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ON STAGE!

Women in Landscape_Architecture and Planning

A. INÉS MOISSET, CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA



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a) About the current personal and/or family situation: The architect will tell us what she considers relevant about the current situation.

There's not much to be said, just my parents are architects (already retired) and my current associate was my husband.

b) About the point of view of the architecture before the studies: memories of the architectural experiences before the studies started, the point of view at that time (Thinking Architecture, Zumthor).

I was always seeing what my parents were doing at the office and at the university. Since I was a little girl I used to go with them to lectures at the faculty. We travelled a lot with my parents visiting A LOT of pieces of architecture. My mother teaches History of Architecture. At the age of eight I knew that I wanted to go on with architecture and become part of the university.

c) About the formation as an architect: How did the years of the studies go, what topics/assignments/circumstances had the most influence on your motivation for studies, what do you think now about that period of life, what would you change and what not, what was the political, economic and cultural background at that moment?

It was a very stimulating period, after the end of the dictatorship, but economically difficult. In 1989 Argentina went through a big hyperinflation crisis that led to an institutional one. Since it was impossible to purchase anything, because the currency was devalued in a matter of hours, we used to gather materials from the street with classmates to make our models. I also remember when we visited Currutchet House in La Plata, it was a revealing moment. I studied at the National University of Córdoba, which had a very good level by that time, excellent professors. Among them I can mention Horacio

Gnemmi, with whom I started to be an assistant student, and mainly César Naselli, with whom I collaborated later at his Arquitectura IV chair and in his research projects. Naselli developed some research about the design process and creativity, and his workshops were very stimulating. All that enhanced the establishment of a group of similar people with great enthusiasm. Naselli's teams from National University and Catholic University started to gather every Saturday to develop creative experiences. That is where Instituto de Diseño was born, in 1990, a research seminar on design principles (together with Viviana Colautti, Esteban Bondone and Ian Dutari).

d) About the beginning of the professional activities: What did you choose to do in that moment, what influence did this choice have on your current work, what problems/advantages did it generate, what was the political, economic and cultural background at that moment?

Just after I was graduated, I was lucky enough to be called by Marina Waisman to collaborate with her in the chair of *Problemática de la Modernidad en América Latina*. Marina is the region's most important architecture critic, and she was especially concerned at the education of the young people and thus she formed the Centre for the Education of Researchers in Architectural History, Theory and Critics, in which I was involved for several years being in charge of editing its magazine.

On the other hand, I started to work for Togo Díaz office, a local architect with a particular, very sensitive and careful work, but also for a construction company which completely changed a part of the city: Nueva Córdoba. Togo built over 200 buildings in Córdoba, during the time I worked in his office. I took part in 7 projects for high-rise residential buildings, apart from other works like a shopping centre, some single-family houses, a hotel, etc.

In parallel, I kept on collaborating with César Naselli at Instituto del Diseño, where I started to do research into

fractals. César encouraged me to apply for a grant so I could develop this work more formally, and I finally got it from the Consejo de Investigaciones de la Provincia de Córdoba, between 1994 and 1998.

Thus, I had the chance to share work with three references of Latin American architecture. Motivated by César and Marina, in 1997 I moved to Italy to do a doctorate at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, which I finished in 2000. Here, theoretical training completed the practicing I brought from Argentina. I met many people of great worth among my classmates, and we started our first online collaborations. Students from Italy, Germany, Austria, Korea and other nationalities gather in doctorate courses. From there we formed, together with Omar Paris, Red Hipótesis de Paisaje which organized seminars for 10 years without a break.

In December 2001, in the frame of another crisis in our country ('corralito') we decided together with Omar to edit the first book of Editorial i+p (investigación + proyecto), taking advantage of our editorial experience in the MW magazine (from Marina Waisman Centre). It was a thoughtless thing because any economic analyst would have said that it had to be stopped, but it went well since the currency was devaluated and it was difficult to import books from abroad, they were so expensive that we had no competitors at the beginning. There was barely any publishing production in Argentina about architecture, so crisis turned to opportunity. Obviously it was impossible to build by that time, and most of our university mates emigrated.

In 2004, we decided to publish 30–60 Cuaderno Latinoamericano de Arquitectura, a periodical publication with a meticulous selection of contents where we suggest less evident glances over contemporary architecture works from Latin America. The name 30–60 refers to a geographical position; these numbers are Northern and Southern parallels between which Latin America is located

(from Mexico to Patagonia). In 8 years of activity we have promoted the construction of collective knowledge. Over 400 collaborators have participated, providing a wide and varied glimpse. Works are selected by an international committee giving preference to emerging trends. Critics are especially invited to review works from a constructive approach. There are more than 200 works and more than 200 texts within the 32 issues that have been published constituting an enhancement for new ideas. This enterprise needs business logic to stay alive, something about we weren't educated and we had to obtain through training and consulting.

e) About the current situation of your professional activities: What opinion do you have about it, have you imagined your future doing exactly what you are doing now, how did you benefit from your cultural and personal legacy, how does the political, economic and cultural background affect you at the moment?

Apart from my research and writing in 30–60, I currently work at Carrera de Investigador Científico de CONICET, where I have been working full-time since 2002. Carrera de Investigador Científico y Tecnológico is a national body that gathers all those who do creative research and development from different levels of conception, design, approach and practice of all scientific disciplines. There, I work in fields related to public space and to alternative research methodologies bound to our discipline. I am responsible for leading projects and training human resources (PhD candidates). I also teach in some postgraduate courses, especially from Latin America. Besides, I coordinate Innovative Design Processes Master in Universidad Católica de Córdoba, where all above researches take place and where designers from different disciplines meet.

I find my job very stimulating, although it isn't the professional profile shown in the schools of architecture. The possibilities of our disciplines are much wider than the university programs. The space and funding given by our nation to generate science and technology is some-

thing to emphasize, especially when there is a lack of available resources. The stability achieved during the last years made possible to bear an editorial project that was born in a crisis. Furthermore, there are so many things to be resolved and so much room to make proposal (in all fields). That is an open door to creativity.

f) About other non-paid complementary activities: How do they relate to your current work, what advantages and disadvantages do they generate, in what way do they influence your point of view?

I cooperate with some civic participation groups and heritage protection groups, which demands to be on permanent alert and to provide information to media. The advantage is to have the chance to have a bearing on politics, avoiding that the knowledge stays within the universities and academic circles. This allows interacting with media, politicians, social organizations, etc. and it provides a broader vision than the one given by the discipline.

g) About the compatibility between different kinds of activities: How do you achieve it, does it generate any problem or the advantage for you?

So far there are no incompatibilities. Everything I do is different sides of the same thing.

h) About the visibility and recognition of your work and other non-paid activities: Do you feel well compensated for your efforts and professional capacity, do you consider you have equal opportunities, or do you have to choose?

I cannot complain about myself. I am a privileged. I am where I want to be, in the fight.

i) About the social point of view of the work made by women: Do you consider the behavior as fair, do you share your responsibilities with your familiars and/or partners, do you find the language used around you to be discriminatory?

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I never felt offended by any of my workmates or relatives; neither in the institutions I am working. But this is within the academic and scientific spheres where I move and with the personal. On the contrary, I was always encouraged. I cannot extend this to the whole social perception of the labour made by women or the whole architecture profession. But I do take questions about why I chose not to be a mother, since it's what is expected from a woman. Obviously responsibilities like reproduction, maternity and care are made invisibly and with no room for discussion. Besides, construction is a sphere where masculine prevails. Female students have little references in that sense.

j) About the incorporation of the gender perspective to the everyday life: Do you consider that it is necessary to intensify collective incorporation of the gender perspective, do you think that this particular action would bring any improvement (or not), please describe in what way it would affect you?

I totally agree with the introduction of the gender mainstream to everyday life. That would mean more equitable relationship between the sexes. Even if I consider myself an exceptional case, I don't work alone, but I network with many other people where disparity is present and not alien to me. Obviously, the problem should be solved as society and not as something isolated.

k) About the existence of 'different way of seeing the architecture': Do you consider that there are different points of view, what is your opinion about it, do you think it is positive to insist at this particular point?

Absolutely, and it is very valuable if we have an approach from which we assume that diversity is the richness of our society. It is also necessary to say that gender perspective is not only a women issue but it has to be debated by men who will gain other roles. Besides, it is impossible to separate this debate from a criticism of capitalism (and the issue of labour) and the sustainability of our planet. Even if they seem topics of great magnitude they are completely linked to everyday private decisions.

l) About the possible prognosis of the near future: How do you see the professional situation in short/long terms, how do you see the social situation of women in short/long terms, do you see any alternatives in professional work of the architects?

I think there are great opportunities for women architects if we consider a redefinition of the profession. This redefinition means rethinking the way we build, the technology, the times, the stakeholders of the system; and those areas where women are more present (research, theory and critics) should be introduced into university programs. This is a micro scale where we can act and have effect.

