Gender inequality in an 'Equal' environment

Lithuania, as a part of the former Soviet Union, has a long-standing history of perceived equality for women in the workplace. Women played an equal role in economic production as it was a constitutional expectation that all citizens had both a right and an obligation to work. Consequently, at the time of independence in 1990 the levels of participation of women in the workplace including at managerial and professional levels were much higher than other western European countries. In architecture, women achieved parity in terms of numbers, but this equality did not transfer into all aspects of economic activity. Drawing on qualitative survey and interview data from 31 Lithuanian women architects, our findings show, despite the historical emphasis on equality, the existence of a 'critical mass' of women in the profession and the adoption of EU gender equality policy, the position of women remains poor with clear evidence of sex discrimination, harassment and lack of opportunities for career advancement.

Keywords: architects, equality, gender, inequality, Lithuania, women.

Introduction

The Soviet Union and its satellite countries were well-known for their approach to equality and all people of working age were required to be in full-time employment as part of their duty to communism. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the move towards democracy by the former members of the Soviet Bloc it is of interest to assess how this equality is enacted in practice. This article draws on the country of Lithuania, which achieved independence in 1991 (Carroll 2021), and the profession of architecture as a context to explore this further. Lithuania is of specific interest because figures show that women account for 48% of the 1400 registered architects in Lithuania which although slightly down from 50% in 2016 shows a favourable representation of women in the profession compared to Europe overall (ACE 2018). The Nordic states of Finland, Sweden and Norway have a higher proportion of women at 52%, 58% and 53% respectively, but generally across Europe the figure is much less (ACE 2018).

Upon joining the EU in 2004, Lithuania was required to implement gender equality policies and legislation to conform to the founding principles of equal treatment for all. Therefore, we have a further strand of interest in that we can examine the introduction and adoption of these policies and assess their impact on women's employment. Thus we derive three specific research questions with which we aim to investigate this: firstly, we aim to examine women architect's experiences of 'equality' in what is considered to be an egalitarian environment and secondly, we seek to investigate the impact of the introduction and adoption of EU gender equality initiatives upon the work practices, organisational cultures and workplace relationships in the profession of architecture. Finally, our third research objective assesses whether as a result of this critical mass of women, there is actually gender parity in terms of status and equal treatment within the profession in Lithuania. Our research here conducted in an environment with a long-standing tradition of equality presents and interesting and unique view of the position of women working in the architecture profession in a very different environment to previous studies.

The research forms part of a larger cross-national project conducted by the authors and is among the first to look at the position of women in a specific profession in a former Soviet country.

Beginning with an overview of women in the workplace in Lithuania, it gives a brief historical background and identifying how this has impacted on and influenced their position today the discussion then turns to gender equality before focussing on women in architecture. The research method of semi-structured interviews and surveys carried out in the qualitative paradigm is explored and the sample of 31 women interviewees is detailed. We then present the themes which have emerged from the interviews before drawing together the strands of the discussion and identifying our conclusions.

Women and work in Lithuania

Following the breakup of the former Soviet Union and declarations of independence in the early 1990s interest grew in the various labour markets because of the different social and political systems in place and curiosity as to how these former command economies would adapt to capitalism. Lithuania is of particular interest because of a long history of attempts to implement equality for women dating from the end of the 19th century (Birmontienė and Jurėnienė 2009). In the early 20th century, prior to Soviet occupation, equal pay, longer maternity leave and state support for housework were mooted although none became law. Equality in employment was a central tenet of Soviet socialism and all adult citizens were required to work (Mikulionniene and Kanopiene 2015, Jurėnienė 2008, LaFont 2001). However, the requirement to work coupled with the ideological condemnation of unemployed women (including housewives) did not lead to true equity due to the persistence of horizontal and vertical segregation.

The focus on parity in both politics and the workplace was a key principle of the communist system under the Soviet regime from 1940 to 1990. Women played an equal role in economic production as it was a constitutional expectation that all citizens had both a right and an obligation to work and 'allegiance to the state was placed above that of the family and the family was seen as an economic unit supporting state objectives' (Metcalfe and Afanassieva 2005:398). At this time, the economy was based on labour-intensive industries and it was difficult to support a family on one income, which coupled with the ideology led to a significant increase in women's activity in the workplace (Lafont 2001). Consequently, at the time of independence the levels of participation of women in the workplace including managerial and professional levels, were much higher than other western European countries (Standing 1994, cited by Metcalfe and Afanassieva 2005). Indeed, women account for over 70% of those employed in professions (Bierman et al. 2013) capitalising on their easy access to higher education during the Soviet period and becoming a 'revalued resource' (Motiejūnaitė 2010). Certainly, the stable presence of women in the labour market and in the professions runs counter to the movement of women in and out of the labour market in many Western capitalist societies where women have been regarded as a 'reserve army of labour' (Bruegal 1979; Beechey and Perkins 1987) or in response to fluctuations in the economic cycle. This normalisation of women in the labour market should make it easier for women to

play an equal role in employment however the persistence of State-sponsored patriarchy counters any advantage gained.

Women's position in the Lithuanian labour market.

Lithuanian women's employment rate has been constantly higher than the EU28 average since 2002 (EUROSTAT 2019). In 2018 it stands at 76.7% (as % of the female population aged 20 to 64) compared to the EU 28 average of 67.3%. Women and men are almost equally represented in the labour market (Stanikuniene and Kvedaraitė 2015). Furthermore, there is a high proportion of mothers in the labour market standing at 78% (Bierman et al. 2011) despite there being little in the way of childcare for under 3s due in part to generous parental leave provision. Parental leave is 100 weeks with the first year paid at 100% of the parent's wage and the second year at 85% (Macedo and Santos 2013). In addition, there is a very low incidence of female part-time working -8.7% in 2018 compared to 30.8% of EU average (EUROSTAT 2019) and is not related to the number of children (Bierman et al. 2011). Instead it tends to be involuntary and is related to poor job market opportunities.

Currently there are fewer women unemployed than men with rates of 5.4% and 6.9% respectively and while the gender pay gap stands at 15.2%, it is marginally lower than the EU average of 16% and notably lower than the UK (19.9%) and Germany (20.9%). However, when we evaluate statistics relating to caring responsibilities and housework there are stark differences between men and women – 92% of women take care of children on a daily basis compared with 66% of men; and 79% of women do daily cooking and/or housework while only 29% of men do. This presents clear evidence of the 'double shift' for women in that they are required to work full-time as their salary is necessary for the household plus they have to take care of the family and domestic activities to a much greater extent (all data from EUROSTAT 2020).

Women in architecture

The poor position of women in the construction industry in general and architecture in particular is well-documented, most notably in the UK context (Wright 2013, 2015; Fowler and Wilson 2004; De Graft-Johnson *et al* 2003; Sang *et al* 2014); other European countries (Pérez-Moreno and Santos-Pedrosa 2020, Agudo and Sánchez de Madariaga 2011, Caven et al. 2012, Navarro-Astor and Caven 2018); Australia and the US (Clark 2016, Matthewson 2017, Stratigakos 2016). Much of the extant research focuses on the powerful masculine identity which permeates the industry and the impact this has on women who attempt to enter and remain in associated trades and professions with De Graft-Johnson *et al* (2003), in particular, focussing on the reasons why women leave architecture. They highlight low/unfair pay, maternity or childcare issues, macho office and working culture, sexism and side-lining, lack of scope for creativity, long working hours and inflexible work, illegal employment practices and Professional bodies and regulation as being the key reasons as to why women leave the profession.

The professional activity of architecture in Lithuania was first recorded in the 14th century with those practising having obtained their qualifications in Italy, the Netherlands and

Germany (Lakštauskienė 2015). The first mention of architecture being taught in Lithuania comes in the 16th century where it was included as general education at Vilnius University. However, on closure of the university in 1831 for almost a century, architectural education ceased until the creation of the first dedicated School of Architecture in Kaunas in 1922 (Leišytė et al 2018). S. Mitkovskaite was the first woman to qualify defending her diploma work in 1930 (Lakštauskienė 2015).

In June 1940, the Soviets converted all government ministries into commissariats incorporating the design, planning and construction departments which existed within these former ministries. Architects in the private sector had to cease their work and were collectively forced into the State Planning Institutes (Drėmaitė 2020). During the post-World War II until the 1970s women entered the architectural profession in both Lithuania and Eastern Europe in much greater numbers and were accorded more opportunities to design large-scale public buildings than their female counterparts in Western Europe (Pepchinski and Simon 2017, Bartosova 2018, Kalm 2017). Soviet modernisation following World War II led to large numbers of young women attending university in the immediate post-War period in the Baltic nations and female architects enjoyed an important role (Kalm 2017). The urgent demand for rebuilding in the post-war era along with the socialist commitment to equality, as well as day-care facilities for children and subsidised workplace facilities all contributed to their relative success in the profession in Eastern Europe. During the Soviet occupation, architecture was considered a very prestigious profession with intense competition for the limited number of places in the Schools of Architecture, but despite the focus on equality the majority of applicants were men. Hence men dominated the profession from 1947 until 1965. However, from 1968 onwards the number of women entrants has equalled and exceeded the number of men (Lakštauskienė 2015). Despite this development of a 'critical mass' of women, glass ceilings have remained and gender-based divisions and stereotypes continued to influence careers and personal lives (McLeod 2017).

The existence and persistence of patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy was subject to extensive investigation in the second half of the 20th century with the focus being on male dominance and female subjugation particularly in the domestic environment or where referring to employment as a result of capitalism. In both cases adopting two key strategies of exclusion and segregation (cf Hartmann 1979, Walby 1986, 1989, Cockburn 1983) however it is clear that institutions such as the state and the Church also play a key role in the perpetuation of patriarchal structures. Walby (1989:227) extends this to define patriarchal culture "as a set of discourses which are institutionally-rooted rather than as ideology which is either free-floating or economically-determined", arguing that it exists in both capitalist and socialist economies. Irrespective of the origin, we will adopt Walby's (1989:214) definition where she defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women … and they exist in so-called socialist economies" despite the notion of egalitarianism and equality for women. While we have chosen to adopt this definition, we are aware of patriarchy being a contested term with a multiplicity of definitions from differing perspectives such as (but not limited to) radical, liberal, socialist, post-structuralist and post-modern. Thus, there is no one universal definition with Connell (1995) and Goldberg (1979) arguing that the subordination of women is a global phenomenon. The term 'patriarchy' however is much contested with Walby, herself, preferring to refer to gender relations in later work (Walby, 1997). Other

scholars argued that the term is 'too simplistic' by failing to take class or ethnicity into account (Beechey and Perkins, 1987) or 'too limiting' (Acker, 1989). Bridges and Messerschmidt (2019) further detail the impact of Acker's work (1989, 1990) in moving the debate towards a broader discussion of the embedded nature of gender within organisations.

Extending Walby's definition, Watson (1993:472) argues that "State socialism served to preserve and promote patriarchy and traditionalism …. not so much as a result of specific state policies (although many policies did incorporate patriarchal assumptions)." However, despite the emphasis on equality under a Socialist regime, Miroiu (2007) argues that any autonomy gains for women are undermined by 'oppressive patriarchal, androcratic, and andromorphic cultural, moral, and political constraints' which prevent women from taking control over their own welfare as a legacy from the Soviet notion of the 'ideal woman' being the composite of worker, wife and mother (Žilinskienė 2018); thus feminism cannot achieve its goals.

While Walby further breaks down her definition of patriarchy to identify six structures which constitute a patriarchal system - these being a patriarchal mode of production where men appropriate their wives labour; patriarchal relations within production; the patriarchal state; male violence; sexuality; and culture (Walby 1989:22); Witz extends the argument to include professional employment. The professional governing bodies impose systems of patriarchal control in addition to those listed previously with restrictions on entry to the professions as women were prevented from obtaining the necessary qualifications (Witz 1992); or if they did achieve the qualifications being excluded from practising (Lehmann 1992). The assimilation of women into professions is regarded as a threat by men because there has traditionally been an emphasis on homogeneity within professions created by standardised skills and knowledge and, by implication, gender. Thus, with the movement of more women into the architecture profession we can see the move from exclusion to segregation (Walby and Bagguley 1990).

Europeanisation and gender mainstreaming

In the early 20th century, prior to Sovietisation, there were significant moves to attempt to improve the position for women in Lithuania via legislation promoting equal pay, longer maternity leave and to recognise housework as equal to paid work thus attracting a wage, but these did not become law (Jurėnienė 2008). The Soviet era brought 'equality' gains in that all people had to work and, as mentioned above, it was not possible to support a family on a single wage. Hence, in Lithuania during the Soviet years both parents carried a heavy workload outside the home (Mikulionniene and Kanopiene 2015). However, while this 'equality' existed, the system of patriarchy operating under the Soviet regime prevented any tangible improvements in the position of women as women's movements were strongly discouraged or banned (Bingham 2017, Žilinskienė 2018).

Accession to the European Union where equality of opportunity is a fundamental principle means that each country must enact EU gender equality policy. However, it is down to each

Member State as to how this is implemented. Lithuania has incorporated equality into its constitution adopting a gender mainstreaming approach whereby a gender perspective is incorporated within the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes (EIGE 2020b) but has also implemented 'hard' laws (Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, Lithuania (2018)). Pollert (2005) points out though that while Lithuania has implemented EU gender-equality policies, most training programmes target the unemployed rather than women. She found no evidence of any positive action being put into place to encourage women to achieve equality of opportunity via training or recruitment arguing:

> "Neither men nor women appear concerned with sex equality… Trade unions are weak and few are concerned with women's issues. In this context, it is not surprising that equality legislation is flagrantly violated. Employers are either unaware of the law or disregard it, while workers are also often unaware, or frightened of victimization and are more concerned to keep their jobs rather than to protect their rights' (Pollert 2005:228)."

Currently, there is still a clear relationship between both Soviet Union and the European Union in terms of gender equality policy although Kublickienė and Žilinskienė (2018) argue that gender equality policy has been reconstructed following independence and in line with the United Nations and EU requirements with a gender mainstreaming approach being adopted. The Europeanisation process adopts the Open Method of Coordination where examples of 'best practice', 'road maps', recipes and guidelines are adopted to help create policy with a view towards actively working towards developing a coordinated strategy. Since applying for EU membership in 1995 and implementing laws on Equal Opportunities (1998) and Equal Treatment (2003), Lithuania has retained its position as leader of gender equality in the Baltic states bolstered by a 'bottom up' political mobility aimed at integrating equal opportunity processes but without challenging policy models. However, Kublickienė and Žilinskienė (2018) point out this has been weakened by a lack of understanding of gender relations and a shortage of experts to provide training in gender issues. In addition, Chiva (2018) suggests that negative legacies of 'forced participation' and issues of patriarchy remain serving to deter women from taking action to improve their position. While Aidukaite (2014) points out that under a neo-liberal approach, economic policy takes priority over social goals and goes on to say that there is no clear evidence of a positive impact of Europeanisation on social policy and which Miroiu (2007) argues is essentially 'room service feminism' which she defines as the introduction of gender legislation before the recognition of such a need and serves only to cover the weaknesses of post-communist societies. Miroiu (2007) explains that women in the former Eastern Bloc countries missed out on second wave feminism, where women defined their own position within the State and where feminist projects, such as equal pay, reproductive control, access to traditionally male occupations etc, became accepted into state level policy. Thus, they are not equipped with the knowledge or skills to fully benefit from the opportunities afforded by gender mainstreaming.

Furthermore, Beveridge *et al* (2014) argue that there is a lack of understanding throughout the former Easter Bloc countries as to what constitutes gender mainstreaming and that gender quotas do not challenge the informal rules which perpetuate gender inequalities within

institutions. So, while gender mainstreaming is apparent within the formal structures the difficulty lies within the informal structures and culture within organisations. Thus, we have a locus whereby due to the existence of asymmetric institutionalism where certain areas of political activity are prioritised over others and serve to reinforce male dominance.

Equal opportunities and equal treatment are enshrined in Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and is supported by the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men enacted in 1998. This law creates a legal obligation on organisations, whether public or private, to implement gender equality principles in all areas of activity (Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman 2018). Sex discrimination and sexual harassment are defined and proscribed and in 2007, Lithuania was considered by the Global Economic Forum to have made the greatest progress of all the former Soviet satellites in working towards gender equality in employment (Macedo and Santos 2013).

However, this equality in the workplace did not transfer into the home and women still have the burden of caring for the home and family (Metcalfe and Afanassieve 2005). As Pollert (2005:220) asserts 'Women's strong representation among professionals and associated occupations reflects their educational gains during communism, but they failed to advance further up the occupational hierarchy'. Men dominated the higher levels of professions and while 'women do have a stronger presence in 'male' industries, as is to be expected from post-war communist industrialization policy … there are smaller proportions of women in the top occupations' (Pollert 2005:227). Following independence in 1990, more than 100 women's groups, clubs and associations were established to promote the interests of women and Lithuania became home of the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE 2020a). However due to the post-communist 'retraditionalisation' agenda (Razzu 2016) along with the Catholic Church, which enjoyed a period of strength and influence during the 1990s, 'played an important role in praising motherhood and urging women to return home to devote their lives to raising children' (Motiejūnaitė 2010:241) serve to reinforce their poor position. EIGE (2020a) data shows growing gender inequality in economic decision-making and the largest regression of women at senior levels of any EU Member State. Thus, as Pavilionienė (2015) argues, gender inequality is persistent and unlikely to be overcome while Aszatlos and Grakskova (2018) argue that the former socialist states were 'maternalistic' privileging men in not being obliged to provide care work.

Gender equality is promoted by four separate mechanisms, namely the Parliamentary Commission for Family and Child Affairs, Women Parliamentarians Group, Parliamentary Human Rights Commission and the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (OEOO). The OEOO is an independent state institution which reports directly to Parliament and has overall responsibility for the supervision and implementation of equal opportunities. The Lithuanian approach is largely Government-led and structured supported by social partners and non-governmental organisations such as trade union women's councils. However, such a method is not without its limitations as the various institutions have responsibility for separate areas of policy and must rely on cooperation in order to be effective. In addition, most of the actions are based in and around the capital Vilnius and no structural units exist for the monitoring of equality principles outside of the capital (OEOO 2018).

Gruzevskis and Kanopiene (2016) argue, that despite these initiatives and the long history of women's active participation in the labour market, patriarchal attitudes and existing gender stereotypes are still strong in the country and influence social and economic relationships thus contributing to the perpetuation of sex discrimination. The emphasis was on contributing the same levels of production and emancipation through work rather than achieving true gender equality. Thus, feminism was not a feature of this form of 'equality' in the same way as Western feminism aims to achieve equality of opportunity – feminism in Soviet times meant that women emphasised their femininity. Drakulic (2015) reports on attending a feminist conference in 1978 how women from the Soviet bloc looked starkly different from their Western feminist counterparts because they wore high heels and make up while the Western feminists downplayed their femininity. She argues that women from the Soviet countries did not adopt Western feminism for fear of being considered dissident even after the fall of Communism. Thus, feminism becomes a contested term with Drakulic (2015:7) arguing that the 'freedom gained ... has brought unexpected limitations on economic, social and even reproductive rights' as countries have become more patriarchal.

Thus, to draw the strands of our discussion together to form the framework for our research; we have drawn upon the concepts of public and private patriarchal structures and their impact upon women's position in the labour market generally as well as the architecture profession specifically. In addition, we have examined how gender mainstreaming has been incorporated into policy developments, regulatory mechanisms and budgetary programmes and explored the position of women and feminism in former Soviet countries. Furthermore, at professional level, we have established that there is a 'critical mass' of women within architecture. Drawing these potentially contradictory ideas together, and against the backdrop of our research questions, we now set out to establish their impact upon women in architecture and their position within the profession. We will now turn to outline the methodological approach and to explore the findings from both desk-based research and interview/survey findings.

Methodology

The data reported here draw on both surveys and interviews carried out in the qualitative paradigm with 31 Lithuanian women architects. With there being around 1400 architects registered in Lithuania and 48% of these being female (ACE 2018), our sample size represents around 5%. A qualitative approach is the most appropriate for exploring career-related experiences as it can 'elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge' (Corbin and Strauss 2008:1). We wanted to explore the lived experiences of women in their careers from their stories rather than draw conclusions from statistical techniques. The sample was recruited from personal contacts, official registers and snowballing techniques and 31 women agreed to participate. Our initial intention was to conduct interviews but our requests for interviews were by and large rejected with only 13 women agreeing to be interviewed. The remaining 18 women invariably cited time constraints or distance from Vilnius (where the interviewer is based) as their reason for declining to be interviewed. These women responded to a survey containing the same open

questions as those asked in interviews. Where responses required further probing, this was done by follow up phone calls. Despite having to take a different approach to that planned, we consider the survey data to provide data of equal quality to the interviews with both depth and richness – perhaps because the respondents could consider their responses more fully before giving their reply and by adding to their stories as they thought of other relevant aspects but we cannot discount this as a form of self-censorship which Heinrich *et al* (2019) report as being problematic when researching in post-authoritarian regimes[1].

Both interviews and surveys were conducted by a native speaker who is a female faculty member in a faculty of civil engineering so had much in common with which to create rapport and shared understanding as well as helping overcome any potential difficulties with there being a multi-national research team (Hantrais 2009). The non-native members of the research team spent time in Lithuania prior to the data collection period meeting some of the respondents, carrying out contextual data searches and visiting the EIGE offices in Vilnius. This gave us a valuable insight to the practice of architecture and to appreciate the challenges faced by Lithuanian women.

The study replicates earlier research into the careers of women architects in several European countries (Navarro-Astor and Caven 2018, Caven et al 2016; Caven and Navarro-Astor 2013, Caven et al 2012;) adopting an interpretive perspective by taking a career life history approach to explore the influences and events which had shaped their careers and the meanings taken from them. By replicating previous studies, we can be assured of the reliability and validity of the research design. Topic areas for both the interviews and surveys covered were what had attracted them to architecture initially, then we asked them to describe how their careers had developed highlighting successes and low points; then what they considered to be the rewards and stressful elements. We deliberately did not ask about gender issues so to not skew the data but where it was mentioned (in the interviews), we took the opportunity to probe further.

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English and the analysis was carried out by the authors in a thematic way taking a *grounded in theory* approach (cf Caven et al 2012 for a full discussion). This allows the identification of emergent themes while acknowledging that theory relating to women working in the architecture profession influenced the development of both interview and survey topic discussion areas. The thematic analysis firstly matched back to the initial interview and survey questions then a second level of analysis was carried out by identifying the key emergent and recurring themes, patterns, similarities and differences and these were coded accordingly (Goulding 2009). All the interviewees were given a pseudonym and any personal details which may mean they could be identified were removed. This process of analysis was accompanied by desk-based research to identify and examine the position of women in the Lithuanian architecture profession. The key themes which emerged included perceptions of equality; the experiences of inequality; family issues; and, the performance of gender.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 24 to 74 -19 participants were under 40, 5 between 40 and 50 and 7 over 50 - thus we were able to collect data from those who had worked under

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[1] This is a methodological point worthy of further investigation but beyond the scope of this paper.

the former Soviet regime (the generation of Late Socialism) as well as from those who had worked only since independence. According to Mannheim (1952) they are representatives of different generations that were affected by important changes in their socio-historical context. In total, 8 interviewees graduated and worked under the Soviet regime; 12 grew up during the regime but qualified post-independence; while 11 were raised and qualified entirely following independence. The eldest respondent was retired while the others were active in a range of areas from being salaried in practice; self-employed; practice principals; university associate professors including 2 vice deans; and, the public sector; 7 had senior management experience. All had carried out their studies in Lithuania but four had spent time abroad in other European countries as part of their studies.

Context of the architecture profession and the position of women

Here we will examine the structure of the profession in Lithuania drawing on equivalent statistics from the UK and Spain as a basis for comparison.

Insert Table 1 here

The main areas of activity – sole practitioners, partners/directors, and salaried – are broadly similar percentage-wise in Lithuania and the UK with the profession adopting a different structure in Spain. The key difference between the three countries is the salary level with the UK average being over five times greater than in Lithuania and Spanish salaries being closer to those in Lithuania. However, architects receive a salary higher than the national average, which is 720€/month, (Statistics Lithuania 2020) and the profession is regarded as being well-paid in relative terms. Prestige and status is accorded by 'professional closure', the means by which entry to and membership of the profession are restricted to those who have achieved the necessary educational level, completed a Diploma in Architecture and a test of professional competence which leads to registration with the Architects' Chamber of Lithuania (LAR) which governs professional standards. This body was formed in 2006 so while a recent creation, it is better placed to implement the Europe-wide standards of professional practice. An older organisation - the Architects' Association of Lithuania, established in 1924 – is a voluntary NGO which aims to unite and promote the interests of architects and to promote their work. While membership is optional, it has 1081 members but not all of these will be practising architects as associate membership is automatically conferred on retired architects and students. (ACE 2018)

There is a high level of attrition with women leaving the profession after qualification. For example, according to available data from Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (leader in numbers of architecture students in Lithuania), in 2018 women accounted for 70% of bachelor's students and 72% of master's (Kairienė 2019). Yet, they account for around 48% of practising architects (down from 50% in 2016) (Source: ACE, 2018). Data regarding women at different levels of the profession would be useful however it is not currently collected by the Lithuanian Chamber of Architects due to financial constraints (email correspondence between Author 3 and the Chamber of Architects 29th May 2020).

We now turn our attention to our interview and survey data and examine the experiences of women architects in their careers.

Perceptions of equality for women in the Lithuanian architecture profession

While we didn't ask specifically about issues of discrimination, we did ask about factors which had helped or hindered the women's career development and twenty of the thirty-one interviewed mentioned their gender. Some mentioned that the economic 'boom' years of the early 2000s had benefited their careers and helped them to become established and gain a strong reputation for their work. In part, the boom years were an opportunity to challenge the prevalence of patriarchy and gender stereotyping while showing their competence and skill as a professional architect. We were told that in the early 2000s "there was a big demand for architects, so the customers had to get used to women architects" (Ieva, age 37, freelance interior designer, 12 years experience). Interviewees frequently mentioned that no aspect of architectural work is gender-specific and can be carried out equally well be either men or women suggesting the potential for gender parity within the profession. However, the over-riding approach regarding gender mainstreaming via the EU is through integration rather than a proactive process of rethinking gender goals and falls short of achieving the transformation of gender relations or policy-making through a gender-sensitive lens (Woodward, 2003:66) thus the work practices, organisational culture and unequal workplace relationships remain unchallenged.

Two of the respondents who strongly voiced feeling equal were among the younger interviewees aged in their 30s so part of the 'new generation' thus not having been so exposed to traditional attitudes and one had studied in Denmark and worked in Ireland and Germany. Following qualification, she had worked for a German firm which won a contract in the Middle East so

> "In Lithuania I do not feel discrimination based on sex. I try myself not to give a chance for others to deal with me somehow exclusively or unprofessionally. Although, when while working in Germany we went to Saudi Arabia, where we had a project. In Saudi Arabia, as you know, women do not have a lot of rights, so the women in our team had to accept that the project would be presented by the men, and that they would make all decisions, while we (women) kept nice smiles and nodded. I began to appreciate in what good times and a good place I am living in, where experts are valued according to their experience and qualifications not on race or gender" (Natalija, age 31, architect, 7 years experience).

Natalija's experiences of studying and working in western European countries may have increased her exposure to greater levels of equality in terms of working practices and in her interview she specifically mentions being treated as an equal during her studies in Denmark. However, the project she worked on in the Middle East may have caused her to consider gender equality in 'relative' terms as her position within the profession in Lithuania is better in comparison. However, she also mentions a personal trait in that she tries not to allow others to hinder her progress.

Eight of the older interviewees graduated and qualified under the Soviet regime and thus belong to what Žilinskienė (2018) describes as the 'Stalin Generation'. The period from 1944

to 1953 was when the harshest 'Sovietisation' of Lithuania took place, private property was abolished, farms were transformed into collectives and the economy was centralised. During this time the roles of women became clearly defined and the 'Soviet ideal woman had to hold a special or higher education diploma and work in the state sector. According to Soviet propaganda, the ideal woman was also married; she was a dedicated wife to her husband and a dedicated mother to her children. Thus, the Soviet ideal woman was a composite: a worker, a wife and a mother. A woman seeking to achieve this ideal was obliged to combine all three roles' (Žilinskienė 2018:318). Our eldest interviewee, Stefanija, matches this 'ideal'; she was born in 1941 and spent her entire working life of 35 years designing 'living districts' (residential areas with all local amenities for the workers) but she refused to call it a career. Instead, she referred to her husband

> '[he] was a famous constructor, he had a high and responsible position. He worked with famous architects, supervising the implementation of projects of national buildings, including those designed by Bučiūtė[2]. I therefore refused to design more buildings and devoted my life to my family and kids and for a while I only worked part-time. I thought that my husband could be more useful for Lithuanian architecture than myself (Stefanija, age 74, retired architect, 35 years experience)

Another respondent did reflect on the role of women during Soviet rule and currently, specifically mentioning the presence of patriarchy:

> But in our society (especially in Soviet times) there exists a patriarchy. When I worked in the Ministry, I noticed a lot of women working there but I was surprised that they were doing imperceptible works in the professional sense and making and serving coffee for the men. In all the higher positions, there were men. Men do not allow women to be admitted into higher positions. Men think that women cannot work well because they must take care of their families and bear children (Karina, age 65, public sector architect, 41 years' experience)

The invisibility of women, as mentioned here, is also noticeable throughout Drėmaitė's (2020, 2019a, 2019b) work on the history of architecture in Lithuania, where on the few occasions where women are mentioned, it is as the wife of someone. Thus, women have had a longstanding involvement in the design and creation of buildings, but their contribution has long been overlooked and their progress impeded because of patriarchal mechanisms in place. Kaskla (2003) attempts to explain this as emanating from the Soviet emphasis on women's powerful position in the home leading to men asserting their dominance in the workplace.

Gendered work practices and exclusionary mechanisms

Women reported other more explicit negative experiences saying "Discrimination exists". Some women told us of unsafe working environments in an emotional sense where bullying and discrimination exists. Women reported receiving derogatory comments with one reporting "look, 'meat' has started to talk" (Nida, age 47, architect and university associate

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[2] Recognised as being the most famous Lithuanian female architect

professor, 23 years experience) from a male student when she offered an opinion in her university class and another woman told us of her professor quoted as saying "the woman to the kitchen, the man to enact works" (Vita, age 35, architect/project manager and university teacher, 11 years experience). These kinds of offensive comments were commonplace with another saying that male colleagues refer to her work as "The Molly did it" (Monika, age 28, architect, 4 years experience). While this shows that the stereotypes from Soviet times continue to impact on the careers of women who grew up and qualified post-independence possibly remaining as a legacy within architectural education, it cannot be the sole explanation as it also reflects the findings from De Graft-Johnson *et al* (2003). It is particularly striking that some of the women reporting these comments are young and have completed their education since independence and following Lithuania joining the EU and incorporating gender mainstreaming principles. However, as we discussed earlier, a major weakness of the gender mainstreaming approach is that the integration approach has been adopted without any strong challenges directed towards a reconfiguring of the political agenda (Walby 2011). EU recommendations exist as 'soft law', they are not mandatory there are no penalties for not observing them (Cruşmac 2015). In addition, as Pollock and Hoffner-Burton 2000:452) point out, 'if gender is everybody's responsibility in general, then it is nobody's responsibility in particular'.

Many women cited the burden of bureaucracy, constantly changing regulations and heavy workloads as sources of dissatisfaction with their careers. They felt that men had in place better support mechanisms to help them cope. There were many instances of 'the old boys' network' where male contacts and acquaintances helped each other and overtly excluded the women "And the men go to smoke, they go for a drink and to discuss deals" (Vita, age 35, architect/project manager and university teacher, 11 years experience), although (Lina, age 55, architect/project manager, 31 years in profession) explained that "A lot of men architects become alcoholics due to big tensions in their work".

Many of the women who were mothers felt they were excluded because they could not spend long hours at work or carry out networking in their own time, whereas others felt they were invisible, as they were not allowed to carry out site visits instead having to do the menial detailing work in the office. Others told of how they are excluded in a wider sense, such as in the public arena:

> The invisibility of architects, especially women architects in the mass media, during the news on TV it is loudly announced who has built a new building (the builder's name), but it is not told who the architect of that building is. Men architects are sometimes mentioned, but women architects never. In Lithuania we have only one well known woman architect Bučiūte, who has designed the building of The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. For men everything is easier they are not so busy with the family, hence they have more time and possibilities. Women architects are like invisible, they do all the "black" hard work and nobody knows about them. All the laurels are taken by men-despite the fact that work is a collective work, even when the main design idea comes from women (Lina, age 55, architect/project manager, 21 years experience)

One woman told of her strategy regarding being excluded saying:

> "Men usually do not allow women to go for the higher positions but my attentiveness [to] and helpfulness for men has helped me somehow unnoticeably [to them] to achieve a high level in my career. When they noticed, it was too late. My diplomacy has helped me" (Karina, age 65, public sector architect, 41 years experience).

However, this leads us to consider the notion of performative labour, women presenting themselves as a perceived ideal in deference to masculine dominance (Goffman 1959). Other women criticised themselves for not having certain what they considered to be essential personal traits, such as speaking with authority or having confidence in themselves; they also mentioned being too compassionate and caring too much about what others think which hindered their success within architecture. This matching and comparing against a male 'norm' was highlighted many times during the interviews but none of the participants mentioned challenging these norms or behaviours. There was a resigned acceptance rather than any will to push for greater equality; it is, as Kirss (2003) says that women in the Baltic States are afraid of feminism.

The impact of family

While the majority of interviewees cited bureaucracy and ever-changing regulations as being the main cause of stress and hindering their careers; a smaller, but still significant, number mentioned family and children having a hindering effect on their careers; this also included women who had not yet had children but who were worried about the impact of having a family. While women spend time away from work to raise children changes occur in IT programs, regulatory and design information. Therefore, women suffer knowledge gaps and lag behind in their professional development so it becomes hard to restart a working life following time out for children. Others mentioned the lack of self-confidence as a consequence of a career break.

Two women mentioned returning to work within weeks of giving birth instead of taking the full period of maternity leave available:

> "I had to return to work from maternity leave very soon - after 4 months. Nobody can afford to [both in a professional experience or financial sense] and can't wait long until you will return to work [as] you are at risk of disappearing from the labour market." (Karina, age 65, public sector architect, 41 years experience).

Another likens maternity leave and family commitments to becoming invisible as there is no time to attend any networking events and so male architects are much more visible in society. Others reflected on gender stereotyping by men who assume a woman cannot be successful in her work or be able to combine work and a family. Traditional attitudes are very apparent here as one woman pointed out "My children were born during my studies period. But here [in architecture field] you can't do breaks"(Lina, age 55, architect/project manager, 31 years experience). Notably, it was mainly the older women who mentioned children and maternity leave as being problematic in terms of their careers but two of the younger ones who have not yet started families mentioned perceived difficulties in taking a career break. Patriarchy is also very apparent with women commenting that men do not believe they can compete in an equal sense and are somewhat less committed because they have family commitments. This situation is not peculiar to the Lithuanian context with De Graft-Johnson *et al* (2003), Fowler

and Wilson (2004), Sang *et al* (2014) and Agudo and Sánchez de Madariaga (2011) citing family situation, maternity leave and career breaks as being problematic in that employers feel women are somehow less committed to their careers.

An interesting observation made by one woman was that having children occupies mind-space which inhibits the design process with:

> "Design, it is a very long creative process … having no children means you work without stops, till late at night, at weekends, have a few free hours for creative thinking, but having children, you can't. You need time for creation and with kids you have a lack of time" (Egle, age 35, partner/director and project manager, 11 years experience)

This demanding time requirement is a common feature within the profession cited by many authors including Burns (2016), Clark (2016), De Graft-Johnson and Manley (2016), Sang *et al* (2014), and De Graft-Johnson *et al* (2003) and reflects wider problems within the profession in relation to adopting and accepting flexible working patterns.

Conclusions

We set out to examine women's experiences of 'equality' in what is considered an egalitarian environment; to investigate the impact of EU gender equality policies and practices on the work practices, organisational culture and workplace relationships in the profession of architecture; and, to assess whether the presence of a 'critical mass' has generated parity in terms of status and equal treatment. Lithuania provides a fascinating insight into the practice of architecture in an environment where there was, in theory, a longstanding history of equality combined with the current position of implementing gender mainstreaming within national policies. The reality is that despite the policies and initiatives in place, the position of women remains poor. The Soviet emphasis on everyone being involved in production but with the notion of the 'ideal woman' meaning that women were expected to contribute to paid work but also had responsibility for the home and caring responsibilities. Accession to the EU, the subsequent adoption of EU gender equality policies and the development of national policy based on gender mainstreaming, has not improved the position. Women remain in the same position except without the safety net of guaranteed employment as they previously enjoyed. Thus questions need to be raised about the lack of effectiveness of gender mainstreaming approaches when not accompanied by a reconfiguring of the political agenda or a rethinking of goals.

The dominance of patriarchy under the Soviet regime has been replaced with an equally powerful force since independence. The pervasive presence of patriarchy remains apparent, despite the presence of equality policies and initiatives, and entrenched within the profession. There is clear evidence of the six forms of patriarchy identified by Walby (1989) - patriarchal mode of production where men appropriate their wives labour; patriarchal relations within production; the patriarchal state; male violence; sexuality; and culture (Walby 1989:22) - apparent in the women's accounts of their treatment, as well as the seventh of professional closure as identified by Witz (1992) pertaining to the practising of a profession regulated and controlled by patriarchal structures. Neither the Architects' Chamber of Lithuania nor the Architects' Association of Lithuania have equality policies, instead relying on the State-

mandated legislation. Without the requirement to report data or to present evidence of the implementation of gender equality initiatives then such rules, strategies and programmes are meaningless.   Women are still responsible for running their homes and caring for their families, ie the 'double shift,' despite their involvement in full-time work leaving them little or no time to engage with any women's support groups to try to improve their position. Women also are part of the 'reserve army of labour' in that during periods of economic stability and growth, they are able to find jobs easily but are more likely to experience unemployment and layoffs when there is economic uncertainty.

While on the face of it, the generous parental leave provision would be enviable in many other national contexts, the reality is that it serves to hinder career development with women losing their contacts, dropping out of their networks and their skills becoming outdated. Longer statutory parental leave has a negative impact on the re-entry of mothers to the workplace by reducing the accumulation of human capital having the knock-on effect of being perceived as less committed workers by employers (Ondrich et al 1999 cited by Kurowska 2017). Post-communism equality is influenced by the market rather than ideology and the new forms of feminism require women to take advantage of the opportunities offered by capitalism while realising and being aware of that structures are being developed which prevent them from succeeding (Dawisha 2007). Johnson and Robinson (2007) point out that since 1990 there has been a 'gender multiplication' where a wider range of complexities and gender ideologies exist. They argue that there has been a 'refeminisation' and 'remasculinisation' of post-Communist societies which is due to states ignoring equality issues in favour of economic growth and security.

In contrast to the other countries which have been part of this wider research project, the striking difference is that women architects in Lithuania predominantly work full-time. Part time working is rare mainly due to financial pressures but also due to there not being a strong tradition of alternative working arrangements. However, aside from this, the position of women in the profession reflects that of several other European countries (Caven et al 2016, Caven and Navarro-Astor 2013). Employment is across a range of sectors from central Government to sole practitioners which equally reflects the comparative studies. While data was not available from the Architects' Chamber of Lithuania to show the proportion of women in senior positions, the women interviewed and surveyed mentioned being in lower positions and subordinate to their male colleagues.

Overt discrimination is much more apparent in Lithuania with women reporting derogatory comments particularly while studying from both fellow students and their professors. This surprised us given the backdrop of women's longstanding involvement in the workplace and the presence of legislation regarding sexual discrimination and harassment. However, as Berendsen (2015 cited by Annuk 2019) points out, feminism and feminists are represented negatively and ridiculed in the mainstream media thus normalising such behaviour. It was sadly not surprising to hear of exclusionary behaviours by their male colleagues and needing to prove themselves to a much greater extent as this reflects findings from our earlier work (Caven et al 2016, Navarro-Astor and Caven 2018). We, therefore, call for greater scrutiny of the culture within the schools of architecture as a recommendation for future research.

Thus, we draw two key conclusions from this research. There exists a paradoxical situation of economic freedoms preventing the move towards gender equality but also that without EU

policies there would be no protection at all. Also, despite the presence of EU, national level and industry level policies, legislation and other soft law initiatives designed to promote gender equality, they clearly are not achieving their aims. Our central argument is that there is a fundamental mismatch between the aims and objectives of policy interventions relating to gender equality. It is clearly evident that they are failing to achieve what they are intended to deliver. We suggest that more needs to be done in addressing the social and cultural issues relating to gender differences in the workplace and home which leads us to our second conclusion that despite the existence of the legislation in place in Lithuania, it is not succeeding in changing masculine attitudes and this is where, we argue, that real change needs to emanate from. Our research shows that despite there being a 'critical mass' does not necessarily equate to equality of opportunity. Without there being a determined drive to challenge these dominant preconceptions and stereotypes then genuine equality cannot become a reality and we support Pavilionienė's (2015) assertion that gender inequality is persistent and unlikely to be overcome.

While Lithuania provided us with a unique situation within which to explore gender inequalities in an 'equal' environment, our study is limited in that it only includes the female perspective and while we argue the need for fundamental social and cultural change, this cannot take place in isolation and without the active participation of all members of society.

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