CONVERGING GENDER STRUCTURES AS A PROMISE FOR A DIVERSIFIED ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract. This study analyses the otherness of female and male architects and their distinct professional identities. The hypothesis suggests that the increasing presence of women is reshaping the traditionally masculine profession. It explores whether gender becomes irrelevant after achieving a quantitative balance in Lithuania's architectural community. The research is based on a sociological survey of 450 Lithuanian architects, conducted via an online questionnaire, exploring their attitudes toward architecture, professional preferences, career paths, and loyalty. Women and men in the Lithuanian architectural community share an almost identical understanding of architecture and similar involvement in the profession. Noticeable differences emerge in the perceived scope of architectural activities, motives for choosing the profession, and time allocation in their professional routines. The assumption of distinctly gendered professional identities is only partially supported, suggesting a shift toward a more nuanced mapping professional heterogeneity rather than adhering to a binary gender structure.

Keywords: female architects, male architects, professional identit, gender balance, femininity vs masculinity, questionnaire, professional community of architects

1. Introduction

Much research on gender structure in the profession assumes that men and women in architecture form two distinct, homogenous groups (Sang et al. 2014). Is this justified? Do women perceive and practice architecture differently? Do they have a different sense of aesthetics, space and time than men? Do women organise their practice differently, preferring certain design approaches and methodologies? If these differences exist, how can they be explained? To address these questions, it's crucial to explore the relationship between gender and architecture. Finding answers is relevant, because recognising gender theory's role in interpreting architectural representations could provide a framework for understanding gendered identities within the profession.

It is important to consider the insights of researchers who analyse the architectural profession through a gender perspective, highlighting its masculine nature and the perceived otherness of women (Borden et al. 2000, Heynen 2011, Brown 2011, Matthewson 2017, Adams and Tancred 2000, Troiani 2012). A significant body of international research has focused on identifying discriminatory and gender-based inequalities in the architecture profession (Fowler and Wilson 2004, Matthewson 2012, 2015, 2017, Willis 2012), uncovering the reasons for women's differing positions in this male-dominated field and the resulting consequences, such as the 'glass ceiling', adaptation strategies, or leaving the profession (Adams and Tancred 2000, Sang 2007, de Graft-Johnson et al. 2005, Anthony 2001). This study addresses another challenge by analysing the otherness of female and male architects and their distinct professional identities. It seeks to determine whether gender is becoming irrelevant in Lithuania's architectural community after achieving a quantitative gender balance or if gendered professional identities are being eroded and levelled (Bolton and Muzio 2008: 285).

During the past two decades, significantly more women than men have studied and graduated in architecture in Lithuania (70% vs 30%), indicating a clear trend of feminisation of the profession. Therefore, this quantitative study, conducted through a questionnaire survey, explores differences in the basic professional attitudes of active female and male architects. The aim is to contribute to understanding the professional identities of female and male architects, highlighting shared or differing approaches to architecture and profession. Commonalities would suggest a gender-neutral mindset and activities within the profession, while differences may lead to a new representation of architecture, alter its content, scope, and potentially transform the field itself (Rendell 2000). The hypothesis suggests that the increasing presence of women in the architectural community is reshaping the perception of a profession traditionally seen as masculine, along with the concept of architecture itself.

2. The research context

2.1. The traditional concept of the professional architect

In the origin myths of architecture, the architect is constructed as male. In the early days of the profession, under patriarchal rule, architects were tasked with bringing nature under human control. In the 18th and 19th centuries, architects positioned themselves as fine artists and portrayed as geniuses who possessed superior gifts. The Bauhaus movement reinforced a stance of superiority toward the public (Sutton 2000: 178-189). By the 1930s, they had become a gentlemanly profession, mostly upholding the image of the genius, hero, and creative professional (Saint 1983: 114). This demonstrated that women were deemed unsuitable for the profession, as early 20th-century architects were consistently portrayed as masculine in body and mind (Stratigakos 2001).

The stereotype of the 'ego-driven' modernist architect as a powerful hero remains prevalent in professional culture. It is supported by architectural education, which emphasises originality and individual authority (Charlesworth 2006: 41), success stories of starchitects, reinforced by awards, media attention, and commissions, in a self-perpetuating cycle (Harriss, Hyde and Marcaccio 2021: 8-9) and professional recognition such as the Pritzker, Gold, Aga Khan and Stirling prizes, awarded mainly to male architects (Enwerekowe and Diyenaan 2019). Male dominance in architecture is reinforced by attributing aspirations and interests considered masculine – such as authority, honour, making a mark, and competing for reputation (Fowler and Wilson 2004). Anyone who does not fit the standard profile of a white, male, middle-aged, and moneyed architect is often excluded due to prevalent racism and sexism within the profession (Charlesworth 2006). Architecture is still often portrayed as the product of individual male artistic geniuses (Battersby 1991) and this fosters an 'individualistic masculine culture' within the architecture profession. Bourdieu's argument that women have been denied access to the truly noble tasks explains the deep-rooted gender inequalities within architecture as a high-status profession (Fowler and Wilson 2004).

2.2. Gender identity in the architectural profession

Questions about the impact of gender conceptualizations on the profession, discipline, and built environment began to arise during the second wave of feminism (from the 1960s onward) as more women entered the architectural profession. Gendered professional identity is viewed as a cultural construct (Schlegel 1990). In the 1960s and 1970s, the complex relationship between the hierarchy of architectural space and the construction of gender identity became a central theme in women's studies in architecture (Heynen 2011).

Over a hundred years after the appearance of women in the architecture profession (in Europe and North America), the idea of a 'womanly' architect still evokes a sense of misaligned categories. To navigate the "tension between cultural conceptions of femininity and the social construction of the architect as a masculine figure",

women have confronted the challenge of rejecting a self that aligns with traditional femininity in order to establish their identities within the architecture profession (Stratigakos 2001: 98).

This suggests that the professional identity of women architects is complicated by non-conforming gender role behaviour. While they wish to retain a feminine appearance, their daily behaviour becomes transgendered due to male professional standards. As a result, a kind of duality (bi-gender) emerges, leading them to move between feminine and masculine gender-typed behaviours depending on the context (Troiani 2012).

Some women in architecture prefer not to be judged by their gender, arguing that women can achieve the same outcomes as men and should be treated equally. This perspective suggests that asserting 'difference' is contrary to the pursuit of equality (Matthewson 2012: 252). Women architects from various eras describe their professional behaviour as a strategy of rejecting the feminine self, levelling feminine and masculine roles, and denying gender identity within the field (Rendell 2000).

Recent research partly confirms the neglect of gender in the architectural profession (Fowler and Wilson 2004: 209). This approach aligns with the 'equality thinking' paradigm identified by Heynen (2011: 159), which posits that men and women possess the same capabilities. It's worth recalling question whether women's 'ideational worlds' differ from men's, as true emancipation can only occur once women achieve the same status as men. "In what degree she will remain different, in what degree these differences will retain their importance" (de Beauvoir 1953: 672).

In the last decades of the 20th century, architecture critics analysed the roles of women, gender, and professionalism in architecture, exploring what the profession means for women and vice versa (Berkeley and McQuaid 1989), discussed and proposed alternative architectural practices based on a feminist perspective (Matrix 1984). This feminist approach highlights a pattern of behaviour, where women architects develop and employ 'usurpatory' strategies to challenge existing architectural practices and redefine models that are radically different (Rendell 2000). This aligns with the 'difference thinking' paradigm, which views women as "equal to yet fundamentally different from men" (Heynen 2011: 162). This perspective emphasises the distinctions between masculine and feminine approaches to architecture and examines how gender influences architectural practice. Critics argue that architectural value systems are patriarchal, noting that women prioritise different aspects in organising and designing architecture (Bradshaw 1984, Weisman 1992, Spain 1992). This challenges the definitions of both the architect's role and architecture itself.

In feminist architectural discourse, the term architecture is often replaced with the more inclusive and less hierarchical built environment, and the architect's role is viewed as that of an enabler rather than a genius. Many women architects emphasise teamwork, identifying themselves as group members rather than 'stars' (Heynen 2011). Feminists argue that the design process is where women's differences can manifest. Women architects aim to organise the design process to benefit users and clients, to focus on conveying spatial ideas rather than aesthetic expression

in architectural drawings and models (Bradshaw 1984), and to reconsider design practice emphasising the process rather than just the end product. From a feminist perspective, architecture is considered not only in terms of production but also as reproduction through cultural representations, consumption, appropriation, and occupation (Rendell 2011).

The socialisation of women fosters a different value system, emphasising qualities such as connectedness, inclusivity, an ethics of care, everyday life, subjectivity, feelings, complexity, and flexibility in design (Franck 1989). In contrast, the masculine architectural approach highlights rationality, economy, functionality, control, experience, and prestige (Heynen 2011). Rendell describes architectural practice as reflective and emancipatory, identifying five key themes of a feminist approach to environmentalism: collectivity, interiority, otherness, performativity, and materiality (Rendell 2011). This notion of architecture expands to include activist practices, where "women architects leave the office, engage with the community and seek out the need for design in that community, rather than passively waiting for clients to come to them" (Bell 2008: 15).

These feminist characteristics suggest potential differences in the attitudes of female architects within the traditionally masculine identity of the profession, leading our research to focus on identifying gender differences in the architectural profession.

2.3. Impact of socialism and post-socialism on the architectural profession

The Lithuanian architectural community developed in a different social and ideological context than Western Europe or North America. Socialist ideology significantly impacted the profession's emancipation in Central and Eastern Europe. While the West saw the rise of the New Woman movement (Fowler and Wilson 2004), the Soviet government granted women the right to vote and work in 1936. The ideal of the new Soviet woman, as socially and politically active and empowered at work (Pepchinski and Simon 2017), was influenced by earlier demands for suffrage, work rights, education, social participation, and economic independence (Ruudi 2022: 4). The equality of women established by the Soviet state had both ideological and practical reasons, as the rapidly expanding industry needed additional workforce (Ruudi 2024: 78). The mobilisation of women through constitutional obligations, educational opportunities, and social infrastructure development led to a female influx into male-dominated fields like engineering and architecture. After World War II, female participation in architectural studies and practice grew across the Eastern Bloc. In the Socialist Bloc, all graduates were assigned to state design institutes, enabling women architects to work on diverse building types and scales. Despite the declared equality, true gender equivalence was not achieved. Patriarchal power dynamics and conservative gender roles maintained a 'glass ceiling' for women architects limiting women's access to leadership, authorship, and recognition (Pepchinski and Simon 2017).

In Lithuania, the inclusion of women in architecture followed Soviet trends established throughout the Eastern Bloc. While only one woman graduated in

architecture in independent Lithuania (1930) (Drėmaitė 2022), the number of female architecture graduates surged during the Soviet occupation (1940–1990). By around 1965, gender balance was achieved and maintained into the early 21st century. Women made up 47% of architecture graduates from all Lithuanian higher education institutions in 1947–2001 (Lakštauskienė 2015); by 2020–2024, women constituted 70% of graduates from Lithuania's largest architecture school. While the exact number of practising architects in Lithuania is unavailable, women comprised 42% of certified Lithuanian architects in 2014 (Lakštauskienė 2015) and 43% in 2024.

Equal rights for architects in Lithuania were formally established during Soviet times. However, this quantitative equality did not translate into equal tasks, positions, or rewards. Women architects were often excluded from individual projects, authorship, and leadership roles, instead relegated to tasks related to everyday environments, mass construction planning, and minor or technical duties within their teams (Drėmaitė 2022). Although the situation has improved in recent years, with women architects increasingly occupying prominent positions and receiving recognition, lingering inequality suggests the potential for distinct male and female professional identities. Therefore, our research aims to test this hypothesis.

3. Data and methodology

The research is based on a sociological survey of Lithuanian architects active in design and education, conducted in December 2021 using online questionnaire data collection method. The research group includes members of the professional organisations Lithuanian Association of Architects and Architects' Chamber of Lithuania and the academic community from Lithuanian architecture schools. The anonymous respondents, reached through the relevant online distribution channels, resulted in a sample predominantly consisting of registered architects. The survey did not capture architects who are not active in the profession or those working at the margins of the field.

Since the exact number of architects active in Lithuania is not known and its determination is problematic, the sample was drawn from the study population using non-probability sampling, guided by the principle of random chance and online survey. A total of 450 anonymous respondents participated in the survey. The study employed a mixed methods research design (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2008) which involved collecting, analysing, and interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data (Trochim and Donnelly 2008).

To analyse the professional identities of female and male architects through the similarities and differences in their attitudes, preferences and career paths, respondents were asked about their concepts of architecture and architectural practice and about their professional choices. Targeted questions regarding gender-specific self-positioning were avoided to achieve more objective answers. The questionnaire includes eight structured multiple-choice questions for quantitative data, along with an open-ended question for qualitative insights. Classification information

is obtained from the gender question, while other survey questions provide key information across four topics: 1) the nature of the architect's activities and fields of practice; 2) understanding of architecture; 3) scope of practice and allocation of professional time; and 4) professional path and loyalty.

For initial survey data processing, SPSS statistical software suite and specific methods of descriptive statistics (Trochim and Donnelly 2008) were employed. Data grouping, classification, distribution, main tendency calculations, and interpretations of the results were used to process the survey data. Quantitative responses from female and male architects were compared and evaluated according to the magnitude of the difference: responses with less than 5% difference indicate common attitudes, 5–10% signify nuanced (small) differences, 10–20% reflect distinct attitude differences, and above 20% represent significant differences. Additionally, quantitative data from open-ended questions were analysed applying content analysis (Krippendorff 2004) and, to some extent, thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2021) methods.

4. Results

4.1. Gender structure of the architectural community by nature of activity, field of work, and duration of practice

The classification question "Are you a woman or a man?" revealed the gender structure of the Lithuanian architectural community: women comprised 43%, while men made up 57%. Answers to the question "When did you graduate in architecture?" revealed the gender proportions across architect cohorts, reflecting different career durations: the senior cohort (graduated 1970–1989), the younger cohort (graduated 1990–2009), and the youngest cohort (graduated 2010–2021). Respondents are unevenly distributed: 52% in the younger cohort, 29% in the senior cohort, and 19% in the youngest cohort. The gender composition differs among cohorts: in the senior cohort, males predominate at 61% while females account for 39%; in the younger cohort, males make up 58% and females 42%; in the youngest cohort, females are predominant at 55%, with males at 45%. Figure 1 provides the population pyramid of the sample.
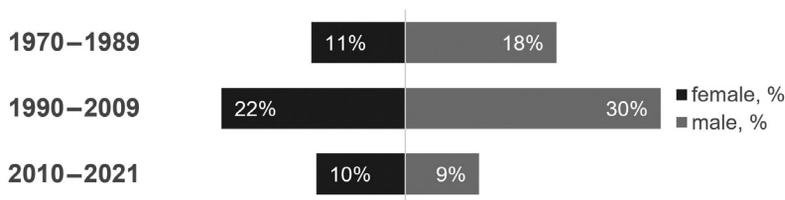

Figure 1. Sample structure by duration of career cohorts and gender
as a reflection of the Lithuanian architectural community (created by the authors).

When asked to describe 'the nature of their activities', most male and female architects respond similarly. A significant majority identify as 'designers': 87% of women and 92% of men. Three percent of both genders classify themselves in 'other roles', such as administrators, experts, or researchers. There is some variation regarding the activities of 'designer-educator': 10% of men identify as designer-educators, while only 5% of women do.

When architects were asked about their 'fields of activity', the gender structure within their activities became evident. The majority are involved in 'building design', with 70% of women and 78% of men, indicating an 8% higher engagement among male architects. However, women are slightly more involved in 'interior design' (women 5%; men 2%) and 'other activities' (women 5%; men 3%). In 'urban design', participation is similar, with women at 9% and men at 7%, as well as in the 'design of buildings and other objects' (women 11%; men 10%), where differences are almost insignificant. Overall, women are more likely to engage in projects and activities beyond building design (women 30%; men 22%).

4.2. The fundamental understanding of architecture and the profession

When asked, "What is architecture to you?" (with options including 'activity', 'object', 'lifestyle', 'self-expression', and an open-ended question), women and men have a similar, almost identical, professional perspective on architecture. The male cohort slightly more frequently associates architecture with activity, self-expression, and lifestyle compared to their female counterparts. Specifically, women mentioned activity and self-expression 6% and 7% less frequently than men, respectively. Both gender groups perceive architecture the same way as an object (1.5% difference) and as lifestyle (3.3% difference). Overall, all respondents primarily view architecture as an activity, often emphasising combinations that include both activity and other categories, such as object, lifestyle and self-expression. Notably, men are more inclined than women to reference combinations that include self-expression.

Respondents were asked to identify "what they thought was involved in an architect's professional activities". The six options included 'design', 'project management', 'architectural research', 'teaching architecture students', 'curating architectural exhibitions and events', and 'social activities in the field of architecture'. Women and men showed a common trend in their responses, consistently ranking the six fields of activity in descending order. They agreed that designing is central to architects' work (women 97%; men 99%), while curating architectural exhibitions and events is perceived as the least significant or most peripheral activity (women 39%; men 25%).

Here, we observe differences in how often women and men assign certain categories to the field of architectural practice. Statistically significant differences were noted in attitudes toward architectural research (women 66%; men 54%), curating of architectural exhibitions and events (39% women; 25% men), and social activities in the field of architecture (women 64%; men 49%). However, both genders are equally likely to classify designing, project management, and teaching architecture students as architectural activities (Figure 2).
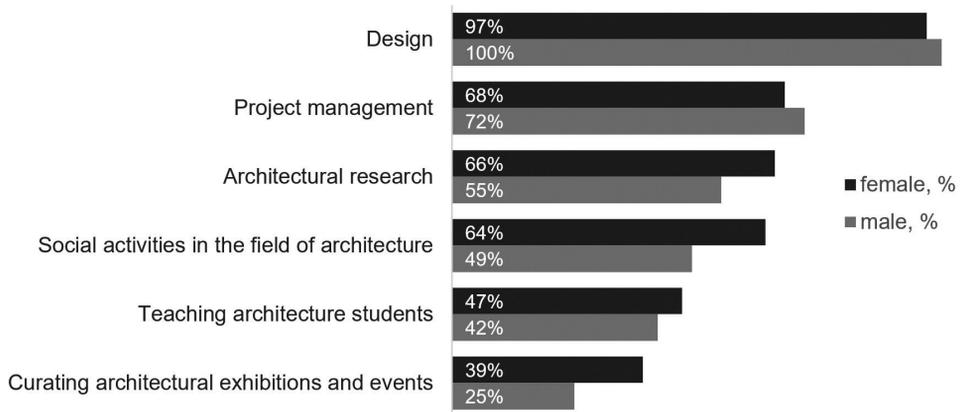
Figure 2. Comparison of women's and men's attitudes regarding the frequency of mentions of components of architect's activity (created by the authors).

In women's perception of architectural activities, designing is an essential aspect, followed by project management, architectural research, and social activities in the field of architecture, which are considered important. Teaching and curating events are viewed as more peripheral. Men perceive all six aspects in a sequentially decreasing order, lacking a clear distinction between essential, important, and peripheral activities within the architect's practice.

Observing the combinations of the most frequently expressed fields of architectural activity reveals notable differences in how women and men perceive them. In both groups, three combinations are most commonly mentioned: first, the combination of all six categories; second, design and project management; and third, design alone. Among women architects surveyed, 30% favoured the all-encompassing combination, while 12% preferred the combination of design and project management, and 9% referred to design only. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to mention two combinations: the all-encompassing combination (19%) and the design combined with project management (20%). The third most frequent combination, design alone, was mentioned by 10% of male respondents. Women architects are more likely to view architectural activities as broader, encompassing all six areas, while men also recognise the various aspects but place a similar emphasis on the combination of design and project management.

4.3. The professional path

The study revealed gender distinctions in professional paths, shaped by expectations, their realisation in practice, societal recognition, and job satisfaction. Asking 'what motivated you to become an architect?' showed that 'artistic and creative talent' was the primary motivation, and the only one stronger for women than men (women 84%; men 80%) as motives like responsibility, pragmatism, and
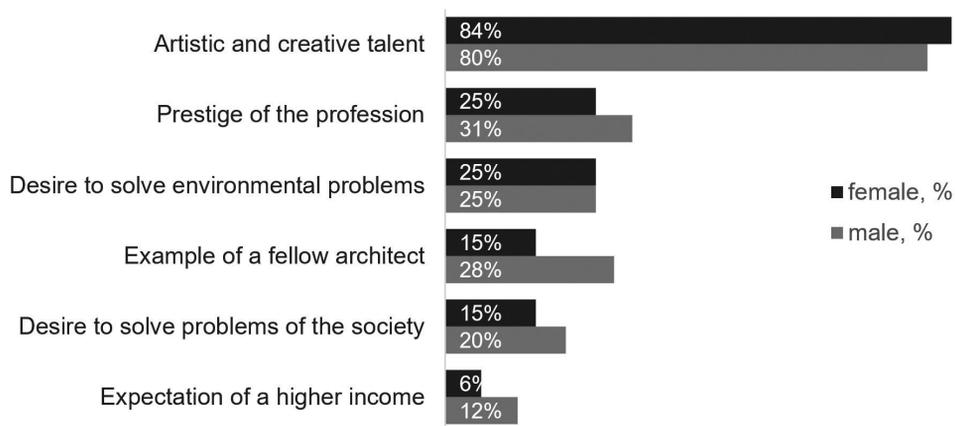
Figure 3. Comparison of motivations for entering the profession
between women and men (created by the authors).

real-life examples were more significant for men. A twofold gender gap appears in the following 'example of a fellow architect' (women 15%; men 28%) and 'expectation of a higher income' (women 6%; men 12%). The gap is smaller in expectations of 'prestige of the profession' (women 25%; men 31%) and the 'desire to solve problems of the society' (women 15%; men 20%). There is no difference in the 'desire to solve environmental problems' (25%) (Figure 3).

Men entered the profession with more motivations (average of 2) than women (average of 1,7). The largest gender gap in personal choice combinations occurs in selecting architecture for artistic talent alone (women 33%; men 21%), a notable difference exists in the choice of artistic talent plus pragmatic considerations (women 7%; men 13%). Some respondents chose the profession despite believing they had no artistic talent. Gender differences are noted among those who solely followed the example of a familiar architect (women 2%; men 7%). Only pragmatic intentions influenced 6% of both women and men, but no women mentioned a higher income expectation, while 3% of men did.

Distinct approaches emerge from analysing the detailed individual responses to the open-ended question. Women evaluated the profession from a distance, rationalising it as an appealing binary mix of art and science, appreciating its attractiveness and prestige, and expressing emotional admiration. Meanwhile, men approached the profession with determination, drawing on familiar trials and experiences, seeing themselves as constructors, builders, challengers, or those leaving a mark.

Responses to the question "Where do you spend most of your professional time?" indicate that the most time-consuming tasks in their professional routine for women and men follows a rather similar pattern. A higher proportion of men (57%) than women (46%) spend most of their working time for 'management, administration, and bureaucracy'. For a slightly smaller proportion of architects, 34% of women

and 31% of men, time spent on 'creative design' is predominant. The smallest group spends most of their time 'communicating with stakeholders', with significantly more women (15%) than men (8%).

The foundational expectation for professional practice – centred on artistic talent – has not been met for some architects. Women and men expressed unanimous dissatisfaction with the prevalence of managerial and bureaucratic tasks in their work, along with regret over the diminishing time for creative work, in their individual responses to the open-ended question. The expressed frustration relates much more to the building design segment than to gender differences. However, comparing the ratio of the controversial activities – creation and management – as the most time-consuming shows a more favourable balance for creativity in the female cohort.

Responses to the question "How has the professional status of an architect changed throughout your career?" indicate similar views among women and men regarding the second most important motivation for choosing the profession: 40% of women and 44% of men experienced that 'professional status has declined', 25% of women and 24% of men reflect that 'professional status has increased', while 34% of women and 30% of men think 'professional status has remained almost stable' or changed both directions.

However, significant gender differences emerge in how different generational cohorts assess changes in professional status. In the 1970–1989 generation, slightly more women (54%) than men (51%) reported a decline in status, while status growth was much less common (women 8%; men 20%). In contrast, in the 1990–2009 and 2010–2021 generations, a higher percentage of women reported an increase in status (women 34% and 28%; men 29% and 25%) and a lower percentage experienced a decrease (women 34% and 36%; men 42% and 39%).

The identical responses from women and men to the question, "If given the chance, would you choose to become an architect again?" – with 71% saying 'yes' and 18% saying 'no' – indicate equal satisfaction with their choice of profession and a shared perception of alignment between expectations and reality, as well as professional resilience and loyalty.

Distinctiveness appears in individual responses to the open-ended question, reflecting assessments of the profession that identify its advantages, disadvantages, and behavioural patterns. While both genders express dissatisfaction with increased bureaucracy, women often propose alternatives and solutions alongside their resentment, whereas men focus more on identifying causes and culprits in the problems they discuss. Women, more than men, emphasise their desire for creativity and express concerns about stress, competition, and income, while men focus more on the lack of respect.

In summary, statistically significant differences (a difference of 10% to 20%) between the perceptions and attitudes of female and male architects in the profession were only apparent in some aspects. There were differences in attitudes towards the scope of architects' activities, towards the incentives and motives for entering the profession, and different structuring of working time in professional routines. Women and men in the Lithuanian architectural community perceive the nature of

their activities and the scope of architectural practice quite similarly, with nuanced differences (between 5% and 10%), and feel quite similarly about their relationship to architecture (the concept of architecture). They experience changes in the status of the profession in the same way (up to 5%) and express loyalty to the profession and satisfaction with their choice of profession in the same way.

5. Discussion

5.1. Quantitative gender balance and convergence
of fundamental attitudes and approaches

The survey shows that the Lithuanian architectural community is nearing quantitative gender balance, with men still slightly dominating at 56% of respondents. The gender composition across cohorts, reflecting different career stages, confirms that numerical feminization has occurred, with women making up 55% of the youngest cohort. The higher 'feminization' of the youngest cohort of architects may signal a future trend, but it is important to note that this cohort includes the early career period, which Cuff (1991: 130) refers to as the 'experience-building period', when a large pool of women graduates actively pursue professional paths (Matthewson 2015). However, later stages may see 'disengagement' of women architects due to social factors (family, motherhood) and lower visibility in senior roles and professional registration networks (Fowler and Wilson 2004, de Graft-Johnson et al. 2005, Adams and Tancred 2000). One could argue that when there is a 'sufficient' number of women and men in a work group, a woman's gender becomes 'less distinctive' (Burns 2012: 242). However, this raises the question of whether equal gender representation in a profession implies equivalence among professionals (Fowler and Wilson 2004: 102).

The architectural community's activities are not gender-differentiated, but men are more likely than women to combine designing and teaching architecture. A UK study also noted a 'bias against the employment of women as lecturers' (Fowler and Wilson 2004: 209).

The structure of activities in the architectural community is largely consistent, with building design dominating and other areas evenly distributed. However, minor gender differences exist. Women are slightly less involved in building design but focus more on areas like interiors, heritage, landscape, spatial planning, administration and social activities.

Women are more likely than men to pursue tasks outside of building design. This may result from social conditions, such as the need for a more balanced income, or from a willingness to apply their skills more broadly. Matthewson (2015) noted women's inclination towards smaller, non-prestigious tasks, while a Canadian study found women concentrated in tasks like education, urban planning, construction, and the arts, which lie outside male-defined architectural boundaries or in more complementary roles (Adams and Tancred 2000). In the Lithuanian architectural community, despite gender balance, the slight disparity in women's roles may reflect

lingering gender stratification. A cross-national study suggests that "what is actually happening is not the feminisation of architecture as a profession, but the feminisation of low-level architectural tasks, and the consequent perpetuation of gender divisions" (Caven 2012: 374).

From a professional standpoint, women and men perceive architecture in very similar, almost identical ways. Men are more likely to associate it with activity and self-expression. This may reflect traces of the model of the architect as an artistic genius (Battersby 1991), a creative hero (Saint 1983), or the expectation of creative self-realisation (Ruudi 2024). A comparative study of architects in England and France by Caven and Diop (2012) also found no clear gender differences in gendered attitudes toward becoming and being an architect.

The architectural community unanimously agrees on the scope of the architect's field of activity, maintaining a consistent sequence of prioritised activities. There are slight gender differences in emphasis, with female architects placing greater importance on architectural research, curating exhibitions and events, and social activities than their male counterparts. This reflects feminist orientations (Rendell 2000) and aligns with gender stereotypes, where men focus on agency (design, project management) and women on community (Matthewson 2015).

5.2. Specific expectations and career path patterns

An analysis of the career paths of Lithuanian male and female architects revealed similar or distinct motivations for entering the profession, the fulfilment of initial expectations, and overall job satisfaction. The study found no significant gender differences in motivations, with creative aspirations prioritised over responsibility or pragmatism. Previous studies have shown similar motivations attracting young people (Sang 2007, Matthewson 2017) and particularly women (Sang 2007, Caven 2008, Caven et al. 2012, Caven and Diop 2012, Matthewson 2015) to architecture.

These studies identify creativity as the core of the architectural profession (Sang 2007, Matthewson 2015), supported by factors like contributing to job satisfaction, such as intrinsic rewards, relationships with architects, family influence (Caven 2008, 2009, Caven and Diop 2012, Caven et al. 2012), interest in combining science and art ('creative plus...') (Matthewson 2015, Caven and Diop 2012), focus on social issues (Caven et al. 2012, Ruddi 2024), an engaging degree program, and even childhood toys (Sang 2007). Research indicates that architects often enter the profession intuitively, without prior investigation, driven by an inherent childhood reaction (Sang 2007, Caven 2008, Caven and Diop 2012), a trend observed in both women and men (Caven 2009). Our analysis of career choice motivations revealed gender differences: women often enter the profession with fewer aspirations, relying mainly on their creative skills, while men are motivated by a broader range of factors, including pragmatic concerns, idealistic goals, and familiar examples of architects. Women often view architecture as a pleasurable creative activity, while men see it as a broader, more complex profession. Men often seek to make an impact, are motivated by the power and reputation associated with the profession and prioritise financial returns. Their motives are influenced by perceptions of architects as powerful

figures, societal expectations to maximise performance and be family breadwinners (Matthewson 2015: 17), and inspiration from successful architects around them. Women are more likely to choose architecture as an attractive profession, a suitable mix of art and sciences based on logical considerations (Matthewson 2015: 125) or to appreciate it emotionally, whereas men tend to pursue it more purposefully, often with prior experience in design and construction.

The exploration of how initial expectations for creative work are fulfilled in job reality revealed a significant pain point for architects. In Lithuania, many architects spend most of their time on project management and administrative tasks rather than on creative design, leading to dissatisfaction and bitter frustration. Researchers attribute the conflict between unrealistic expectations and the realities of practice to a mistaken view of architects as autonomous individuals focused solely on artistic design and an overemphasis on their creative competencies. This perception exists not only in the public's understanding of the profession but also reflects a desire within the profession, perpetuated by university education (Sang 2007, Sang et al. 2009, Matthewson 2015, 2017). "Many architects felt that they would be designing buildings, but in reality much of their work is administrative. As such, the real work of an architect is not design, but managing administrative tasks associated with the project" (Sang 2007: 200). Sociologists suggest that the conflict between serving 'professional' interests – such as autonomy, collegiality, and service quality – and 'managerial' interests should be resolved through 'hybrid' professionalism, balancing professionalism with managerialism (Olakivi and Niska 2017). In the architectural context, Matthewson (2017) suggests viewing creativity not merely as an artistic endeavour but as a broader 'creative plus...' approach to solving building design challenges.

While both women and men express dissatisfaction with the imbalance between managerial and creative tasks, women are more likely to find ways to avoid administrative overload and engage in business interactions with clients, stakeholders, and communities. This aligns with the stereotypical social role of women as community-oriented (Matthewson 2015: 80), contrasting with the 'genius' model and linked to qualities like caring, contextual sensitivity, and the upholding of social values (Heynen 2012: 335-336). Other researchers have highlighted female architects' willingness to communicate and collaborate (Sang 2007, Ruddi 2024). Their inventive search for alternative activities to reduce managerial tasks and dedicate more time to creativity, design, or community engagement may lead to greater job satisfaction.

Architects are concerned about their professional status as a source of intrinsic rewards and satisfaction, which compensates for job insecurity and inadequate financial rewards (Caven and Diop 2012). Lithuanian architects are divided on whether their status is rising, falling, or static, mirroring findings by Sang (2007) among UK architects. This reflects diverse perceptions of status dynamics, influenced by personal career success and confusing experiences. For example, those in the construction industry may view architects as having lower social status (Sang 2007: 200-202), conversely, public opinion polls in various countries show

that the general public considers the architectural profession as prestigious and trusts its professionals (GfK Verein 2018). More Lithuanian architects are experiencing a decline in professional status rather than an increase. This is attributed to a complex mix of social and economic factors, including the takeover of tasks by other, often less qualified professionals like project managers, engineers, or craftsmen (Caven and Diop 2012, Sang 2007, Samuel 2018, Symes et al. 1995), technological advancements, and the feminization of the profession. However, as Samuel notes, architecture began experiencing a decline in status even before its feminization (Samuel 2018: 13). Despite the inconsistent treatment of status changes and unequal experiences experienced by Lithuanian female architects, both genders in the survey reported similar proportions of status change. Gender differences in status perception reveal that female architects who graduated 1970–1989 report more negative experiences than their male counterparts. In contrast, younger female architects report more positive experiences compared to men. This shift suggests that after the Soviet era, the devaluation of female architects was replaced by recognition and respect. The more favourable perception of status among female architects who graduated after 1990 reflects their career emancipation. Matthewson (2015) also notes the declining stereotype of architecture as a male-dominated profession.

The literature presents architects' job satisfaction ambiguously, attributing dissatisfaction to disillusionment with administrative tasks, high demands, fast-paced work, and low salaries (Sang 2007, Matthewson 2017). However, these negative experiences are often counterbalanced by intrinsic rewards, such as the joy of creation, professional power, status, recognition, and social capital from stakeholder networks and friendships with clients (Caven and Diop 2012). Our survey reveals that 71% of Lithuanian architects, both female and male, are satisfied with their careers and would choose the profession again. Despite ongoing changes in the profession, this finding aligns with a three-decade-old survey by Symes, Eley, and Seidel (1995), which found that nearly 70% of UK architectural practice principals would not leave the profession for greater financial rewards and would choose it again. Previous studies have identified gender differences that create more challenges for women in practice, including lower salaries – the gender pay gap was 17% in 2022 (Architects' Council of Europe 2022: 57), greater work-life conflicts, and difficulties within the profession and the construction industry as a whole. These factors contribute to lower job satisfaction among female architects compared to their male counterparts. However, their overall well-being, positive emotions and optimism (Sang 2007: 164) help counterbalance these challenges. Paradoxically, despite differing priorities and experiences, satisfaction levels among both women and men in the Lithuanian architectural community about choosing the profession again are nearly identical across the sample and generations. This suggests a balance of advantages and disadvantages in navigating the challenges within the evolving political, economic, and socio-cultural context, which is not distinctly gender specific.

5.3. Towards convergence of gender-specific approaches

The study of the Lithuanian architectural community, focusing on the otherness of women in a male-oriented profession, revealed similarities in professional approaches and attitudes between genders, with nuanced rather than distinct differences. Women are no longer a minority in architecture, comprising 46% of the profession across Europe in 2022 (Architects' Council of Europe 2022: 6). The population pyramid of European architects illustrates this generational shift, showing that the younger the generation, the higher the proportion of women (Architects' Council of Europe 2022: 19).

Qualitative research indicates that gender differences in the architecture profession are diminishing. Caven, who studied the careers of both women and men in architecture, noted that "there are many more similarities between the men and women than were expected at the outset" (Caven 2009: 624). A large proportion of architects interviewed in the UK felt that "the attributes that made architects good at their jobs were unrelated to gender" (Fowler and Wilson 2004: 112). Matthewson observed that some of the complex social relations underlying the practice of architecture tend to render the profession blind to the effects of gender (Matthewson 2012: 245). As the profession becomes less male-dominated, future female architects face fewer discouragements in pursuing their careers (Matthewson 2015: 125).

The blurring boundaries of the profession's gendered structure is reinforced by female architects' unwillingness to associate with the feminist label due to fears of marginalisation or being perceived as disabled, as well as by the unverified assumption of inherent female solidarity (Caven 2006, Matthewson 2015). Burns (2012) argues that women practitioners' reluctance to embrace such categorization should not be interpreted as a betrayal of feminist principles, but rather as a conscious choice to define their professional identity on their own terms, recognising that professional identity is collectively constructed but individually applied. In absence of a clear and homogeneous otherness among female architects, the notion of a gendered professional identity should be replaced with an emphasis on diversity in professional behaviour and creative approaches. This concept is preferable because gender "is a construction and the features that different cultures associate with masculinity and femininity are not absolute but rather vary historically and geographically" (Heynen 2012: 335), suggesting they are not necessarily inherent in the behaviour and creativity of men and women, respectively. The study of the post-Soviet context revealed that, while certain professional approaches could be considered feminine, "generally those characteristics are on the move to becoming more universally accepted, thus obliterating the need for distinguishing them as specifically feminine" (Ruudi 2024: 93). This attitude promotes the levelling of the gender structure within the profession and shifts the focus toward non-gender-related aspects of architectural profession (Riaubienė, Navickienė and Dijokienė 2023; Riaubienė and Navickienė 2024).

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the gender structure within the Lithuanian architectural community has revealed that a quantitative balance between women and men in the profession has been achieved, and a critical mass has been reached where professional identity outweighs gender. The quantitative balance implies that equivalence between female and male architects may soon be achieved. The feminization of the profession in Lithuania may have occurred earlier than in capitalist countries, due to enforced gender equality in the labour market under socialism and a more rapid influx of women into architectural studies and practice.

Women and men in the Lithuanian architectural community share a nearly identical understanding of architecture and enter the profession similarly. Differences emerge in how the scope of an architect's activities is perceived: women tend to see it as encompassing a broader range of activities beyond design and project management, which is linked to their greater involvement in 'design plus' tasks and slightly less engagement in building design. Patterns of professional paths differ slightly, with women more often entering the field due to artistic abilities rather than real-life examples or pragmatic reasons, as men do, which correlates with their lower involvement in project management. Despite these differences, satisfaction with the profession is identical.

The study aimed to explore the professional identities of women and men in architecture and identify differences in their attitudes and approaches. However, it found only minor statistically significant differences and did not support the assumption that gender groups in the profession are distinctly homogeneous or obviously different. On the other hand, the significant presence of female architects in Lithuania indicates that these identified differences or nuanced distinctions suggest that female architects have already introduced a feminine dimension to architecture, thereby enriching and diversifying the field. This reflects a new social reality in the transformed profession of architecture, where it is more relevant to focus on the diversity of professional personalities rather than on gender identities. The binary gender structure of the profession should, therefore, be replaced by mapping professional heterogeneity. Professionals with diverse skills, approaches, backgrounds, and experiences are more productive and contribute more to the advancement of the field than divisions based on gendered differences and culturally or socially constructed stereotypes.

Further research on the architectural profession could be promising by examining different paradigms of architectural practice and distinguishing masculine and feminine attributes of practice (Heynen 2011) without directly linking these attributes to the professional's gender. Exploring how women's decisions and judgments are influenced by internalised social and cultural gender stereotypes presents another relevant research direction, offering valuable insights that could lead to more effective choices for female architects.

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