yeah, it is like, it is not the norm, it is more than... You get happy when you find it or unusual.

There was one course where we had this bit about sustainability, then you could... There was an extra task about sustainability, and you did have to implement it, but it was only like what, 5% of the grade... And the teachers didn't really like... If we wanted feedback on it was with other people and the teachers didn't really make time for it, and also that year we had to work... It was designing apartments, so they have to be inclusive, but then our tutorials for the inclusivity, they were with another teacher...

I get it, I get it, because they don't really know what. I get it.

It sends a bad message to us because it is like, Oh, but they're not our main teachers, it is like they don't really care about it. So I think it sends the wrong message to the students.

For sure also that they maybe really don't have a confidence is also present. No, for sure. I get a little shock because I feel like now it is... It is almost 20 years ago, I started studying architecture here in Stockholm and that's what I felt then. I had extra tutors from KTH because I was interested in concrete sustainable building technology... You know what, I got, but no one had that knowledge which was shocking. So I contacted people at the other parts of KTH that were not at the architecture school, but I was always thinking, I can't be like that. I guess it is very different. Maybe a different school...

I guess even the example that you gave first about the trolls, that class. You said it, it is maybe more free because it is not as pretentious.

For sure I think... Exactly, it is like you have to go looking in different places where there's been an environment of daring to do in another way or something, and especially in Sweden and I feel like no one has nothing to lose because it is not like Sweden is known for their great architecture. It is like you can just try out lots of different things because we've got nothing to lose.

I think it is funny. White is the biggest firm here, I guess and everyone's is always talking about them and I'd never heard of them.

Had you never heard of them?

And the first time I was like, why are they called white? Then I realized it was the man's name.

No, but it is the craziest name, I don't know what they were thinking... It is like they almost think white, it is in English as white. That they don't really relate to that. People in other countries would be like, Oh, you mean White architects, it seems like the whole ... No, for sure, they do some good project, but then some clueless-ness on the grand scale, but I guess it is a lot about snooping up and finding the people trying to create your own little gang, or what inspires you and go there. I Mean, we still do that all the time, we look for people that

we like, like these professors at Linnaeus universitetet, we really actively like. Okay, they're doing cool stuff, we'll be friends with them, we'll tie our energy together and then we can do stuff and then they have the students enroll. And then those students probably in and then... So just finding the stuff you like and then one in any place

But I do feel like maybe in some ways, depending on which problem or questions that we're raising, maybe some are being more listened to already I know that my professor mentioned that she had this subject for thesis about gender inequalities for a few years now, and no one wanted to do it, and now this year, it is me and two other students that are working with this problem, with gender and architecture. So it is also a bit of a up and down and.

For sure, I also think that people can be afraid of that... But if I have this niche when I study architecture, what work will I get? How will I be employable? But then it is also, I guess, necessary to point out, I think that I actually do think that that kind of knowledge will become more important for architecture firms. I know that White have people who have that at least theoretical knowledge then, I don't know how they apply it, but they do employ those kind of people and that you are actually employable. I think that if you would work like to work at a big firm and have those extra competences or will employable, but I think that students can get afraid of that, don't you think so that... It is like, what I'm going to do with it.

I hear a lot of fear about being unemployed.

Now I get it, right. But then also that's actually... As an architecture student, you can... If you would like to continue within academia, you could become a teacher yourself, but also I think importantly, you could work at a firm, you will... I think so. I mean, those students, I had taught master classes at KTH Urban Planning Department for some years ago, and all of them were employed at the commune stadsplantering or they were at a firm where... I mean, so we can actually, I think be a surplus for you.

I guess also breaking... What is an architect? I've known for... After my first year studies that I didn't want to be an architect, the vision, the Ideal that there is... What is an architect? I know that that wasn't for me. And throughout the years, I just realized that more and more that that is not what I want to do, and I've read a little bit about this shift away from the architect as the author, which is kind of... If it is a big firm, it is mostly like the man that gets to write his name up on it, and it is going more and more towards, teams of people working together, and I think it is more interesting from what I would want to do, but it still to me so narrow in a way.

No, sure. But I think you're right, I think I have some friends working at a place called Lamskopslagit in Stockholm, they have a lot of landscape planners, but they do a lot of urban planning too, and they are maybe 30 people at that firm and the owners are super aware, they're just women, and they're super aware of who they employ that they try to get people from different... With different experiences, a different class or being Swedish or not and genders and sexuality. So I think that those kind of genius architect firms that used to exist there, actually, if you look around and the smaller firms, you do find places that really actually have ideals that are more similar to mine and yours, and you'd think... But of course, it is about researching a little bit and finding those firms and stuff, but I think you're right, there is a shift,

because there's also a shift on these white men, taking credit for everything, right? With Me-Too, and everything, it is like somehow I feel like everything is lagging, but it is still that many people know in a way that it is so unsustainable and that kind of how it starts, I believe in you. I think you'll be able to find good paths in life...

Have you noticed a change over years. With your working?

I think so, I'm not sure if I've changed or if the environment has changed, but I feel like when I graduated, I was just so angry, like I assumed that everyone was going to be against me, no one... Like everyone was going to be racist sexist, although they didn't know it, like in disguise you know. But somehow now I'm not really sure, but I feel that there is a genuine interest in making... creating inclusiveness. Creating sustainability. I feel like in Sweden... A lot of the time, different context, lack the knowledge, to be honest, there's a little bit like not enough competence, but that there's often a will, kind of, you know. I feel that I don't feel like before I felt maybe more like an underdog... I don't anymore. I feel listened to and respected in an architectural context. Also meeting urban planners and stuff that they generally are interested in understanding for us, this Kepsen project was so successful because it was so supported by the community and they helped... We didn't just do the process, they helped, we really helped other and like, oh, but did we tell those did we include... Always. And it is been working out really well. And I feel like people really want to learn about that generally, how we can create attractive safe spaces, for example, girls in million program areas, I think... I think this

I also think there's not knowing, I feel like there's different ways of ignorance kind of, there's this way that they just don't know yet, but if you talk about it... People are open to change. If you explain it, yeah. Yeah, not everyone... And that's like the other kind of ignorance, which is like they're just not open to it, even if you talk about it, but I think a lot more people, just by using the right language, which I think does that, are open to a lot more than you initially, you realize...

Yeah, no, no, I think you're right. So I think it is also like... We're actually, we're going to do... We've been writing on a publication in the last year, which is... because we haven't published anything during all these eight years, but now in January, we're going to have it in English and the English version through the magazine girls like us, which is all the research we did within the club scene, and then we're going to publish. It was my point with that, now that we've been working and been working on a lot in these publications with trying to communicate about trying to make people understand it. So a lot of the times I feel like people don't... They get also offended, if they don't get you really try to explain stuff can be hard, but really trying to reach out. Like really reach out, and I think also maybe when I first graduated, I wasn't really interested, I was just so angry, so I could speak on top of people's heads too theoretically, because then you seem so smart or something, but I didn't really mean to, but I just could not say it in any other way, so how can you just say it to people understand.

It is difficult. Yes, language is such an important part of this problem kind of because the word feminist, it is so, it has all these... I don't know, people feel very often afraid of it almost, and I think if you then explain that this is what it stands for, and it is like, Oh yeah, but I believe in those same things, but I won't call myself a feminist. Yeah, the language is so important.

Definitely, it is also. We almost never use... When we talk to people in general, we don't say, we do queer feminist architecture, because it doesn't mean anything like, what the fuck does it mean for them? So we're more interested in places... We talk about *jämlika*, equality, equal places and places for everyone. Because, you're right, even if that's where we come from and we think that that's the same, it just alienates, it can alienate people if we say it, so really, we changed our terminology because it creates a really unproductive distance. So I think that you can choose the word to use and still say what you actually think, I think without alienating, and then that people shouldn't be offended by using feminist. That's also another question. You know that you will get a lot of unnecessary reactions, you can maybe say the same thing, but not use some trigger words, although it is a... So it does help.

There's this article in bang and I was reading it, and I thought it was really... I like the aesthetic of the article, but also really what was said in it, and I was wondering there is this part, I'm going to open it to read the sentence "Don't you find that problematic though, saying that one shouldn't base things on appearances, Mycket struggles with this quite a bit, we think we have to base things on appearance or we will end up in modernism by default, the aesthetic expression is crucial to how one is meant to feel interacting with design and architecture", and I was wondering if you could elaborate a little bit

Yeah, but it is so tricky, I think, for example, when doing Kepsen now, which it is a purple colour with the metallic with these LED strips that can change colour buttons in pink, and we really worked a lot with this aesthetic expression to fit the prime group that will use this space, which is a mix dancers academy were mostly people who identify themselves as girls. And then I think what we want to say there, it is tricky, Is that feminine aesthetics is there a female aesthetics in all this because no, we want men to use it to. Or we want everyone not categorizing people by their genders to code architectures as male or female, but at the same time, how are we going to talk about it because certain groups have promoted a certain aesthetic that are tied to them. I can still say that a white modernist aesthetics has actually been promoted by a white upper middle class men and it looks a certain way, and if I look at how these girls, how they dress normally, what things they like. They've been showing us reference projects that are shiny, glittery, this is what they like. I guess what we're saying that you don't want to put gender or gendered words when discussing things or discussing aesthetics, but somehow you also have to. But it is tricky, so you will always have to say this, you will always have to say... We don't only want to conform a gender aesthetics, that girls only like pink and sparkly, because girls will like whatever, right? They will also like modernism or they like whatever, but still, we have to see that there is a lack of certain aesthetic expression, and it has to do with a power structure that has promoted some architectures instead of others, and colour and pattern is one of those that have been tied to class and race and gender, and therefore have been talked about as naïve or kitsch or ugly. Right, so you still have to say that. But it is uncomfortable to talk about feminine architecture, I think. So I think that that's what that is, we have to call that out. But it is also hard. It is hard in anything.

Our Five-Point Gender Equality Checklist²

Gender equality does not pose a threat to quality in our chosen field; it is about improving quality through greater choice. Everyone who is in any way active at the School of Architecture can give consideration to who they choose to refer to at any given point in time.

1. **Think about who, or what, you display as a reference, and why.** Consider what or who the image/lecture/critique omits, and why. Always examine the completed text/lecture/presentation/image/task formulation/appointment with a gender-balanced and inclusive gaze. What perspective do you have on the issue at hand? Do you need to make any changes in order to create gender equality and diversity?
2. **Travel outside of your normal network** to create a gender balance among participants on discussion panels and juries, at seminars, conferences and reviews.
3. Bear in mind that you should **move seamlessly when highlighting architects of both genders**. Avoid segues such as, “and now, we come to a female architect”. Instead, move on naturally with no particular emphasis.
4. **Name or cite women and men in the same way**, always initially using both first and last name and subsequently either both names or first name only. Remove superfluous value words or gender-specific expressions.
5. **Consider how you converse with or ask questions of students.** Always maintain a positive tone that shows respect for every student as an individual. Is there a risk that the person you are speaking to may perceive you as exclusionary? If so, consider whether there is something you can change about your interaction.

² KTH. (n.d.). *KTH SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE – RULES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY*. Retrieved from KTH: https://www.kth.se/polopoly_fs/1.772194.1574023221!/KTH%20SCHOOL%20OF%20ARCHITECTURE%20-%20RULES%20ON%20GENDER%20EQUALITY%20AND%20DIVERSITY.pdf on 21/3/2021