

ARCHITECTURES AND SPACES FOR CARE: RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPANISH POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE LED BY WOMEN ARCHITECTS

ARQUITECTURAS Y ESPACIOS DEL CUIDADO: APORTACIONES RECIENTES A LA CULTURA ARQUITECTÓNICA ESPAÑOLA DE LA POSTMODERNIDAD LIDERADAS POR ARQUITECTAS

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Abstract

Nowadays we observe how many of our cities and other inhabited spaces have been conceived by and for a subject that represents an androcentric model that focusses on the productive, with the result that aspects of architecture such as assistance and care have been underestimated. Faced with this neglect of issues that are considered by society as feminine, a series of feminist struggles have, over the course of decades, been demanding more equitable, inclusive spaces and cities that take into consideration tasks relating to care and reproduction in architectural practice. With regard to the Spanish architectural scene, since the end of the 20th century it has been possible to observe the emergence of a series of professional practices led by women architects that have used the concept of femininity as a creative argument in an effort to approach the profession from different perspectives and open up new areas of activity and debate within which they are free to develop their professional careers. These are based around

a critique of modern architectural positions associated with an idealistic vision of society that takes as a reference a neutral gender far from all complexity and excludes the differences between people to establish a paradigm shift from and with feminisms. In this regard, this article aims to present a series of recent professional practices led by Spanish women architects during the period 1978-2008 who, from architecture and urban planning, as well as other peripheral positions such as the arts and social action, have worked around women's experiences and lent prominence to day-to-day life and care. Its purpose is to determine some of the singular aspects of the contributions made by women to Spanish postmodern architectural culture. This study will allow us to observe how many of these contributions take shape in a series of actions, attitudes and ways of working that envisage the beginning of a shift in how the profession is practised; a shift that departs from the predominant canon to define new strategies and ways of approaching architectural practice that are more in line with the needs of women and non-normative subjects.

Keywords: architecture with a gender perspective; architectural culture; postmodernism; spaces of care; feminist practices; Spanish architecture; feminism; women architects.

Resumen

En la actualidad observamos cómo muchas de nuestras ciudades y espacios en los que habitamos están pensados por y para un sujeto que representa un modelo androcéntrico centrado en lo productivo. Esta práctica ha hecho que aspectos de la arquitectura como la asistencia y los cuidados hayan sido subestimados. Frente a este olvido de las cuestiones consideradas por la sociedad como femeninas, son numerosas las luchas feministas que durante décadas han venido reivindicando espacios y ciudades más justas e inclusivas, que atiendan las labores relacionadas con los cuidados y la reproducción en la práctica arquitectónica. En el panorama arquitectónico español, desde finales del siglo XX, es posible observar el surgimiento de una serie de prácticas profesionales que, lideradas por arquitectas, utilizan el tema de la feminidad como argumento creativo para aproximarse de un modo diferente a la profesión y abrirse a campos de trabajo y debate en los que poder desarrollar su carrera profesional. Estas parten de una crítica a los posicionamientos arquitectónicos modernos, vinculados a una visión idealista de la sociedad que toma como referencia un género neutro alejado de toda complejidad y abstrae las diferencias entre las personas para instaurar un cambio de paradigma desde y con los feminismos. En este sentido, este artículo tiene como objetivo dar a conocer diversas prácticas profesionales conducidas por arquitectas españolas representativas del periodo 1978-2008 que, desde la arquitectura y el urbanismo, pero también desde otras posiciones periféricas como el arte o la acción social, han trabajado desde las experiencias de las mujeres, poniendo en primer plano la vida cotidiana y los cuidados. Su finalidad es determinar algunos aspectos singulares de la aportación de las mujeres a la cultura arquitectónica española

de la postmodernidad. Este estudio nos permitirá observar cómo muchas de estas aportaciones se concretan en una serie de acciones, actitudes y modos de trabajo que vislumbran el inicio de un cambio en el modo de ejercer la profesión que se aleja del canon predominante para definir nuevas estrategias y formas de aproximarse a la práctica arquitectónica más acordes con las necesidades de las mujeres y de sujetos no normativos.

Palabras clave: arquitectura con perspectiva de género; cultura arquitectónica; postmodernidad; espacios del cuidado; prácticas feministas; arquitectura española; feminismo; arquitectas.

1. INTRODUCTION

For many years now, women's work has been confined to the world inside the home, to reproductive, or care-related tasks, and women have not been recognised as having an active role in productive society (Novas, 2017). Throughout history their integration into the labour market has taken place slowly and progressively. At first, this was limited to the performance of tasks relating to the professionalisation of household chores such as cleaning, dressmaking, health care, etc. As a result, access to professions considered 'masculine', and which required technical training, was forbidden to them.

It would require the entire 19th century, with all its disputes and struggles, for women to not only become active professionals in sectors hitherto considered male but also for them to gain access to higher education. These incidents defined one of the most important events relating to Modernism in the last century (Espegel, 2008; Yanguas, 2009); an event which resulted in, among other things, the emergence of the first pioneering women architects.

While in recent decades the integration of women into the various fields of science and culture has taken place globally and extensively, in the field of urban planning and architecture this integration has been far slower. In addition, women's access to architectural studies has taken place in a context of belittlement and discrimination on the part of architects practising the profession and, as Espegel (2008) points out, in the absence of clearly defined rules, given that their education was considered a private matter that only concerned them and their families.

In Spain, moreover, this incorporation took place late in time, partly due to the loss of civil and legal rights that women suffered during the Franco's regime. So, the pioneering women of the 1930s and 40s, which included María Cristina Gonzalo, Rita Fernández-Queimadelos and Matilde Ucelay, the latter being the first woman architect to be qualified in Spain, were followed by the next generation of women architects, namely those who entered the architecture schools of Madrid and Barcelona in the 1950s and 1960s.

Few of these first-generation women architects went on to practise the profession, however, and those who did were employed either in public Administration or in partnership with male colleagues, and their work was never valued or recognised. They were considered mere collaborators.

The end of the dictatorial regime and the arrival of democracy in Spain marked the beginning of a new political, cultural and social period in which most Spanish women were afforded the opportunity to advance. These first years of the democratisation process brought about socio-political changes that were important for society as a whole, but especially for women, such as the increased presence of women in Spanish universities and other institutions.

The establishment of various public universities meant that many women were able to choose their education freely, and this process of emancipation was reflected in the increase in the number of women entering architectural studies (Pérez-Moreno & Santos Pedrosa, 2020; Pérez-Moreno, 2021). With the advent of democracy, this growth took place in a stable, sustained manner, with the result that, from the 1980s to 2007, the number of female students enrolled in the first year of degree courses increased from 15% to 52.3% (Agudo & Sánchez de Madariaga, 2011; Sánchez de Madariaga 2008, 2010, 2014, 2015), exceeding 50% for the first time. This percentage remains above this value today.

Faced with a male-dominated history, this increase in the number of women architects graduating from architecture schools marked one of the principal shifts in the Spanish architectural scene. However, while this steady increase in the number of women studying architecture could be seen as an indication of progress in terms of their integration into the professional sphere, the reality is quite different. A disparity remains between female graduates and those who turn professional, due to the progressive

disappearance of women in the period between academic studies and the professional sphere; a disparity that becomes even more acute as one scales the employment hierarchy towards management, positions requiring a high level of qualification, or positions of responsibility in businesses, institutions, etc.

Resulting from this disparity is the high rate of women who quit professional practice, the reason for which can be found in reduced vertical integration, in the difficulties that women encounter in terms of continuing the profession, and in the fact that their salaries are significantly lower than those of their male colleagues (Yanguas, 2009). All this leads to an increase in the demotivation of women architects due, in part, to the paternalistic nature that continues to characterise architectural practice today, an issue that prevents their participation in positions of responsibility and decision-making (Álvarez, 2015, 2022).

This scant presence of women in management and decision-making positions, in conjunction with traditional historical bias, has steered the profession towards purely male interests, with the result that a significant part of the theoretical and practical discourses that have guided the profession in recent decades, the working methodologies, structural organisation and professional practices, have shifted away from women's ways of working and their requirements. Consequently, issues that directly affect women, such as care, the reconciliation of work with family life, maternal support, the difference in professional salaries or the possibility of exercising their profession without limitations simply because they are women, have not been considered with the requisite degree of seriousness (Alba, 2018).

Since the end of the 20th century, however, it is observable within the Spanish architectural panorama the emergence of a series of professional practices in the field of architecture and urban planning that, led by female architects, resort to the concept of femininity as a creative argument in order to approach the profession from a different perspective and open up areas of practice and debate within which they are free to develop their professional careers. These practices address issues traditionally considered by society as feminine and, as such, reviled, for example reproduction and care, in an effort to lend them new meaning in terms of the design of new strategies and ways of approaching architectural practice and further the connection

between this practice and the vital reality of the society in which we live (Álvarez, 2022; Pérez-Moreno, 2021).

Faced with traditional ways of conceiving and designing cities and architecture that are based on markedly androcentric models and focussed on the productive, and in which women have been systematically excluded and made invisible and the reproductive has been increasingly forgotten, these architectural practices seek to establish a paradigm shift that is both based on and in line with feminisms.

The vast majority of these actions have been and are being promoted by women and are based on a critique of modern architectural positions that are associated with an idealistic vision of society that takes as a reference a neutral gender that is far removed from any degree of complexity and excludes the differences between people in an effort to introduce gender perspectives into the field of architecture and urban planning with the aim of responding to the needs of those who do not respond to this model, among these, women. As a result, care constitutes a key element in feminist studies.

In this context, the aim of this article is to present a series of professional practices that have been led by Spanish women architects who, from the perspective of architecture and urban planning, but also from other peripheral positions such as the arts and social action, have based their work around women's experiences and lent prominence to day-to-day life and care. The purpose of this study, then, is to characterise and understand the specific features of these architectural practices to determine some of the singular aspects of the contributions made by women to Spanish postmodern architectural culture.

In the development of this study the focus was not so much on quantifying these practices as it was on approaching their relevance from a critical perspective in an effort to determine their singular nature and contribution to the architecture produced in Spain over the last decades. In this sense, this research does not aim to address an exhaustive sample of these professional practices, but rather the contrary, to examine just a few of the most representative cases. The selection has been limited to the Spanish territory and the period 1978-2008, a time characterised by the restoration of democracy in Spain. This brought significant socio-political changes, including a gradual increase in the presence of women in professional architecture

careers, which would continue until the first decade of the 21st century and coincide with the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis of 2008. During this period, the incorporation of women to the field of architecture introduced changes in the traditional way of conceptualising and carrying out professional architectural practice in Spain; changes involving a paradigm shift that departed from the predominant canon in an effort to define actions and ways of exercising the profession that were more in line with the needs of women.

Likewise, the selection of the case studies has tried to ensure that these were representative of the development of architectural practices that contemplated inclusivity and the desire to achieve gender equity in diverse environments through the creation of new ways of developing architectural practice that were not derived from androcentric canons that only deal with these normative subjects, but rather to lend priority to activities that are part of everyday life, especially those related to domestic and care-giving work. As such, the relevance of this research lies in the possibility it offers in terms of revealing, via the analysis of the work of several women architects, some of the principal changes that the incorporation of women into the field of architecture has brought about in recent years, not only in the methodology and the process of design itself, but also in relation to the subject matter of the project, opening up new possibilities that contemplate alternative ways of exercising the profession that are more in keeping with the needs of female architects and non-normative subjects, the latter being understood as masculine, white, western and heterosexual.

2. CITY, ARCHITECTURE AND CARE

The configuration of many of our cities today, which is based on the legacy inherited from the principles of the modern movement and on a social and spatial conception inherited from the division of labour within a patriarchal system, is based on the paradigm of a symbolic and hierarchical dichotomy between the public and the private, the masculine and the feminine, the productive and the reproductive (Murillo, 1996; Muxí, 2009; Ruiz de Gopegi, 2021; Sánchez de Madariaga, 2004; Valdivia, 2018). The public sphere, which is overseen principally by men, has been associated with the productive

sphere, i.e. the place where economic, political, cultural and other activities take place, while the domestic, or private, space has been linked to the reproductive sphere, for which women have been primarily responsible (Murillo, 1996).

This dichotomous conception, inherited from the Industrial Revolution and the sexual division of labour, is the one that currently prevails in most of the cities we inhabit, and from which many of the decisions regarding the planning and design of urban centres, the distribution of uses in public space, the investments in infrastructure and transport, the conception of domestic spaces, etc. are derived, prioritising the productive sphere over the reproductive (Ruiz de Gopegi, 2021; Sánchez de Madariaga, 2004).

This separation and disconnection of the public and the private, the productive and the reproductive, constitutes one of the basic problems of today's cities (Arias & Muxí, 2018) insofar as it produces a segregation of spaces according to gender, resulting in the design of spaces designed and conceived by and in response to the experiences and needs of the male gender. This contributes to the exaltation of the functioning of the productive system rather than facilitating reproductive tasks and the organisation of everyday life (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2004; Valdivia, 2018), which have been made invisible (Federici, 2018).

The allocation of reproductive activities to the domestic, interior and private sphere, and the exclusion of the inter-spatial links that are a requirement for daily life, has meant that our cities have not been designed to cater for care. As a result, we find that many spaces in our cities are inefficient and discriminatory towards caregivers, the majority of whom are still women (Arias & Muxí, 2018), with the resulting negative impact on their daily lives and quality of life (Valdivia, 2018). This has also led not only to a social construction that devalues domestic and care work (Carrasco et al., 2011), but also to relegating these activities to the domestic realm, despite the fact that many of them take place in public spaces, such as accompanying children to school, accompanying the elderly and the sick to health centres and hospitals, shopping, going to parks, administrative centres and other services, etc.

Many of our cities have not been designed to serve as physical supports for the development of these care-related activities. They have been conceived and designed with a false neutral reference point that is far removed from

any degree of complexity and based on markedly androcentric models that contemplate a sectoral approach based on traditional roles that prioritise male employment and place men in a central position in the architectural and urban landscape, but which is incapable of contemplating the combination of roles that many women play as wives, mothers and workers.

This has led to urban environments in which everyday activities the likes of work, family life, leisure and shopping constitute separate spheres that are only linked by extensive transport systems (Jaeckel & Van Geldermalsen, 2006). This makes the performance of day-to-day activities difficult and prevents most women who carry out these activities on a daily basis from being able to reconcile them without perceiving this segregation (Darke, 1998; Valdivia, 2018). This compartmentalisation of public, domestic, private and other spaces is also too artificial, given that human existence unfolds in a far more fluid fashion. Women's lives are interrelated in a continuum of far more complex experiences, a fact that corroborates the permeability of these spaces and questions their treatment as delimited spaces that exist independently (Carrasco, 2007; Valdivia, 2018).

Depending on the type of tasks, responsibilities and roles they perform on a daily basis, women and men make different uses of space and the city (Greed, 1997). These, moreover, vary over time according to the interests and needs that appear at different stages of their lives and in accordance with diverse family and community contexts. Urban planning, however, has always been modelled on man as the *average human being* on whom to focus with a view to satisfying his needs, a fact that has resulted in women being systematically excluded and made invisible in these areas.

This androcentric perspective, which places man in a central position in society and culture and, therefore, in our way of thinking, is reflected and transmitted not only in the urban landscape, but also in architecture and building design, both in the interior configuration of these and in the spaces that separate them (McDowell, 1999).

Regarding such gender-biased hierarchies, there are a number of authors who, from a feminist perspective, have denounced the androcentric character present in the cities and spaces we inhabit, a fact that both makes invisible and ignores the requirements associated with reproductive tasks by excluding women's daily lives from the design of these spaces while raising

awareness regarding the problems involved in not taking into account this plurality of needs (Campos, 1996; Levy, 2003; Moser & Levy, 1986; Valdivia, 2018; Walker et al., 2013).

3. FEMINIST APPROACHES TO URBAN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

Research into feminist-oriented urban studies began to develop in the 1970s and placed the question of gender as one of the basic foundations not only of urban studies, but also in terms of the development of alternative planning proposals (McDowell, 1983). The work of activist and thinkers like Jane Jacobs, Dolores Hayden, Silvia Federici and Nancy Fraser, among others, laid the foundations for many feminist theories focussing on the importance of achieving gender equality and inclusivity in a wide range of settings. These theories were subsequently translated into the field of architectural practice in the search for new forms of urban planning and design that were far removed from existing androcentric canons. Despite the time that has elapsed since the beginning of these currents of thought, however, numerous situations of exclusion regarding activities linked to the reproductive sphere in territorial planning and the design of public space still remain.

This limited inclusion of a gender perspective in planning is partly justified by the fact that many urban planning actions are gender-neutral (Larsson, 2006). This focus on the interest of the public has meant that many of the needs related to the performance of daily life activities such as childcare, care for the elderly and the sick, etc., which are mostly carried out by women, have been forgotten. In this sense, as Izaskun Chinchilla states, it is possible to see how «the male tradition has meant we have forgotten how to create welcoming places and understand gender problems and those of children and the elderly in our cities» (Chinchilla, interviewed in Ávalos & Sánchez, 2014, para. 4).

Faced with this traditional way of conceiving and designing cities, it is necessary to establish a paradigm shift in both urban and architectural planning that is both derived from and in line with feminisms and that implies a diversified use of the city and of space (Arias & Muxí, 2018). Only from a feminist perspective is it possible to explore and transform this model of

the city to construct more multifaceted narratives that can address new and distinct realities that have not, as a rule, been paid attention to, but which are essential in terms of building a world of equal opportunities. That is to say, a complex city that includes facilities for the care of children, the elderly and the sick, etc. and the performance of all activities related to hygiene, food, emotional care, etc., efficient public transport, local routes that link the numerous activities that are fundamental in terms of sustaining life, and safe public spaces that make it possible to choose how one uses the city, etc.

The feminist perspective emphasises the importance of the performance of reproductive and care-related tasks by highlighting the quantitative and qualitative impact they have on the maintenance of any society and the essential role they play by making visible the fact that it is principally women who carry out these associated tasks. In fact, care has long been a key issue in feminist studies from a variety of perspectives in the field of urban planning and architectural practice.

A number of approaches to the field of architecture and urban planning that have dealt with the introduction of the gender perspective into urban planning have existed in Spain since the 1980s. This makes it possible for us to outline some relevant deliberation and dissemination actions, such as the celebration in Barcelona in 1980 of the *1st Conference of Independent Feminists*, which offered the possibility of not only lending visibility to the feminist movements of the time, but also of defending the incorporation of everyday life into urban planning practice. At the conference the Catalan architect Anna Bofill, one of the principal references in feminist urban planning, gave a lecture entitled «Woman and Architecture» in which she demonstrated the relationship between the configuration of our cities and the patriarchal structure (Bofill, 2013; Giocoletto et al., 2019). These lectures constituted the starting point for other conferences that were held throughout Spain in subsequent years, and which sought to initiate the study of the use of space in everyday life.

In the mid-1990s, Anna Bofill and Isabel Segura, together with Rosa Dumenjó, carried out the European-funded project «Women and the City», the objective of which was to offer a response to the needs of women in urban planning. The result was the publication of the guide *Women and the City*, in 1998, and the homonymous *White Paper* in 1999, which compiled

a series of recommendations for the drafting of policies for the transformation of Catalan cities based on the incorporation of the gender perspective in urban issues.

This project marked a milestone in the history of feminist urban planning in Catalonia and the rest of the country and influenced the development of many of the policies and laws that began to be drafted in the early 2000s (Muxí, 2019). In particular, the *Catalan Law 2/2004, on the improvement of neighbourhoods, urban areas and villages requiring special attention*—informally known as the ‘Neighbourhood Law’—was the first urban rehabilitation regulation in Spain that introduced gender as a parameter in urban planning (Muxí & Ciocchetto, 2011; Muxí, 2019). Among the points, or areas of action, proposed by this law was «Gender equity in the use of urban space and facilities». This neighbourhood law was also a precursor to the implementation of gender perspective in urban planning in many local governments.

Likewise, in the field of urban planning, it is worth highlighting other initiatives that were pioneering in terms of incorporating the gender perspective and placed people’s daily lives at the centre of attention. This is the case of the *Everyday Agoras* project in Girona, promoted by the geographer Isabel Salamaña when she was councillor for Territorial Planning and Mobility in this municipality and which had the support, among others, of the architect M. Mercè Corominas in advising on and designing the various urban planning projects. This project is the result of a long process that arose from neighbourhood demands for the improvement of children’s play areas in 1994. Consequently, a study-diagnosis of the 52 play areas existing in the city at that time was carried out and, on the basis of this, a progressive renovation of these areas was completed in 2000.

This renovation of the old play areas, however, led to an increase in general demand for play areas, with the result that, in 2002, a proposal was introduced to use the children’s play areas as the basis for creating small urban centres that would facilitate encounters, promote spaces for relationships and diversity in the city and allow everyday spaces to be reclaimed. Therefore, taking as a basis the fact that streets, pavements, squares, corners, parks and gardens, etc. are places that we use to move around and interact, this project sought to improve the interdependence of these by creating itineraries that would enhance encounters, experiences, etc. and strengthen

public space as a place of proximity in everyday life. The project aimed to establish children's play areas close to nurseries, kindergartens and primary schools, at an average distance of 200 m, and to create itineraries that would facilitate access to services, facilities and shops and enable people to meet and interact in everyday life, in line with the principle of the plural city (Muxí, 2019; Salamaña, 2012; Valdivia & Ciocchetto, 2012).

Regarding this introduction of the gender perspective into urban planning, the work carried out by architect Inés Sánchez de Madariaga since the end of the 1990s is worth highlighting. Her book *Urbanism with a Gender Perspective*, published by the Andalusian Institute for Women in 2004, is both a pioneering book and a reference point in the development of subsequent studies, investigations, regulatory frameworks, etc. that seek to address the presence of the gender perspective in urban and territorial planning in this country. The book develops an initial compilation of themes, core concepts, experiences, etc. from a variety of fields of knowledge at an international level with the aim of developing support material for professionals and technical teams in an effort to enable them to integrate the gender perspective into urban planning (Giocchetto et al., 2019; Gutiérrez et al., 2021). It is also worth highlighting its contribution to the integration of the gender perspective in policies such as the *Land Act 8/2007*, which incorporates the notion of equality in territorial development.

Likewise, in the field of gender urbanism, it is possible to highlight approaches which, apart from the development of proposals based on the questioning and repudiation of many of the founding precepts of modern urbanism, urge that women be heard and given a voice through their collaboration in the different stages of the urban planning project by means of participatory processes of recognition and improvement of their own everyday environment. Architects and feminist activists such as Zaida Muxí and the Col·lectiu Punt 6 collective, which consists of women architects, town planners and sociologists from different backgrounds, are among others who feature in this line of work. For them, «the processes of participation are an essential step forward in the democratisation of society» (Muxí et al., 2011, p. 123) insofar as they make visible the needs of the tasks assigned to the female gender in the city, hitherto ignored, with the aim of incorporating

everyday life and the needs of reproduction into urban design and planning (Giocoletto et al., 2019; Muxí & Ciocoletto, 2011).

The development of the practices examined, which were until then peripheral, began introducing the gender perspective as a category within the urban project, giving priority to everyday activities, especially those relating to domestic and care-giving work, and placing the focus of reflection on people, establishing inclusive work objectives that cater for the diversity of opinions and are directed towards non-normative subjects. These practices have made it possible to initiate a line of work within the urban project that, from an integral perspective on the processes and dynamics of the city, questions modern urban universalist approaches to urban planning and tries to contemplate the needs of the daily life of the majority of women in relation to urban planning on its various scales. Some of these practices also define a work ethic that transcends the established canons and advances in the development of new, more understanding and supportive ways of working that contemplate the participation of other groups, principally the more vulnerable social groups, such as women, via the development of participatory collaboration and discussion processes designed to both address and highlight the physical and vital experience of these groups as a creative weapon in the improvement of our cities (Pérez-Moreno, 2021).

The interest in the work developed by these architects in relation to feminist urban planning has grown exponentially in recent years, which has undoubtedly improved and changed the priorities of many of the urban projects that attempt to incorporate everyday life and the needs of reproduction on an equal footing with those derived from production.

If we focus on the architectural field, it is possible to highlight the professional practice of several women architects who, from a critical position, question the way in which different spaces have been designed from a perspective that is alien to women's needs, such as the case of housing.

Throughout history the home has been associated with women, while urban spaces have belonged to men (Amann, 2005), so while urban spaces have been designed to respond to the needs of the productive sphere, their design has not considered the satisfaction of those needs associated with the reproductive sphere and care, since these activities have traditionally been carried out exclusively by women in domestic environments. The truth is

that while women have nowadays by and large conquered the public space and exchanged unpaid domestic work for paid work outside the home, even today a traditional family model and type of femininity to which these tasks per se correspond is still revered (Reus et al., 2022). Likewise, in the design and use of domestic space it is possible to observe how tradition, culture, society, etc. have impregnated the design of these spaces with imposed roles that do not respond to the habitability needs required by contemporary conditions. This has meant that:

A large part of the property constructed in recent decades in Spain has been designed from a traditionalist viewpoint regarding how daily life is approached and inhabited, with the result that care-related tasks have been habitually relegated to residual spaces, i.e. to those places with poor spatial quality, poor orientation, poor lighting and/or far from the central points of the house, a fact that has clearly contributed to their invisibilisation. (Reus et al., 2022, p. 172)

We can, however, highlight a number of projects led by women architects who have taken an interest in care, in particular in the domestic arrangement of care. This is the case of Anna Renau and Sara Bartumeus's social housing project for the elderly and young people in Poble Nou (Barcelona, 2004-2008). The complex, which consists of 168 dwellings, 80 for the elderly and 88 for young people, is developed in five volumes that are linked in such a way as to form, on the one hand, an extensive façade that is aligned in one section with the old boundary of the site and, on the other, a series of courtyards and interstices in the interior of the block where activity is concentrated and which relate to the surrounding open spaces. These interior courtyards have been carefully designed between the public realm and the private interiors and rupture the public-private division to define two different landscapes: one being an urban courtyard that is accessible from the street and the adjacent public spaces, the other defining a more landscaped space that offers greater privacy and is intended for the elderly, where they can carry out semi-domestic activities such as tending an urban vegetable garden. These outdoor community spaces complement the indoor spaces located on the ground floor, these consisting of a day centre, a library, study

rooms, etc. for the use of residents and the entire neighbouring community and encourage interaction between people and foster intergenerational relationships.

The vertical communication cores are located at the junctions between buildings and allow access to the interior courtyards of the block. These constitute collective spaces where residents are invited to interact with each other, thereby fostering a sense of community. The horizontal circulations that link the various volumes and give access to the properties are diverse and give rise to hybrid spaces located between the interior and exterior, straddling the line between the private and the collective. These are organised in such a way that the exterior routes are used for homes for young people and the interior galleries facing the courtyards for the elderly.

Another project conceived along the same lines is the Mare de Deu del Port residential building in Barcelona (2005-2006), by architect Blanca Lleó. The project includes 97 rental properties for young people and is developed in a single longitudinal volume of 102 m and five floors above ground level that forms the façade of Carrer Mare de Deu del Port. On the ground floor, the programme is completed with a nursery and an occupational centre. Along its length the volume is sponge-like in form and includes terraces, covered courtyards and community premises that define a diagonal sequence of voids that form intermediate spaces designed for collective use, transition areas between public and private spaces that encourage meeting and interaction between residents and integration with the surroundings. The housing units have a surface area of 40 m² and include a bathroom and kitchen that are arranged towards the interior, leaving the rest of the space free so that it can be organised according to the interests of each user. Adjoining the properties on the second and third floors are two collective multi-purpose rooms with laundry facilities, contributing to the collectivisation of domestic tasks and encouraging communication and exchange among the residents.

Likewise, it is worth highlighting architect Débora Domingo's elderly housing and social centre in L'Alcora, Castellón (2008). The project houses 40 two-person affordable dwellings and a series of common services shared by the residents, including a day centre and garage. The building is located on an irregularly shaped corner plot with a significant slope and consists of three blocks of five levels with varying depths and takes advantage of the

unevenness of the terrain to include an underground car park. Above this, a plaza with pedestrian access not only allows the residents to enjoy the views, but also defines a transition space between the public and the private that encourages meeting and interaction between the residents. The day centre is located on the ground and first floors while the properties are raised above street level to guarantee privacy.

These three examples evidence the concern of these women architects with issues of care. In their development, they faced the challenge of making architecture an active participant in care. The projects examined reveal a marked interest in ensuring that the buildings would constitute models that were capable of meeting the needs of people in all their diversity. They also foster the development of community relations via the creation of collective spaces (common squares, terraces, patios, etc.) that encourage contact and interaction between people and foster intergenerational relations.

The relevance of the architectures examined lies in how they take into consideration everyday life in the design of space and attempt to offer a response to all its constituent spheres: the productive, the reproductive, the communal and the personal. The projects also present a number of innovations, both in the interior design of the property and in the interior and exterior common spaces. From a feminist perspective and methodology, these architectures seek to blur the boundaries between the private sphere of the home and the collective space, moving domestic and care tasks to common, intermediate spaces in an effort to consider these as a social responsibility. In this manner, these architectures contemplate the creation of community support and care networks around the property, networks that involve different people sharing collective spaces, thereby contributing to the collectivisation of domestic, care and community tasks. Likewise, the issue of bringing together different uses and different ways of living in different time slots guarantees social sustainability and community coexistence.

The objective of the practices examined was to create spaces that actually meet the needs of their users, and their aim was to achieve inclusivity and gender equity through new ways of defining architectural space that do not conform to prevailing discourses and modernist ideals and offer alternatives to those derived from androcentric canons.

Looking beyond the professional practices examined so far, since the beginning of the 21st century we have been able to observe the emergence of other lines of work that, led by women architects, approach the professional practice of architecture and urban planning in a different light. These feminist approaches and design strategies that differ from those used prior to the end of the 20th century while developing new creative formats that lead them to consider new ways of practising the profession in Spain (Álvarez, 2022). Many of these alternative lines of work share design criteria, work methodologies and structural organisation with certain feminist theories, a fact that leads them to define their own way of working outside the established canons. On examination of some of these practices it is possible to observe how, from a feminist perspective, they attempt to establish new ways of defining space that depart from the androcentric canons that cater only to normative or prototypical subjects to position themselves creatively when it comes to redefining care and its naturalised association with women. Likewise, rather than, from the perspective of modernism, focusing on the production of space as a central theme, they shift the focus of attention towards the definition of spatialities that respond to human needs and their corporeality, mainly those of the female body. These practices seek to explore the limits of the architectural discipline itself in an effort to establish alliances with other professionals from the fields of art and design in order to draw on new *modi operandi* and means of expression that differ from those traditionally used in architecture in an effort to generate new spatial experiences.

In light of this, it is worth highlighting the work that the architect María Mallo has been developing along these lines since she graduated in 2006. Her work is situated at the intersection between non-hegemonic architecture, design and art, and blurs the limits of these disciplines. Her proposals, mostly spatial installations, emerge from a hybrid, experimental *modus operandi* that merges the handmade and the digital, the intuitive and the scientific. They seek to blur the boundaries between space and the body by working with fluid and soft spaces, deformable and soft materials that deviate from modernist abstraction in an effort to approach that which has historically been associated with the feminine, such as ornamentation, colour,

textures, etc., and define an architecture for care that is flexible, curvilinear, feminine and kinder to both the body and the emotions.

In a manner consistent with this line of work, and exploring the traditional limits of architecture, the interior and the exterior, real and virtual space, the individual and the collective, with the aim of establishing new relationships that allow space to be considered and defined in a manner that breaks with convention, it is worth highlighting the work developed by architect Nerea Calvillo from the agency *C+Arquitectas*, founded in 2004 and based in Madrid and London. Her research addresses feminist technoscience studies and explores the material, technological, political and social dimensions of environmental pollution. Similarly, architect María José Marcos, from the *Magiarch* agency, founded in 2008, develops her work with an emphasis on the value of atmospheric design, transforming the relationship between the body and the environment and visualising new ways of understanding the scenarios of the city and the domestic.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The selection of professional practices led by Spanish women architects that have been developed in the field of urban planning, architecture, and other peripheral fields such as the arts or social action and presented here insist on the need to prioritise the world of reproduction and care, generally linked to the female gender, over the productive world, traditionally linked to the male gender. The work of these architects is aimed at non-normative subjects and seeks to address plurality with the aim of designing more equitable, inclusive cities and spaces for a more equitable society in which the obligations that continue to be assumed by the majority of women today are shared (Muxí et al., 2011).

The examination of specific aspects of the practices reviewed in this article reveals a transformation in the way the profession is practised in Spain from the way it had been understood up until now. In recent years, the work of these architects has been the driving force behind the initiation of change not only in methodology and in the design process itself, but also in relation to the subject of the project, which has opened up new possibilities. As a result, we are currently witnessing a growth in ways of working that

no longer refer to the predominant canon but contemplate other ways of exercising the profession that are more in keeping with the needs of women architects and non-normative subjects.

In the field of urban planning, the practices examined have fostered the introduction of gender perspective in urban design and advocated the creation of an urban space in which the care of citizens constitutes the principal design criterion. They have also brought about legislative changes in the field of urban planning and design through their influence on policies and laws that began to be developed in the early 2000s and that included the introduction of gender as an urban planning parameter. Similarly, they have introduced new working methods that offer alternatives to the ways in which the profession has traditionally been practised, i.e. based on the hegemony of the figure of the architect as a creative genius who can impose his or her ideas on a client and who carries out his or her work in solitary as a self-employed freelance professional. In this sense, we find that some of the practices examined advocate a different way of understanding the profession that opens up new possibilities. This is based on an inclusive ethic based on the use of participatory methodologies and collaborative processes that even go so far as to include the subjects to whom their projects are aimed in the decision-making process. These approaches have allowed women to be heard and given a voice in urban project decision-making by incorporating women's everyday lives and reproductive needs into urban design and planning.

In the field of construction, the projects examined, which are the result of the recent work of several Spanish women architects, constitute a conscious critique of spaces designed from a male perspective that omit issues considered feminine. In their projects, these architects vindicate tasks relating to care and reproduction, and defend the importance and incorporation of these into architectural practice. By doing this, these projects approach the domestic sphere from a feminist position that seeks to establish a re-signification of care and the association of this with women and the private sphere, positioning these as the focus for consideration.

Likewise, the practices reviewed in this article, which, from positions peripheral to architecture such as the arts, have been based on women's experience and used the question of femininity as a creative tool and have led to the creation of new areas of action for architectural practice that offer

design options that are free from existing social conventions and that help establish an alternative approach to the profession that differs from the norm.

In the development of these architectural practices, the feminine becomes a driving force for reflection. These works take a critical stance on the way in which many spaces have been designed from a male perspective that is alien to the needs and life experiences particular to women. Offering a response to these questions considered feminine both from the perspective of and in line with feminisms constitutes a creative, powerful weapon for architecture that is capable of opening up new debates and frameworks for reflection that depart from those traditionally used in architecture and bring everyday life and care to the foreground.

The projects examined show how the inclusion of feminist thinking in architectural practice gives rise to diverse fields of action for both male and female architects. By taking into consideration plurality, offering a response to diversity, and including these within the project process raises the question of finding new ways and methodologies of working that promote a change in the contemporary design process. This points to a transformation of the assumptions currently established in professional practice, academic work and the collective imaginary. In most of the professional practices addressed, it is possible to observe how they contemplate actions, attitudes and ways of working that envisage the beginning of a change in the way of exercising the profession that departs from the predominant canon to define new ways of designing that are more in line with the needs of women and non-normative subjects. In order for this change to take place, however, there needs to be a major structural transformation of professional practice that contemplates greater inclusivity for women architects (Álvarez, 2017).

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