RESEARCH ARTICLE

Telling Transnational Histories of Women in Architecture, 1960–2015

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This essay uses an emergent transnational research project — a global encyclopaedia of women in architecture — as a site for unsettling the terms, chronology, and geography of feminist histories of architecture. By locating feminist architectural history in multiple geographies and histories, feminist practice can attend to the specific geopolitics of architecture and knowledge. This project uses a crowd-sourced approach, rooted in local regional reference groups and writers, to facilitate a greater range of entries, voices, and expertise. Transnational histories are generated from difference and disseminate diverse models of architectural practice and lives. Biography is a central tool for providing these counter-narratives of architecture. In this essay feminist scholarship of the 1980s on women's lives provides a critical foundation for the current biographical turn in journalism and academia. Life writing has long been foundational to women's history writing, but contemporary biography, with its strategies of visibility, de-canonisation, and mobilisation around gender identity, also provides an affective politics for contemporary architectural feminism. The global turn in architectural history is enriched by an intersectional lens, capable of mapping the myriad geographies and differences of women's lives, and the precise contours of agency and oppression.

Introduction

The impact of 20th-century feminism and women's rights claims on the discipline of architecture deserves greater historical attention (Spain 2016; Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011). New archival content and historiographic innovation can be produced by drawing on the work of historians in other disciplines who have interrogated the conceptual categories conventionally used to produce the periodisation of women's history. These historians have noted that the standard chronology of feminism as a series of waves remains a useful shorthand but offers a deeply problematic historiographical method that centres the history of women's rights around a narrative of Western feminism and white women's feminist organising (Cooper 2018). As Kimberly Springer notes, the 'wave analogy obscures the historical role of race in feminist organizing' (in the United States) and 'disregard[s] race-based movements before them that served as precursors, or windows of political opportunity, for gender activism' (Springer 2002: 1061). Similarly, Alka Kurian has argued that women in India developed innovative ways of protesting and analysis in the early 21st century before the declaration of feminism's resurgence in North America (Kurian 2018). This essay uses a global research project that we are currently undertaking — an encyclopaedia of women

in architecture from 1960 to 2015, called *The Blooms-bury Global Encyclopaedia of Women in Architecture* — to argue that global projects can question the periodisation, geography, and analytic terms used to frame histories of women's struggles in the discipline of architecture. Global projects expose different histories of women's rights activism, and register the deliberate rejection of the label feminist in some countries or periods for political and strategic reasons (Moghadam 2015: 5). By presenting 'intertwined histories' of women in architecture across the globe through our encyclopaedia, we reveal the divergences, differences, and contests between women, feminism, and women's rights (Bozdogan 1999: 210).

The encyclopaedia project is large in scope. It participates in and critically interrogates the recent biographic turn within contemporary architecture. Collating 1,150 entries, the survey consists of biographical micro-histories of women in architecture, accompanied by scholarly essays and a range of thematic entries for each region that explore key ideas and contexts of spatial production. As well, a global timeline collates key historical events with the history of women's rights across the globe and significant moments in a history of women in architecture. This collaborative endeavour with an international roll-call of authors is facilitated by global digital communications.

The encyclopaedia challenges chronological histories of women and architecture by presenting a geographically organised approach to a specific historical period. This global lens places individual women within intimately local and national frames while uncovering mobilities, migrations, and transnational lives. Our geographic focus counters the privileging of the Global North in histories of women in architecture, and in the history of architecture more generally.

This essay argues that a global and intersectional focus chimes with current definitions of 'fourth wave' feminism.[1] By centering global geography as a frame for histories of women in architecture, we contextualize familiar canons, theories, and history as regional productions generated from within the Global North. Transnational and local histories of women in architecture focus attention on the geopolitical contexts of production and reception. Writing accounts of women in architecture inevitably forces an engagement with biography, a genre long central to histories of women both inside and outside architecture. This essay engages with critical work on life writing to evaluate the place of biography as a historiographic method. It argues that biography fosters an affective politics producing individual and collective identity formation that serves as the foundation for contemporary organising around the political identity of women in architecture.

Geography and Gender

A number of nationally bounded histories of women in architecture have been published over the last fifty years. These range from early examples, such as Doris Cole, *From Tipi to Skyscraper: A History of Women in Architecture* (1973), which, like Susana Torre's *Women in American Architecture* (1977), focusses on North America, to later projects, such as Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hanna's *Women Architects in Australia, 1900–1950* (2001) and Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred's Canadian study, *'Designing Women': Gender and the Architectural Profession* (2000), and more recent examples, such as Madhavi Desai's *Women Architects and Modernism in India* (2017) and Lynne Walker's work in progress, *Gender and Architecture: A History of Women and Architecture in Britain from 1640 to the Present Day.*

Larger transnational projects have been thinner on the ground. This sparse collection includes Maggie Toy's *The Architect: Women in Contemporary Architecture* (2001), focussed largely on North American and British women with the inclusion of women from Western Europe qand Japan and one Australian; Claire Lorenz's *Women and Architecture; A Contemporary Perspective* (1990); the transatlantic and European focussed historical study by Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke, *Women's Places: Architecture and Design 1860–1960* (2003); Alice Friedman's transnational (North American/Western European) comparative account, *Women and the Making of the Modern Home* (1993); and unusually. because it is a project focussed on South Asia, Brinda Somaya and Urvashi Mehta's *An Emancipated Place: 2000 Plus, Women in Architecture* (2000). The recent book edited by Elizabeth Darling and Lynne Walker, *AA Women in Architecture 1917–2017*

(2017), is a distinctive study of a metropolitan institution and its transnational students and effects. A current pan-European project, *MoMoWo: Women's Creativity Since the Modern Movement* (2018), also includes material from other regions and broadens the focus beyond architecture to design. Given the difficulties of transnational research, particularly in the pre-digital age, we lack histories that truly integrate the Global North and South or that give equal visibility to regions under-represented or rendered invisible to architectural history. We believe that a feminist history of architecture needs a more inclusive geography.

Feminist encyclopaedias — and indeed the encyclopaedia format — are well established in other disciplines and range from surveys of key concepts, such as *The Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (Code 2005), to global surveys, such as the *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge* (Kramarae and Spender 2000), to feminist historical scholarship introducing specific historical periods, such as the volume *Women during the Civil War: An Encyclopedia* (Harper 2007) or *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia* (Schaus 2016). Encyclopaedias offer a specific knowledge format and a useful overall survey of a field of scholarship or historical period and theme. They provide information and sources for an educated audience who are intelligent but do not possess expertise in the subject area. They contribute to pedagogy, curriculum development, and the knowledge base of disciplinary experts both within and outside the discipline. Feminist practice aspires to be transformational. By putting knowledge resources in college libraries and online for the use of teachers, researchers, and students unfamiliar with the more specialised field of architectural histories of women, the encyclopaedia is intended to have a broader political impact.

Encyclopaedias have experienced a new life in the recent turn to global studies. As multi-authored and multi-voiced works, they can present multiple viewpoints and introductions to the disagreements and differences which structure a field of knowledge. A global encyclopaedic approach to women in architecture follows the transnational turn taken in feminist history, theory, and activism (Antrobus 2004; Ferree and Tripp 2006; Moghadam 2005; Fernandes 2013; Naples and Desai 2002; Stienstra, 1994; Wichterich 2000; Bakash and Harcourt 2015). Transnationalism first emerged as an analytic category in the late 1980s, but the field has flourished since the turn of the 21st century. This field has multiple strands. One strand maps international feminist organising since the mid-19th century. Another critically examines how the history of women's rights intersects with global and local conditions. Key case studies for these intersections are international and grassroots organisations, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations, including its Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Another strand of the transnational feminism field examines contemporary activism in women's and human rights struggles across the globe whilst being attentive to the impact of globalisation on action. Another strand critically

reconfigures the knowledge and knowledge practices of feminism.

The new global purview is reflected in recent feminist research committed to tracing different genealogies and geographies for a history of women's rights. Thus, in the modern period historians have noted debates on women's rights and education in 18th-century China, and in movements for women's social emancipation in India in the early 19th century, as well as the more familiar European enlightenment push for women's emancipation (Jayawardena 1986). Following this global turn, the encyclopaedia aims to place histories of feminism in a spatial rather than a temporal frame, to emphasise the multiple points of origin for histories of women's entry into architecture. Struggles for women's rights and knowledge can be located within particular 'past geographies and institutional sites' and intellectual traditions (Disch and Hawkesworth 2016). As geographer Susan Stratford Friedman argues, feminist theories, agendas, and political practices are grounded in acknowledgement of the specificity of gender systems and their intersection with movements for social justice (Friedman 1998: 5). This global focus reveals the contours of different equity struggles, such as the intersection of women's rights with the anticolonial, communist, anti-communist, and other liberation movements of the 20th century and the current struggles of the 21st century (Mohanty 1991; Anzaldúa 1987; Federici 2004). A global view produces 'plural' feminist histories, but these stories are interlocked through global connections, influences, and intersections (Friedman 1998: 5).

Geography and the Chronology of Feminist Histories

In her study of women's movements in Asia, historian Kumari Jayawardena observes that 'the movement towards women's emancipation was acted out against a background of nationalist struggles aimed at achieving political independence, asserting a national identity, and modernising society' (Jayawardena 1986: 3). This perspective of entwined political struggle is critical to our project's formation of different histories of the trajectories of women's rights beyond the Global North paradigm of first and second wave feminism. In our encyclopaedia, individual biographies and regional introductory essays challenge the chronologies and periodisation of struggles for women's rights in architecture. The co-location of these liberation movements is made explicit in Anooradha Siddiqi's account of Sri Lankan architect Minnette De Silva (1918–1998). Siddiqi skilfully weaves together a snapshot of De Silva's subject formation using familial and historical intersections of religious and cultural difference, the aesthetics and politics of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the movements for independence and women's rights. She writes,

> The youngest of four surviving children of George E. and Agnes Nell De Silva, Minnette De Silva, born February 1, 1918, became the first woman from the island of Sri Lanka to practice architecture profes-

sionally. If her parents' 1910 Singhalese-Burgher marriage had expanded the social imaginary in the small hill town of Kandy, their significant activity and international exposure, Ceylon's universal franchise, and Independence movement in later decades arguably undergirded her perspective and ambitions. Among other things, De Silva credits her mother's involvement in the related Arts and Crafts movement with her own interest in reviving the arts and crafts and incorporating artisanal elements into modernist buildings later in her career.

She notes that De Silva's apprenticeship and studies were

> interrupted by the tumultuous Quit India protests of 1942. She worked in 1944 and 1945 in the Bangalore office of Otto Koenigsberger, then the Chief Architect of the Princely State of Mysore. With new regulations allowing Indian students to complete their architectural studies within British institutions, De Silva was able to matriculate into the Architectural Association, where she studied from 1945 to 1947.[2]

These snapshots of individual lives offer different foundational narratives and trajectories for women's rights as told by a much more diverse collection of voices. As well as uncovering entwined liberation struggles, the biographies and analytic essays of our project provide evidence to contest the prevailing narrative of the decline of feminism as a Western mass movement during the 1980s and '90s. As feminist transnational studies outside architecture have noted, women's rights struggles grew in these decades of the late 20th century in the Global South (Antrobus 2004).

The international activism of architects provides another way of tracing a transnational history. The life of Anglo-Kenyan architect Diana Lee-Smith connects these currents. She attended the first UN conference on women in Mexico City in 1975 — held to mark the UN's designation of 1975 as International Women's Year — and attended the first HABITAT conference in Vancouver in 1976. Lee-Smith has been instrumental in attempting to embed a focus on women in the HABITAT policy and projects. Her career has straddled both the 'development policies' of the UN and organising at grassroots levels through the Nairobi-based NGO she established with her husband. She is forthright about the struggle involved in transforming the UN, and maintains a dynamic, critical, and contested relationship with the organisation (Lee-Smith 2006).

A key strand of feminist work on development politics asserts a critical agenda and agency for women in this space (Snyder and Tadesse 2014; Jain 2005; Sandler 2015). Whilst feminist scholars and organisers have been critical of the UN's intention, agency, and effects, the organisation has been an important site for connecting women's rights advocates and transnational movements. These alliances have significantly shaped international policy. Political scientist Kathleen Staudt argues that 'gender would be invisible without the rise of the global women's movement

and its connection to the United Nations-sponsored conferences' (Vandenbeld 2015: 224). In her history of the drafting of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), legal scholar Meghan Campbell discusses the contentious and critical debates that shaped the eventual treaty (Campbell 2018: 46). Women of the Global South moved the organisational focus of the treaty from its interest in the relations of men and women to a determination to improve the economic and social positions of women. More recently, the 'gender mainstreaming' occurring in the UN, specifically through their Millennium Development Goals, has transformed the binary divisions of women and men to gendering of all issues (Vandenbeld 2015: 215, 217).

The encyclopaedia will link disparate areas of the world, enabling us to see how architectural ideas and networks crisscrossed geographical and geopolitical borders. As Leila Rupp observes in her history of the international women's movement, the discipline of history remains highly structured around the nation state (Rupp 1997). With its global scope, the encyclopaedia mirrors the globalisation of architectural practice, training, and culture in the post-war era. Women architects, like their male peers, engage in transnational careers.

This research aspires to emulate the patterns of women's history projects outside architecture, which now map the global history of feminist knowledge and transnational organising and transnational organisations. The encyclopaedia's entries will reflect the impact of UN HABITAT, the UN Conferences on Women, and international alliances and conferences on Shelter, all key networks that record and represent transnational organising around issues of space and gender. These networks reveal unknown feminist architectural histories, beyond the established catalogue of feminist theory and history conferences and books produced from the Global North. These other nodes register other circuits and modes of knowledge and action.

Geopolitics

The encyclopaedia is undergirded by a 'locational feminism' attuned to the politics of location, pluralisation, and geopolitical histories. It responds to Gayatri Spivak's request that feminists acquire 'transnational literacy' — knowledge of a transnational frame (Spivak 1993: 269). This demand acknowledges the interlocking dimension of global cultures and the ways in which the local is always informed by the global and vice versa. Our project intends to foreground global contexts, in part to map the complex and myriad relations that are produced across borders. However, to reveal transcultural interactions, the encyclopaedia needs to have a strategic and flexible relationship to its geographic categories (Friedman 1998: 5). This is probably one of the biggest challenges of its geographic structure. To be legible to readers, the project reaffirms national boundaries even as it seeks to cross borders.

Our public presentations of the project and discussions with our area editors have generated helpful criticism and engaged feedback on the encyclopaedia's initial classification of countries within broader regional areas. In our current planning and commissioning stage, we

are collectively addressing issues of Global North-South relations and in the case of Eastern Europe, of East-West histories as well as Russia and former Soviet Union histories (Bernal and Grewal 2014: 3). The problem of how to incorporate Russia and former socialist and former Soviet Union histories was discussed by the area editors who superintend entries from Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia.

Discussion and debate resolved that this large terrain could be structured as three large spatial territories — Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union/Russia. Within these territorial and spatial categories, individual nations and their formal boundaries would be included but overlaps would also be noted and theorised. The area editors decided that

> in effect, while certain nations would clearly 'only' belong to one category, others on the fringes would essentially overlap. So, for instance, while Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would be located under Central Asia, the Republics of Transcaucasia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) would have better proximity with Russia (but could also be dealt with from Central Asia), and so on.[3]

It was agreed that

> the Area Editors can specifically commission essays which will be territorially situated, would be necessarily inwards or outwards looking. Once 'entries' are received, the Area Editor's own introductory essays can 'section off' or 'inter-connect' parts of the territorial/spatial categories we began with.[4]

These critical insights are made possible by the area editors' individual expertise and on-the-ground knowledge and history of the geopolitics of each region and country.

A geographic structure is a recognisable organising strategy for a global audience of non-expert readers, but it is also fraught with peril. As geographer David Storey observes, notions of territory and territoriality can camouflage the socio-political complexities of these terms and reduce them to spatial boundaries: 'Territoriality thinking, the production of territories, and the employment of territorial strategies are bound up with maintaining power … [f]orms of exclusion can be consolidated and reinforced through territorial practices' (Storey 2017). In another essay he argues that territories and spatial boundaries reflect a particular organisation of space and power relations and, by extension, control (Storey 2015: 222; Elden 2010). The encyclopaedia project aims to give visibility to areas that are frequently invisible in architecture and in feminist work in architecture. The ten areas of the encyclopaedia will be presented in an alphabetic sequence, beginning with Africa and ending with the USA/Canada. In the encyclopaedia, the introductory essays produced by the overall editors and the area editors will foreground the difficult histories of geographic labels and introduce readers to current debates over nomenclature. Where pertinent, such as in describing former settler colonies,

indigenous placenames will be used in conjunction with European names. A transnational survey can contextualise production histories within specific geopolitical terrains.

Across the Geopolitics of Architectural Knowledge Production

Through its range of biographies and biographical subjects and its global geography, the project aims to present a truly intersectional feminism. This aspiration challenges the editors to ask what it means for scholars to think geopolitically and to interrogate how scholars are positioned within a global context (Friedman 1998: 11). Knowledge producers are unevenly positioned within the global sphere of architectural history. The book's content and the project's working methodology aim to engage with this problem. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Geonpul woman from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island, Queensland, Australia) has developed the concept of 'intersubjective' relationships in knowledge production to focus on relationships of power between research subjects. Her work is an explicit methodological critique of feminism's address to white women's concerns and of whiteness as an unmarked/unexamined entrenchment in knowledge production (Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

The encyclopaedia's geographical scope fosters modes of collaborative and intersubjective knowledge production. The project is strategically structured through collaboration and collective agency. To include more voices and histories from across the globe, this project requires areas that have often been the central focus of histories to cede representational space. Regions that already have deep archives of research on women in architecture, such as the UK or the US, will need to compress their histories in the encyclopaedia, to make space for other regions. This concern resonates with increasing bodies of work interrogating the geopolitics of knowledge production (Connell 2016: 135–257; Mignolo 2000). This work challenges the 'dominance of the North in globally-circulating feminist thought' (Robert and Connell 2016: 135). It also requires the awareness of global hierarchies and power differences that occur within transnational contexts (Purkayastha 2012).

In the first stage of the project, knowledge was generated in a crowd pool way; informal regional reference groups produced preliminary names for inclusion. These recommendations were collated into spreadsheets. Foregrounding feminist research within the global sphere — through collaboration and partnership — redistributes and challenges knowledge/power relationships. It acknowledges but tries to reconfigure the geopolitics of knowledge production, and with collaborative 'authorship' undermines the idea of the solitary expert within the production and dissemination of historical research (Harding 1987).

Moreton-Robinson's interest in intersubjectivity is sited in a longer line of feminist research and activism examining how the intersections of gender, race, and class have historically perpetuated inequities *within* feminism (Crenshaw 1992; hooks 1984; Mohanty 1991; Anzaldúa 1987; Federici 2004). In framing the encyclopaedia

project, we used Moreton-Robinson's insights to build on North American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's challenge to the single axis of gender analysis. In her highly influential account of intersectionality, first proffered in 1989, Crenshaw built upon decades of Black Women's lived experiences of oppression in the double axes of gender and race. Crenshaw declares that 'the failure of feminism to interrogate race means the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce subordination of people of colour, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means antiracism will frequently reproduce subordination of women' (Crenshaw 1991: 1242). This vision of the intersecting axes of oppression has developed in the intervening years to enable sensitivity to the intersections of race, class, gender conforming and gender non-conforming identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and ability/disability in producing an individual's identity. The double pull of identity is acknowledged. It is a form of empowerment, affirmation, and collective affiliation, as well as a coercive and exclusionary form of subjectivity (Kuo 2016).

Some recent scholarship challenges the intersectional approach and claims that intersectionality has outlived its analytic usefulness in both national and global contexts. For example, Bandana Purkayastha (2012) argues that the concept of intersectionality is imperfect for transnational analysis; it does not adequately reveal how transnational subjects can be subjected to hierarchies of marginalisation in one country but assume majority status in another nation state (Purkayastha 2012). Brittney Cooper has mounted a powerful counter argument to those who claim that intersectionality is limited because it cannot fully attend 'to the contours of identity'. She observes that intersectionality was not proposed as a 'totalizing theory of identity' but as a tool for making visible subjects who had been rendered illegible within legal structures of power (Cooper 2016: 1–2). Moreover, Cooper argues 'that the failure to begin with an intersectional frame would always result in insufficient attention to black women's experiences of subordination' (Cooper 2016: 7).

The encyclopaedia is committed to producing biographies that describe the multiple axes of identity and domination in a specific setting, and to understand how these axes change as subjects travel across transnational contexts. Purkayastha's insight that transnational subjects can be subjected to hierarchies of marginalisation in one country but assume majority status in another nation state is usefully brought to bear on the transnational histories of some post-war modernist women architects. This can be seen in the life and practice of Austrian-born architect Ehrentraut Katstaller Schott, who spent the majority of her career in El Salvador as both architect and educator. In the encyclopaedia entry on Katstaller Schott (b. Vienna, Austria, 1924), Sofía Rivera writes that she enrolled at the Technical University of Vienna, then was assistant to Raymund Schüller in Innsbruck, Austria from 1945 to 1946, before obtaining the professional designation of engineer from the Technical University of Graz, Austria, and a postgraduate degree in architecture from the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts (entry edited for length):

[Katstaller Schott] established her own office in the city of Frankfurt, together with Karl Katstaller. [I]n 1952 a German engineering and architecture magazine called *Bauwelt* published a short article announcing that the Minister of Public Works of El Salvador, the engineer Atilio García Prieto (1911–2004), along with others officials, had arrived in Hamburg, Germany, in search of professionals in architecture who wanted to travel to Central America to work on the reconstruction project *El valle de la esperanza* (The Valley of Hope) in the towns of Jucuapa and Chinameca, which had been destroyed by an earthquake in 1951 in the department of San Miguel, El Salvador.

Without having any knowledge about the country or its culture, Karl Katstaller and Ehrentraut Schott offered their services at the Salvadoran Consulate in Hamburg, moving to El Salvador that same year. After arriving in Central America, Katstaller Schott joined the Ministry of Public Works of El Salvador (MOP), specifically the Planning and Architecture Department (DUA) which had been created in 1950, and became the first woman to be hired at that institution. Over the next eight years, Katstaller Schott collaborated with MOP by designing numerous markets, city halls and schools, both individually and in collaboration with Karl Katstaller. [P]arallel to her work at DUA, Katstaller Schott joined the newly founded UES School of Architecture as a teacher.

Rivera connects Katstaller Schott's earlier education as both an engineer and architect with the scope of her work and career trajectory. Katstaller Schott's transnational career demonstrates how European architectural expertise was exported and provided opportunities for European women in regions of the world where formal architecture was not yet practised by women. She was one of the new cohort of 'global experts' operating within government agencies and institutional networks across the Global South in the postwar decades of geopolitical reconstruction. Katstaller Schott's was a practitioner embedded within a country, rather than an expert who passed through, to use a recent determination to distinguish between the different kinds of global experts (Lagae and De Raedt 2013). Contemporary historical research is attempting to recover global experts who were 'off radar' or less well known, but few women practitioners have been profiled in this emergent research field. Our project aims to contribute to this work.

Adopting a global framework attuned to local geographies and differences enables new, analytic categories to be introduced into the history of women in architecture. Anoma Pieris, a colleague at Melbourne University and a contributor to the South and South East Asia entries, has reminded us that 'labour' is a key term for uncovering and foregrounding socio-economic hierarchies of privilege within the category women and the architectural office in South and South East Asia. She notes that 'women drafts

people occupy the lowest ranks of construction labour' — relegated to the lower levels of status, pay, and agency even as they provide the essential work of documentation drawings.[5] Regional and transnational histories ask feminism to be keenly attentive to changes in the meaning, agency, internal divisions, and difference in the category of woman.

Biography

Biographies of women architects have surged into public visibility through recent feminist activism in architecture. Scholarly projects, like the Beverly Willis Foundation's *Pioneering Women of American Architecture* website; activist projects, such as #wikD (writing women in architecture into Wikipedia); the Brazilian collective Arquitetas Invisíveis [Invisible Women Architects] (https://www.arquitetasinvisiveis.com); and the Spanish-language blog *Un dia/Una arquitecta* [One Day/One Architect] that publishes biographies (founded in 2015 and still active; https://undiaunaarquitecta.wordpress.com), all make the life stories of neglected women in architecture visible (Pinzón and Merret 2017). These activist strategies expose the discipline's efforts to marginalise women and acknowledge the contributions of women.

Our project also participates in this biographical turn. This life writing push produces important genealogies which connect contemporary activism to past histories of women practitioners. Biography can be mobilised for a feminist politics, which is a strategic use of biography. Histories of women in architecture can be written without using a feminist analytic lens. Histories of well-known women architects, for example, have been absorbed into the canon. These biographies do not necessarily challenge the canon's values, which focus on exceptional built works and design. However, a critical approach to biography builds on early feminist architectural history work and conjoins it to interrogations of biography developed by other disciplines.

In the 1980s feminist architectural scholars consciously argued that the project of writing women back into history should not merely expand the scope of the canon but instead dismantle its principles. In the 1970s new histories of women space makers and experts who were often not architects demonstrated the possibilities of a new kind of history, but its theoretical implications were fleshed out in the 1980s. Historians and theorists have recently revived methodological debates by asserting that the contemporary feminist project must do more than simply add names of women into the canon. The Feminist Art and Architecture Collaborative (FAAC) writes, 'We agreed that simply adding women and minorities was not a satisfying solution' (FAAC 2017: 277). Katie Lloyd Thomas suggests that 'we change the question to one less tied to the conventions and values of the profession, and look for women in architecture with a lens that has not already been shaped by it' (Lloyd Thomas 2016: 181). Paul B. Preciado argues we need 'to unveil how architecture contributes to the production of gender, racial, sexual and able/disabled subjectivities' (2012: 132).

A keener examination of the forms of cultural narrative in architectural biography provides one place to begin. As a feminist geographer has observed, 'cultural narratives encode and encrypt in story form the norms, values, and ideologies of the social order' (Friedman 1998: 8–9). In the late 1980s Karen Kingsley investigated the work of interior architect and exhibition, furniture, and textile designer Lily Reich (1885–1947), and in so doing Kingsley evaluated different forms of narrative power. She pondered Reich's exclusion and minimisation in histories of German architect Mies van der Rohe, and speculated that historians preferred to ascribe architectural meaning to the wellsprings of individual talent rather than describing buildings as socially produced artefacts (Kinglsey 1988: 23). Individual biography can reinforce the mythology of the great architect and simultaneously exclude a socio-political account of architecture by using the life story as an explanatory frame for building production.

Authorship is a key issue for a volume organised around a collection of individual biographies. In 1998 architectural historian Julie Willis called for more complex accounts of production that would articulate the collective work of architectural firms. She described mainstream architectural discourse as a 'fictive reality' which did not adequately account for everyday work life. If women were rendered invisible by this mythic narrative, she declared, there were also many more invisible men in architecture (Willis 1998: 63). The encyclopaedia project aspires to work with a more distributed model of authorship that arises in a firm, partnership, organisation, institution, etc. (Orton and Pollock 1996: 330). The model of biography as a study of great or exceptional people makes women marginal, as only very few can ever fit into its framework (Caine 2010: 104). We see this in architecture where collaborative teams are rarely if ever acknowledged in a project's publication materials, thus preventing anyone other than those lead designers or partners to ever be credited with a project.

The encyclopaedia rethinks the uses of women's life histories or biographies, using feminist debates and methodologies developed inside and outside architecture. Rather than merely operating as a recovery project, biography can use individual lives to provide greater insight into the larger social, political, and economic situations of women in a particular time and place (Caine 1994: 247). Feminism is grounded in the investigation of men's and women's lives and everyday experiences (Disch and Hawkesworth 2016: 1–2). Historical biography can examine how social subjectivities are constructed and intersectionality is experienced, and can theorize the impact of feminism in everyday life (Bulbeck 1997; Ahmed 2017). The architectural producer should be located within these kinds of specific 'social and historical practices' (Orton and Pollock 1996: ii).

Thus feminist biographical practice can be *a study of subject formation*. Some strands within feminist history achieve this portrait of socially produced subjectivity by examining the typical (woman), not the exceptional subject (Caine 1994: 259). Works on the collective history of women in architecture — such as Adams and Tancred's

Designing Women, Willis and Hanna's *Women Architects in Australia, 1900-1950* and Walker and Darling's *AA Women in Architecture 1917–2017* — present and aggregate biographies to illuminate the lot of architectural women in a particular time, place, and social group (Caine 2010: 247). The encylopaedia's eleven introductory essays analyse the aggregation of biographies in order to unearth the structural conditions of women's production and education and to understand how individuals engaged with social movements and institutions, encountered structural oppressions, and challenged prescriptions or asserted agency within the limits of social contours.

We borrow from the established methods in social history and literature that attempt to write typical lives of the everyday life of the woman architect (Caine 1994: 247–261). The project writes biographies of a range of women — many of whose contributions do not meet the requirements of a canon organised around exceptional buildings or exceptional practices. Even when women's buildings meet the norms of 'exceptional building' status, the commentaries and histories on their lives and the explanations of their career paths do not conform to the exceptional architect narrative because the discourse of their 'achievements' is frequently gendered. Pace Zaha Hadid. As Rachel Lee and Anooradha Siddiqi observe, women as everyday architects and authors of everyday architecture have produced works that are 'anonymous or illegible objects within architectural history' (Lee and Siddiqi 2018).

Our project also foregrounds women who have been previously ignored. It expands the definition of architectural practice to include a much broader range of spatial engagement: from women as architectural critics to pedagogues to urban planners to heritage architects, policy makers, activists, and curators. We aim to challenge definitions of architectural practice. This expanded field of production is highlighted in the biography of American theorist and educator Phyllis Birkby, a feminist gay rights activist, who was one of the co-founders of the Women's School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA), a mobile summer school that ran from 1974 to the mid-1980s (Schroeder 2016). The biography of Pakistan architect Yasmeen Lari illustrates the expanded fields of practice pursued by women architects. After graduating from Oxford Brookes University in 1964, Lari returned to Pakistan and established a practice with her husband in Karachi. They worked in housing, government, and commercial architecture. After 'retiring' from practice in 2000, Lari entered an energetic phase of historical research; heritage work, including a position as a UNESCO national advisor; research on informal settlements and vernacular housing; the development of zero-carbon footprint construction in post-disaster communities with a focus on women's economic empowerment; and knowledge transfer through Mobile Barefoot Karavan Teams (Gillin 2012). Biography as a feminist practice renders visible different and multi-valent stories, allowing new insights and histories to emerge, such as the operation of individuals across several social movements or fields of social practice.

Biography is a well-established genre of women's history. The return of biography to architecture's public

sphere can be a critical project for feminism. As feminist theorists, we are interested in biography as a form of affective politics. Individual biographies are anchor points of individual and collective identity formation. A powerful relationship between the biographical story and the reader is part of the emotional resonance of the canon. As a recent theorist of the broader story telling turn in late 20th-century culture has observed, 'People know who they are through the stories they tell about themselves and others'. We recognise and draw on the story telling turn in contemporary culture, digital and print media: a turn that has escalated since the late twentieth century (Goodson 2016: 1). Feminist theorist Clare Hemmings has identified structures of feeling as motivations behind the impulse to tell stories: 'Feminist emotion, then, is central to the feminist stories we tell, and the way we tell them … It hurts because it matters, when we are passionately invested in academic feminist practice' (Hemmings 2005: 119–120). She acknowledges the emotion bound up in redressing past omissions but also advocates for a focus upon future possibilities for feminists' stories.

Writing feminist history is an activist project that weds aspirations for social transformation to a critical interrogation of agency and domination. Our project deliberately investigates a history of women in architecture with the intent, as Devaki Jain has argued in the context of a resurgence of the term 'women' at the UN, to 'reclaim political identity, to affirm women's collective will, the word "women"' — as distinct from gender — has 'returned as preferred currency' (Jain 2005: 5). The encyclopaedia is not a study of all the groups marginalised by architecture's power systems, which would risk 'collapsing different types of oppression', but a history of a 'discrete form of oppression and resistance' (Cooper 2016: 2).

Conclusion

As feminist activism and research again enter the mainstream of architecture, it is timely to reflect on how contemporary struggles for women's rights might be reconfigured. We have argued that architecture can productively follow the transnational turn in feminist theory, history, and action, a field inaugurated in the late 1980s under the influence of the UN conferences on women and its policies and the rise of NGOs in this arena. Research in the transnational field has expanded dramatically since the turn of the 21st century, yet we have few transnational comparative histories of women and women's rights struggles within our discipline. An expanded geography of women and architecture is more than a project of rectifying omissions; it has the potential, as we have argued, to challenge the chronologies, geographies, and periodisations of women's practice in architecture. These transnational projects can also address the contemporary geopolitics of academic knowledge production.

Like all feminist work, the encyclopaedia aspires to be politically transformative. It aims to consolidate women's identity as a category around which contemporary women in architecture can organise. Through the project we hope to build 'alliances that might transform the discipline', using the project to begin and build an expanding network that will persevere even after the project is published (Bakash and Harcourt 2015: 2). By revealing interconnections between feminism and other social movements, we hope to expand architecture's social justice framework. By bolstering transnational alliances, we aim to organise and act as activists beyond borders, and, through this methodological approach, to work across differences in race, country, and class (Dufour, Masson, and Caouetee 2010; Keck and Sikkink 1998). We hope that by challenging the pervasiveness of the formal architectural canon of buildings, new practices will be made public and more expansive types of practices will be highlighted. We hope that this project will contribute to the growing concern with broadening the discipline of architecture, to imagine other future trajectories for the spatial practitioner, both within and beyond building production.

Notes

[1] Fourth wave feminism is a category that largely exists in the media rather than in feminist academic research, possibly because of the increase in historiography devoted to the problems of the 'wave' as a classifying metaphor.

[2] Sample entry for *The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopaedia of Women in Architecture.*

[3] Personal communication, Manu Sobti to Karen Burns and Lori Brown.

[4] Personal communication, Manu Sobti to Karen Burns and Lori Brown.

[5] Personal communication, Anoma Pieris to Karen Burns.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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