

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Journal of Islamic Architecture (IJIA) Special Issue

“Gender and Architecture in the Islamic World: Restrictions, Reactions, and Actions”

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Gender and Architecture in the Islamic World: Restrictions, Reactions, and Actions

Real and imagined spaces are inherently gendered based on widely accepted heteronormative and patriarchal ways of living, thereby affecting how buildings and cities are accessed, used, and experienced. Moreover, spatial practices associated with such heteronormative and gender binary systems impact design ideas that shape the built environment. The imposition of traditional gender roles in architecture from patriarchal and heteronormative views affect urban policy making, architectural education, and decision making in the building and transformation of cities. Even the word ‘architect’ was and still is often gendered both in historical and contemporary perceptions of the society due to the male-dominated professional field despite the involvement and contributions of women in the transformation of the built environment for centuries. Hence, space and gender are intrinsically linked and mutually construct one another. Against these complex yet urgent ongoing questions, this special issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* aims to interrogate the relation between gender and architecture focusing on feminist, queer, non-binary, and trans perspectives with an interdisciplinary approach from the past and present. However, in order to have a nuanced understanding of diverse dynamics shaping spaces and spatial practices, contributions will need to have an intersectional approach encompassing race, sexuality, age, disability, class, religion, and ethnicity. Moreover, studies must derive from specific social, cultural, and political contexts and localities to prevent essentialist approaches to Islamic and diasporic communities.

This special issue raises questions around three themes: restrictions, reactions, and actions. On the one hand, while looking at gender history to see the restrictions imposed on various marginalised groups through socio-political structures and institutions, it is crucial to avoid

victimising them by also underscoring their reactions, resistance, and attempts to reclaim their rights. On the other hand, it is equally important to show how marginalised and racialized groups took these rejections of heteronormative and patriarchal power dynamics as a starting point to build alternative communities based on their spatial experiences and embodied creative design ideas and practices. The purpose of this threefold approach is to have a well-rounded and nuanced grasp of the role of gender in architecture beyond passive and top-down narratives.

Regardless of traditional gender binary roles that associated women with domestic space and duties, women have contributed to the shaping and building of cities, communities, and spaces for centuries. But when one considers the restrictions imposed on not only women, but also nonbinary people, and their use, design, and experience of architecture in the past, the lack of historical records comes to the forefront as a serious obstacle. Given the scarcity of the primary sources, scholars look at different places for bits of information or read sources through new lenses to construct a narrative about women and marginalised non-binary people, who were not mentioned or centred in state records because they did not belong to courtly circles or other dominant groups. Hence, contributors will need to introduce an interdisciplinary approach and willingness to engage with diverse socio-political and cultural discourses and realities to reveal their hidden histories. For example, in the last decades, court records have emerged as an important source for understanding women's lives and engagements with the city. These records show that diverse material, visual, and textual sources have the potential to contribute to writing new architectural histories disclosing the lives and spatial practices of women and non-binary groups from ordinary backgrounds. The lack of histories on women and non-binary people cannot be considered distinct from the restrictions imposed on them during spatial practices. What were the restricted spaces for them in the past? This historical perception of gender binary roles is also important in understanding contemporary architectural practices that privilege heteropatriarchal ways of shaping spaces and cities today, which affects the spatial experiences of queer, non-binary, and trans groups. Architecture can be a tool of suppression and segregation, sometimes in spite of the initial intentions behind it. Governing groups have used cities and buildings to subjugate women, queer, and trans communities, both in the past and today. These restricted spaces can expose various issues related to the intersection of gender and access. Spaces built according to a standard, able-bodied male model ignore other bodies outside of this norm.

Contributors can examine real or imagined alternative spaces that challenge this normative patriarchal model. Considering the movement and impact of diverse bodies in space, it is equally important to look at the creation of alternative spaces of resistance and action during migration. Wars, authoritative states, or disasters, such as earthquakes and epidemics, cause displacements and relocations for people. Gender plays a critical role in generating spatial injustices and inequalities, particularly for women, queer, and trans communities, who are often made vulnerable to health and hygiene issues caused by gender normative or male-centred spatial organisations insensitive to their needs. Moreover, when people immigrate and settle in new places forming diasporic communities, they might reproduce traditional patriarchal structures such as the practice of sex segregation in religious or educational spaces. In diaspora, people of colour encounter diverse obstacles during urban experiences and through spatial segregations at the intersection of gender, race, and architecture. The contributors are invited to explore private, public, or in-between spaces where women, queer, non-binary, and trans people reclaim their autonomy, pushing the limits by creating new zones of resistance, action, and interaction.

Every restriction causes a reaction. Whereas traditional gender roles affected the various restrictions imposed on people in cities, for centuries women found creative ways to claim their right to experiencing the city even under strict control and patriarchal hierarchies. Modern city planning intersected with women's movements and new rights. Modern architects introduced houses and buildings for a new way of living that reimagined gender roles and normative spatial measures. It is however important to question how progressive these modern transformations and designs were in terms of considering women's changing role as well as promoting gender inclusivity and diversity. Architectural representations, drawings, and models can provide insight into understanding these conceptions. Looking closely at the designers who suggested changes to the private spaces particularly can disclose underlying and ongoing heteronormative and patriarchal structures despite the claim of progress as well as gender equality and inclusivity. At this juncture, it is crucial to hear, for example, how women reacted to traditional as well as modern spatial arrangements that acted as norm makers or gatekeepers. But women's reactions were not limited to discourses. When and how did women gain full access not only to using but also working in and shaping public buildings such as hospitals, schools, libraries, and universities that empowered them? For example, contributors are encouraged to investigate women leaders in medicine, who developed spatial facilities and hospitals that supported women, queer, and trans people's mental and physical wellbeing. Women who shaped architectural education and changed heteronormative studio practices will be another important topic to examine. Women in labour history as well as women working in architectural offices in diverse capacities emerge as another area to investigate further to understand the formation of the built environment outside the work of the male architect figure. There has been an ongoing effort to alter structural barriers in architecture to propose innovative design solutions overturning suppressed bodies and ideas and to create safe spaces for women, queer, non-binary, and trans people's empowerment as well as gender inclusive spaces.

Contributors might examine gender-neutral and gender inclusive spaces today, and in the past, tracing the alterations in social perceptions within time along with changing political discourses that target marginalised communities. Architecture can be used by power structures to hinder gender fluidity in spaces. But feminist, queer, and trans groups reclaim architecture to create gender fluid and safe spaces as agents of change for themselves and their communities. Contributors are invited to write on the erased, forgotten, or simply ignored contributions of women, queer, non-binary, and trans people to the spatial, social, and technological development of communities, neighbourhoods, and cities, from small scale workshops to alternative educational settings. Just as the male able-bodied model and its measures became the norm for forming spaces, their experiences also became the standard to imagine new spaces and who occupied these spaces. Papers interrogating this understanding to reimagine and reclaim women, queer, non-binary, and trans people's emotional and multisensory history and lived experiences in architecture, which go beyond positivist and orientalizing discourses focused on the duality between body and the mind or the senses and the intellect are most welcome.

Equally important to underscore is writing about women, queer, non-binary, and trans people's spatial experiences from their perspective by giving space to suppressed voices. This includes a new assessment of the seeming contradiction between the notions of traditional and modern, both of which were often defined according to the heteropatriarchal gaze imposing how, for example, women should look and act. What do attempts to create safe spaces through gender inclusive washrooms, athletic facilities, women only gym classes, women in mosques movements, and

shelters offer in terms of protecting one's privacy and freedom while supporting spatial justice? What kind of a relationship do they establish with the public sphere that can be exposed to gender-based violence? The dichotomy caused by looking at private and public as two strictly separate zones defined by gender binary roles has already been challenged by scholars. They, for example, showed how working at home didn't prevent women from participating in social, cultural, and economic activities, hence the link between public and private spaces is fluid. For centuries, knowledge has been produced in diverse spaces. It is thus important to delve into this relationship by looking at contemporary interpretations of private space and the notion of privacy by also incorporating changing lived realities and perceptions of gender beyond heteronormative, gender binary, and patriarchal norms.

Some further questions one might consider within the Islamic context might include:

- What are the legal policies that impact women, queer, non-binary, and trans people's spatial actions and urban experiences today and/or in the past?
- Where can we locate architectural movements and alternative participatory practices that initiated real change for women, queer, non-binary, and trans people in specific neighbourhoods or cities?
- What is the impact of women, queer, non-binary, and trans people's liberation movements in opening and forming new safe spaces?
- What are the real and virtual sites of resistance for women, queer, non-binary, and trans communities, ranging from gathering at small community meetings to occupying the squares?
- How can we rewrite the history of women's participation in architectural education from an intersectional perspective?
- What can intersections of critical race theory and gender studies offer to reconsider travel literature and representations produced to convey urban narratives?

Editors welcome articles dealing with similar issues related to gender and architecture from an intersectional and interdisciplinary perspective, encompassing a wide variety of areas including, but not limited to, legal history, law, critical race theory, labour history, environmental history, history of emotions, and history of science.

Articles offering historical and theoretical analysis (Design in Theory; DiT) should be between 6000 and 8000 words. Those on design and practice (Design in Practice; DiP) should be between 3000 and 4000 words. Practitioners, urbanists, art historians, specialists in literary, religious, and gender studies, curators, archivists, librarians, archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and historians whose work resonates with the topic of this special issue are welcome to contribute discussions that address the critical themes of the journal. Collaboratively authored articles are also welcome.

Please send a title and a 400-word abstract to the guest editor, Gül Kale, Carleton University (IJIAGender@gmail.com), by June 15, 2024. Authors of proposals will be contacted by July 30, 2024, and may be requested to submit full article drafts for consideration by January 30, 2025. All submissions will undergo blind peer review, editing, and revision. For detailed author instructions, please consult: www.intellectbooks.com/ijia.