

Gendered Bodies. Feminist Approaches to Spatial Design

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Looking at the Old Bauhaus of Gropius, the topic of gender equality was already present; there would be no distinction, showing a progressive vision. It was, however, equality only on paper, with little validation in practice. The New European Bauhaus reframes past ambitions, encompassing the new SDGs and assuming a crucial role in guiding spatial transformations bridging the intersection between spatial and social/gender justice. The contribution proposes to recast the discipline of architecture by its encounter with feminist methodologies, investigating through a research-by-design approach the spatialization of gender equality. Accordingly, it assumes a gendered perspective – where architecture is called upon to (re)construct women’s condition, movement and visibility in space. By recognizing the relevance of a design experimentation that modifies the ‘hardware and the software’ namely the deep formal urban structure and the ethical-cultural dimension, it embraces the concepts of “care” (Tronto) “complexity and multiplicity” (Deleuze and Guattari) and the “right to the city” (Lefebvre).

It questions the traditional narrative of the male standard, understanding whose perspectives are valued, how they are represented in the built environment and which are the uses. This approach re-weaves the relationship between gender, body, and architecture, spatializing them in the materiality of space, and unveiling the networks of power and how people carve out space, which is negotiated and appropriated. Body as perception, movement, appropriation, and measure; where in its multiple interactions with space, it becomes an active medium between design and space, holding the generative power to inform spatial transformations. However, through their continuous interaction, bodies and behaviours are also modified. The paper presents a series of case studies, discussing themes, tools and methods of a feminist approach in architectural design, fostering gender equality in space.

