

Friday, 15 June  
9.00-11.45

Track: Body and Mind  
Room: *National Library, Main Conference Hall*

**A WOMAN'S SITUATION: TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY AND GENDERED PRACTICE**

**Session chairs:** Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, Harvard University  
Rachel Lee, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

As a factor of globalization that accompanied the modern colonial and postcolonial period, transnationalism and an emerging landscape of cosmopolitan sites offered women new proving ground outside established social, cultural, and commercial spheres of architecture and planning. In this session, we investigate the significance of transnational mobility, over an open time period, for women as architects, planners, patrons, builders, curators, historians, or other users of the built environment. Whether their movement was based on privileged access to international networks or resulted from forced migration, we find repeated instances of an engagement in debates on regionalism, the vernacular, the everyday, the folkloric, and the anonymous, as expressions in architecture and planning. Seeing these debates as deeply contingent on the subject's position, this session seeks precision on a problem that has inhabited the fringes of architectural and planning history: the gendered connections between an extreme mobility (understood as conditioned by specific historical contexts) and a theory of the situated. Thinking with Donna Haraway—in particular, her concern with 'situated knowledge' as that which is informed by the subject's position and does not attempt the abstraction of universalism—this session attempts to map mobility and gender onto one another within a set of practices and visions that focused on structuring, building, historicizing, or thinking the undesigned, the unplanned. We see this in part as stemming from the vision of a stranger, a function of vision from a periphery or a territorially interior margin. As Hilde Heynen has discussed in relation to Sybil Moholy-Nagy, the turn to architecture without architects also shifted claims upon expertise, opening the position of expert to a wider pool. This session takes the epistemological question of what knowledge is produced by transnational mobility, and attempts to move beyond the frequent challenges of the archive and historiography, to suggest certain sites of resistance to a 'canon' from which many women have been excluded, as well as to the various borders which define architectural expression, authors, and publics. Bringing the work of women architects and non-architects alike into conversation, we invite papers that consider understudied professional figures such as Sybil Moholy-Nagy, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, Charlotte Perriand, Erica Mann, Jane Drew, Lina Bo Bardi, Minnette de Silva, Hannah Schreckenbach, Dorothy Hughes, Gillian Hopwood, Ursula Olsner, and Denise Scott Brown, or a variety of named and unnamed groups of women—clients, laborers, refugees—whose transnational travels affected the built environment or its history.

**PAPERS:**

**Enclosed Bodies: Circulation and its Discontents**

Ross Exo Adams, Iowa State University

This paper attends to relations between gender, mobility and marginality by re-reading the nineteenth century theories of Ildefonso Cerdá against recent work of Silvia Federici.

In her book *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), Federici expands Marx's notion of 'primitive accumulation' to signify a process of accumulation of differences within the working class, whereby hierarchies built upon gender and race became constitutive of the modern proletariat. Federici reveals that the contemporaneous processes of land enclosures, colonization and witch-hunts were parts of the same broader process whereby gendered and radicalized bodies were 'enclosed' in new power relations just as was the land, separating for the first time productive and reproductive labor from one another.

Federici's analysis has compelling spatial implications, and it is in this regard that Cerdá's work may shed light on how her notion of 'enclosure' had hardened into relations made legible as a universalist spatial project associated with nineteenth century globalist imaginaries.

Predicated on unlimited circulation of bodies and capital across the planet, the 'urbe', as Cerdá called it, proposed to overcome all spatio-political divisions. Yet, in doing so, it would construct a space constituted instead by a single distinction, one on which the entire system depended: that between circulation and domesticity. Revealing Federici's argument in remarkable clarity, Cerdá's urbe divulges how the enclosure of women's bodies in modern power relations is made spatial in the reduction of life to two gendered states: economic production and biological reproduction, or waged consumption of productive, male labor power and unwaged, female reproduction. Three centuries after the witch-hunts had forced a transformation of the human condition, Cerdá's urbe suggests an isolation of these two states, on which capitalism's conditions of possibility still rest today.

### **The Gendered User and the Generic City: Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* (1947/1954)**

Mary Pepchinski, Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden

This paper takes up the challenge put forth at the 2008 conference on Simone de Beauvoir at the Free University Berlin, to assess her vast literary output using frameworks beyond the discourses of Philosophy and Feminism. Accordingly, this paper argues that Beauvoir's 1947/1954 book, *America Day by Day*, an account of her post-war sojourn through the United States, produces an argument about everyday urbanism and the transient, gendered user.

In de Beauvoir's view, architecture in combination with urban design was integral to the modern project. She was informed about recent developments, and made a point of visiting newly constructed projects, from the Waldsiedlung in Berlin to Brasilia, the new capital of Brazil. Although at this time male European intellectuals were becoming fascinated with the United States and its cities and were publishing impressions about their American sojourns, de Beauvoir was well aware that (explicit) writing about architecture and urbanism was masculine territory. Perhaps for this reason she did not state that the city *per se* was one focus of her book.

*America Day by Day* presents her experiences in the American city. For de Beauvoir, the post-war American metropolis ('the dimensions of these cities are discouraging') is both antithetical to its European counterpart and alienating. Because she is transient, she finds herself drawn to sites that enable her to 'enter' a city—typically spaces which mediate between individual needs and the desire to be part of a shared space, such as parks and museums, but also hair salons and bars. Whereas her perspective is gendered and subjective—she is female and foreign, single and childless, middle aged and intellectual, as well as bisexual—the places she chooses as points of entry are depicted as generic and interchangeable. These places take on special importance because they allow her to "enter" into the life of a given city, or feel connected to instead of alienated from its goings-on.

It is not known if *America Day by Day* was ever embraced as a directive for urban planning. But upon publication it identified the single, transient woman not only as a user of urban space, but also as having specific needs, which the design of post-war cities would now have to accommodate.

**'Dear Ms. Comrade' or A Transnational Agent in the Communist World: Architecture, Urbanism, and Feminism in Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's Post-War Work, ca. 1945-1960**  
Sophie Hochhäusl, University of Pennsylvania

In 1945, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky returned to Vienna, after being imprisoned for more than four years for her participation in the communist resistance against the Nazi regime. In the following months, she sought to resume architectural work as an expert on housing, educational institutions, and kindergartens, which she had designed in the interwar period. In conservative post-war Austria, however, picking up work proved to be no small task. Many colleagues and building officials in the Viennese municipality remained wary of a female communist, particularly against the backdrop of growing Cold War divides. Disappointed by the lack of opportunities to realize built projects and already in her early fifties, Schütte-Lihotzky had to find alternative career paths, as a writer, curator, organizer, and activist. Her work as the newly elected head of the Austrian Federation of Democratic Women allowed her to travel, and, in time, brought her architectural work as a consultant, predominantly in the communist and socialist world.

In this paper, I elucidate these trips from the GDR and Bulgaria to Mexico and Cuba, and, in particular, those to China in the late 1950s. In her role as consultant, I argue, Schütte-Lihotzky remained committed to the modernist – and sometimes universalizing – tenets that had characterized her interwar architectural work. But her writing and travel observations, interspersed with photography, and later published as books, reveal a different effort of imbricating objects, buildings, and debates about lively urbanism with local histories. In addition, Schütte-Lihotzky's letters, many written to other female professionals, illuminate a network of transnational exchange about modernization that was attentive to customs and traditions, in particular when it came to studying women's and children's lives in cities. I argue that these texts expose a dilemma of a transnational agent operating in the communist world: how could modernization, rapid development, and internationalism be reconciled with customs, culture, and a rich and greatly diverse history? How could one negotiate a commitment to modern architecture with sensitive urbanism? And how could an outsider express something meaningful about a country only known through travel? As the paper will show, this endeavor was as much about consulting as it was about developing a methodology for studying building and cities in a communist environment.

**Georgia Louise Harris Brown and the Myth of Brazilian Racial Democracy**

Anat Falbel, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro  
Roberta Washington, Roberta Washington Architects

In the study of gendered practice and transnational mobility, the career trajectory of Georgia Louise Harris Brown (1912-1999), the second African-American architect licensed in the United States, presents a special case. Georgia Louise Brown graduated from the University of Kansas and the recently reorganized Illinois Institute of Technology, directed by Mies van der Rohe, beginning her practice during the 1940s. Seduced by an ambiance that seemed comparatively free of racial boundaries, she landed in Brazil in the first years of the 1950s. Although she may have been naive about the restrictions imposed on foreign professionals in those times, she arrived in the country at an opportune moment, during great industrial development, and was almost immediately engaged in the establishment and design of industrial plants.

Georgia Louise Brown's career path will be analyzed as part of a dialogue between architectural history and gender studies, considering a threefold approach:

- the complex dynamics of cultural transferences after World War II between the United States and Brazil, and the architect's place within it;
- Georgia Louise Brown's particular insertion in the professional milieu of architectural practice in the city of São Paulo, where international capital strongly stimulated the engineering and construction industry;

- the issues of alterity and self-imposed exile in Georgia Louise Brown's life and career during decades of Brazilian nationalistic fervor.

### **Horizons of Exclusion: Lina Bo Bardi's Exile from Exile**

Sabine von Fischer, Agentur für Architektur

Open plans in residential and institutional architectures, a transatlantic biography, and the rhetoric of a 'bright blue horizon' combine to produce a narrative that emphasizes the overcoming of limitations in the life and work of Lina Bo, later Lina Bo Bardi. Her early drawings transmuted the poverty of war into strokes of colour; the later ones, the poverty in the periphery of Northern Brazil into masks, chairs, and museums.

Embodying the cultural paradigms of both the establishment and of dissidents, Lina Bo Bardi belonged to an international, well-connected elite of political emigrants. Despite the international resonance of her work, it remained largely ignored by the Brazilian-born, male architects of the Paulista school. Her exile in Brazil, from 1946 onwards, was followed by relocating (repeatedly, temporarily) from the industrialized metropolis of São Paulo to the remote Bahia region. There she found an authenticity as aspired to by 1960s counter-culture, blurring lay craftsmanship and regional expertise into a somewhat romantic moment, one that by necessity requires a more critical reading today.

To what extent was the vernacular simply a fancy for bourgeoisie tastes, and in what way can 'Doña Lina', as her students called her, serve as model of the female architect overcoming boundaries? The tacit class and gender assumptions that emanate from recent reflections on her oeuvre prompt further questions relating to the role of the architect as elite, expert, and agent. Moreover, the question remains of why she has commonly been portrayed as a singular figure rather than as belonging to a generation of counter-cultural architects. Such contradictions were both accentuated and blurred by Lina Bo Bardi as part of her transnational identity. Possibly, her synthesis of the modern and the vernacular, of international design and the everyday, was formed from self-constructed ambiguities.