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Architecture as a gendered profession:

a comparison between Italy and the UK to understand the

material and cultural reasons that reproduce gender disparity.

Maria Silvia D'Avolio

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the University of Sussex is solely my own work. I hereby declare that no portion of the work that appears in this study has been used in support of an application of another degree in qualification to this or any other university or institutions of learning. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author.

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Thesis abstract

This study aims at understanding the material and cultural reasons why women leave the profession of architecture disproportionately when compared to men.

I developed a study which compares Italy and the United Kingdom as two case studies, where I conducted a total of 39 individual interviews and two focus groups with women in architecture - either students, employed or self-employed in various sectors, or who left the profession at different stages. The original empirical data has been analysed through a thematic analysis which identified three main areas of discussion: the construction of professional and personal identity among female architects; material experiences of being female professionals in the construction industry, with a particular emphasis on implications of childcare and sexism; and consequences of leaving the profession on their identity as architects. Moreover, my own personal experience as a role-exiter in architecture helped me in accessing and understanding at a deeper level discourses relevant in the field.

The first two chapters of this thesis analyse the context of architecture in both Italy and the UK and offer an overview of the existing literature and perspectives dealing with gender and work. There is a particular focus on architecture and the construction industry, highlighting the main theoretical approaches employed more effectively in previous studies in the field. Chapter three illustrates the research design and methodological reflections about the project. The main empirical chapters are intended to illustrate the analysis of the data firstly in the UK, then in Italy (chapters four and five), before offering a comparison of the results in the two different contexts (chapter six). The thesis concludes offering a discussion of the research questions and of the main contributions offered by the study to the research field, which originate particularly from the case studies approach employed in the study. In addition, I briefly conclude with a discussion of implications and strategies for policy and practice.

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List of Abbreviations

ACE - Architects' Council of Europe

ARB – Architects Registration Board

BAME - Black, Asian or minority ethnic background

CIC – Construction Industry Council

IVA – Imposta sul Valore Aggiunto (Italian equivalent of VAT - Value-Added Tax)

RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Acknowledgments

'The concept of gender refers to relations between 'men' and 'women', that is, the way we divide society's members up into two (or more) biologically-distinguished sexes and allocate to them different social roles and attributes. It covers, then, both the sexual division of labour and cultural definitions and ascriptions concerning femininity and masculinity'.

Harriet Bradley, Gender and Power in the Workplace (1999: 22)

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This study is a comparison of the profession of architecture in two European countries, Italy and the United Kingdom, with a focus on gender disparities within the industry.

In order to offer an original and critical discussion on the topic, I present an analysis of the labour market of these two countries which focusses particularly on architecture as a distinctive profession. By the term '*profession*' I refer to an occupation which benefits from institutionalised recognition (Freidson, 1986), such as being regulated by a professional body, have a formal educational pathway (which is often limited in access), and is traditionally considered as valuable and elitist (Abbott, 1988). The controlled access and the institutionalisation of an occupation offer to its members a certain *professional status*, which is more or less powerful depending on the condition of practice, the organisation of the occupation, and its relation to other occupations (Dingwall, 2008).

Architecture is a peculiar profession which is positioned between the arts and science and technology (this controversy in the earliest stages of the institutionalisation of architecture has been also discussed by MacDonald, 1995: 108), and it is performed in various working environments (such as the office, the construction site, on-site meetings with clients and local authorities). This dual position inevitably carries implications for the working conditions and expectations of architects, for example having double competing figures, having to be perceived as someone with a '*vocation*' rather than just a job, or engaging in tasks which unexpectedly lack creativity. Moreover, this divide is not always clear at the moment of choosing this career and many students become aware of this contrast between expectations and reality only during their first working experience, leading to the extensive phenomenon of leaving the profession. These contrasts are particularly relevant for women, as they realise that architecture is still a male-dominated profession which, on the practical level of the labour market, excludes forms of flexible employment and, on the level of social roles, requires the performativity of an ideal professional identity which traces male norms.

These aspects will be extensively examined throughout the whole thesis and discussed through the analysis of the original empirical material gathered for the study. This material is comprised of accounts by women in the field, sought through interviews and focus groups and aimed at understanding women's experiences in the profession and the reasons that lead to their discontent.

The comparison between Italy and the UK is interesting because they present an opposite trend in general female employment rates - 71.8% for British women in January 2019 (ONS, 2019) compared to 49% in Italy (ISTAT, 2019). Female employment in the architecture field meanwhile is 17% higher in Italy (ACE, 2019). In other words, despite greater numbers of women working in the UK than in Italy, they are less likely to be employed in architecture. This has provoked an investigation about how structural inequality and culture are related: women's value is both employed and perceived on a lower level compared to men, especially regarding the profession of architecture.

The topic of women in architecture has been of interest to a broad range of researchers and practitioners, with the majority of studies carried out in the last 10 years, almost exclusively in the UK, Australia and the US, but none in Italy. However, those studies were mainly focussed on analysing women's experiences, their satisfaction and their career trajectories, with little attention towards the broader implications of architecture's gender dynamics on their identities and on the practice of the profession itself. Moreover, only a couple of studies which compare two different contexts have been conducted so far, with a focus on the UK, Spain and France (Caven and Diop, 2014; Caven and Navarro Astor, 2013). This study builds from previous work and focuses on the experiences of women in architecture to understand the extent to which architecture can be considered a male-dominated profession, and its consequences for the retention of women in the field.

Furthermore, this study is inevitably shaped through my own understanding and experience as a woman qualified in architecture. After seven years of education in Italy, I have practiced as an architect for almost one year before deciding to pursue this research project.

This introductory chapter offers an overview of the subordinate position of women in the labour market both in Italy and the UK, with a particular focus on the profession of architecture in both these countries. I also highlight the benefits offered by the comparison of Italy and the UK as two case studies before illustrating the main objectives of this research project and the questions that guided the research design and the analysis of the empirical data sought through interviews and focus groups.

1.1 – Gendered Employment

Trends in the labour market are inevitably influenced by economic booms or crises, or worldwide events such as wars or sudden switches in governments. Patterns of employment are directly affected by such events, and female employment in particular is more likely to be influenced, as historical cases illustrate. For example, in the UK women were under-employed before the Second World War. However, the labour market needed their participation which increased from 38% to 55% during the war (Crompton and Jones, 1984). This sudden change inevitably affected the labour market once the war was over, since women tended to stay in the labour force, inevitably saturating it. Moreover, the mass employment of women also determined alterations in family and household dynamics, including the need to adjust childcare and the addition of women's limited wage to the family earnings, historically only provided by the male breadwinner. Those rapid changes in society's structure created various situations of *anomie* (Durkheim, 1893), for example gender conflicts in Trade Unions where working-class men saw their employment threatened by women's participation in the labour force, and the result of increased competition on the effective lowering of wages (Glucksmann, 1990).

In the following years, the pattern of women's employment faced two main changes: firstly, an increase in the proportion of working married women (a 400% from 1901 to 1971); secondly a two-phase work profile for women, characterised by a drop in employment between the ages of 30 and 45 years (bi-modal pattern). This latter data suggests that childbearing and childcare occupied a pivotal role in family and therefore women's lives. Crompton (1997: 77) argues that '*the greatest increase in labour market participation since 1984 has been amongst women with children under 5; from 37% in 1984 to 52% in 1994. The proportion of women in employment goes up as children get older*'. This data suggests that the need for women's contributions towards the family wage pushed women to go back to work earlier after childbirth, and this trend increased over the years (ONS, 2017; Anyadike-Danes and McVicar, 2010).

Labour market and employment patterns have changed again since the 2008 crisis. The economic crisis is characterised by a general lack of jobs, an increase in casual employment by single family earnings being insufficient, by the average age of motherhood moving forward, and with austerity affecting welfare state and family policies (Kamerāde and Richardson, 2018; Rubery, 2015; Ginn, 2013). The labour market has changed rapidly in the last 10 years. In this difficult situation, women continue to occupy a further disadvantaged working position compared to men. According to the latest statistics from Eurostat (2017), the European employment gap between women and men is at 11.5%, with the Italian situation being the second worst in Europe at 19.8%.

The gender imbalance in employment (re)produces dynamics and stereotypes that affect women's occupational power. Firstly, despite cultural shifts aimed at challenging traditional understandings of the nuclear family, caring duties still heavily rely on women. In the UK, for example, women carry out an overall average of 60% more unpaid work than men (ONS, 2016). This need for flexible and caring-friendly employment affects their employability, both directly and indirectly through certain dynamics such as a broken employment history, lack of mobility, and 'threat of motherhood', to name a few. Furthermore, gendered stereotypes about specific technical and behavioural skills and attitudes that women lack, compared to men, are prevalent. The economic system and the labour market have strict requirements from workers in terms of education, skills, availability, and working patterns, and women are characterised as lacking many of those characteristics due to their material and social position.

A further observation to be made, especially considering the two countries analysed in this study, is the role the State plays in the advancement of the labour market - particularly through the impact of the Welfare State, which can be implemented in different ways and have distinct weights. The welfare state produces various gendered implications for female workers, from identity to material conditions. For example, Pateman observes that:

> *'whereas men were incorporated into the welfare state as individual citizens – that is, as workers who could contribute to social insurance – women were incorporated as members of families, that is, as wives and mothers […] women were dependents who made claims on the welfare state through their relationship as a member of an employee's household. Women were not, therefore, 'full citizens', as they did not have direct access to the provisions of social citizenship' (Pateman, 1989, cited in Crompton, 1997: 55).*

In other words, the feminist narrative that a suitable welfare state is able to contribute to gender equality fails to consider that the male-breadwinner model of the family structurally prevents women from reaching that equality, as argued also by Land (1994). The mechanism which denies their identity as full citizens becomes institutionalised through legislation which only consider the male-breadwinner family model. Leon (2005: 206) further explores this aspect, arguing that in some countries '*access to welfare benefits is fundamentally determined by participation in formal paid employment*'. Meaning that welfare states are able to either promote or discourage women's engagement in paid employment, and to provide or facilitate autonomy from family dependency. Leon continues arguing that '*women's engagement in paid work is crucially*

influenced by the way in which the welfare state conceptualizes care work as either paid or unpaid, and public or private' (ibid.). This idea of women as denizens (half citizens) is confirmed in today's patterns of employment, where women occupy the majority of the precariat, which is characterised by insecure employment, lack of benefits, casualization and lower pay (Kamerāde and Richardson, 2018). Therefore, using the dual narrative of the blue-collar and white-collar jobs, it can be argued that women are the 'underclass' of the white-collar sector, where 'class' is defined in terms of 'market capacity' (Giddens, 1973), because they possess a *disqualifying* market capacity (e.g. concentrated in lower-paid occupations, chronically unemployed or under-employed). '*The gender system is a hierarchical one*', argues Ruth Woodfield (2007: 35). The gender division of labour and women's segregation in lower jobs will be more extensively discussed in the next chapter.

Women's experiences of work

Italy and the UK are characterised by different female employment patterns, and this is reflected in how Italian and British women experience differently various issues, such as educational choices, motherhood and sexism at work.

In the UK in 2019, women were 1.36 times more likely to enter *higher education* than men (UCAS, 2019), which is similar to the 1.2 times in Italy (MIUR, 2018). However, in both countries it is clear how gender stereotypes influence women in enrolling in more traditionally feminine careers, with an astonishing 50.2% gap between female students choosing courses in Engineering and Humanities in Italy (MIUR, 2019), and an even higher gap in the UK where 78% of female students dominated courses in Education whereas only 19% choose Engineering courses (ESA, 2018).

The horizontal segregation in education is inevitably reflected in a similar labour segregation in terms of occupations and employment (Bettio et al., 2009), where in both countries women are overwhelmingly employed in careers that are culturally recognised as more feminine (Centra and Cutillo, 2009), for example the 'five Cs' (clerical, cashiering (retail), cleaning, catering and caring occupations) which employ tree-quarters of working British women (Kamerāde and Richardson, 2018).

Moreover, segregation and inequality are subsequently reflected in the gender pay gap (which is a combination of factors such as lower pay, part-time employment and vertical stratification for women), which is still extensively present in both countries (Chevalier, 2007; Rustchelli, 2007). Therefore, the gender pay gap is an inevitable consequence of the limited labour power

held by women in the labour market, which is affected by their own working priorities: flexible and part-time work is preferred in order to carry out care duties (Centra and Cutillo, 2017).

Overall, it is evident that among the life choices able to influence employment and career pathways for women, *motherhood and childcare* play an overwhelming role. However, the extent to which women's priorities, cultural stereotypes and social support towards care duties influences women's employment has different outcomes in Italy and the UK. For example, Italian literature suggests that female employment is a reflection of women's life choices (Pescarolo, 2007) rather than a consequence of how the labour market is organised, which is extensively discussed in British literature (Scott et al., 2010). Furthermore, what keeps reproducing these mechanisms is that individual expectations are matched with both formal institutional policies and sectorial practices (Rizza and Sansavini, 2010), for example this is reflected in the length of parental leaves in the two countries. Maternal leave in Italy is five months long (paid at 80%), with the possibility to take an additional ten months of 30% paid leave (Eures, 2019), whereas in the UK women have 39 weeks of 'Statutory Maternity Pay', which is paid at 90% for the first 6 weeks and 90% (for a maximum of £151 a week) for the next 33 weeks (GOV.UK, 2020). The shorter and less well-paid leave for the Italian working women reflects the culture and the traditional social expectations of women as main carers which is so ingrained in society to the point of shaping their employment patterns. In fact, in Italy women are more employed in full-time work compared to their British counterparts (68% compared to 61%, according to Eurostat, 2019), but at the same time they tend to be self-employed, differently from British workers, where only 11% of working women are self-employed (House of Commons, 2020). In addition, another characteristic of Italian mothers is that they can rely more on grandparents for childcare (Meggiolaro, 2018; Sarti, 2010), an informal support system that is lacking in the UK. These opposite employment patterns and alternative care systems are reflected in how institutional policies are different in the two countries, offering British women longer and more highly paid maternal leave.

However, the influence of women's life choices on their employment does not always negatively affect their career plans. In fact, the economic recession, which is particularly tough in Italy is playing a big role in increasing the trend in voluntary childlessness in Italy (Tanturri and Mencarini, 2008), showing how the opposite can also happen and career aspirations are able to affect life choices.

Another aspect which is experienced differently between Italian and British workers is the extent to which *sexism and episodes of harassment* happen in various working settings. Italian literature on the topic stresses the normalisation of sexism in the working lives of women

(Fasoli et al., 2015), suggesting that Italian culture and media play a big role in reproducing acceptance of sexism in working environments (Formato, 2017 and 2014). British culture, instead, is more critical towards this normalisation and suggests the need of calling out sexism and harassment as not acceptable in working settings, and in everyday life more broadly (Ahmed, 2015; Bates, 2014; Gill, 2011).

1.1.1 – Architecture: gender in the profession

Architectural practice in Europe is marked by a drop-out of women at every stage of their career, as demonstrated by research conducted in 2018 by the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE, 2019), highlighting that overall the presence of women represents only 39% of the total.
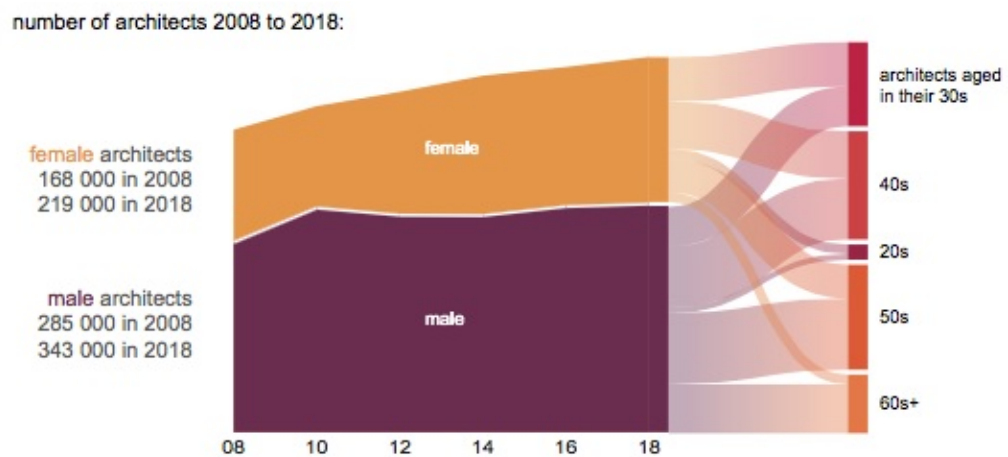
Figure 1 – 'Female/male architects in Europe from 2008 to 2018' (ACE, 2019).

The drop-out is evident from the above infographic, which shows how 53% of architects in their 30s are female compared with 32% in their 50s, highlighting a 21% drop-out in just 20 years life span. Furthermore, a steady drop-out also happens during the educational pathway, where in the UK female presence drops from 50% to 44% between Part1 and Part2, and a further drop of 3% happens before Part3 (RIBA, 2018a). The drop-out both during education and employment represents an essential factor to investigate in order to understand female discontent in the field. In particular, leaving the profession carries a multiplicity of material, cultural and identity implications on women, given the specific elitist character of the architecture profession. These issues will be referred as '*role-exit*' (Ebaugh, 1988) and explored throughout the thesis.

In terms of earnings, in Europe male architects earn 25% more than women in full-time jobs, whereas the gender pay gap in part-time jobs significantly decreased from 11% to only 2%

in just two years (ACE, 2019). Interestingly, the pay gap favours women in the age span 30-34, to immediately fall back to 25% from 35 onwards (ACE, 2019), as evident from the following graphic.
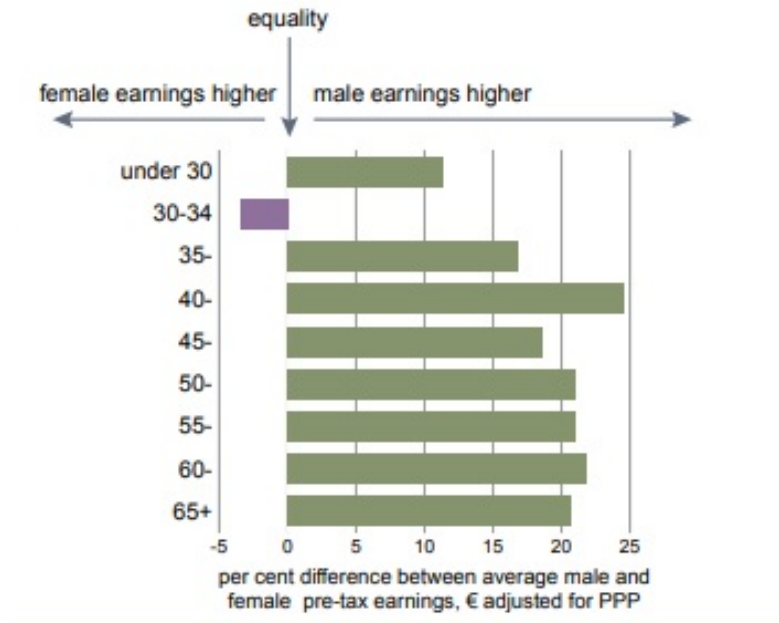
Figure 2 - 'Change in male/female architects' average pre-tax earnings 2008-18' (ACE, 2019).

Considering how male earnings are overwhelmingly higher in all the other subgroups, this result seems unlikely to be representative of the real situation. However, the previous ACE publication in 2016 does not include this same graphic, therefore it is not possible to evaluate the change of this data over the last two years. If correct, this data suggests that childhood, the most impactful event that may happen to 30-34 years old women, has a remarkable effect on the form of their employment and, therefore, their earnings.

The breakdown of the data by country shows that in Italy 43% of architects are women, compared to the European mean of 39%, which are proportionally more than in the UK, where women are only 26% of the total (ACE, 2019). However, despite the higher presence, female Italian architects still earn 36% less than their male counterpart (CNAPPC-Cresme, 2016).

Different studies found in childcare one of the main reason of women's limited participation in the profession (Burns et al., 2015; Fowler and Wilson, 2004). Women themselves consider motherhood to be in contrast with the culture of architecture and often move to part-time jobs or self-employment (Caven, 2004; de Graft-Johnson et al., 2003). Non-standard employment, as a strategy often employed by mothers of young children, has been argued to bring a risk of marginalisation (Adams and Tancred, 2000; Fowler and Wilson, 2004). However,

it can be observed that the decision to employ non-standard work is not necessarily linked to childcare, but also to other factors such as ill-health, response to redundancy, control over career, or the willingness to pursue a personal project at the same time of working as employee, as disclosed by the study conducted by Val Caven in 2004. Many of the women interviewed in her study affirmed that their decision was based on choice rather than on constraint.

Recession and prestige

Employment in architecture and engineering sector faced a slight decrease from 2008 to 2018 in Italy, for both women and men, with a decrease of women from 108.2 thousand to 106.5 (Eurostat, 2018). The UK, meanwhile, witnessed a big increase for both men and women, where women's employment raised from 118.6 to 148.4 thousand in ten years. Nonetheless, both Italy and the UK are in the top five construction industry markets in Europe, as evident from this chart:
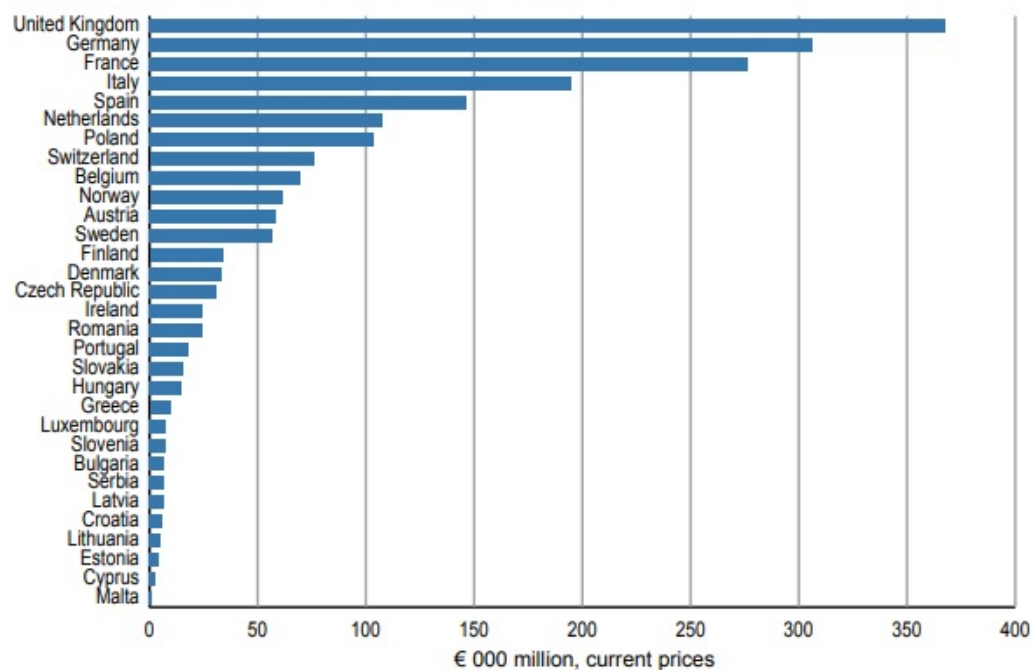
Figure 3 – 'Estimated size of Europe Construction Market 2018' (ACE, 2019).

However, both academic research and sectorial studies pointed out that the profession of architecture no longer holds the prestige of the past (ACE, 2019; AJ, 2018; Dezeen, 2017; Caven and Diop, 2012). This is mainly due to mechanisms such as the emergence of similar professional figures, namely the civil engineers which are considered holding a more scientific knowledge, the subsequent increase in sectorialisation and further professionalisation of different areas of

the same field, the increase in number of chartered architects all over Europe, and the phenomenon of the 'feminization' of the industry (Bolton and Muzio, 2008). The stark increase of European architects, almost 25% in 10 years (ACE, 2019), highlights the paradox of the growing number of architects in the receding Western economy.

The total number of architects in Europe (562,000) is 3% higher than in the previous survey conducted two years ago. However, the various economic recessions of the last half century led to a reshaping of the size and number of projects obtained by the majority of small/medium sized architectural practices in the UK. As a consequence, architects earn less than bricklayers and work unpaid overtime as the norm (AJ, 2018a).

Gender Pay Gap

Female architects are generally underpaid, even when employed in the same role and with similar responsibilities and working hours, as evident from results from the latest European report on the profession. The report highlights that men employed full-time earn 25% more than women. The gender pay gap for part-time architects is considerably lower and dropped from 11% to only 2% in the last two years. However, it must be considered that this data does not say much about gender differences in earnings, considering that the vast majority of architects employed part-time are women (ACE, 2019).

This is not unique of architecture (see for example Boll et al., 2016; Bishu and Alkadry, 2017; O'Reilly et al., 2015) but has only recently obtained a widespread acknowledgment in architecture at the end of the fiscal year 2017, when practices which employ more than 250 employees were legally requested to publish official gender pay gap reports (reports are publicly available from the government's website at: https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk). In April 2018, the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) voluntarily published its gender gap figures despite employing fewer than 250 employees. RIBA President Ben Derbyshire has encouraged smaller practices to do the same (RIBA, 2018b), in an attempt to give wider relevance to the phenomenon and raise public awareness. For example, Zaha Hadid Architects, the third-biggest architecture practice in the UK, made big headlines when a 20% pay gap in 2017 has been disclosed, despite it being one of the few practices employing a high percentage of women in senior management roles (AJ, 2018b). The importance of these policies and actions towards the transparency of wages resulted effective so far in many sectors (Rosenfeld and Denice, 2015), especially considering the fact that many women are not aware of being underpaid.

Education

Architectural education is negatively influenced by two main factors: *access* and *long training*.

In Europe, women started to be accepted in schools of architecture from the end of the 19th Century (Walker, 1986). However, female architects have been granted a marginal role in the practice of the profession: they were almost exclusively assisting in projects of male architects, with decorative or auxiliary tasks, or they could dedicate themselves to architectural criticism (Walker, 1986). The limits of access are clear from this historical snapshot: only privileged higher-class white women could consider studying architecture. Cultural, social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) were prerequisite in accessing the profession, characterised by hereditariness, prestige, need to access networks of wealthy clients and to own expensive technical instruments. Characteristics still relevant in contemporary society and therefore effectively limiting diversity among architecture students, especially in terms of economic and ethnic background (RIBA, 2019; 2018a). This difference becomes more relevant if analysed in terms of the retention of students into the three different steps of architecture education: as mentioned above, women's drop-out rates are higher compared to their male counterparts. The drop-out for students from ethnic minorities is even more striking - between the start and completion of the degree the number of white students increases from 66% to 90% (RIBA, 2018a).

The requisite to undertake a long training affects both less economically advantaged individuals, who may not be able to afford a long training, and women, who will fully qualify not earlier than in their late 20s. This age represents the moment when women need to decide whether to invest a few more years in employment in order to secure a senior position which will allow them to come back to their role after childbearing, or to start a family first and then enter the labour market considerably later than their colleagues equal in age. Adapting what Wacquant (1995) mentioned regarding the body of boxers, the body of a woman also has inherent structural limitations, including an expectation of motherhood and a determined timeframe, which links different working positions to different family duties.

Furthermore, it needs to be acknowledged that institutions are also gendered. For example, Architecture Schools are male dominated environments, where the majority of teachers are male, and the pedagogy is characterised by macho culture, as extensively illustrated throughout this thesis.

Diversity

The imbalance of access and retention in education inevitably affects diversity in the profession. Furthermore, media representations of female architects increase stereotypes and misconceptions: in movies and TV series it is very rare to find female architects and, whenever present, they are always associated with interior design (e.g. in Will & Grace, 1999-2006, or Transparent, 2014). It is difficult for young architects to find affirmed examples of women in their field: (with notable exceptions Zaha Hadid and Kazuyo Sejima) there are only a few other well-known female 'StarArchitects' to refer to, many of whom are seen as marginal partners of better-known male architects, such as Denise Scott-Brown and Robert Venturi, Aino and Alvar Aalto, Alison and Peter Smithson. This concept of 'partnership' is itself an interesting phenomenon to consider and analyse further.

The demographic of the profession highlights a wider lack of diversity in terms of economic background and ethnicity (DCMS, 2016). This latter aspect is particularly relevant in the UK, where in the largest 100 practices only 12% of architects are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background (BAME), as illustrated by an analysis led by the Architects' Journal (2018d). Moreover, one third of the AJ100 practices (The Architects' Journal top 100 practices) do not employ BAME architects at all. This suggests a considerable lack of diversity in the profession, especially considering that most of these practices are based in London, the most demographically diverse city in the UK with 40.2% of residents identified as BAME (GOV.UK, 2019).

Professional bodies are still male dominated and one of the main critiques moved to the RIBA since the 70s is that is not committed at increasing diversity. However, in the last few years, especially under the guidance of its only female president, Jane Duncan, the RIBA launched a series of programmes and policies aimed at increasing diversity - for example the Role Model scheme and the advisory group 'Architects for Change'.

Stereotypes and limitations

Architecture, as a profession in the construction industry, can be considered to be based in two main work settings: the office, and the construction site (Watts, 2009). As this study demonstrates, women's interaction with other actors in these two environments is often defined by stereotypes about their appearance, their physical strength and adequateness, their ability to cope with technology and with the culture of a masculine profession. Studies on the gendering of jobs and technologies by Cockburn (1988; 1993) showed how important technological mastery was for maintaining male dominance in workplaces. Therefore, women's

own characteristics are perceived as not fitting the profession, due to centuries of male domination. Gendered power dynamics have shaped the concept of *space* itself, historically banishing women, through their lack of independence, to physical and professional constraint. This is clear from many examples, such as the renowned need for 'a *room of one's own*' advocated by Virginia Woolf (1929), or architecture-specific examples such as the Frankfurt kitchen and household as 'professional workplace' for housewives (Henderson, 1996).

Furthermore, it is important to consider language in order to understand how the architectural discourse plays a role in preserving gender-based relations of power (Coleman, 1996). A discourse which, according to Grosz (1995), is characterised by a complete absence of the feminine. It is possible to challenge language gender dichotomy in today's practice, but it is not possible to historically change it, thus the need to explore and analyse previous language domination in order to address change.

In short, the architectural profession in Europe is at 61% male dominated (ACE, 2019), and is important to understand the reasons why this inequality keeps on reproducing itself. Joan Acker (1990) analysed a set of processes involved in the gendering of organisations, able to produce and reproduce gendered order (Bradley, 2007). In this study, I analyse these processes in order to define to what extent male domination is part of architecture's organisational habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), which created the very profession of architecture and reproduces it today identical to itself. As also clearly explained by Mark Wigley in the essay 'Untitled: The Housing of Gender':

> *'The active production of gender distinctions can be found at every level of architectural discourse: in its rituals of legitimation, hiring practices, classification system, lecture techniques, publicity images, canon formation, division of labour, bibliographies, design conventions, legal codes, salary structures, publishing practices, language, professional ethics, editing protocols, project credits, etc'* *(Wigley, 1992: 329).*

In other words, it is important to analyse architecture's history and organisational habitus in order to understand the gendered patterns that led to architecture being considered as a masculine profession.

Adapting Acker's framework of analysis of the processes of gendering organisations to architecture practice, it is important to understand how women and men are divided into

different tasks (the gendered division of labour, as exemplified in this context by Powell et al., 2009). To consolidate this division, it is necessary to construct symbols and imagery able to justify and therefore maintain such order, offering symbolic power to the dominant group (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, men maintain dominant positions also in the workplace, both in terms of physical space and occupation of higher positions. This domination is able to influence women's and men's self-perception as both employers and employees.

Architecture in the UK

Today, there are 33,500 architects in the UK, and only 26% of those are female (ACE, 2019). There are two bodies which regulate the profession in the UK, the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architecture) and ARB (Architects Registration Board): it is compulsory to register with the ARB in order to use the title 'architect' but not to practise the profession. Membership to the RIBA is completely voluntary, although the majority of registered architects join the RIBA too, because it offers further social status which is important in a traditional and elitist profession such architecture.

The Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) is the oldest independent school of architecture established in the UK in 1847. Women only started to be accepted to the AA school in 1917, and to other schools during the 19th Century (Walker, 1986), although their roles in the professional field were limited and marginal for a longer period. At the end of the 19th Century some activities were considered more feminine, such as decoration or garden design, where almost the whole female occupations tended to merge into (Chase, 1996). As already mentioned before, architecture was an elitist discipline reserved for middle/upper-class people. For example, in the UK pioneer architects such as Julia Morgan, Lilly Reich and Eileen Gray were from wealthy backgrounds and able to invest in a costly education which was not necessarily meant to generate income.

In the following 100 years the number of female students steadily increased to the point of reaching a 50% balance (RIBA, 2018b). Today, students start the long and costly educational pathway with a three year BA followed by a mandatory 12 month internship. At this point, they can decide to register with the RIBA as Part1 architects, or they can undertake a further two year MA, followed by another internship and the possibility to register as Part2 architects. Eventually, Part2 architects could decide to undertake another year that would enable them to register as RIBA Part3 Architects, or as Architects in the ARB. Overall, the whole process requires at least 7 years of training, if undertook as full-time.

In terms of the typology of employment in the labour market, the UK is characterised by the highest number of practices with more than 50 employees, a higher number than any other European country (ACE, 2019). The comparison with Italy shows an opposite trend - Italy has 7.4 times single staff practices by comparison to the UK. In particular, as shown in Figure 4, the two countries occupy the opposite poles for the whole European sector, with the UK being the first country in Europe for number of practices with staff numbering from 11 to 30, 31 to 50, and over 50 (the three largest categories), and Italy being the first in the opposite categories, staff of one, two, three to five, and six to 10.

number (estimate)	size of architectural practice (number of architectural staff)							TOTAL
	1 staff	2 staff	3 to 5 staff	6 to 10 staff	11 to 30 staff	31 to 50 staff	over 50 staff	
Austria	1098	333	279	93	26	1	0	1831
Belgium	3263	465	436	159	43	21	2	4389
Croatia	360	143	140	40	14	0	1	698
Cyprus *	67	50	90	9	8	0	0	225
Czech Republic	885	154	334	97	47	4	1	1524
Denmark	919	123	106	44	58	12	9	1271
Estonia *	75	25	41	14	6	0	0	161
Finland	151	53	57	35	31	6	4	336
France	5537	1456	777	194	59	7	2	8033
Germany	26970	3560	2167	561	173	8	1	33440
Greece	3568	988	548	118	89	10	4	5325
Hungary *	409	185	168	71	30	5	1	869
Ireland	389	91	91	26	33	4	2	636
Italy	32633	4237	3245	781	291	31	23	41242
Lithuania	181	59	84	26	8	2	0	359
Luxembourg *	168	23	49	16	9	1	0	268
Malta *	48	39	27	27	6	3	0	150
Netherlands	2136	673	411	115	70	11	12	3428
Norway	344	45	121	52	62	3	4	630
Poland *	2085	661	1075	179	138	0	7	4146
Portugal	1706	570	763	198	91	16	11	3356
Romania	888	737	584	147	44	4	2	2407
Slovenia *	220	60	81	22	3	0	1	386
Spain	5312	2371	2006	586	57	4	2	10337
Sweden	705	141	112	59	41	8	11	1076
United Kingdom	4407	981	1268	445	305	70	39	7515
2018 EUR-26	94526	18227	15060	4112	1746	230	139	134038
per cent of practices	71	14	11	3	1	<1	<1	100

Figure 4 – 'Estimated number and size of architectural practices' (ACE, 2019). Coloured box added to emphasise the two analysed countries.

Architecture in Italy

The gender difference in Italy is more balanced by comparison to the UK, with women occupying 43% of the profession (ACE, 2019), although they earn considerably less than their male counterparts (CNAPPC-Cresme, 2016). Despite having the largest population of architects in Europe (27% of EU total), Italian architects' income almost reaches the bottom of the

European mean, 19th out of the 26 countries (ACE, 2019). The correlation between number of architects/earnings is more consistent in the UK (respectively fourth and fifth in Europe) than in Italy (respectively first and nineteenth). This, of course, influences both the education and the practice of the profession in the latter country. Considering the above data, education in architecture can be considered as an investment not necessarily followed by adequate economic reward: the average income is €19.000 (approximately £16.000), and for a young architect under 40 it can be as little as €9.000, which can be considered a low-income range (Il sole 24 Ore, 2016).

In terms of educational pathway, in Italy it is possible to decide to undertake a three year BA course, eventually followed by a two year MA, or directly a five year MA path. After obtaining any of these qualifications, in order to practice as an architect it is necessary to pass a national exam on behalf of the Ministry of Education. This exam is comprised of three different phases over a period of at least six months. Depending on the level of the qualification obtained, BA or MA, the exam enables the graduate to operate as Junior Architect or Architect. Overall, the whole process needs at least six years to be fully completed, and registration to a Provincial Architects' Chamber (*Ordine degli Architetti*) is compulsory in order to practice.

1.2 – Aims and Objectives

The aims of this research study are firstly, to explore the reasons that reproduce gender disparity in architecture and if those reasons are similar/different in the UK and Italy, and secondly, to critically interrogate what leads women to leave the profession. In order to achieve this aim, I collected original empirical material in both countries through individual interviews and focus groups, I then transcribed the data and analysed it through a thematic analysis.

Italy and the UK as case studies

An objective of this study is to develop the research design and the analysis of the data through a case study approach in order to discern differences and similarities between Italy and the UK in two main areas. First, in what ways are the two countries different/similar on issues related to the labour market (welfare, parental leave, full- and part-time jobs, etc…) and the profession of architecture itself (kind of tasks performed, average wage, aspirations, examples, training obtained, methods of recruitment, etc…)? Second, how is the professional identity perceived by women in the field?

Approaches which offer a comparison of different contexts have not been sufficiently employed in the studies of architecture (except for a couple of small studies such as Caven and Diop, 2012,

and Caven and Navarro Astor, 2013) despite offering a promising perspective, especially if the two comparing cases are characterised by different features but similar outcomes, and vice versa. This is particularly relevant for the two countries selected for this study, which are characterised by different social, cultural, historical and architectural contexts. However, the material outcome of a gender segregation in architecture is similar in both Italy and the UK in terms of drop-out rates, gender pay gap, and limited employment and career progression. The comparison led to useful findings for understanding the patterns that reproduce the gendering of the profession of architecture.

Research Questions

The study addresses three main research questions, all developed through a case study methodology:

- How do women choose to enter architecture and what experiences do they have in professional training and work in Italy and the UK?
- What are the material barriers to women's employment typical of this profession in Italy and the UK?
- To what extent are processes of professional identity construction and role-exit different in the two countries?

In the next chapter I explore various perspectives around gender and work, in particular regarding gender in organisations and inequalities in access, retention and progression. I discuss how various theoretical approaches have been employed in studies on gender and work, in particular regarding architecture and the construction industry at large. I conclude the chapter by presenting the standpoint that I took in this study. Chapter 3 illustrates the methodology and the research design of this study, including reflexive accounts about the sampling and the conduction of individual interviews and focus groups in both countries. Chapters 4 and 5 offer a thematic analysis of the empirical data firstly in the UK and then in Italy. Both chapters are divided into three parts, 'culture and identity' where I discussed education, professional and personal identity of participants, 'material experiences of female architects' which focuses on labour market, implications of childcare and sexism, and 'role-exit' in which I follow the narratives of five participants who left the profession at different stages of their career. Chapter 6 is aimed at comparing the main results obtained in the two countries. In particular, the main areas discussed are: education; working as an architect; gender discrimination and strategies; identity; and criticisms and alternatives. The last chapter offers a discussion of the research

questions and briefly illustrates the main contributions of this study and some implications and strategies for policy and practice.

Chapter 2 - Gender and work

In this chapter, I offer an overview of various perspectives on gender and work applied in literature, with a particular focus on gendered mechanisms that affect employment at different levels, from the labour market, to organisations, professions and the workplace. Successively, I present some of the main professional sectorial studies that look at architecture and, more broadly, the construction industry. To conclude, I position my research according to the theoretical and applied material presented.

The main focus of this thesis is on gender, as also clear from the title, chapters sub-headings and the characteristics of the participants, however the overlapping of various layers of discrimination will be present and discussed throughout the whole thesis. Despite not being openly grounded in the concept of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990; Davis, 2008), this study inevitably considers an intersectional approach when reflecting on the data.

2.1 – Perspectives on Gender and Work

This study can be understood as set in the field of the sociology of work with regards to gender. New definitions of the term *work* have been recently debated (Halford et al., 2013; Pettinger et al., 2005) in order to be more representative of new developments in the labour market during the last few decades. In particular, the concept of *employment* is useful in suggesting the gendered implications of work done for economic reward. As Crompton and Jones (1984: 145) suggest:

> '[…] the distribution of rewards from employment accords only loosely with 'market principles'; the market itself is socially constructed. Thus, what is supposedly valued in the 'market' [...] may not actually be determined by market factors'.

In gendered terms, the value of a female employee may not depend exclusively on her competence for the job, but on gendered implications that are valued on the market more than her ability to fit the job. For example, women approach employment with a devalued position and higher probability of underemployment due to the expectation for them to perform care duties, towards children and related elderly people, and domestic roles (Kamerāde and Richardson, 2018; Bettio et al., 2009; Glucksmann, 1995; Crompton, 1995).

For this research project I analysed various studies on the topic of gender in the labour market, in particular concerning the construction industry and architecture. Among the variety of theoretical approaches that have been employed to analyse and make sense of the gender

dynamics in these sectors, four approaches emerged as important to my study - Marxist Feminist, Bourdieusian, Interactionist, and Gender Performativity. At the outset of the research process I had a number of assumptions based on my reading. I thought that Marxist feminist theory would have helped me in understanding material implications of gender discrimination towards women, especially regarding childcare and employment. Bourdieusian theories for exploring the importance of different forms of capital in order to access and progress into architectural careers. Interactionism (in particular Goffman) for analysing workplace dynamics and stereotypes. Finally, gender performativity for interpreting the actions that women employ to fit in in the male-dominated field of architecture. My intention was to employ these theoretical approaches in order to develop my own thinking and to reflect on my data, rather than to lead the structure of my research study, especially considering that this is an empirical thesis. I initially envisaged that the interdisciplinarity of these approaches would have offered me a favourable tool in the understanding of the original empirical data that I gathered for this study. However, as I discuss in the conclusions, I ended up relying on some approaches more than others, and of course drawing on ideas from outside these four schools of thought. That said, all four approaches were important to the study and were helpful throughout.

I focused on specific concepts relevant to my study from each of those four approaches, as illustrated in the brief overviews below.

Traditional Marxist approaches mainly focus on material causes and consequences of inequalities. In addition to this, the main interest for **Marxist feminist** scholars has been to incorporate gender with this analysis, and therefore understand the historical and economic conditions that originally divided men and women in different working spheres and practices. Marxist feminist authors agree that market and domestic economies are intertwined, and women's subordination is reproduced through a set of interlocking structures, theorised as *Patriarchy*, notoriously by Kate Millet (1971), Heidi Hartmann (1979) and Sylvia Walby (1990).

Pierre **Bourdieu** agrees with Marxist feminists' view that men dominate public space and hold various forms of power, while women remain assigned to the private space. However, he gives more room for women's agency over structure by comparison to Marxists. He does it by linking objective structures to subjective experience (Skeggs, 2004). In doing so, Bourdieusian approaches consider different forms of capital - other than the merely economic form considered by Marxism - and aim to highlight how men (and dominant groups in general) hold most of these capitals and therefore the power to set themselves as the norm.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective which focuses on the micro level, in the sense that is aimed at understanding interactions among individuals rather than wider

institutions and structures which happen at the macro level. In particular, it focuses on *language* and *symbols*, and on the effects that those have on *identity* processes. One of the most influential interactionist authors is Ervin Goffman: the concept of *performance* is a dramaturgical metaphor to explain how individuals present their self in everyday interactions through performances of various roles, which are the reflection of both physical characteristics and established social roles (1990).

The **gender performativity** approach aims at implementing the interactionist approach specifically regarding gender and, at the same time, critiques both the attempt to consider gender as role or as display (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 127). Instead, it considers the use of the verb '*doing*' in relation to the concept of gender, emphasising the basic idea that gender is embedded in interaction. Furthermore, this approach is critical towards the gender binary, as clear from the aim at *troubling* gender argued by Judith Butler in one of the most influential works on the subject: 'Gender Trouble' (1990).

The following sections present and evaluate the application of these theoretical approaches to previous studies, both at the macro and the micro level of the analysis of gender in the labour market, organisations, professions and the workplace.

2.1.1 – Gender and the Labour Market

In this section I outline specific mechanisms of gender discrimination happening in the labour market in Western countries. Men are historically the primary controllers of discourse concerned with production, employment, and specific working tasks (Bradley, 1999), and by holding symbolic power, they are the univocal definers of the norm in many occupations (Martin, 2003). Men in the labour market are the representation of what is normal and what is deviant by contrast, what is 'other' (de Beauvoir, 1949). In 'Masculine Domination' (2001), Bourdieu argues that men not only learn but also embody symbolic meanings related to certain occupations, and women are evaluated according to norms which are not universal. They obtained this power by historically creating modern jobs (Davies, 1996), to the point that still today working practices that differs from traditional employment are perceived as deceptive. For example, part-time or temporary employment, casual work, and home working are still portrayed as not real work, even if used by men themselves. However, women are generally more likely to occupy these kinds of positions (Warren and Lyonette, 2018) since they are still expected to carry out main unpaid care and housework duties.

Time is gendered

Many feminist scholars interested in the unequal participation of women in the workforce agree that gender inequalities are reflected in the social organisation of time, which is gendered in every aspect of life (Sirianni and Negrey, 2000; Glucksmann, 1998). Adapting the Marxist terms of production, reproduction and consumption to the three main areas of activity of an individual, namely paid work (employment), unpaid work (childcare or housework) and leisure, it is clear that the concept of time is commodified (Federici, 2018; 2004). As explained by Sirianni and Negrey (2000: 60): '*as labour power is a commodity exchanged in the market and as labour is measured in terms of time, time is commodified*' and, furthermore, time is gendered. All the different spheres of time have repercussions on the temporal asymmetries between men and women in paid work. Recurrent gendered patterns in different forms of employment, such as women largely employed in part-time and temporary work compared to men (Warren and Lyonette, 2018), the need for flexible jobs, and the dominant model of 'career' which is difficult to pursue for a woman because of the lack of linearity and continuity of employment, create a discrepancy between female and male labour power. Moreover, the time spent in unpaid work also affects participation in paid work. Women tend to undertake more than double unpaid work compared to their male partners (ONS, 2016), thus affecting their availability and, therefore, their labour power. In addition, leisure time is also deeply gendered (Beck and Arnold, 2009), with women undertaking more self-care and individual activities (because of social norms and the need to be flexible to carry out care work), compared to social activities of men such as pub gatherings and team sports. This affects their social capital and women's ability to engage in networking outside working time. Conceptualisations of uses of time as a form of discrimination are supported by many feminist scholars, for example Coyle (2005: 78) in the clear statement: 'di*fferences in working times reflect material inequalities*'.

Gender segregation and inequality

Gender inequality at work can be interpreted as a particular form of inclusion, rather than a complete exclusion of women from the workforce (Davies, 1996); and it might assume many forms: horizontal segregation (man and women are expected to be employed in different occupations and to perform different tasks), vertical stratification (well-known is the concept of the *glass ceiling* (Frenkiel, 1984) as a metaphor for the upper limit that women face at some point of their climb on an organisation's ladder) and pay gap. Current discourses about the reasons why women obtain less promotions and are underpaid compared to men suggest that women lack confidence in asking for equality: the concept of the "confidence gap" has been

recently researched through empirical studies (Estes and Felker, 2012; Ehrlinger and Dunning, 2003) focused on evaluating the reasons why women do not consider themselves as ready for promotions, and why they generally underestimate their abilities. Women seem to be less appealing for employers because they are considered less productive or more costly to employ (Reskin and Padavic, 1994). In order to challenge this vision it is essential to determinate what productivity means: skills, experience and commitment (Cohn, 2000). Women are considered less productive than men because of their limited cultural capital, which is affected by their incapacity of accumulating the same amount of occupational knowledge as their male counterparts, due to their occasional absence from the labour force in order to accomplish their family duties (Cheung and Halpern, 2010). Reskin and Padavic (1994: 8) argue:

> *'Society is still making assumptions about which activities are appropriate for one sex or the other. These labels influence the job assignments of women and men, and they influence employers' and workers' expectations of who ought to perform various jobs'.*

Meaning that gender discrimination at work is a result of cultural beliefs and stereotypes around the 'roles' and the 'characteristics' of women and men. Therefore, stereotypes unconsciously lead both employers and women themselves to consider men as more adequate for certain kind of jobs or worthier of reaching high positions (Barreto et al., 2009).

The labour market is based on a structure of occupational inequality, and Crompton and Jones (1984) argue for the need to understand the patterns of individual mobility in respect of this structure. In particular, systematic gender disparities in the labour market happen, as summarised by Acker (2006: 443), in power and control over (1) goals, resources and outcomes; (2) workplace decisions; (3) opportunities for promotion; (4) security in employment and benefits; (5) pay and monetary rewards; (6) respect; (7) pleasure in work and work relations. Being able or not to have control over those aspects inevitably affects the possibility to stay in employment (or in more advantageous forms of it).

Policies aimed at promoting equality strategies and overcoming these structural limitations have been employed at various levels, from education to recruitment. However, these actions attracted many criticisms. For example, quotas and reserved seats have been considered as forms of reverse sexism or discrimination (Kingsley and Glynn, 1992) which limits the possibility for the best candidate to be hired, thus affecting meritocracy and productivity. Yet, these criticisms fail to acknowledge both structural factors that affected a fair participation

in the first place (Federici, 2004), and more pragmatic arguments such as the impact of the critical mass on introducing effective change (Powell et al., 2006).

Division of labour

The gendered division of labour, in Marxist terms, is the effect of the relationship between the political nature of employment and the material base which causes inequality (Grint, 2015). Adding a gendered focus to this view, Marxist feminists define it as the consequence of the combined effects of Capitalist and Patriarchal society on women's employment (Glucksmann, 1990; Hartmann, 1976). This consequence on the market economy causes, in turn, negative effects also on cultural aspects which affect women's work. Useful in this regard is the concept of *feminisation* of work. The phenomenon of feminisation develops historically from the mass entry of women in employment, which clustered them in 'niche' occupations (Bradley, 2007; Crompton, 1997) picked on the basis of supposed female specialisms and predispositions (such as empathy, consideration, support). These occupations end up being female dominated and, therefore, subject to de-professionalisation. In other words, lower prestige specialisms which hold less occupational benefits and career aspirations. Examples of feminised occupations are the typewriter (de Groot and Schrover, 1995) and the clerical work at large (widely analysed in the 70s and 80s, see for example Cohn, 1985, or England and Boyer, 2009), today deeply identified as female jobs but which started as male ones. The feminisation of work allows traditional and new professions to make good use of feminine virtues, but it also causes devaluation of the profession and its consequent de-professionalisation (Noordegraaf and Schinkel, 2011; Malatesta, 2011). The key point of this concept is that the devaluation of the job is not a consequence of the presence of women but of the feminine characteristics requested and employed in the job, even if performed by men (Bolton and Muzio, 2008).

Care work

In most Western countries, care work is seen as an individual responsibility rather than a collective one (Lyon and Glucksmann, 2008), which would require institutionalised policy change (Romero and Pérez, 2016). Unpaid care work is overwhelmingly carried out by women (Kan and Laurie, 2018; Lyonette and Crompton, 2015), either employed or not, and without institutional support this affects their paid employment in various ways. For example, by being employed in part-time and flexible jobs which decrease their income and their career possibilities.

There is also another form of care work: the paid one. However, this is a marginalised and devalued sector which is perceived as unskilled and essentialised as natural female trait, therefore characterised by precariousness, lower wages, lower value and lack of labour regulations (Hirata, 2016).

Furthermore, Romero and Pérez (2016) argue that the rhetoric of 'care as love' is detrimental to the sector by placing emotions above skills: a work considered as personal and unique cannot be regulated by normative state policies. With this in mind, further Marxist concepts can also be applied to contemporary paid care work: in the current global society care work has been internationalised and a new group of labourers have been employed from non-western countries, meaning that migrant care workers are privately employed precariously and often underpaid in the black market (Lyon and Glucksmann, 2008).

Lyonette and Crompton (2015) tested the three main reasons developed to explain the gendered division of domestic labour: time availability, the higher economic power of men's labour, and an embedded set of cultural gendered assumptions. By analysing various households in which women earned either less, same or more than their male partners, the authors conclude that all those factors, jointly, justify and reproduce gender division of domestic labour. Furthermore, they noticed that class differences emerged in the amount of shared domestic labour, with working class men taking more unpaid work than middle class ones, effectively undertaking behaviours of '*lived egalitarianism*' (2015: 25). Each of the above reasons is intertwined with the others: time availability, for example, refers to women's need for flexible time, which affects their reliability and, therefore, their labour power. In turn, the traditional female role in the domestic sphere creates a clear distinction between male and female labour power: women enter the labour market under certain constrains which are not also valid for men, with the consequence of rewarding and evaluating man's work highly (Bradley, 2007). Therefore, men's labour power is highly evaluated in the labour market, despite being strictly dependent on women's unpaid domestic labour.

2.1.2 – Gender and Organisations

'*Work is not an isolated relationship between actor and activity*' argues Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977: 250), jobs need to be understood in '*reference to the organised systems in which the contemporary division of labour operates*'. In her analysis, Joan Acker (1990) summarised that studies about gender in organisations conceptualise the latter in different ways: either as gender neutral, in the sense that the ruling structure is distinct from gender (Kanter, 1977), as dual-structured, by both bureaucracy and patriarchy, or as gendered, with gender intended as

an analytic category. Her own position is that '*organizational structure is not gender neutral* […] *advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine*' (Acker, 1990: 146), meaning that gender is not just a factor to add to pre-existing processes, but it is ingrained in them. She later develops further the concept of '*interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations*' (Acker, 2006: 443), effectively using an intersectional lens to theorise the analytical approach referred as 'Inequality Regimes'.

Organisations, as defined by Gherardi, '*are places where women and men handle their dual presence in cross-gendered universe of meaning. The way in which we 'do gender' in our work helps to diminish or increase the inequality of the sexes*' (1994: 593). In other words, doing gender increases inequality. Doing work-related tasks specifically assumed as female jobs not only segregates women in those specific tasks, but also influences and shapes the gendered perception of their work-identity, therefore their own doing gender. It is clear that Gherardi's approach relies on a binary understanding of gender (for example in this passage: '*gender can only be defined 'by default', since what we attribute to one gender is implicitly denied to the other*', p.592), however she steps away from an essentialist reason behind the binary and links it to a social dynamic of political nature. In asking if it is possible to '*do gender without second-sexing the female*' she argues that the main attributes of femininity are also shared by other categories of marginalised people, becoming the attributes of the powerless. The gender performativity approach considers gender performance as interchangeable: a woman can perform male characteristics, or even feminine characteristics at home and male ones at work. However, if gender is seen as both a characteristic assigned from the start and a performative action, as described by Butler (1990), it is hard to understand how to move from one construct to another and experience gendered relations differently between home and work. Especially if considering that gender intersects with other characteristics (such as class, ethnicity, and age) which are also both lived relationships and structures (Smith, 2008).

Homosocial Behaviour

The mechanism of *homosocial behaviour* (Kanter, 1977) is relevant in reproducing gendered inequalities in organisations, since it is recurrent in various aspects of working practices: from hiring attitudes (Pinto et al., 2017; Gorman, 2005), to access to networks (for example the gendered pub gatherings as described by Sang et al., 2014), and promotions. It refers to the attitude of the majority to reproduce itself in a social setting by directly or indirectly

favouring people who appear similar to who holds power in that social setting. Some authors (Sang et al. 2014; Watts, 2009) agree that men, who usually occupy higher positions in the hierarchy, are able to influence someone's progression and tend to be keener in nurturing other men (in the specific white, middle-class men) because more similar to their own characteristics. This process, most of the time, happens involuntarily, and it is argued to be happening in many other environments and circumstances of everyday life, simply because people are more at ease with others similar to themselves. The 'boys' club', as described by Sheerin and Hughes (2018: 229), helps the '*maintenance of gender differences in the distribution, nature and mobilisation of social capital*'.

Biased processes of recruitment and hiring can also be linked to Bourdieu's concept of social capital. Acker (2006: 450) argues that '*hiring through social networks is one of the ways in which gender and racial inequalities are maintained in organisations*'. Here, the mechanism of homosocial behaviour reproduces the norm and the lack of diversity, as exemplified by research in various sectors, such as law (Gorman, 2005) or project management (Pinto et al., 2017). Gorman also noticed that organisational mechanisms which produce inequality in hiring processes operate through structural dynamics (through established policies and practices) but also through processes of social interaction. Here, Goffman (1967) helps in understanding how decision makers '*repeatedly form impressions and evaluations of employees or candidates in face-to-face or mediated social encounters, and then use those impressions and evaluations as bases for selection decisions*' (Gorman, 2005: 703). In particular, perceptions of candidates are made through sex categorisation and gender stereotypes, reproducing gender inequality in access.

Progression

For workers in an organisation, *reward* does not only mean wage but also the possibility for promotion. Kanter (1977: 131) frames this aspect in terms of opportunity:

> *'You're not really successful, or you do not mean much to the company, unless you get the chance to move on. Thus, jobs and job categories were evaluated in terms of their advancement prospects, quite apart from job content or actual grade level and salary. Many clerical positions had low status because they led nowhere; sales could attract good people because it promised a route into management'.*

Crompton and Jones (1984) illustrate that the main promotion requirements considered by employers are age, pre-entry educational attainment, post-entry qualifications, geographical and occupational mobility, and long unbroken service. It is easy to notice that women usually lack the possibility to acquire promotable qualities, mainly due to caring jobs, and found themselves in what Whittock et al. (2002) call 'the tender trap' - getting left behind in terms of career development. However, Crompton and Jones (1984: 244) note that:

> *'Some women, although lacking the formal attributes that would have made them candidates for promotions, nevertheless carried out work tasks requiring the exercise of considerable skill and initiative. In these circumstances, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, had a man been occupying these positions, he would have been in a 'promoted' grade'.*

This suggests that lower levels of promotion requirement should not explain women's lack of promotions alone, because promotable qualities do not provide a reliable indication of labour productivity.

Evidence shows that employers do evaluate job performances and abilities in gendered ways (Gorman, 2005; Martin, 2003; Acker, 1990). In order to offer a less deterministic vision of career progression for women, in 1977 Kanter introduced the idea that it is the workers' organisational location more than their gender that affects work attitudes and behaviours, including career aspirations. This view has been subsequently tested in empirical studies, in particular Cassirer and Reskin's (2000) research on promotion aspirations, which agrees with Kanter's argument and concludes that men attach greater importance to promotion than women because they are more encouraged to aspire to promotions thanks to their location in the organisational structure. More recently, Sheerin and Hughes (2018) add another aspect to this view and reiterate that gender inequality does not depend on essentialist differences between women and men, but on women's limits in accessing and accumulating resources. In particular, employers need to accumulate social capital to advance their careers, however for women this strategy is affected by their limited ability to accrue benefits, such as guidance and advice, key assignments, and access to job not formally advertised (Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2010). This supports the idea that inequality is both the cause and the effect of different expectations and promotions.

From the aspects outlined above it is clear that promotions are difficult to be regulated because behaviours, homosociality and mechanisms of normalisation are involved in decision making

processes. Kanter (1977: 253) notes that '*social factors (such as sex or background or conformity to similar values) become more important in direct relation to the difficulty and uncertainty of evaluating competence*'. This comment suggests that it is difficult for employers to measure in objective terms someone's competence, because employees' characteristics are more immediate to be noticed and therefore able to influence the overall evaluation.

2.1.3 – Gender and Professions

Professions exist through social and institutional recognition and offer professional status to their members (MacDonald, 1995; Freidson, 1986). Status and recognition are predominant aspects in the concept of *professionalism* (Svensson, 2015), to the point that Abbott (1988: 17) argues that most of the literature at his time of writing assumed that '*the social structure and cultural claims of professions are more important than the work professions do*'. The prestige of a specific profession changes over time, depending on various factors, such as the condition of practice, the organisation of the occupation, and its relation to other occupations (Dingwall, 2016) – for example the number of people entering that field, the number of competing professions or global markets, or the characteristics of the majority of professionals employed in that field.

In terms of gender inequality, professions can be historically defined as '*professional projects of class privileged western male actors at a particular point of history and in particular societies*' (Witz, 1990: 675). These projects produce gender relations of dominance and subordination, according to social dynamics between men and women, which are able to affect and reduce professional status, as illustrated above in this chapter through the concepts of feminisation of work and segregation of women in 'niche' sectors (Malatesta, 2011; Crompton, 1997; Halford et al., 1997). These mechanisms can be read as forms of 'de-professionalisation' where professional 'formal knowledge' (Freidson, 1986) is considered as an instrument of power, which women generally lack in professional settings. This view is supported by Noordegraaf and Schinkel (2011: 67) in their Bourdieusian understanding of professionalism as a form of symbolic capital, '*the substance of which is constantly at stake in power-driven context*'. Therefore, due to their lack of symbolic capital, the access of women to specialised professions is greatly limited, especially scientific ones, since these professions reflect values embedded in the notion of the practice created as a masculine project, thus denying stereotypically feminine qualities (Davies, 1996), and are also subjected to structural and historical parameters that shape and reiterate social life inside and outside the workplace (Witz, 1990). The relevance of symbolic capital and power imbalance in patterns of gender

occupational segregation highlight the importance of employing the concept of *professionalism* which, as Evetts (2003: 407) argues, can be used as '*a mechanism to facilitate and promote occupational change*' when employed '*from within*', as it consequently challenges normative values and power balances between institutions and occupational groups.

Access and Aspirations

The possibility to access a profession is not exclusively connected to the capacity or the willingness of an individual to follow a certain career. Crompton and Jones (1984: 233) argue that '*professional status depends on training undertaken by the individual, material inequalities thus appear as the legitimate consequences of individual effort*'. This conception suggests the need to acknowledge the tensions that happen at the individual level between aspirations and material reality, which affect minorities in particular. In fact, the access to a profession is not equally available to every individual: minorities, in particular women, BAME and lower-income individuals, are disadvantaged in accessing both education and employment (DCMS, 2016; Bhopal and Preston, 2012). Therefore, professions are often affected by a lack of diversity.

For example, many of the higher-earning jobs, such as engineering, finance, law, and medicine, require a long and expensive university training, which is not easily accessible for lower income families. The possibility to obtain students loans or scholarships from universities is aimed at challenging this social inequality and foster diversity in education, however, students from low-income families often do not consider these possibilities, not having direct examples to follow from their families or in their networks. This relationship between cultural choice and social position has been widely analysed and discussed by Bourdieu in one of his major works: *Distinction* (1984). A vast amount of literature has been focussed at analysing gendered and classed differences in career aspirations in children and young people, highlighting their ability to acknowledge their own interests but, at the same time, the possibility of achievement, which clearly has an impact on their aspirations' formation (Hartas, 2016; Bandura et al., 2001). Going back to Bourdieu, research shows that social interactions, in particular with parents, are the main influence on children's aspirations (Shapiro et al., 2015; Fuller, 2009), although teachers seem to be most influential than parents for working-class students (Archer et al., 2014). A classist and gendered educational system, more in general, is able to affect the developing and retention of attainment, aspirations and engagement of some categories of pupils over others. As argued by Barker and Hoskins (2017) schooling facilitates cultural reproduction rather than social mobility.

Today, women have the possibility to access education but, when entering the labour market, they often encounter disadvantageous conditions of employment by comparison to men. This ultimately limits their presence in many professional fields. It has been argued above that a traditional cultural legacy portrayed the labour of women as secondary compared to men's labour (Glucksmann, 1995; 2005; Federici, 2004), therefore also less rewarded in terms of both income and career development (Bradley, 2007). Thus, it is clear to see that for women it is not worth investing in professional education, as this does not necessarily equate to sufficient reward, considering women's secondary and restrained possibility of employment (Rampino and Taylor, 2013). Why, then, do women invest as much as men in education if they can see that their future condition of employment is likely to be part-time, self-employed, casual, and probably discontinuous? It can be argued that the cultural shift promoted by feminist movements in the last 50 years is not reflected in the slow adaptation of the labour market to this shift. In other words: women have been raised to aspire to any career, but the jobs are not available for them yet (Woodfield, 2007; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

Role-exit

The various structural constraints illustrated above often push women to leave certain jobs and careers. One way to theorise leaving mechanisms and their consequences on identity has been developed through the concept of '*role-exit*'. The term has been introduced in 1973 by Zena Smith Blau in her study on pensioners in order to understand how personal identity changes after retirement:

> '*When a person gives up a role, he loses a part of himself and is uncertain and has self-doubts about his identity, depending on the significance the role had for him and also on what precipitated his exit from that role*' (1973: 212).

However, the first attempt at theorising role-exit only came in 1988 with Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh's extensive 10 years study on ex-nuns. Her insider role, being an ex-nun herself, accompanied the discovery of the causes and subsequent implications of the decision to exit the role. Ebaugh's understanding of role implications is effective because she manages to merge the influence of social structures and institutions with self-determination in identity construction. And she explains this convergence through a specific mechanism that acts on the immediate moment of exit: disengagement. In her own words, disengagement is both a '*process of withdrawing from the normative expectations associated with a role* [and a] *process of ceasing*

to think of oneself in the former role' (1988: 3-4). Furthermore, she put emphasis on the idea that a former role does not fade completely, therefore any subsequent role carries with it '*vestiges and residuals of the previous*' (Ibid.: 5). This suggests that roles are not pre-formed boxes to be filled and emptied by individuals, rather are '*created and redefined as individuals interpret and assume them*' (Ibid.: 19). This concept of *role-making* is pivotal in this study in the intention to demonstrate the existence of a variety of professional identities, as explored later in chapters 4 and 5. Moreover, the concept of role can be also linked to Goffman's idea of actors and parts that individuals play in a social setting (1967). For example, this is evident in the description of the moment of exiting: '*like actors on a stage, exiters signal to audiences that they expect to be treated and reacted to differently than in the past. These presentations of self, or cues, are like masks that indicate a specific role change*' (Ebaugh, 1988: 150). Ebaugh notices that participants' social behaviour is predictable and follows a pattern, however it is still able to offer the perspective of a dynamic variability among individuals in the same role. A key aspect of this idea of identity formation is the fact that such identity needs to be validated, which is particularly relevant in professional contexts where both social and institutional recognitions are required.

The way individual and collective occupational identities intertwine suggests how occupational segregation is the outcome of a systematic inequality which relies on assumptions of a normalised collective occupational identity (Adamson, 2015). This framework of analysis has been framed as the 'glass slipper' by Ashcraft (2013) and employed in work about gender and professions to highlight how discrepancies between collective occupational identities and embodied social identities create the misleading impression that identities which do not 'fit' the current demographics of a profession are not suited for that position, therefore reproducing the marginalisation of female and minority identities (see for example Simpson and Kumra, 2016 and Adamson, 2015).

Despite having been introduced almost half century ago, the application of the theoretical concept of role-exit is still very limited. Three roles in particular have been analysed under the role-exit lens: sport (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998; Stier, 2007), the military (Gambardella, 2008; Naphan and Elliot, 2015), and education, from both the faculty (Harris and Prentice, 2004) and the student perspective (Breese and O'Toole, 1995). The European study on nurses (Hasselhorn et al., 2008) is the closest application of the theory to professional settings, however, being a quantitative study, it lacks the possibility of following case studies that might offer a more organic understanding of specific barriers and motivations that lead nurses to consider leaving the profession. Nevertheless, emphasis on the gendered reasons and

implications of the role-exit dynamic have not been extensively analysed yet. For example, despite Breese and O'Toole's study of college students (1995) seems to be heavily focussed on women, given the emphasis on gender in the title 'Role exit theory: Applications to adult women college students', the reasons behind their focus are purely accidental. As explained by the authors: '*this study was limited to women because they account for the greatest proportion of growth in the population of college students over age 28*' (1995: 12). This initial disclaimer suggests that the gendered implications in the lives of the participants are not as important as their age or their being mature students. Considering this lack in the literature, this study focusses on exploring gender as the main characteristic of the *exiters*, together with their professional status as architects.

2.1.4 – Gender and the Workplace

The workplace is the site where everyday working interactions happen, power relations are negotiated, gender stereotypes reiterated, and access controlled. Traditionally, the workplace has been analysed and considered as a physical area, away from home, where a remunerative job was performed. However, given the changes in employment happened after the 2008 recession through the diffusion of the gig economy and the need for more flexible working patterns, the occupation of the physical sphere of the workplace is changing to reflect various settings. Work still happens in the traditional office space, but necessities and resources are changing, thus pushing towards different working arrangements, such as working from home or in shared working spaces, or outside the traditional 9-to-5 hours. By rethinking the concept of 'work' and its physical boundaries, it is possible to question the traditional division of work-duties-leisure time, which can overlap and happen in the same physical space (Glucksmann, 2005). However, Coyle (2005: 75) argues that changes in both work organisation and the family, towards a family-friendly flexibility, is far from reconciling work and family. Instead, this '*is giving rise to new sources of inequalities and stress, rooted in the varying capacities of different categories of workers to exert control over their working time*'. For example, working from home is not available to everyone, but is often a working arrangement available to highly skilled workers who are able to negotiate it.

Women's bodies

The workplace is organised in hierarchical order, where the increase in seniority is usually paired with an increase in symbolic capital, as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1986). As argued by Bradley: '*power [is] the capacity to control patterns of social interaction*' (1999: 33),

therefore power is exerted by one sex when this is able to control the behaviour of the other. Feminist theory relies on the concept that men's domination over women happens primarily through control over their bodies (Phipps, 2014, Federici, 2012). The workplace is not exempt from this dynamic, where women's bodies are '*suspect, stigmatized, and used as ground for control and exclusion*', argues Acker (1990: 152). Sexuality at work is controlled on the assumption that is potentially disruptive for working relationships and productivity, thus female sexual behaviours and women's bodies are essentialised and restricted (Alvesson, 1998; Acker, 1990). If hyper femininity or masculinity are encouraged in certain type of organisations, for example where it is assumed to give easier access to clients, the opposite is also true, and displays of sexual attitudes are banned to avoid unbalanced dynamics in the workplace. In other cases, female sexuality can be discouraged where, at the same time, male gendered sexual behaviour is actively performed, as clearly illustrated by Alvesson's study on advertisement agencies in Sweden (1998). Alvesson argues that men perform hyper masculine attitudes at work as a response to the feminisation of the creative industry, to exert control over other workers, either male or female, to reinforce hierarchies, or to create cohesion (Fleming, 2007; Connell, 1987). These mechanisms normalise the male body and sexuality to the point of expecting and reproducing hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality in the workplace and in working relations, as exemplified in Wright's research on LGBT employees in the construction industry in the UK (2013).

Emotional Labour

Caring is a recurrent concept in the life of women: since birth they learn how to internalise the need to perform this essentialist feminine behaviour in their private and social life. Results emerged by various studies aimed at analysing the amount of unpaid care work carried out by men and women in the domestic sphere (Kan and Laurie, 2018; Lyonette and Crompton, 2015) suggest that men are not expected, as much as women, to express caring attitudes other than for the tasks required in their working life. Skeggs (1997: 72) argues that women '*invest in the responsibility and performance of caring for others. This is given the greatest legitimation when practiced in an occupational setting*'. In other words, caring has to be displayed as a performance of moral superiority and women end up becoming dependent on the needs of others. Skeggs continues arguing that women's '*selves come to be constructed in relation to the powerlessness of others. […] The desire to be valued and to demonstrate respectability and responsibility predisposes women to do voluntary and unpaid caring*' (Ibid.). Therefore, in working environments the performance of stereotypically feminine characteristics

(such as dealing with conflict or managing aspects external to work duties – e.g. making coffee or keep track of stocked goods) requires women to perform extra unpaid labour, in the form of care work and *emotional labour* (Hochschild, 1983). This dynamic reproduces the difference between women and men in terms of expected everyday tasks: this suggests that emotional labour can be perceived in terms of performance but hides further material and structural inequalities. The concept of emotional labour has been adapted from Bourdieu's concept of capitals by developing the idea of emotional capital as a specifically gendered capital (Reay, 2005), and theorised as another form of unpaid work which women are requested to perform in the workplace (Grandey, 2000). This concept will be explained further in its practical applications in the empirical chapters 4 to 6.

Gendered practices

Silvia Gherardi (1994) argues that the way gender is performed at work could diminish or increase the inequality of the sexes. The gender performativity approach suggests that there are a multitude of gender performances required for different jobs, in the double meaning of *gendering practices* and *practicing of gender*, as outlined by Martin (2003). For example, law professionals are characterised by traditional, middle-class and masculine appearance (Bolton and Muzio, 2008), despite the fact that law represents one of the first professional fields that was opened up to women. One of the main contributions offered by women was assumed to be their ability to interact with clients, as a stereotypical feminine ability developed from women's innate sense of hospitality in the domestic sphere (Powell et al., 2009). Whereas medicine, although often being considered similar to the profession of nursing in terms of caring for others, has been considered as a male profession until recently, thus it is still characterised by *vertical stratification* and *horizontal segregation*. These mechanisms affect women's participation in the workforce clustering women in particular sectors of employment and particular occupations within sectors.

Teaching, similarly to nursing, is one of the few professions to be socially considered as feminine, and this is reflected in being characterised by less autonomy, status and rewards, other than in the strong vertical segregation that limits higher positions for women (Bolton and Muzio, 2008). Similarly to law and medicine, management is characterised by masculine attributes of power and leadership but, being a rather new profession, it immediately recognised some indispensable qualities culturally assigned to femininity. As a result, in this profession women tend to occupy specific feminine niches, such as Human Resources (Sheerin and Hughes, 2018). Therefore, women in management occupy a balanced percentage compared to men, but are

still segregated in lower positions. In fact, only a small percentage of women occupy top managerial positions, just 24% of women globally holding senior roles according to the latest report published by Grant Thornton in 2016. The same applies to architecture, as extensively argued throughout this whole thesis, which is characterised by a male-dominated attitude which segregates women in specific feminine sectors (e.g. interior design or landscape architecture) and prevents their ability to fit in and embody the image of the StarArchitect, which is almost overwhelmingly male and inherently 'genius' (Heynen, 2012; Forsyth, 2006).

Summary

Material and cultural implications of gender inequalities in the labour market can be summed up and adapted from the model that Acker (1990) outlined to analyse gendering processes in organizations. This can be applied to work (paid and unpaid) more in general. Acker argues that work is shaped by five interacting processes: construction of *divisions* and *differences* between men and women (such as the division of labour, occupational segregation, pay gap…), construction of *symbols* which express and maintain these differences (this links to symbolic capital), *interactions* and *performances* in the workplace which keep men in dominant positions of power, construction of *individual identity* on the base of assumptions and stereotypes about women and femininity, and creation and conceptualisation of *social structures*. These five points link clearly with the four approaches that I considered employing in the analysis of the data, namely Marxist feminist, Bourdieusian, interactionist and gender performativity, which offer a theoretical framework able to analyse these different processes from various theoretical positions. Furthermore, parts of each one overlap with others providing the possibility to get an interdisciplinary understanding of the different aspects involved. For example, Hochschild's materialist approach has been heavily influenced by the work of Goffman (1963), which also influenced Bourdieu's concept of organisational habitus with the notion of individual performance. Or the concept of the body, which shows a link between the gender performativity approach and Bourdieu's attempt to define objectification through the same performative mechanism, as explained by Skeggs (2004: 21): '*it is through the body that the child learns immediately to experience wider structural features, which are never just an experience of the structural but always entwined with the child's physical and sexual experience, with its bodily relation to others*'. This view comes from a different perspective, but it aligns perfectly with Young's theory of feminine spatiality aimed at de-essentialising sex/gender differences (Young, 1980).

Overall, inequality affects three different aspects of employment: *access* (through a lack of social capital and access to education and training), *retention* (through lower presence in numbers, quality of participation, and wages), and *progression* (through limits caused by motherhood, low consideration of part-time formulas of employment, lack of possibilities to implement own social capital and promotion opportunities), all of which have been explored in the previous sections.

To move further, the next section of this chapter focuses on how gender has been theorised in architecture and the construction industry at large.

2.2 – Gender and Architecture

Architecture can be considered as part of the broader field of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) professions (UK Parliament, 2012) and, at large, of the construction industry, so a background of these fields is firstly explored in order to better understand some mechanisms of inequality specific of this sector.

2.2.1 – STEM and the Construction Industry

Careers in STEM and construction are characterised by a dominant masculine culture which requests its practitioners to possess stereotypical masculine attributes: shared images of knowledge and practice in those specific fields are the results of cultural associations between masculinity and technology, construction, and the use of a laboratory (Hoeborn and Sagebiel, 2003). Those requested characteristics heavily contrast with stereotypical feminine ones and women's care duties, which would be affected by long-hours shifts or by the need to travel for scientific research. Stereotypical feminine aspirations, such as reaching personal realisation through the construction of a family, are considered in contrast with the professional need to follow a career path without pauses (Cheung and Halpern, 2010). Women in these professions often face the paradox of being defective women for choosing male jobs, and defective professionals for lacking male characteristics (Watts, 2009, Powell et al., 2009). Moreover, they are able to deal with masculine jobs better than they can cope with the culture, values and expectations of professions created by men for men (Evetts, 1998). This happens because they do not lack the technical skills required to perform that job, but rather '*a whole set of properties which the male occupants normally bring to the job [...] for which men have been tacitly prepared and trained as men*' (Bourdieu, 2001: 62). In addition, a possible consequence of the attempt of women to 'fit in' would be to reinforce the dominance of the majority (Powell et al., 2009), already solid by centuries of gendered division of labour.

Barriers to a full participation of women

Numbers speak clearly about a constant and worrying underrepresentation of women in STEM and in construction across Europe (ONS, 2015; WISE, 2014). Several studies have outlined the conflicted relationship between women and technology as the main barrier to the full participation of women in these fields (Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993; Elkjaer, 1992). Thus far, some of the main factors which have been identified as contributing to shaping this relationship negatively are personal and cultural stereotypes, the environment, and the presumed technological inability of women (Cheryan et al., 2015). Skeggs (1997), in addition, argues that official institutions, such as the state and the educational system, legitimate structural domination by unconsciously leading women to internalise their subordination.

Another set of stereotypes appears to discourage women from initially choosing a career particularly in STEM fields: stereotypes around its culture. These stereotypes operate on three main levels: the people in the field, the work itself, and the values of the field (Cheryan et al., 2015). People in tech, specifically in computer science, are portrayed as socially isolated and interested only in tech culture (Cheryan et al., 2013), and these stereotypes are promoted and repeated by media representation on TV or online. The standard technology user seems to be a young/white/heterosexual man, therefore tech culture is dominated by a univocal hegemonic masculinity (Kendall, 2011 and 2000; Woodfield, 2000). Some recent studies, like Dunbar–Hester's work on radio activism, stressed the fact that, given this common assumption, technical skills are not '*desirable and commensurate with a feminine identity*' (2014, p. 66). Therefore, only women who are already challenging traditional feminine presentation of the self, thus *troubling* gender as advocated by the gender performativity approach (Butler, 1990), are likely to also challenge the dominant gender identity associated with technology (Dunbar–Hester, 2014).

Moreover, work in construction and STEM is perceived as not collaborative, a characteristic that various authors (Diekman et al., 2010; Dixon, 1998; Thornham and McFarlane, 2011) have problematised as incompatible with women's sociability and their need to fulfil communal goals. However, this view risks limiting, in essentialist terms, the understanding of various women's interests, and relies on a form of biological determinism difficult to prove empirically. Finally, Cheryan et al. (2015: 2) identify as '*values of the field*' specific cultural aspects such as typical masculine interests and the stereotype of the inherently *genius* nature of men, which is specifically reflected in architecture through the StarArchitects system (Heynen, 2012; Forsyth, 2006).

Ultimately, it is necessary to stress the importance of the assumed technological inability of women as perceived by the whole society, women included. This assumption is deeply rooted to the point that, sometimes, women perform a '*habitual 'feminine' position of incompetence*' (Walkerdine, 2006: 526). From their cross–generational study about women in the gaming industry and teenagers' choice of workshops, Thornham and McFarlane found a common pattern according to which both women and young girls '*are actively excluding themselves from (technological) activities using gendered discourses of sociability and incompetence*' (2011: 68). The reasons behind the employment of this particular practice may be interpreted as the performance of what others expect from women, and women's fear of being considered less feminine because of their ability in a field dominated by men (Thornham and McFarlane, 2011). This mechanism highlights the interconnectedness of interactionist and gender performativity approaches.

2.2.2 – Architecture

Architecture is a creative profession, involving design and access to creative tools and software, as evident from the last analysis on employment developed by the Government's Department for culture, media and sport (DCMS, 2016). However, recent studies focused on how practitioners lament a lack of creativity: for example, Sang et al. (2014) discovered that many architects perceive creativity as a feature reserved for partners and senior staff, where the tasks permitted to the rest of the team were more automatic and tedious. This is less true in smaller practices, where all employees tend to have access to more creative tasks. At the same time, architecture is part of the construction industry and despite not being considered a traditional STEM field, both its discipline and practice include some aspects typical of various STEM sectors, such as the study of mathematics, physics, statics and technological applications, to name a few.

The issue of gender and architecture has been analysed especially from the 1990s, mainly in the UK and the US, highlighting the interest in the topic from both academics and practitioners. Authors looked at the correlation between women and architecture in many different ways: like Debra Coleman (1996) who analysed the social perception of the female architects; or Shirley Ardener (1993) who focused her observations on the shape and design of space; or Diana Agrest (1996) who developed a critical approach to urban theory; or the British Jane Rendell (2000) who analysed how space has been gendered historically. The debates raised in this period were more focussed at questioning the practice of architecture, as I will discuss

later in this section, rather than understanding the sector in material terms and the women employed in it: it was more about women *and* architecture than women *in* architecture.

Instead, the mainstream attention towards the issue of the uneven presence of women in architecture has been raised in the last ten years by specialised magazines, such as The Architects' Journal in the UK and Dezeen more globally. Following this interest, various organisations created groups of networks for women in architecture, or in construction at large, both informal and institutionalised (for example RIBA WIA - Women in Architecture, NAWIC – National Association of Women in Construction, American Institute of Architects WIA). In terms of academic literature, the first observation to make is that it can be divided in two main timeframes: the first wave of interest happened at the beginning of 2000, whereas the second starts again from 2015.

To summarise the existing literature, it can be noticed that the majority of previous studies about women in architecture focussed either on the experiences of women in the field, their discontent and their identity (Burns, 2012; Spaeth and Kosmala, 2012; Caven, 2004 and 2006), or on architecture as a profession, in relation to the gendered aspects of it (Mattewson, 2017; Burns et al., 2015; Sang et al., 2009 and 2014; Fowler and Wilson, 2004, de Graft-Johnson et al., 2003). Almost all studies have been conducted in the UK, the US or Australia, with some examples of comparative study between UK and France (Caven and Diop, 2012) or UK and Spain (Caven and Navarro Astor, 2013). Currently, there are no studies which have been carried out in Italy.

Overall, there are five most influential studies conducted in the UK about women in architecture. The most famous and cited is the RIBA co-founded study conducted by Ann de Graft-Johnson, Sandra Manley and Clara Greed in 2003, which focussed on the reasons that lead women to leave architecture. This study showed that a combination of factors was causing the phenomenon, mainly related to the need for women to balance their professional life with the care of the family, and it proposed a series of recommendations to be undertaken and fostered by the RIBA and other institutions. The vast resonance of the study despite its limited sample size, an online questionnaire with 174 responses and 14 individual interviews to female practitioners, suggests the high interest in the topic and the need for further research. The following year, Fowler and Wilson (2004) conducted a similar study on 72 architects (both male and female) which described architecture as a profession characterised by a long hours culture and a competitive environment. Both aspects affect women in particular, who are still considered as the main caregivers in the family and are lacking the dominant cultural capital needed to compete in the environment. A third study is offered by Val Caven (2006) with her

analysis on how women construct their career. Findings from 49 individual interviews show that women were more successful in following alternative careers, characterised by flexible employment, rather than traditional ones. Not long after those three initial studies, Spaeth and Kosmala (2012) used a life course perspective on three in-depth interviews to female Scottish architects, in order to analyse women's techniques to '*simultaneously identify and dis-identify with the collective identity of professional architects*' (2012: 216). The fifth study by Sang, Ison and Dainty (2014) has been conducted on interviews to 23 architects (both male and female) and focussed more specifically on the hegemonic masculinity of the profession. This study mainly drew upon gender performativity theory (Butler, 1990) in understanding how women employ resisting or conforming gendered practices. In half of these initial studies male architects have been interviewed as well as female practitioners, however, research tradition focussed on gender participation in the labour force is more inclined on centring the attention on women's particular and individual experiences: '*the aim is to access the viewpoint of girls and women themselves*' (Woodfield, 2007: 52).

Among studies conducted in the US, Payne's analysis (2015) on two architecture schools as case studies presents an innovative methodology interesting for this research. The study focussed on architectural education and investigated the reasons that characterise architecture as lacking diversity (in terms of class, ethnicity and gender) and as an expensive and therefore hardly accessible education path. The author argues that inequalities and the lack of diversity are daily reproduced by the architectural education itself. One of the most recent studies conducted in Australia (Mattewson, 2017), offers a detailed overview of the sector in Australia to delineate patterns of departure of women from the profession.

Further literature about the topic can be divided into thematic areas which I explore in the following paragraphs, namely working practices, architecture organisational habitus, representation, and criticism of practice.

Working practices

Research about the architectural field has been aimed at understanding to what extent architecture fits with traditional working patterns, characterised by a fixed number of office hours and a client-based daily interaction. Employment and self-employment are both common typologies of work in architecture, however the material and cultural effects of each form on the individual architect are different. Self-employed architects have more flexibility in terms of time but, conversely it is harder for them to take time off, since their income depends on the number of jobs they are able to obtain and realise (Sang et al., 2009; Caven, 2006; Fowler and

Wilson, 2004). In addition, their income is uncertain and inconsistent, making it difficult for them to make life plans in advance. The employed architect, on the other hand, has a more stable income but less flexibility, both in terms of working time and typology of commissions (Burns et al., 2015). According to recent literature (Sang et al., 2009), partners and people in higher positions tend to keep the creative part of the job for themselves. In big practices the employed architect tends to work on specialised and repetitive tasks, whereas in smaller ones there is less variety of commission, and jobs are small scale: in both cases architects' creativity is limited. To compensate this lack of creativity, employed architects usually tend to collaborate outside the official working hours with other peers in order to develop their own projects, which often means participating to competitions, therefore working for free. Both these experiences can be described as work (in terms of hours spent and skills involved), however only the first experience as employed architect is remunerated, which also happens to be the less stimulating for the architect.

Furthermore, many studies found the culture of long working hours to be predominant in the construction industry (Powell and Sang, 2015; Sang et al., 2014), with the need for flexibility to work overnight or during weekends (Watts, 2009). Moreover, architecture practices are not particularly keen on offering parental leave, as this is a peculiarly continuative job where employees tend to work on one specific project for long periods of time (often months). This characteristic of the job reduces flexibility and the possibility for co-workers to assist or take over a project at any point.

Architecture's organisational habitus

For Bourdieu (1977), habitus is a system of dispositions, both inherited and acquired through practice, which inform an individual's understanding and actions. It can be defined as assumptions not questioned, but rather normalised in society (Lawler, 2004). Focusing on gendered implications of habitus, Bourdieu analyses the predominance of men over women in different fields, and argues that different agencies and social institutions, in particular the family and the educational system, reproduce masculine domination on unconscious structures (2001). This means that also official institutions legitimise the structural domination by unconsciously leading women to internalise their subordination (Skeggs, 1997). Linking the concept of habitus to the institutionalisation of professions it is possible to develop the concept of '*organisational habitus*'. In this sense, the concept of habitus is useful in illustrating that social structures are not the only forces involved in shaping women's professional choices, but the organisational

habitus of particular professions is also involved in the construction and the perception of practices and structures themselves.

Architecture practice in Western Countries has been created and shaped as a profession for white middle-class men, therefore it is not surprising that today, in the UK, 89% of architects are white, 66% are male, and 97.5% come from a more advantageous background (DCMS, 2016). Various studies have been focussed on understanding why there is a lack of diversity in architecture, and among possible explanations some authors suggested that this happens because it is harder for marginalised groups to cope with the solid dominant organisational habitus in this profession (Powell and Sang, 2015). Architecture's organisational habitus is the result of the profession's historic development, the working practices employed both today and in the past, the educational training, the importance of different forms of capital, in particular social, symbolic and cultural, in accessing and progressing within the practice, and the unique position of this profession between arts and science. Moreover, it can be noted that the wide use of Bourdieu in literature focused on this professional field is also encouraged by his specific mention of architects as part of the State Nobility (1996), or an '*elite within the dominant class whose legitimacy is backed up by the state's accreditation of their higher education*' (Fowler and Wilson, 2004: 105). Organisational habitus, therefore, can be considerate as a normalised culture of the profession, which recognises white middle-class as the norm. As noted by Burns (2012), success in architecture does not only depend on merit. There are many factors independent from merit that can influence personal or a practice's success, such as personal characteristics, access to capital, access to networking, advantages from familiar or educational connections, or personal factors (e.g. attractiveness, sociability, and technical skills). Many of these are culturally and economically based, but others are biologically assigned: '*some people are lucky and can capitalise on their good fortune*' (Burns, 2012; 240).
As for social capital, Sang et al. (2015) argued that architecture is characterised by homosocial behaviour, or the preference for men to work with other men (Kanter, 1977). Yet, it is surprising that no other studies noticed this behavioural pattern, one of the reasons being that working environments in architecture are not characterised by a lack of women per se, but rather those are confined to defined and gendered tasks. Therefore, a striking lack of women is not observed in the overall industry, since the remarkable vertical stratification and horizontal segregation are more subtle and harder to notice.

Bourdieu considers habitus as a reproducing mechanism but also a reproduced one, therefore not completely determined, and it is possible to consider also organisational habitus as such. Employing a Bourdieusian perspective, it is clear that owning different forms of capital

influences the ability to fit in the architectural habitus. Economic capital is important mainly in the access to architectural education, whereas social and cultural capitals take a stronger importance at a later stage, namely in the access to the labour market and in career progression. This is exemplified in various studies which stressed the importance of networks in career advancement (Powell and Sang, 2015; De Graft-Johnson et al., 2003) and cultural accumulation strategies, which are able to offer job satisfaction (Burns et al., 2015; Fowler and Wilson, 2004).

The symbolic capital, instead, is more embedded in the culture of the profession itself, and it is hold by the normalised architect, the middle-class white man who is able to control practices, language and the reproduction of the norm.

Representation

Zaha Hadid, the famous Iraqi-British StarArchitect who passed away in 2016, is a common example who often comes up in literature about representation of women in architecture. Her example is commonly used for many reasons, firstly because she is one of the very few world-famous female architects, but also because she is portrayed as an *outsider* (Troiani, 2012) and a lone woman (Forsyth, 2006). These characteristics have been depicted as enablers to succeed in architecture as a woman: her lack of familiar ties and her arrogant attitude gave her the chance to fit in the masculine culture of the profession (Stratigakos, 2016), and to be celebrated and recognised in the field. When portraying one of the very few women at the top, the rhetoric has been denigrating and sexist, with Hadid herself trying to downplay gender differences (BBC Radio4, 2016) in the attempt to avoid reducing her success to the fact of being a 'true woman disguised as a man' (de Beauvoir, 1949). Instead, women's contribution to the sector still obtain a limited feature in professional magazines, where have been featured mostly in terms of housing and interior (Adams and Tancred, 2000).

Criticism of practices

A diverse group of authors, mainly from the UK and the US, focused on women's resistance towards the *status quo* in architecture and questioned normalised practices and identities. The catalyst of this interest can be inscribed in the seminal text '*Making space: Women and the man-made environment*' by Matrix (1984), a collective organisation of female architects in the UK. The essays collected in the text covered a broad range of topics with a gendered scope, from working in women-only spaces to female approaches to design and the building environment. Interestingly, the years 1996/98 saw the publication of three edited books which developed these arguments further: '*The sex of architecture*' edited by Diana Agrest

challenges dualist assumptions such as the notion that 'man builds/woman inhabits' or 'man as outside/woman as inside'; '*Architecture and Feminism*' (Coleman et al., 1996) questions the othering of women in the profession through historical examples; and '*The architect: reconstructing her practice*' edited by Francesca Hughes aims at creating various professional identities through '*a collective autobiography of practice*' (Hughes, 1998: xvii), eventually able to disrupt the norm. Shortly after these fertile years, Bartlett's Professor Jane Rendell co-edited the book '*Gender, Space and Architecture*' (2000) which was aimed at gathering and organising the copious number of essays criticising the profession, mostly from a gendered perspective, written in the previous decade.

To conclude this section, since early 2000 the literature about women in architecture was focused on both women themselves and their identity, and on the gendered aspects of the sector. The majority of studies have been carried out in the UK, US and Australia, and as today there are not studies conducted on Italian female architects. Overall, what those studies have in common is that they underline the difficulty for women to cope with the dominant masculine culture embedded in the profession, and the working practices peculiar of this field that collide with the care duties generally carried out by women. However, the relevance of their findings is undermined either by the small sample size, by the focus on one aspect over the other (e.g. on employment without including its repercussions on identity), or by the lack of possibility to frame it in broader contexts. This latter aspect can be addressed by comparing two different contexts that offer a same outcome, as this study is aiming to demonstrate. This approach can be adapted from Miriam Glucksmann's theorisation of the 'total social organisation of labour' – TSOL (2005). TSOL's approach is aimed at analysing interconnections between different institutions of civil society under different socio-economic relations, and the effects that these have on labour market and employment (Glucksmann, 2005). This theory overlaps in some respects to Stratification theory which, according to Wendy Bottero (2005: 56), by looking at hierarchically organised social relationships '*entails the analysis of structured social inequality in all its aspects: material, social and cultural*'. This is particularly relevant when considering that the legitimacy of inequalities varies with political and economic conditions (Acker, 2006). Its usefulness is linked to the use of two case studies approach and the analysis of the material, social and cultural spheres at the same time, which is lacking in previous studies.

2.3 – Standpoint: positioning this study

Sandra Harding (1986) suggests that there are three interrelated ways of conceptualising gender: a *structural* view that explains material implications, such as division of labour between sexes, horizontal and vertical segregation, gender pay gap, a *symbolic* view that explores perceived dichotomies of the two sexes, through stereotypes and biological differences, and an *identity* view which considers the individual gender socialisation, where femininities and masculinities are learned and performed. The standpoint held in this study considers those views as interlinking: focusing singularly on each would fail to acknowledge that reality and social perceptions influence each other. This organic view aims at understanding the causes and consequences of gender inequality in the labour market.

More specifically, to analyse the original empirical data acquired through interviews and focus groups, I draw upon each one of the four theoretical frameworks employed thorough this chapter. In particular, the Marxist feminist framework is useful in guiding my understanding of the division of labour, especially in critically analysing how gender assumptions affect women's employment. For example, the division between productive and reproductive spheres of women's lives is blurred in contemporary labour practices and not as relevant as it was during industrialisation, however assumptions about women's caring roles are still able to affect their employability and labour value. On the other hand, it is not possible to just discredit these mechanisms as assumption and therefore ignore them. Instead, it needs to be taken into account how these assumptions are internalised and reproduced by women themselves: the ability to have control over structures is enabled (or here is limited) by the individual amount of different forms of capital. Here, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capitals (1986; 1984) and habitus (1977) is particularly useful in understanding how a cultural shift can be negotiated within the organisational habitus of the profession. Symbolic capital in particular is pivotal in understanding the dominant culture of the profession. Men (particularly white and middle-class men) hold the symbolic power able to set and reproduce the norm, therefore the symbolic interactionist approach is useful in informing my understanding of the interactions that happen at different levels of the profession: with superiors, colleagues, clients, contractors and builders. Interpreting how the interactions are negotiated between actors offers a better insight on how inequality is reproduced and challenged at the micro level. A specific analysis through gendered lens of these interactions can be implemented through the use of the gender performativity approach. This framework, starting from the micro level and individual performances, suggests how socially constructed gender attitudes eventually become essentialised, and therefore structural in affecting gender equality.

To summarise, the individual experiences gathered and analysed in this study are evaluated within a theoretical approach which aims at positioning women in material and cultural terms in the labour market. As argued by Skeggs (1997: 167): '*these mundane experiences are a product of systematic inequality […] they are profoundly located in structural organisation*'. In short, structural barriers need to be extrapolated from everyday experiences in order to explore how inequality is produced and reproduced in the architectural field.

In the next chapter I illustrate the design of this study, for which I gathered original empirical material through individual interviews and focus groups to women at various positions of the architecture industry. In particular, I offer a personal reflection on the processes of sampling and conducting the interviews during the three main timeframes: pilot study and fieldwork, firstly in Italy and then in the UK.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

A 'methodology' can be considered as the sum of epistemological, ontological, micro- and macro-political, practical and ethical issues (Pryor and Ampiah, 2004). As is clear from the research design outlined in this chapter, my intention was to develop the study through a feminist methodology (Letherby, 2003; Kitzinger, 1994; Harding, 1990; 1987; Oakley, 1981; Hartsock, 1974), with the central elements being: the use of semi-structured interviews, the direct presence of me as both the researcher and a member of the studied community (as a female architect myself), the attempt to dismantle authority and unbalanced power relations between me and the interviewees, the position of reflexivity that I had during the whole study, the presence of a public research journal, and the need to inform the community about the findings and involve them in the debate.

This chapter covers the methodological aspects related to this study: I carried out individual interviews and focus groups as qualitative methods of inquiry common in social research. The whole fieldwork has been divided into three main parts, namely pilot study and fieldwork which, in turn, has been carried out firstly in Italy and then in the UK. Overall, it lasted from March 2016 to September 2017. The following paragraphs illustrate how the three periods have been intended as distinct processes, characterised by different sampling strategies and approaches to interviewing. Furthermore, I explain how the two focus groups, both of which carried out in the UK in December 2016 and June 2017 respectively, have been organised and conducted.

In addition, I also address some ethical considerations connected to the project, including the implications of having a public research journal, accessible as an open blog, where I shared my reflections after some of the interviews.

3.1 – Research Design

This research project adopts a case study approach which offers a comparison of two different contexts, namely Italy and the UK. The comparison between these two countries is meaningful as they are characterized by different labour markets and 'traditional' culture and family roles have different weight and relevance, which both played a role in differentiating the architectural sector and the culture around the profession in the two different countries. However, both countries are characterised by similar gendered dynamics reproduced in the architecture profession, suggesting a further area of interest to explore through comparison. Moreover, my personal experience as an architect in Italy and a researcher in the UK offers me

an insider position from which I am able to evaluate and discuss social and material mechanisms of this profession and, more broadly, society and the labour market in both countries.

Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology can be defined as a '*qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a case or cases through in-depth data collection […] and reports case description, themes, and/or findings*' (Freeman et. al, 2012: 223), which characterises the approach of this study.

The choice of using a case study approach was guided by Yin's observation that this methodology should be adopted when the researcher is interested in covering contextual conditions because those are relevant to the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2003). Case-based knowledge, Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests, is always context-dependant. The emphasis on the context is particularly significant in multiple-case studies, where further interpretations for similarities and differences may arise on a deeper level if sought in different contexts (Hantrais and Mangen, 1996). Indeed, '*the logic of comparison implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations*' (Bryman, 2012: 72). This suggests the importance of selecting suitable cases and utilising consistent research instruments, in order to gather comparable data and '*predict similar results or […] contrasting results but for predictable reasons*' (Yin, 2003 cited in Baxter and Jack, 2008: 550).

Furthermore, a multiple-case study is interested in capturing deep understandings and the complexities of the individual cases, rather than aiming at *generalisability*, as discussed extensively in the case study literature (Harland, 2014; Noor, 2008). However, carrying out a well-executed research design determined by a theoretically-led selection of cases achieves another objective of the use of case studies: *applicability*, which is fostered by the strength of the theoretical reasoning more than the representativeness of the case analysed (Meyer, 2001). This is particularly relevant for organisational studies, as argued by Harley (1994: 225): '*the detailed knowledge of the organization and especially the knowledge about the* processes *underlying the behaviour and its* context *can help to specify the conditions under which behaviour can be expected to occur. In other words, the generalisation is about theoretical propositions not about populations*'. His reference to generalisation here can be interpreted as what Meyer (2001: 342) defines '*analytical generalisation*', a methodological approach which links existing theory to the empirical results of the case studies. She further argues that the use of a broad range of theory, also contrasting theories, '*enhances the internal validity,*

generalizability, and theoretical level of theory-building from case research' (Meyer, 2001: 342) because it reduces the chance of neglecting conflicting findings. This methodological approach is implemented in this study by the use of the broad range of theoretical perspectives extensively discussed in the previous chapter.

Overall, the methodological flexibility of case study research on the one hand offers the possibility to design a context-relevant study which is in line with specific theoretical and paradigmatic positions, but on the other hand increases the risks of providing space for methodological and theoretical criticisms (Hyett et al., 2014). In discussing my reflexive position as a researcher, the rationale behind the selection of the two case studies, and the theoretical expectations behind the results obtained by the study, I illustrated how this methodological approach is appropriate for this specific study. In the following part of the chapter I illustrate how I developed the research design in light of the methodological positions discussed above.

Methods

In total, I carried out 39 semi-structured open-ended individual interviews and two focus groups with three and four participants, among Italian and British women at various stages of their careers (students, young or experienced architects, directors, or women who left the profession), as detailed in Figure 5. This kind of purposive sampling helped me in recruiting those participants who have offered the study both variety and relevance (Bryman, 2012). I originally planned the number as in line with similar studies conducted in the last fifteen years (see for example Caven, 2004; Fowler and Wilson, 2004; Watts, 2009). This number fits the threshold agreed in literature about qualitative research methods, which positions an adequate number of interviews between 25 and 30 in order to reach saturation and variability (Dworkin, 2012; Guest et al., 2006). Furthermore, I considered this number to be adequate for this specific study given my interest in reaching fewer respondents, able to support the research with a various range of experiences, rather than in finding a large number of similar accounts.

Overall, this study is concerned with individual narratives and, at the same time, wider social structures. Harriet Bradley's *Fractured Identities* (1996) and Ramazanoğlu and Holland's *Feminist Methodology* (2002), helped me in managing this peculiar aspect of my research. I found of particular resonance Bradley's reference to gender:

> *'Gender is a social category which refers to lived relationships between women and men; [...] every aspect of social life is gendered; sexual divisions are constructed, organized and maintained not only within the family and private life but also in work*

> *and employment […] In every aspect of experience whether we are male or female*
>
> *has implications' (Bradley, 1996: 19-20).*

This interconnectedness between lived relationships and material implications is particularly relevant for my study, which is rooted in the labour market, where material conditions (such as wages, forms of employment, promotions) are integrated with meanings, language and everyday interactions in the creation of perceptions and experiences of women in the field. Furthermore, the comparative aspect plays a key role in the understanding of social structures especially considering the differences between Italy and the UK in the three main social institutions pivotal in professional employment: the educational system, the family and the labour market.

My interest in participants' narratives is obvious from the first research question - *how do women choose to enter architecture and what experiences do they have in professional training and work?* However, a plain list of different experiences and motivations gathered without considering the contextual structures that affect them would lead to results not valid in terms of understanding of wider phenomena. Thus, interviews are considered the method of inquiry most appropriate to feminist research (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Reinharz and Davidman, 1992; Oakley, 1981), because of their ability to supply knowledge about everyday life or particular experiences of the informants, and in exploring participants' feelings and thoughts about the social questions investigated. This is particularly relevant for studies focused on gender inequality, as argued by Reinharz and Davidman (1992: 19):

> *'Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in*
> *their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly*
> *important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an*
> *antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for*
> *women'.*

This suggests that interviews are conversations that have structure and purpose (Kvale, 1996), that look at meanings rather than at facts, that collect behaviours, experiences, feelings, opinions and values. Focus groups' discussions, instead, were aimed at debating particular dynamics around education and employment in architecture rather than at collecting common or shared accounts, therefore testing initial themes and suggesting more topics of analysis.

3.2 - Interviews

The process of interviewing has undoubtedly been the most exciting part of my study, considering the whole range of related feelings: apprehension of inadequate results as a researcher, obsession in selecting the 'perfect' place for meetings, fear of not arriving on time, excitement in meeting people that are actually interested in sharing their views and experiences, the intense feeling of bonding and sisterhood, the post-interview effect which left me unable to do anything else (I often wrote in my research journal that I felt drained after an interview). The role of emotions and vulnerability in research, from the perspective of the researcher, have been highlighted several times by authors, such as Ellis (2016) or Behar (2014), especially in difficult situations, like in interviews with refugees (Gemignani, 2011) or breast cancer patients (Rager, 2005).

Carrying out an interview as a researcher is not just limited to the duration of the interview itself. There is the time that you spend before, which you need in order to enter the part of the researcher: it can be seen in Goffmanesque perspective (1967) that it takes time to get ready to perform. You know what you are going to talk about, you know your questions and something about the person you are about to meet, but you still need to put on different masks: the calming one, which puts at ease the persons in front of you, the professional one, to give you enough authority in asking any sort of question, and the friendly one, which suggests to the person sitting on the other side that you shared similar experiences. This idea of the researcher '*setting the interview stage*' has been also described by Kvale (2007: 55). If on one hand the preparation for the interview takes a significant amount of time, on the other the moment of the interview ends up rapidly, without offering the researcher the time to realise of actually being in the process.

According to qualitative research practices (King et al., 2018), I carried out each interview in a neutral environment, trying to encourage participants themselves to suggest a place to meet. These places ended up being mostly cafés or meeting rooms in their workplace. Depending on the settings of the interview, sometimes carried out during the lunch break or during a weekend morning over a coffee, the conclusion of each interview has been different, from rushing out of the café to go back to work, to asking me follow ups about my research and my views on various topics. However, a common conclusion I obtained after almost every interview was to be updated about my findings and, more generally, to 'keep in touch'. During the following months after each fieldwork I received various emails from participants of the study, some of which were personal updates or online articles about related topics we discussed during the interview. I developed a deep connection with some of the women I got the chance to meet, and I guess

that this arose from the interest I genuinely held and showed towards their insights and experiences, as also noticed by Oakley (1981). For example, one participant thanked me for the time I spent listening to her story, her feelings and ideas; she told me that she could not remember the last time someone asked her about her satisfaction about many different aspects of her life. Conversely, I feel thankful to the women who accepted to take part in my study, who opened up about events that may have been painful for them to talk about, or shared with me their personal views about controversial topics. Overall, the main impression I got from most interviews is that the interviewee and I started the conversation as strangers and often shy individuals, and ended up with a feeling of bonding, of belonging to the same, yet varied, community.

The kind of interviews I conducted were semi-structured and open-ended, in line with practices discussed in feminist literature (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Also, each participant has been interviewed just once and the setting has been mainly formal. An interview is considered semi-structured when the questions are not fixed in terms of construction and consequentiality, and the direction of the interview is a product of the interview itself. This method allows the interviewer to shape the development of the interview according to the specific case: to focus more or skip on certain questions depending on the interviewee's experiences, confidence and serenity in speaking about a certain issue. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are more difficult to replicate, they are not particularly generalisable to a wider population, and their questions are impossible to standardise causing the impossibility to give quantifiable data as result. Despite semi-structured interviews are harder to categorise and standardise, they allow more flexibility to the interviewer in order to follow other interesting paths and deep insights (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002).

The semi-structure of the interviews was guided by a list of key questions aimed at addressing the various research questions mentioned in Chapter 1, which I then gathered in main thematic areas of enquiry (see the list of interviews questions in Appendix A). I mainly investigated information on nine key themes: *examples*, *experiences during education*, *social perceptions and stereotypes*, *family support*, *tasks performed*, *goals and motivations*, *perceived and ideal achievements*, *family duties* and *satisfaction*. A few days before the interview I provided the participants with a handout containing a brief outline of my research study, and a schematic framework of the kind of questions that would have been asked.

I audio-recorded the interviews, meaning that I did not had to take notes, allowing me to better connect with the interviewees. I only carried with me an outline of the interview with the key points that needed to be covered during the interview. I started every interview with

quick questions that would make the participant feel comfortable, such as where they studied, when they decided to study architecture, and which were their favourite subjects. These questions could appear as only 'ice breakers', but they actually carry with them meaningful information useful to understand how young women feel entitled to choose this kind of career (through examples, family support, preference of some subjects over others, etc…). After this brief introduction, the following questions focussed on three main areas: education, work experience, and satisfaction. Regarding *education*, my intent was to understand whether they experienced any discrimination based on their gender; other than test how much gendered stereotypes are rooted in individuals, women comprised - through questions like 'in which disciplines/tasks do you think women are more appropriate? What are the set of masculine properties considered essential in the performing of the profession?'. Another reason to focus on their educational experience was to track significant differences in the number of women in university over time, both among students and academics. However, the main focus of the interview laid on their *work experiences*, both in terms of employment (full or part-time, employed or self-employed, the position they occupy in their practice) and discrimination (in the workplace, on the construction site, and from clients and contractors). Eventually, I concluded the interviews asking the participants if they ever thought about *leaving* the profession, and if they feel *satisfied* and accomplished by their current professional position. These questions have been outlined in order to understand both the profession itself (and if students have been prepared adequately in expecting what being an architect means), and how do women relate to the profession through the analysis of their experiences.

Overall, I interviewed 39 women, 19 in the UK and 20 in Italy, and conducted two focus groups in the UK, with both British and Italian participants, three and four respectively. In terms of professional position, the British sample I interviewed comprised of five students, nine architects in different hierarchical positions, two academics and three participants who left the profession. Although, it needs to be specified that it is not possible to completely differentiate those characteristics since they often overlap, as explained in more details in the next section. In terms of demographics, five participants were under 30 at the moment of the interview, but the largest group (six) was between 46-50 years old. Seven of them have one or more children, two are step-parents, and the majority (ten) have no children.

Among the Italian sample, I interviewed two students, twelve architects at various positions in their practice, one academic and five who left the profession. The most striking difference between the two samples is that in the UK I interviewed more students, whereas in Italy I interviewed more women who had left the profession, and the majority of Italian participants

(nine) were between 36-45 years old, whereas there is no one in the age group 46-50, which is the biggest in the UK. Also, the majority of participants in Italy had no children, which is almost double than in the UK (17 compared to 10).

	UK	Italy
OCCUPATION		
Student	5	2
Self-employed	2	4
Architect (incl. Partita IVA)	3	5
Partner/Director	4	2
Public Sector	/	1
Academic	2	1
Left Profession	3	5
AGE		
> 30	5	4
31-35	1	6
36-45	3	9
46-50	6	/
< 50	4	1
CHILDREN		
One or more	7	3
No children	10	17
Step mother	2	/

Figure 5 - Demographic and characteristics of the British and Italian sample.

Despite characteristics of the Italian and British samples being dissimilar in terms of occupation, age and number of children, the observations drawn from the data are very similar in so many aspects between these two countries, suggesting common patterns of analysis and offering the possibility for generalisation. As mentioned above, I conducted the interviews in three different time frames: from March to May 2016 I conducted a pilot study with a total of 8 interviews between Italy and the UK, from August to October 2016 I conducted the actual fieldwork in Italy, and from May to September 2017 I carried out the interviews in the UK as the last part of my fieldwork.

3.2.1 – The pilot study

The idea of selecting an initial sample before conducting the proper fieldwork has been proven as a good strategy in previous studies, as argued by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001).

Therefore, three months before the actual fieldwork I decided to carry out a pilot study in both of the countries. Methodologically speaking, this is an iterative process in which data collection is controlled by the emerging theory developed from the initial data collected (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and it suggested to me useful actions to be implemented in the following proper fieldwork. Furthermore, this practice also enabled me to gain confidence in both technical (voice-recorder) and personal approaches. The reasons behind this trial study were aimed at providing a preliminary idea of the suitability of the questions, and to facilitate the analysis of the transcriptions with less data. The initial coding process enabled me to identify key themes, which I had the possibility to develop further in the following interviews. And it also suggested me some useful characteristics to look for in the subsequent interviews, for example the need to seek architects both in smaller and bigger practices (their experiences and possibilities for promotions are different), and the limited contribution offered by student's participation. In fact, what I noticed from the pilot study's interviews is that the accounts obtained from the students were less meaningful compared to the other categories of informants. This probably happened because students in their first three years had not yet had much of a chance to enter the labour market, therefore they could not contribute to the study with accounts relating to this specific aspect. Practising architects have contributed to understanding student's expectations anyway, through their memories as students. Additionally, they have been able to offer an invaluable personal understanding of the contrast between their expectations when they were students and the reality of the labour market. Something similar has been highlighted in Uitto and Estola's study about a group of teachers recalling their former teachers (2009). However, current students undoubtedly offered a more updated view of the educational system, therefore I have included seven in the overall study.

Sampling for the pilot study

The recruiting process for the pilot study has been particularly easy, probably because I knew that it was supposed to function mainly as training for me. However, the results have been extremely relevant and satisfactory, therefore I decided to include these interviews among the actual data. I decided to carry out four interviews in Italy and the same number in the UK, following the original plan of considering one participant for each category: students, young architects, experienced architects and women who left the profession. I managed to find one interviewee for each category in Italy but, during the fieldwork in the UK, I realised that this strict differentiation was too limiting and not really useful. On the contrary, seeking participants in a more flexible way gave me the chance to encounter individuals positioned in between more

categories, and this condition has offered the data deeper insights and comparisons. For example, the Part2 student who was also working part-time in a practice suggested me the existence of an indirect negative evaluation that both colleagues and employers have of student-employees. Or the part-time architect that at the same time was also working as the host of a guest house, therefore being in-between staying and leaving the profession.

To contact the first four interviewees in Italy I relied particularly on one friend, a civil engineer who worked in various architectural practices in Pescara and, therefore, was in contact with a considerable part of the architectural community. I arranged the interviews via email, and I conducted them in person during a whole week. I was originally worried about the fact that everyone was somehow connected to the same gatekeeper, and I thought that this would have altered my findings. However, during the interviews I realised that only two of the participants knew each other, but they never worked or studied together. For the recruitment in the UK I had to rely on friends on social networks, since I did not have any link to anyone in the British architectural community. I asked my contacts on Facebook to share with me their contacts, this is how I met my first two interviewees, which suggested me their contacts as well, in a sort of snowball mechanism. At that point it was clear that I was taking the distance from the strict categories originally planned to organise my sample, therefore I interviewed three students (one of which was concluding her Part1, and two of them were doing their Part2 studies) and a young Part1 architect.

Conducting interviews for the pilot study

I have heard many different stories of dreadful situations that happened during interviews - the audio recorder turning off, an unexpected event concluding the interview just after a few minutes, a forgotten list of questions or a forgotten meeting time!), so I never expected my first interview to go too smoothly. And, in fact, I was not proven wrong. The first surprise has been the transportation strike announced the night before the first interview, which in Italy means no buses/trains at all. So, I had to ask a friend for a ride from one city to another. Apparently, the strike was also involving schools, so when I arrived at my interviewee's office, I noticed the presence of her two sons, of four and eight years respectively. During the interview they were constantly entering the meeting room, chased after by one of the architectural assistants (who, with no surprise, was always the female one), asking questions to their mother just to have an excuse to be in that unusual situation. But I did not mind this aspect of the interview, because it actually ended up being significant for my research in terms of care duties and workplace dynamics. Especially considering the fact that their father, also a partner

architect in the same practice, was in the office in that moment, but had not considered at all the possibility that he could look after his children for the 53 minutes that the interview lasted. Overall, it was a beautiful experience: after the interview we ended up chatting on the balcony in the sun about buildings, dogs and the sea. I left her office enthusiastic: the experiences she shared with me have been extremely significant, the settings of a regular working day for a working mother have been unexpectedly meaningful, and I managed to avoid seeming inexperienced. However, I had a very different experience during my second interview. I met the second participant, a young architect, in a bar after work, and while sipping a beer we chatted about her working experiences, university and life plans. It has been a standard conversation, not too meaningful and a bit plain. Her account has been relieving in the sense that I realised that there is not necessarily space for discrimination and suffering in every female architect's life. After having conducted the whole fieldwork, the transcript of that second interview suggested me that it was not too plain after all, since many points raised have been useful during the coding process, and I used some extracts at few conferences. This aspect suggested me that what gives significance to the results is not only the meaningfulness of the interview itself, but also the fact that the researcher is aware of the vast diversity and complexity of the different accounts gathered and is able to offer a meaningful understanding of the overall data.

What I learned from my first experience in the UK is that it is good to optimise the time, but the risk of being too tired could affect the interview and also be counterproductive. This specific concern arose as soon as I stepped on the train back to Brighton from London, where I conducted three interviews during the same day. I contacted this extremely kind person after a friend of mine provided me with her contact. She did not only offer me her availability to participate, but she also put me in contact with two of her friends, asking them to meet me on the same day I planned the interview with her, in order to save me time and money. I definitely appreciated her help, and I spent the day running from one tube station to another, so after each interview I did not have time to write down any thought or to even think about the conversation I just had. Once I stepped on the train back to Brighton, I started to get worried about everything: 'did I cover every area of the interview's structure? Why I could not remember a particular answer that I thought was particularly interesting?' I was mixing up answers and participants. I made a mess, and I wasted their time. Only a few days later, when I decided to face my fears and transcribe the audio recordings, I realised that everything on the day went perfectly smoothly. The interviews were complete, significant and useful. While hearing their voices I suddenly reconstructed the situations, the environments we were in; I could associate

their main points and main experiences to their faces. They were three again. But I did not want to risk the opportunity to get the most out of an interview and its contextual dynamics, therefore I never scheduled another day with more than one interview.

3.2.2 – The study: fieldwork in Italy

At the point of starting the proper fieldwork, I made sure to rearrange things differently, according to what I learned from the pilot study. One of the main aspects of the fieldwork has undoubtedly been the recruiting process. Initially, I was not worried about the access to participants in Italy because the social group I was interested in studying is substantial and I was already in contact with many gatekeepers, thanks to previous relationships I had both at the university and in the workplace. However, I considered important to avoid interviewing anyone I personally knew, in order to prevent any selection bias which may arise because it is likely that the persons in contact with me are similar in characteristics, experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, people I know may be reluctant to share with me their personal experiences of discrimination, as already noticed by Oakley (1981), Reinharz and Davidman (1992) and Letherby (2003).

Sampling in Italy

I carried out the biggest part of the interviews in Italy between August and September 2016. I arranged most of the meetings in advance, according to my tight and detailed plan of stop-overs all across Italy. I started my trip from Genoa, where I interviewed just one person, then I moved to the region of my hometown, Abruzzo, where I conducted three more interviews, then another three in Rome, three in Florence and, eventually, two in Milan. I aimed at covering different geographical areas among north, middle and south Italy, as well as including a different variety of participants, from students to architects working in private or public sectors, self-employed or who left the profession. I had contacts in each one of the cities I visited during my fieldwork and I accessed the participants through friends and relatives, except from two specific cases: in Genova and in Milan. In Genova I only arranged one interview, thanks to a contact received from a friend, so I consulted the local section of a national online search engine (https://genova.paginegialle.it/) using the term 'architect' to access more prospective participants. I then selected only female architects and sent them an email explaining my research and my interest in their participation. I got a very enthusiastic response from only one of the recipients of my emails but, unfortunately, she was not in Italy during my stay. However, as her professional experience was certainly unusual compared to others I had encountered

until then, I decided to carry out the interview via Skype. I will describe in more details the experience of interviewing online in the next paragraph. With regards to the other exception in Milan, I intended to interview a student from the prestigious university '*Milano Politecnico'* but, unfortunately, I did not have any direct contact. So I headed to the campus with some printouts of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), and I started asking around if there were any architecture students. This experience was harder and more embarrassing than I expected. After two hours of scanning the crowd, I approached a large group of students and explained my research to the big audience. Luckily, someone eventually agreed to be interviewed and the whole experience, in the end, went better than expected.

I originally planned the whole fieldwork in detail and, being extra confident about the whole plan, I did not allow extra interviews. Unfortunately, some unforeseen difficulties arose last minute, either for me or for some participants, so I had to cancel some of the planned interviews. For example, a friend who was supposed to host me in Florence had a surgery the day before my visit, so I had to postpone my trip losing the chance to meet one interviewee; or one woman I contacted had a minor accident, so the interview went to the bottom of her priority list. I ended up concluding my fieldwork with three interviews fewer than originally planned. Once back in the UK I carried out the Skype interview I already planned and, given the positive outcome of the experience, I decided that it would have been more useful to arrange a Skype meeting for the three interviews left, rather than waiting a few months before being able to go back to Italy again. Given this spatial advantage, I then decided to focus my interest on specific individuals: two women who left the profession and one architect that was about to change office after 10 years of work in the same practice. I accessed them through friends, and I carried out video interviews via Skype.

Conducting interviews in Italy

My intention, in conducting interviews, was to challenge power relations between the participants and myself as researcher. Most feminist literature argues for the need to conduct non-exploitative research, considering participants as 'subjects' rather than 'objects' of the study (Oakley, 1981; Lather, 1991; Collins, 1990). The conversation has often been facilitated by certain characteristics that I shared with the interviewees (Mullings, 1999) that delineate me as an 'insider', being both female and an architect myself: this made me able to share deeper understandings of the issues investigated. I used this 'insider' privileged position as a researcher in many of the interviews to facilitate interaction, especially in the initial attempt to 'break the ice'. Having been through many experiences also shared by the participants helped me in being

seen as a peer rather than an outsider resolved at exploiting their experiences to prove unknown points. Furthermore, being a woman interested in gendered issues encouraged many participants in opening about their life choices, their frustrations and limited possibilities, as already noticed by Hesse-Biber (2007).

However, this double position of researcher and architect has been really hard for me to balance, especially at the beginning. During the first few interviews I felt overwhelmed by the expectations: both mine and the interviewees'. I felt inadequate and worried about what participants would have thought of me. Why should they spend one hour of their time talking to me? Would I be able to look professional and, especially, to valorise their contribution during the writing up of the results? These were the researcher's worries, also shared with many colleagues I got the chance to discuss this matter with. Worries which I got rid of rather quickly, just after having had a positive validation from the first few participants. But, at the same time, I also had the burden of being a female architect asking other female architects about their experiences of sexism. The architect's hope was to find out that they never encountered any discrimination, not during education nor in the workplace; but the researcher's hopes were a lot different. And I struggled between these conflictual positions, while at the same time personal memories of episodes of obvious or veiled sexism arose in my mind. I valued these memories as a bridge to come closer to the women I was interviewing, but I also despised them because of their being subtle and not clear enough as sexist at the moment I experienced them.

However, some authors like Phoenix (2000) acknowledge that matching characteristics between researcher and researched are not enough to guarantee rapport, especially considering that respondents may be characterised by factors other than gender (such as ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability). Different combinations of multiple categories of oppression create various forms of new oppressions, each tailored to a specific individual, affecting their experiences and their rights, their possibility to access specific institutions, and their life choices. The concept of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990; Davis, 2008) is a theoretical and methodological approach to inequality able to disclose how multiple vectors of oppression subordinate individuals within socio-economic structures (Choo and Ferree, 2010). '*Individuals can experience disadvantage and privilege simultaneously, through the combined statues of gender, race and class*' (Simien, 2007: 267) and other characteristics. This possibility is able to influence the balance of power between researcher and participants in the interview situation, according to the powerful position in certain categories that they both may occupy (Edwards, 1990).

While transcribing the interviews from the pilot study I realised that I tended to speak too much, and I felt that I may have dominated the conversation. This paradigm has been already observed by Phoenix (2000) and, reflecting on it, I realised that my strong presence in the interview was depending more on my insecurity of feeling incapable as a researcher rather than on my overconfidence about the subject. I just wanted to say something that sounded deep and articulated, not much to enhance my personal performance but rather to validate my research, which I wanted to appear more complex than a banal study about women's disadvantages. However, this dynamic was not directly influencing their answers, because I was mainly concerned with explaining the broad position of their answers in this complex discourse. Nevertheless, this was dangerous for my research as well as potentially influencing their answers: I was analysing their experiences according to an already existing framework of analysis, rather than allowing me the possibility to offer a different starting point of view. Therefore, during the subsequent interviews I tried different strategies. It has not been easy, because I realised that the need to comment on the ongoing interview, either to justify the importance of my research or to show involvement and understanding, was dominating my behaviour. Hence, I decided to use this inevitable need to comment the various aspects raised during the conversation to my future advantage, without jeopardising the ongoing interview: before moving to the following area of inquiry I often summarised the points the interviewees raised previously adding my personal comment, which I would have been able to pick up and develop successively, after the transcriptions and during the analysis process. This practice enabled me to easily keep track and return at a later stage to personal thoughts and links without influencing participants' views. Below an example of this kind of in-interview summary:

> *Me: So you're kind of saying that experiences of time are different between women and men... Time for a man means only the time for the productivity. Being productive at work and then only moments of relax. Women, instead, need to be productive also in house duties. Therefore they need to shorten their working time. [Moving to the following topic] Have you ever thought about leaving the profession? Be employed in a job with less responsibilities?'.*

From this example it is clear that my comment served as a conclusion of a particular area and was not directly linked to the following set of questions.

I interviewed a wide variety of people in Italy, from the eccentric and passionate architect with an innate social interest, to the student who just graduated and was determined

at avoiding the unfair unpaid working positions; from the advantaged middle class woman with a wealthy circle of clients, to the disappointed architect(s) who moved into the food sector; from the struggling academic to the enthusiastic architect at the beginning of her career. I met them mostly in cafés, few in their offices, some others in outdoor spaces.

As mentioned above, I also conducted four online interviews. At first, I was sceptical about this sort of interaction, but I found out that this did not affect the connection between me and the women on the other side of the screen. On the contrary, I found out that being in their own house while talking to me helped them feeling more comfortable about talking about their experiences and ideas. However, not having control over the environment affects the ability to avoid external interaction, as already noticed by Oakley in her study about motherhood (1981) and as I found in one of my interviews. I was talking with an interviewee and after about ten minutes I realised that, apart from her two cats, there was another presence in the room: her partner was around, and she engaged with him a couple of times by asking confirmation about some events' dates. At first, I was a bit annoyed by his presence in the room because I was worried that this would inhibit her willingness to share personal experiences (Phoenix, 2000). However, I then realised that she was perfectly at ease with him, they must have previously talked about everything.

Furthermore, I realised that the interviewees were keener at engaging online because this enabled them to save transportation time to a meeting place, and they were also feeling more comfortable in asking me to rearrange the interview, as happened twice with Giorgia because of issues with unexpected working deadlines.

Speaking about the process of interviewing itself, there are not considerable or fundamental differences between interviewing online or in person, as also argued by Curasi (2001) and Dowling (2012). The quality of the audio registration is similar, the eye contact and the possibility to read facial expressions are maintained, and the length of the interview is similar. The only possible downsides could be the quality of the internet connection, causing inconsistency to the conversation thus losing the flow, and the impossibility to interact with the interviewee before and after the interview, while stepping out of the cafe' or while catching a different bus from the same stop, therefore losing the chance to discover significant elements useful to make sense of specific events that they mentioned during the interview. However, these fortunate chances would not necessarily happen in each face to face interview, therefore online meetings should not be avoided for this specific reason.

3.2.2 – The study: fieldwork in the UK

By the time I started the British part of my fieldwork I gained enough confidence in my abilities as researcher and, therefore, I finally felt more at ease in doing this study. Overall, I had a different perception of the British participants compared to the Italian ones: they seemed more aware of the uneven situation of women in the field. I originally thought that this depended on the sampling strategies, since I got in contact with the vast majority of the Italian participants through friends or relatives (18 out of 20), whereas I contacted most of the British ones through the ARB register or through social networks. I thought that people who decided to participate in my study, excluding those I got in contact with through common friends, were genuinely interested in the topic. Their attention got caught either by an email received from me, an unknown person, or they reached my online call for participants because of common interests, therefore were already aware of the issue. However, it needs to be highlighted that the issue of the uneven presence and conditions of women in architecture is more well-known in the UK because of the work of the Architects' Journal, which runs a well-known annual survey on the topic and organises the annual Women in Architecture Award, and other institutional bodies such as the RIBA or CIC (Construction Industry Council), which established specific groups and programmes aimed at increasing diversity in the sector. These kinds of initiatives are absent in Italy at the moment, with the exclusion of an independent group called '*RebelArchitette*', which has been created in 2018 (after my fieldwork) and is not institutionally funded nor well known yet.

Sampling in the UK

The experience of recruiting participants in the UK has been different compared to the Italian one, mainly because I had no links to the architectural field nor gatekeepers, since I never studied or practiced the profession in this country. Therefore, I had to develop alternative recruiting strategies other than asking my friends and acquaintances for their contacts, since their help enabled me to get in contact with only seven of the nineteen participants. The first recruiting strategy I employed was to select women architects from the Architects Registration Board (ARB), the online register of architects in the UK, and send them an email in which I explained the details of my study and asked for their participation. I selected suitable women architects who were working either in East or West Sussex, trying to include either small firms or bigger practices, in order to gain a diverse sample in terms of employment contracts, working dynamics, type of clients and geographical position. Out of about twenty emails sent, I managed to interview four participants with this strategy. I also sent the same email to bigger practices

based in London, which I selected from an online article featuring the ten best practices in London. However, this method resulted less efficient because the email was not addressed to anyone in particular and I suspect that either the office administrator did not forward the email to the architects, or the architects did not find it engaging enough, being so vague in the addressee name. I only received one reply, but unfortunately it was from a French architect, therefore I could not include her among the sample. Another strategy I used, this time mainly aimed at recruiting academics who left the canonical profession, has been to email the Head of the School of Architecture of some Universities in different cities in the UK. I had a very enthusiastic response from one of these HoS, which offered both her availability to be interviewed and forwarded my email to various mailing lists and her personal contacts. It was actually one of her contacts who allowed me to organise my second focus group, as explained in the next part of this chapter. Furthermore, I also posted a call for participants on Twitter, which enabled me to be contacted by one architect who subsequently put me in contact with another interviewee.

During the recruiting process I was contacted by someone whose position was particularly interesting in terms of the understanding of the different motivations behind career decisions. Moreover, her position was a bridge between Italy and the UK, as she was an Italian architect who moved to the UK just after her graduation, more than 30 years ago. The interesting aspect of her story is that, unusually, she did not move to the UK in order to follow a career in architecture, but she instead changed jobs, from gardening to social work, because she did not feel that architecture was the right job for her. I decided to interview this person despite her in-between position among the two countries but because I considered her experience as a good tie between the two different cultures. I explored the differences between Italy and the UK in terms of working practices and culture through the first focus group, but this participant's experience was able to add something different regarding unusual motivations. After the interview I was not sure whether to add her experience among the UK participants or the Italian ones, but I then decided to add her to the British sample because she mainly discussed about the labour market in the UK and the architects she knew who were practising here, while she only mentioned briefly the education in Italy.

Overall, the recruiting process in the UK ended up way more difficult than expected, and I tried to find some explanations about why this was the case. Firstly, because I did not have contacts in the sector, as mentioned above. Then because being based in the UK did not put the pressure on me about trying to organise all the interviews during a limited timeframe like it did happen in Italy, and I justified this lack of rush by wanting to interview the right sample: various,

significant, geographically diverse and different in terms of age and career stage. Utilising only one recruiting strategy, or relying only on my initial gatekeeper, would have offered me a quicker but presumably biased sample.

Conducting interviews in the UK

As happened for the Italian fieldwork, I tried to favour face to face interactions with the interviewees but, in order to be able to access participants from disparate geographical positions, I had to undertake a quarter of the interviews online (five out of 19). This practice offered me the opportunity to include in the study some professionals working outside the London area, London being considered as a homogeneous environment distinct from smaller towns all over the UK. London is characterised by a large amount of practices, many of which have more than 100 employees and tend to be highly specialised in specific sectors of the construction industry; there is more offers and turnover of positions but also more competition (especially foreign), salaries tend to be slightly higher and there is, counterintuitively, less flexibility of working patterns (big practices tend to favour regular full-time employment, in order to standardise working commitments and responsibilities). In London, the typology of clients is different, both on the private and public side, and the kind and number of projects is greatly dissimilar from smaller cities ones. Therefore, accessing a varied sample from other places which were not only London has been my main priority.

During the interviews I did not encounter major issues with the recording device, apart from two specific instances: I met one of the participants in a busy cafe during a lunch break and, despite having been warned from many colleagues about the negative effects of the music and voices on the recorded audio, I did not pay enough attention to the position of the device. I ended up spending three times the usual amount of time needed to transcribe that interview. The other negative experience I had was in Sheffield where, after almost one hour from the start of the interview, I observed the audio recorder to check how long the interview lasted so far and I noticed that the device was off. I just used a new pair of batteries that day to avoid this unfortunate circumstance, and I was quite sure that I pressed the 'record' button at the start of the interview. I tried to stay calm and dissimulate my feelings of despair, giving the fact that the interview has been extremely interesting, I quickly closed the interview that was at the last question anyway and I left the café. Once alone I checked the list of recorded items and the interview was there, however only 38 minutes out of approximately one hour of interview had been recorded, because there was no memory left on the device. Then, I immediately recorded

on my phone everything I remembered from the last part of the interview, and I tried to offer as many details as possible.

3.3 - Focus groups

Focus groups are a useful tool which create the opportunity for participants with the same positions, roles or characteristics to discuss determined topics. These can be considered as an informal gathering in which every participant is able to freely express their feelings, find ideas that they did not think about before and develop them, talk about taboo topics and share their experiences. In particular, the strongest contribution of focus groups to this piece of research lies on the possibility to identify beliefs and assumptions that arise during conflicts and analyse the ideas that influence individuals to the point of making them change their minds (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). However, problems with focus groups arise if stronger personalities amongst the interviewees dominate the talk, if the debate becomes not pertinent with the research or if '*the impact of the group on the expression of individual points of view is a purely negative, inhibiting or distorting factor*' (Kitzinger, 1994: 112). Furthermore, focus groups play the role of reducing the researcher's power and control through the construction of non-hierarchical power relations between researcher and participants during the process (Wilkinson, 1999). Power is a broader concept to be understood not only with regards to the differences between researcher and participants (in terms of class, ethnicity, nationality, etc), or during the research process itself, but also during the post-fieldwork period (Naples, 2003). Focus groups should take place in neutral settings, even if this probably comes at the cost of losing the observation of the actors where social interaction typically occurs (Madriz, 2000). My role as a moderator required me to keep the level of my involvement low, and to follow a non-rigid structured interview in order to let participants have a discussion without too much guidance. However, this lack of structure certainly resulted in more difficulties in the subsequent comparison of the themes and questions arising in each group (Morgan, 1998). Organising a focus group is an extremely challenging experience: it is all about finding a balance, and the usefulness of the experience depends on the preparation of the conditions that offer this balance. I have been lucky in both of my experiences, because I gained invaluable contributions and debates, but not everything went perfectly smoothly in both cases, as I will explore in more details in the following paragraphs. I conducted two focus groups, which have been organised starting from different needs and premises. Both of them have been carried out in London: the first one comprised of only Italian participants, while the second one included only British ones.

3.3.1 – Italians in the UK

I decided to organise a focus group which could act as a meeting point for the two different domains in which I divided the individual interviews: Italy and the UK. I thought that the observations of Italian architects working in the UK would have been extremely interesting to consider in this sense. Compared to the experiences behind the individual interviews, this time I realised that I was worried on so many levels, as evident from my research journal's entry of that day:

> '[…] and if the place will be too noisy, full, too formal or not welcoming? If the people in the group will openly not like each other? What if someone will dominate the whole discussion?' (Extract from 17th December 2016).

These worries were justified because I did not know the participants, so it was difficult to foresee the right mix of people to make the focus group work. I ended up recruiting five participants, only two of which I personally met before through common friends. Other two have been respectively suggested by the first two, being common friends working in London. Although, I made sure that everyone was working in different practices, in order to avoid discussions about internal dynamics which would exclude other participants. The fifth participant was someone that contacted me after reading one of my blog posts and wanted to have more information about my project, so I thought she would be interested in taking part in the group.

Once I confirmed an adequate number of participants, I started to worry about a suitable place to meet. The importance of selecting a suitable venue has been discussed in various methodological guidelines about focus groups, such as Green and Hart (1999). The only available day to meet for all of them was the last Sunday before the Christmas holidays, and they wanted to meet in central London, so I was concerned about finding a café which would have not been packed with last-minute Christmas shoppers. I opted for a large space, in order to avoid acoustic interference in the audio recording, and we decided to meet in one of the cafés in the Southbank Centre. I went there two hours in advance, in order to be able to occupy a large table in an isolated corner and, as soon as I started to relax, I received a text from one of the participants, saying that she was not able to make it. Luckily, the other four women arrived in time and I was pleased to hear that all their experiences were different, and they were employed in dissimilar sectors. However, their characteristics appeared to be quite similar: they were all young women in their 30s with no children nor their own house. I successively considered the possible consequences or benefits of this circumstance, and I ended up regarding this as a lucky

coincidence rather than a dangerous bias. The aim of the focus group was not to gather a diverse sample of participants, but rather to discuss about specific dynamics, such as: what are the main motivations why they moved to the UK, if they were planning to stay or to go back to Italy in the next five/ten years, what were the main differences they found between the Italian and the British labour market. And, in order to discuss such dynamics, the best thing would be that the participants share common characteristics between them.

The first question that I asked - other than giving them the possibility to introduce themselves and summarise their background and their professional position - was intended to understand what had led them to move to the UK. After the first 10 minutes I started to worry about the tone of the discussion: it seemed more like a polite answering in turn, rather than a proper debate. I initially thought that this was due to my lack of experience, the kind of questions I was asking, or their initial embarrassment of being among people never met before. So I started working on each of these issues: I moved to ask more controversial questions (such as 'do you think men are more suited to do this kind of job?'), trying to fuel a discussion about their opinions about the profession, and any differences they may have encountered between the two countries in terms of meritocracy, gender discrimination and working/promotion possibilities. I aimed at picking divergences among what participants said and pushed interaction between them. After my initial active interplay in the group dynamics I then realised that everyone felt more encouraged to speak, and my role stepped back on being only a sort of 'question dealer'. The discussion concluded on their professional and personal satisfaction, and with a provocative question about the possibility to move back to Italy at some point of their life. The conversation ended up being extremely balanced, where everyone had enough space to talk, and at the same time offered the chance to present some divergent points of view.

3.3.2 - UK practice

The opportunity for the second focus group arose automatically from one email that I received during the recruitment for the individual interviews in the UK. I initially discussed my research with this potential participant, who got my contact details from a previous participant. She has been working in an all-female practice in London for more than 30 years (since the practice has been established), and she mentioned that some of her co-workers were willing to be interviewed too. I immediately thought that this opportunity would have been extremely interesting if taken as a general discussion, rather than as individual interviews. I wanted to know how the practice started, why they all stayed for so long, if they have special policies or forms of employment, what kind of projects they have and if they struggled at any point for

being an all-female practice in a male dominated field. All these questions were context-specific, and I hoped the participants would be willing to answer them with both relevant examples and their own reflections, especially considering that some of them were active members of feminist collectives in the 80s. I had the chance to grasp their knowledgeable experience to make sense of some issues on which I was reflecting for a long time, and I was glad of this unexpected possibility. For example, it is after this discussion that I wrote the research journal entry '*Profit vs. Social interest*', published on my personal blog. Unfortunately, this experience did not go as smoothly as I thought. I was meant to meet some of the team members in their office in London but as soon as I stepped in, I realised that only three of them were present on that day, and one of which had to leave the room after only half hour to meet a client. However, this circumstance did not negatively affect the interactions nor the discussion. Two of the participants were the founding members of the practice so we had the possibility to discuss historical changes of the profession in the last 30 years, and challenges for them as both individuals and a practice. The third participant was an architectural assistant who was working there from less than one year: her contribution has been a key element in understanding the dynamics behind the application process and what pushes young architects to apply to specific practices. By that time, I already discussed this point in one of my blog posts ('*Diversity is not synonymous with architecture*', October 2016), in which I argued that more diverse practices were more likely to attract diverse applicants. So, I finally got the possibility to discuss this aspect in person with both of the parties involved: applicants and employers.

The discussion also enabled me to understand how different working patterns could be efficiently organised in a workplace, differently from the mainstream organisation of the field, and how this could benefit employees with different needs. The participants were characterised by diverse familiar conditions and they were benefitting from the flexibility of the practice in different ways.

A limited number of participants does not necessarily affect the results (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999), including this specific case where it did not prevent the group from a general discussion about the peculiarity of the practice, the work interests, the historical changes of the profession and various challenges, to cite some. Besides, a larger number of participants would have been even counterproductive in this context, because it would have added more personal experiences rather than more reflections. As I already mentioned, it is the role of individual interviews, not the focus groups, to collect and explore narratives.

Overall, both groups not only provided me with original data and interesting points of reflection, but they also enabled me to understand some mechanisms acting behind gender discrimination, such as the kind of arguments people use to support assumptions and stereotypes. Individual interviews are mainly able to offer personal accounts and insights, where focus groups are more useful in terms of understanding how conventional and mainstream discourses around gender are shaped and reproduced (Mitchell, 1999). And, in this specific case, it is especially interesting to note how these discourses are reproduced by the social group itself that is usually affected by them.

3.4 - Blog

During the whole research period I kept two different research journals where I noted down my reflections about my position as a researcher and, after each interview, the key points raised directly by the interviewees or my personal understanding and connections from their accounts. Research journals are a means often used in research to develop and modify the conducting of the research in the light of the new awareness and discoveries gained during the process (Ortlipp, 2008).

One of the two journals was more personal and reflexive (Etherington, 2004), mainly aimed at collecting post-interviews thoughts and observations; a physical notebook in which I wrote either in Italian or English. The importance of reflexive strategies is to allow building self-awareness around relationships in the research process and to understand the researcher's own privilege and possible bias (Naples, 2003), which could arise due to their age, class, gender, general background and theoretical orientations. All those factors contribute to build assumptions and stereotypes in the researcher's understanding of reality. A reflexive analysis of the whole experience of interviewing is also useful in making the reader aware of the developing processes of the research, thereby giving greater validity to the results (Letherby, 2003).

The other journal was aimed at sharing more elaborate reflections that arose from the literature I was reading or the interviews I was conducting, and was also aimed at engaging with the architectural community interested in the topic of women in architecture. This research journal consisted of an online public blog (launched in November 2015), which was directed at gaining the attention of possible architect readers (of both genders), who could then be introduced to the social debate, and possibly recruited as participants for the interviews. I kept the language of the blog posts accessible, following the recent debate about the importance of supporting impact of academic research outside academia (BSA, 2017). One of the main aims of the blog was to contribute to the work of other websites aimed at raising female awareness

around the topic of gender discrimination in specific sectors, architecture in my case. The title of the first post on the blog was quite emblematic of my aims: '*Do we really need to talk about women in professions for the umpteenth time? Yes, we do!*' (November 2015).

I expected this blog to be read by a small amount of people, mostly persons I knew from my architectural studies, but regardless it was a good way for me to organise my thoughts: somehow, I was mainly writing for myself. However, after a while I was encouraged by a positive response: the Facebook page of the blog is followed by 447 persons (last checked on August 2019), and the Twitter account is followed by another 301. Furthermore, some of my posts have been commented and shared, and I received four emails of users that wanted to tell me their stories of discrimination, after I shared my own stories in a post ('*A personal experience of everyday sexism*', January 2016). At the point I was recruiting participants for my fieldwork in the UK, I used the blog to publicise a call for participants, and this enabled me to access four interviewees. I also have been contacted by various persons that just wanted to tell me that they were following the blog with interest and that what I was writing was relevant to their current situation. Moreover, I have been interviewed and featured twice in two different Italian blogs that were connected either with architecture in general, and with women in architecture in specific, this allowing me to reach a wider audience. Through the links created on social media I found out about many events where I got the chance to meet people that helped me in discussing some of the topics that I was interested in developing.

The blog is an unusual instrument of research, so I needed to consider specific ethical issues related to this. For example, using the blog as a public research journal accessible online is problematic in terms of mentioning aspects related to some of the interviews, which have been conducted as strictly confidential. Even if the name of the interviewee and specific details that would disclose their identity have never been used in any of the blog posts, the person could still easily connect my words to their interview. However, this does not affect the confidentiality of the interview and, as agreed in the consent form signed by each participant, sections of the transcript can be used in publications. The transcript itself has never been directly used in the blog, but only considerations arose from the experience of the interview, or a general paraphrase of the discussion.

3.5 - Summary

Overall, the fieldwork was satisfactory, also considering that similar studies conducted on the topic have used similar methods (see for example Fowler and Wilson, 2004; Caven, 2006; Sang et al., 2014). The number of interviews carried out is in line with what literature suggests

(Dworkin, 2012; Guest et al., 2006), and the original empirical material gathered is varied while, at the same time, offers a good base to analyse patterns and suggest generalisations. Methodologically, the main reflection I came across is that the practice of the pilot study offered a positive input to the proper fieldwork, suggesting changes in approaches and topics of inquiry through a process of reflexivity. This process offered the possibility to test sampling strategies, the adequacy of the provisional areas of inquiry, and my own interaction during the interviews.

In addition to this, during the whole research process I put particular attention to the ethical implications of my study. The concept of 'ethical research' is very broad and has been defined as '*the set of ethical principles that should be taken into account when doing social research*' (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012: 17). Researching ethically means considering ethics in all the processes of research, from the planning of the study to the publishing of the findings, giving special attention to the procedures adopted for participants (Silverman, 2011). Generally, the main ethical goals of social research are to protect participants from harm, keep individual's accounts confidential, ensure mutual trust between researcher and researched, and ensure that the consent is informed (Silverman, 2011). I took into account these goals during the four main phases of the study, namely planning, conducting, analysing, and publicising. Before conducting the interviews I presented a 'participant information sheet' and an 'informed consent form' to each participant to read and sign (Appendix B): this procedure highlights the need to inform participants about the purposes of the research, the methods used to gain their contribution, the use that will be done of the data, who will be authorised to consult those, and the expected use of the results (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). During the conduction of the interviews, I put particular attention at preventing the risk of harm (physical, psychological, material, or reputational) to participants. During the process of analysis, I ensured the maintenance and preservation of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the participants, other than reporting and analysing data honestly.

In the next two chapters I illustrate how I made sense of the original data gathered during the fieldwork. Every interview offered valuable data which contributed to the development of the three main thematic areas of discussion, namely *culture and identity*, *material experiences*, and *role-exit*. As mentioned above, being my first experience as a qualitative researcher I had to refine the interview technique during the whole fieldwork, but my position as 'insider', as a female architect myself, helped me in obtaining valuable empirical data from a vantage point.

Chapter 4 - Tales from the UK

The case study approach of this research project is intended to highlight the differences and similarities between the two contexts in specific mechanisms and outcomes. This chapter outlines the results obtained from a thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups conducted in the UK. The next chapter mirrors the same structure in illustrating the findings arose from the Italian dataset, whereas chapter 6 is aimed at comparing and discussing similarities and differences between the two analysed countries.

The thematic analysis has been developed following a Grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) by firstly identifying various keywords (codes) in each interview transcript. The keywords (198 from the Italian transcripts and 202 from the British ones) have been created from the text itself, without any previous structure or guideline (Silverman, 2011). Some of the keywords have been identified one time only, whereas others have been more recurrent, for example I identified 'First Working Experience' 10 times within the British data and 11 within the Italian one. Successively, I gathered similar keywords in wider subgroups (concepts) and gave them a unifying title, which was often one of the keywords themselves. For example, I gathered 'career progression, progression, ideal career, satisfaction, reality, goal, ideal situation, ideal job' under the subgroup 'Career'. The next step has been to gather those subgroups into wider groups (categories). Following up the previous example, I unified 'Career, Flexibility, Caring Responsibilities and Working arrangements' under the thematic category that I called 'Women positioning in the Industry'. I ran this process for the Italian and the British dataset separately until this point. I then analysed the results from both contexts before moving to the following step, where I identified three main thematic areas which were adequate to fit the categories that arose from both countries: *Culture and Identity, The architectural sector* and *Role-exit.* To give a numerical idea of the results of this process, both the British and the Italian coding trees contain: three thematic areas, each one containing three categories which, in turn, contain between four and six concepts, for a total of 400 codes overall the two datasets.

The next two chapters offer a gendered perspective on architecture, illustrating women's experiences in the profession and the reasons that had led to their discontent. Both chapter 4 and 5 are organised according to the three main thematic areas arose from the analysis process described above: *Culture and Identity* – a subjectivist approach aimed at understanding how does it feel to be a female architect; *Material experiences of women in architecture* – how the architectural sector is organised and how material consequences influence women in the field; and *Role-exit* – in which I illustrate what happened to those who have left, in material, cultural and identity terms. Whereas the first two sections illustrate and

discuss the results according to thematic subjects, the latter will appear different from the previous two, as the intention is to depict individual experiences by developing the text through a narrative of the accounts of specific participants. This will be explained in more details later in this chapter.

4.1 – Culture and Identity in the UK

In this section I explore how participants developed their professional identity, how they make sense of themselves as female architects, and how their experiences in educational training influenced the construction of these identities. In doing so, I firstly discuss women's self-perception of being architects, and then of being women in the construction industry. At the same time, I illustrate how stereotypes are able to influence self-perception through mechanisms such as lack of confidence and technological inability.

I also explore what/who influenced or discouraged women towards architecture, assumptions perceived by others towards feminine characteristics, negative working relationships and how women challenge them. Finally, I discuss participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the university culture and discrimination in academia, in order to understand what may lead them to drop-out education.

4.1.1 – Professional Identity

Just before starting to write this chapter I received an email from an Italian practitioner addressed to me as *Architetto* (Architect) D'Avolio. It was not the first time, this is the way I always get addressed from professionals in Italy. But the unusual aspect of it is that I never officially registered to the Architects' Chamber so, even if I had fully qualified and practiced as an architect before, I have never been technically registered as one. This led me to reflect on what makes me an architect. Is my long pathway of study enough? Am I still an architect after six years away from the profession, even if I have never been formally one? The senders of the emails think so, as much as many of my friends who still address me in those terms, which reflects their way of offering me the possibility to hold the prestige earned after years of study. To some extent, I realised that I have never felt like an architect and never had the chance to develop my professional identity to see myself as one. However, every individual experience and life course is different and, in this section, through the voices of the participants I illustrate what being an architect means to them.

Being or not being an architect – self-perception

To start with, I outline what it does mean for the participants of this study to be an architect, and what are the stereotypes that they had the need to reject at some point of their career. It is interesting to notice the presence of the duality being/not-being in participant's attempts to define what an architect is. From the participant's point of view, being an architect means being social and extroverted, liking arts and maths, having a certain lifestyle, a vocation, to name a few. Using the same mechanism of generalisation, participants also offered an understanding of the opposite: what does it mean not being like what is expected from an architect? Janet shared one of the worries with me:

> *'I was worried about the profile, because we had a career and development team who did a little analysis of your profile and personality… And all the architects' profiles were very extroverts and very sociable and I was the opposite of extrovert and not very sociable' (Janet, 39, Architect).*

Her personality was clearly in contrast to what the career team regarded as being an architect, and this still has an impact on her confidence. However, a way to show that there is more than one unique profile of architect is to consider the many different reasons why the participants decided to study architecture. The spectrum of different reasons is so wide to suggest that there is not a common pattern. Actually, if any, the pattern is that rarely there are same inclinations and interests among architects. Some women were particularly convinced that their interest in building things as children offered them a good ground to study architecture, where, at the same time, others said that their passion for the arts suggested them the obvious link between creativity and architecture. Examples from these different position are Kathleen and Kim:

> *'My very first thought about wanting to be an architect came from playing with Lego. […] By the time I was 14 I already pretty much knew I wanted to be an architect because I was already making things, building things at home' (Kathleen, 55, Academic).*

> *'I enjoyed design, I enjoyed art. I knew I wanted to go to university because I wanted to indulge in that kind of lifestyle. So architecture seemed the obvious thing for me, because it covered a lot of things I was interested in' (Kim, 35, Architect).*

Other participants, like Laura and Carrie, admitted that the combination of two apparently opposite interests, arts and maths, suggested the route towards architecture.

> *'I've always been good at arts and math. I liked arts and sciences and I thought 'what can I do with both things?' […] I guess the key reason was just a combination of science and the arts together in one thing' (Laura, 45, Architect).*

> *'I liked the combination of art and math. To me those were the subjects that I enjoyed, so it was a continuation of doing those two subjects. Analytic and artistic' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

There is a general assumption that people are either more practical in sciences or in art and it is not common to be in between the two. However, according to the accounts from the participants in this study, this last position is the most prevalent. Overall, the attempt to find a common pattern resulted in a useless attempt to generalise inclinations.

Furthering this concept with a gendered focus, there is an argument from Sophia that I found particularly useful to illustrate the conflict between women, and minorities in general, and the profession:

> *'[…] this male kind of bull head attitude that was encouraged in the School of Architecture. Don't collaborate. The answer is always 'buildings' for architects, but sometimes that's not a good enough answer. A building. Probably an icon. It's not… unless you're one of these people who are prepared to work in a kind of vacuum' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor).*

This point highlights the idea that architecture relies on the idea of StarArchitects, as individualistic approach to something extremely social as the building environment, which Sophia considers as a direct consequence of a male attitude in education. This feeling is confirmed by many other participants, as illustrated in more details in the section about education.

Lack of confidence

Another element observed is that many participants feel they do not look convincing as an architect. This suggests that to be an architect you do not necessarily need to feel like one, but you can still work as one. Not conforming to the mainstream image of an architect leads to

this confusing idea of being a *non-real* architect. This feeling is also shared by more established professionals. For example, Janet says that she is not convincing as an architect not for gendered reasons but for her personal inclinations and limitations:

> *'I can do it, but I may not be very good at it' (Janet, 39, Architect).*

Amanda remembers that during her first employment:

> *'I couldn't believe I could call myself an architect when I didn't know nothing. I felt I knew nothing' (Amanda, 54, Self-employed).*

And Laura still believes, after 15 years of employment, that she is several years behind for her age in terms of career position: she never pushed herself for promotions due to both the lack of confidence and the need to put her children first, as a single mother.

> *'If you're not there at a certain age, then you're not really interested in architecture' (Laura, 45, Architect).*

This observation highlights the attitude of women to constantly question themselves and their need to affirm their commitment to their career, as also noticed by Francis (2017), Watts (2009) and Caven (2004; 2006).

Stereotypical architects

Apart from the reflexive self-understandings of what it feels like to be an architect, the figure of the architect is also constructed from assumptions coming from people outside the profession itself. The main suppliers of information are representations of architects in the media, or stereotypes about the profession commonly taken for granted, such as the idea of the long working hours culture. An architect is a young man with no caring commitments and therefore able to work late in order to please his clients, see for example male architects in TV shows and films like 'How I met your mother' (2005-2014) or 'The lake house' (2006). Stereotypes and assumptions are able to act as a way of discouraging people for choosing a specific career, for example Sophia questioned her ability to fit in since university:

> *'I did notice when I went to study that particularly the male students, a really high portion of them was dyslexic. They were clever but couldn't write very well, or even read that well. And I think that made me feel even more isolated because I was strong in those areas, but probably less strong in spatial awareness. A particular skill that you're supposed to have if you're an architect' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor).*

This happened to Sophia during university, however assumptions about being an architect cause a continue questioning also for women already in the profession:

> *'I doubt some of my skills and I've been a bit slow...so I haven't really progressed in the office. And now that I qualified I still feel that I got stuck because I'm a slightly technical person' (Janet, 39, Architect).*

Or when I asked her if she ever considered leaving architecture:

> *'Yes (laughs). At the moment, all the time (laughs). After my course, struggling all the way through, and getting disappointed and still not feeling like I got… I don't think I'm convincing for the other people in the office. I'm just wondering whether I… you know?'*

Janet stresses throughout the whole interview this idea of not looking '*convincing'* to colleagues, to the point of not looking convincing to herself, as evident from this episode happened on the building site:

> *'A: I've been on site a lot. I quite enjoyed coordinating with the other consultants and with contractors. It was always quite satisfying, good.*
> *Q: That's great, and also quite unusual… there are not many people that like this aspect of their job, coordinating…*
> *A: (laughs) I'm not a real architect! (laughs)'.*

This last sentence shows that women in the profession create in their mind an idea of what a *real architect* is and compare themselves to this image. Spaeth and Kosmala (2012: 218) argue that women unknowingly '*sublimate*' their identity to the dominant image of architects, which is a masculine one. This process has also been noticed by Dryburgh (1999) in her study about

engineering students, where female participants appeared to both adapt to the (male) professional culture and internalise the (male) professional identity of engineering. Therefore, they inherently carry a further difficulty to fit in this professional identity.

Technology

Another stereotypical idea associated with architecture, and more generally the construction industry, is the complicated relationship between gender and technological expertise (Cheryan et al., 2015; Evetts, 1998; Dixon, 1998; Chabaud-Rychter, 1995). Technology is considered essential to perform well in this profession, which is often in contrast with assumptions about femininity. The generational divide between architects who started their educational pathway directly on computers is different from the practice of hand-drawing experienced by older generations. In fact, women that did not use computers during university find technology takes away the creative process, whereas current students argue that technology is part of the creative process. This difference is also reflected in women's relationship with male colleagues. Sophia, for example, found men's confidence with technology off putting while she was at university:

> *'In those days the computers would be in a separate darker room, and it would just be blocks sitting in front of these screens with no colour. Just these numbers popping up and they were all seem to really know what they were doing (laughs). I just couldn't engage with it' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor).*

This comment reflected the educational atmosphere in the mid-80s, at the time Sophia was studying; whereas younger architects who started studying when computers were already the norm in architectural courses did not comment on any feeling of disparity, compared to their male counterparts. They appear knowledgeable and at ease with technology. Carrie, who can be considered in a situation in between the two perspectives (having started her degree in the mid-80s but having always been active in the profession) perceives technology as a good way to overcome the need to be always present, according to her professional experience before and after the mass introduction of the internet:

> *'This was around the turn of the century, the internet didn't take place yet. It was still quite bounded into the office. Either you were in or out of the office on site or at home [...] Technology has been, for me, a massive support in this sense. So I can play*

> *the game. [...] When I send an email from my phone I can pretend I could be…*
> *Nobody knows where the email is coming from. I deliberately like that' (Carrie, 48,*
> *Partner).*

Carrie highlights the benefits of the support offered by technology to challenge normalised practices, as also argued by Troiani (2012), however this really depends on the individual working situation, as explained by Anna, who highlighted the fact that it is difficult to keep up with technology when you work on your own. You need to actively update yourself, in terms of skills, software and hardware, and it this requires an investment of both time and money to catch up with upgrades and courses.

First working experience

The importance of the first working experience was highlighted when I noticed that more than half of the participants used it as an example to make some point in their answers. Bad experiences are able to put people off of architecture, as happened for Polly, who had a rough experience with her boss, in a practice where all her colleagues were older people. Polly left the profession, whereas someone else just had a temporary distancing from the job. As happened for Alice, who found her job in London '*problematic*' and decided to travel in East Asia to study old cities, before going back to the UK and enrol to what she defined as an '*interesting*' architectural course that supported her final decision to go back to the profession. More than a few participants described their practice as a sexist environment, but this did not inevitably lead all of them to leave the profession. One of them, Bell, was comfortable in working in a practice with five male employees as the only female, whereas another one, Shirley, experienced sexism from people the practice was working with, such as contractors, quantity surveyors, but not from her colleagues. Few participants had their first working experience even before going to university, and this varied according to the type of practice. Carrie, for example, had an interview with a practice when she was 18 and one of the people in the office told her:

> *''We'll soon put you off architecture'. It's an odd thing to say. It was something quite*
> *male about that, quite macho. With the secretary being a woman. I would have*
> *taken that job because I was so naive if it wasn't for the fact that I [got another job*
> *in another practice]' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

Ella, a MA student, had another kind of experience because she started working in a practice led by a woman, however she defines her boss as old-fashioned, in the sense that she regarded femininity as particularly important in the workplace. Her male co-workers, on the other hand, were nice and she felt she '*was judged by the work, rather than my aspect*'. I initially found this comment bizarre, showing that she considered this treatment as something peculiar rather than being the norm. However, it shows the expectations that some young women have about the evaluation of their work.

Overall, from participants' accounts and thoughts, professional identity results intertwined with the individuals' self-perception, which is inevitably affected by the stereotypical image of an architect: male, white and wealthy. This mechanism eventually influences confidence and reproduces inequality, which is experienced by many participants since their first working experience.

4.1.2 – Personal Identity: Being a Female Architect

In this section I illustrate how the participants of this study describe their identity as architects, and how assumptions, negative working relationships and influences from family and school shaped the construction of this identity.

Many people interested in architecture decide not to follow this pathway because it is a very challenging profession, where earnings do not reflect the money and time invested in education (Caven and Diop, 2012). This is particularly true for women because the educational pathway is longer than for other careers: this means entering the labour market when they are 25-30 years old, which usually coincides to the moment when women start to think about a family, as confirmed by many participants. Janet explains how being a woman influenced her educational experience:

> '*Then I went straight to Part3, because it was my ultimate goal. […] I started my Part3 just after I had my son […] I should have got Part3 before he was born (laughs)! But I didn't…*' (Janet, 39, Architect).

Janet stressed the importance of planning, whereas Allison commented on the limitations that being a woman had on others' perceptions of her career choices:

'When I was quite young and I decided that I wanted to be an architect, lot of people told me all these different things why I can't do it, just because I wasn't the child of an architect. Because I didn't have architects in the family. All these different perceptions people have… and being female as well. Which I've never really thought about before' (Allison, 28, MA student).

After having had to face these barriers during education women find other assumptions in their employment experiences: employers are not allowed to ask women about their family plans, but they do it anyway because it seems their legitimate right to invest on a long-term candidate, as is clear from Allison's account:

'One of the first things he said when he employed me was that he didn't have problems employing women. Which is like 'you do have problems employing women' (laughs). So often he said things that were strange. He wanted to know if I was going to have children, and he said: 'I think I'm not supposed to ask you this'…' (Allison, 28, MA student).

Allison's experience is not an unusual and isolated event, and assumptions do not come only from employers: families and acquaintances too insinuate that once a woman finishes university she needs to take a bold decision about her family plans and her future. Polly, for example, was working as an employee in an architecture practice, but her mother insisted that working for her father's surveying company would give her more flexibility, especially for childbearing.

'My mum found it really hard to find a job again after having had a baby. She's really keen on me carrying on working with my dad. Being self-employed is the only safe way of coming back and being flexible. […] I don't know how family friendly offices are' (Polly, 29, Surveyor – MA student).

Polly is aware of her mother's influence on her choice. Furthermore, young women are inevitably pushed to question their validity as their working availability is perceived to potentially be disrupted at some point of their career; they are requested to make life plans and to set priorities. Therefore, women end up spending most of their working time worrying about not only their performance, but also their presence. This is inherently linked to the material barriers linked to motherhood, which is extensively illustrated in the section 'Implications of

childcare' of this chapter. However, there are also women who did not have or do not want children, and this is still socially considered as unusual. For example, Kim is a single woman employed in a small practice, and she does not want children: this is a legitimate life choice but, still, she feels the need to justify her position.

> *'I'm a single lady and I'm very career focussed. The relationships I had have always been a sort of compromise, because I'm so focussed on my career. And I'm not a massively maternal person, and I'm not sure if I want any children, but that may change. […] At the moment I don't live for work but it's a big part of who I am' (Kim, 35, Architect).*

She stressed that architecture is a big part of her life as a way of justifying the fact that she did not have room for anything else.

Motherhood influences various moments of women's professional lives and as a consequence women feel the pressure to constantly demonstrate their ability to compensate this 'lack' of constant availability. For example, Jen, Kim and Anna all undertook building workshops, and Anna's motivation was that she:

> *'[…] wanted to be a woman who could go onto a site, talk to the bricklayer and say 'I know about laying bricks, I know about mixing water, how to build a timber'. And I was jealous about the young men that already had that experience in college' (Anna, 56, Self-employed architect).*

As with Anna's motivation, many other participants highlighted their inclination since a young age in being interested in 'building things' as part of their validity to be an architect, and few of them denounced a structural limitation in their possibilities to do experiences in building sites during school and university, compared to their fellow male students. This mechanism leads to a lack of experience for female students which inevitably affects their confidence in the job. This mechanism reproduces unequal dynamics for which women are less confident due to an actual lack of experiences and, at the same time, bosses tend to trust and encourage whoever looks more confident, offering them higher tasks. Moreover, not everyone is able to ask for more responsibilities, and women in particular, as argued by Alice:

> *'What I've always done it's just be the upfront and negotiate and ask them for it.*
>
> *And I think a lot of women just don't feel like and ask' (Alice, 48, Partner).*

In other words, confident people ask to do things, propose themselves, and quiet people end up getting what is left. However, the concept of confidence is very ambiguous and may be the umpteenth way of making women accountable for something that does not fully depend on them, as also argued by Gill and Orgad (2016). As I wrote in my blog post '*Confidence… it's a trap!*' (February 2018), asking women to be more confident '*is the usual reminder that women need to actively make an effort to be able to foster a change. […] in this time of ruthless individualism we're adding more weight on each individual's shoulders*'. Furthermore, it is important to 'Mind the (gender) Gap' because confidence comes from a varied set of circumstances, experiences and background, and not everyone is able to gain enough of it.

Assumptions

Aspects of being a female architect that are perceived by others through assumptions and stereotypes are often inevitably embodied by women themselves. The first set of assumptions that falls on women are based on visual aspects, as summarised by Courtney:

> *'That's really interesting how people assume. If I'm in a room full of architects they*
> *don't think I'm an architect, I need to tell them that I am. The assumption is made*
> *based on visuals' (Courtney, 47, Board Member).*

This is true not only with regards to gender, but also other intersecting characteristics which distance individuals from the norm, such as ethnicity, age and ability. These assumptions highlight how the profession still expects standardised identities among its practitioners. For example, this happens during applications for new jobs: women are perceived as applying for assistant jobs rather than for senior positions, as clearly explained by Courtney:

> *'I think there's a very paternalistic concept sometimes, from the senior team. […]*
> *There are people who have never looked at a female architect CV, and they assume*
> *that you're an assistant, and they don't even think that you may be a senior person.*
> *That you may be someone with a lot of experience. They're just going on 'I just*
> *assumed…' […] 'this one… probably got kids. Probably can't put on that job'. It's all*

> *about filling all the blanks without speaking to that person.' (Courtney, 47, Board*
> *Member).*

The process of assuming illustrated by Courtney leads women to be perceived as not constantly available or not reliable over time because of their *assumed* caring commitments, and their authority is often doubted. This happens either on construction sites or among business partners, as described by Amanda, when she told me that people walking past her studio often think that her male employee is the boss just because is the only man, or by Anna:

> *'I do find that sometimes you get into the end of the project, and because he's more*
> *vocal, it's easier for people to think that he's the architect, whereas we are a team.*
> *Which can be really annoying' (Anna, 56, Self-employed architect).*

Anna's male business partner is more 'vocal' so he is often perceived as being the boss, the leading figure of the project. A destiny encountered by many architects who work with their husbands: they do not get recognition, as remembered in the infamous episode of Robert Venturi's Pritzker Prize. The recognition has been awarded to Venturi in 1991 for his work conducted in full partnership with his wife Denise Scott-Brown. Students from the Harvard Graduate School of Design launched a petition 22 years later to ask the Pritzker committee to amend the award to include Scott-Brown, but unfortunately the episode had a negative outcome, since the committee refused the change (Stratigakos, 2016). Other examples are the two famous StarArchitects Norman Foster and Richard Rogers, both of them worked with their ex-wives who got no credit for their joint work.

Another aspect raised by few participants is the importance of the dress code at work: men have a standardised uniform and they do not have to 'waste' time on thinking if it is adequate. The implications of the dress choice are particularly relevant for women if considered that men are not expected to control their masculinity and sexual behaviour in the workplace, as much as women are required to balance their femininity in regard to how others may sexually perceive their behaviours (Sang et al., 2014; Watts, 2009). This double standard has been already discussed in a study on a Swedish advertising agency (Alvesson, 1998), where has been noticed that in creative environments hyper-masculinity and sexual references are employed to balance the 'feminisation' of the work. These results find similarities in the architectural sector, which can be considered as a creative environment too. And it is particularly relevant in the context of

clients and networking, because taking part in after-work gatherings is essential but can be perceived as sexual availability by co-workers or clients, as happened to Carrie:

> *'There was this guy in the office, he was younger than me. […] One night we were out drinking and he was so flirty and he wouldn't stop. And I just said 'I'm sick of these things where I'm made to remind that I'm an object'. […] The next day I went into the office and I made a complaint. He got taken into the meeting room, and I know I've lost a good couple of friends. 'Why did you do that? You didn't need to''* (Carrie, 48, Partner).

This episode suggests the need for women to control their sexuality in working or work-related contexts, confirming Acker's (1990) argument that women's bodies are stigmatised and controlled. This highlights another aspect which women need to actively make an extra effort in managing.

Negative work relationships

Women experience various sorts of discrimination in the workplace: negative working relationships are not only characterised by episodes of sexual harassment but also by more subtle forms of sexism.

> *'I've been treated badly as well, but I try not to think about it, because often there's nothing you can do about that'* (Laura, 45, Architect).

This sentence contains a common approach for women in the profession, namely trying to undermine the discrimination they are experiencing. This attitude is not shared by every participant, and everyone responds to discrimination with different sensibility and strategies. For example, comments about physical appearance or judgments about perceived individual character, such as '*you're very confident*' have different effects on women. Some would be affected and alter their appearance, like Ella:

> *'If I'm wearing a dress, or dressing particularly feminine, I would feel more vulnerable about being questioned for what I'm saying or… immediately judged for being ditsy... or... you know... there's this assumption that is very present'* (Ella, 29, MA student).

Ella admits her vulnerability, whereas other women tend to avoid admitting difficulties: calling sexist behaviour out or asking for support would be considered as a sign of weakness from their colleagues. I witnessed women reacting in opposite ways: either questioning themselves and their abilities after someone in the office told them '*are you sure you can do this?*'; or showing an attitude of always proving themselves, as explained by Jen:

> '*Every time you have to re-prove yourself. That you are capable to sawing in a straight line, or able to use a drill. That is always been the hardest thing. Because it's like no matter what you do... you're always... A new person would come along and you have to do it again, you have to display that skill again' (Jen, 29, MA student).*

Again, women are requested to make an extra effort in their working environments (Dryburgh, 1999), especially if the physical abilities are being questioned. Men are perceived as being biologically better equipped for the job, to the point of having a specific '*confidence that you enter in any life situation as a male*', as put clearly again by Jen.

Another discriminatory attitude employed by men is about patronising and othering women. This leads women to constantly question themselves as the 'other', as explained by Courtney:

> '*Because I was the one kind of representing 'other'. So that sense that you have to be good, you have to be better. Wear an additional weight' (Courtney, 47, Board Member).*

Furthermore, this attitude is reproduced by the use of the language, as argued by Amanda:

> '*You know what it makes me angry? With women, […] we say 'oh, you're being really girly' or 'you're fussing like an old woman'. We run down women with our language. All the time' (Amanda, 54, Self-employed architect).*

The importance of the wording is also highlighted by an episode disclosed by Corin:

> '*[…] that was an interesting story because the email that we got to invite us was via my business partner, who's male, and they sent an email to him 'do you have any*

architect working for you?' (laughs). I know… (laughs). They may have been contacted him already... but it was just the wording' (Corin, 37, Partner).

This episode highlights how language is one of the factors that reproduce everyday casual sexism by emphasising women as the 'other' and as 'defective' (Burns, 2012). This is explored in more details in Chapter 6, in which I discuss the different evaluation of language and the term 'architect/female architect' between British and Italian participants.

Challenge

Women's ability to fit in the architectural identity is affected by experiences of sexism and discrimination, however many of the participants of this study found a way to challenge these negative attitudes. This happens by calling out sexism or racism. Although this action comes with various backlashes: I outlined above Carrie's experience of losing some friends because she denounced a harassing colleague, or the risk of being labelled as someone 'a bit sensitive'. This adjective is connected to women's reaction to sexism in order to discredit the validity of their claims.

Many participants agree that the most effective way of overcoming those backlashes is to have a network of support. In particular, those networks help people in getting more confidence, as explained by Courtney in an episode from university, in which she refers to her economical position rather than her gender:

'A lot of my fellow students were from more middle class families, so their parents have been to university. My parents have not: I've been the first in my family to go to university. They came with a sense of confidence and understanding about what they were doing, what was expected. They had a really good support network. […] your mom would read your thesis for you, and she may be a lawyer.' (Courtney, 47, Board Member).

As evident from this account, the importance of social capital in professional setting is invaluable, and this becomes clear in the moment you perceive that your social capital is limited. The profession's social capital is owned by men, as explained by Carrie:

'Somebody said to me the other day just straight up 'listen, who are you? Where are you coming from?'. This is because suddenly I've been propelled into quite sort of

> *senior and influential positions. And I said 'Well, I was at [practice]' - because that was easier for me – 'and then I've had kids'' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

Her own identity was denied just because she was not recognisable in the circle of influential persons, having had that position suddenly. This mechanism is typical of elite professions and can be understood through the Bourdieusian theorisation of forms of capital applied to professional identity (Payne, 2015; Powell and Sang, 2015; Skeggs, 1997).

Influences

Among the main actors and experiences able to influence women's identity there are some which are prevalent and have been referred to by many participants: parents or family, school, experiences before university, and role models.

The familiar environment, with parents in particular, exerts a considerable amount of influence, as extensively argued in literature (Shapiro et al., 2015; Fuller, 2009; Eccles, 2007). Parents' examples and experiences are able to suggest if something is doable, and if someone's characteristics are fitting and recognisable in the professional field. Corin's parents, for example, both studied architecture in her same university, and this helped her to picture herself as an architect:

> *'I've always seen my mom as a good role model for working hard. She works in housing, works with the council, adapting people's houses to their needs. My parents went to university when I was about 5, and I remember them doing their dissertations, and they also went to [my University], same department (laughs)' (Corin, 37, Partner).*

Overall, almost half of the participants mentioned that their parents or grandparents worked in the construction industry and used this information to argue that their example influenced their career choice. Laura's father, for example, was an engineer, and she regarded his influence as decisive in her choice to study architecture:

> *'My dad […] was an incredible engineer and businessman. He used to build things, he built our conservatory on his own from scratches. […] He built anything, and I sort of think that he initiated me to being an architect' (Laura, 45, Architect).*

Or Kim, for whom construction sites were a familiar territory since childhood:

> *'My dad worked in the construction industry for years, he runs his own business. […] So I had an insight into how a drawing office looks like and I grow up as a young girl in that atmosphere and I used to go to work with him on weekends, hanging out with my dad having my hands dirty in the workshop it was all kind of familiar territory to me' (Kim, 35, Architect).*

Parents' support is another important aspect for identity construction raised by participants. Parents' worries about career choices are able to push or to inhibit their children's inclinations, as happened for Jen, when her mother discouraged her to study art because of the uncertain career:

> *'My mother studied engineering, but she did a lot of other things… she was an artist for a while. […] At some point I was like 'Oh, I really like art mum'. And she was like 'Yeah nice... but you know… you sure? Maybe you can still apply to something artistic but something that can get you a job'. I think my mum did have some influence on that as well' (Jen, 29, MA student).*

Jen's example came up often in other participant's accounts, for example Bell's:

> *'I think I always liked art. But that, from my family point of you, that's not somewhere that's going to get you far in life if you have a degree on. So architecture became the next logical step for me' (Bell, 21, BA student).*

On the other hand, sometimes parents were more aware than their children about their inclinations, as happened for Alice, who initially studied business for a year before moving to an architecture course:

> *'I really wanted to study architecture. It didn't come from my school or family, even though I've had already done working experience in an architect's office. Which my mother organised. Maybe she knew me more than I did' (Alice, 48, Partner).*

The school, through teachers and career advice centres, is also able to exert some influence on students, especially by offering information about less typical career pathways. The importance of school's influence has been confirmed in various literature, especially with reference to STEM sectors (Ferrini-Mundy, 2013; Sjaastad, 2012). The school's role is also to make students aware of the practical implications of studying architecture, such as the long educational pathway, the high costs of materials, and the gender imbalance in the profession. As happened for Donna:

> *'Then I realised through my career teacher that there was this architecture... that married the science and the arts, you know? And seemed really interesting and exciting. So I thought 'I'll do that', and I didn't really think about what it meant at the time. I was just 14. [...] I didn't know any architects [...] I had nobody to guide me and to help me, but I just thought 'why not?'' (Donna, 47, Director).*

The sort of guidance Donna received from the career teacher was not complete and informative: after choosing architecture she still had no idea what it was like. Instead, in other circumstances students had the possibility to have some working experience before university, helping them to understand in more depth what the profession looks like. Corin shared with me both an informal familiar episode from when she was a child, and an experience that she had just before applying to university:

> *'When my parents had the house extended they had a friend, which was a man, and came to the house and talked all through, and I was sat at the meetings and I was really interested. That was my first experience'.*

> *'Straight after school, in my gap year, I went to do a building project in Mongolia, and I helped in building medical clinics. So it was something that I've always been interested in' (Corin, 37, Partner).*

Both of these experiences highlight the fact that she was prepared in terms of what to expect from working in the construction field.

In this section, I illustrated through various accounts that participants' personal identity as women in architecture is shaped by numerous factors, namely assumptions about their aspect and their abilities, influences from family and school, and negative working experiences.

Moreover, education also plays a role in women's ability to become and perceive themselves as architects, as illustrated in the next section.

4.1.3 – Education

University culture

Many participants in the study felt some sort of inadequacy during their education which, more than being linked to sexism, was linked to the culture of the education itself. In particular, what they found off-putting was the macho culture of the examination system, and this was highlighted by various participants of different age and location. The concept of '*genderization*' in architecture education has been also highlighted by Ahrentzen and Anthony (1993), who argued that '*genderization is attaching our cultural constructs of masculinity to our concept of what constitutes a well-educated person or suitable educational methods*' (1993, 11). An example of this macho culture are the '*crits*' (short for critiques): after a design studio, students are required to present their project in front of a jury, which will comment and criticise it. As explained by Kathleen, 'crits' are meant to toughen the students and prepare them to defend their work, but they have a harsher effect on women:

> *'The way that the design studio worked and how we had these 'crits', they would be really hard on us. I understand this thing of toughing-you-up kind of thing. But it made this culture of 'they're attacking you and you have to defend your work'. And I think that is quite a male way of doing things. And the girls on my course suffered a lot more on those environments. And a lot of them just couldn't handle the people attacking you' (Kathleen, 55, Academic).*

Kathleen's impression that 'crits' are unnecessarily harsh is shared by other participants, such as Courtney who defined them a '*vicious and harsh process to go through*', or Jen who also consider them counterproductive, adding:

> *'This whole idea of 'crits'... I think it's really counterproductive. […] people present their ideas and have to listen to this higher kind of power... that knows exactly what they're doing because they are all more experienced. And just the fact that you have to take it as truth that they're right and you're wrong. That was always a struggle for me... like I always felt the inequality in the hierarchy. It's very kind of deep set in architectural education' (Jen, 29, MA student).*

The example of the 'crits' is just an example of a system that is perceived by women as adversarial and macho, as described by Kathleen, which supports the habitus of a traditional university culture, as also argued by Stevens (1995) and Payne (2015). Anna claimed that in her university they were teaching arrogance, and Sophia added:

> 'The culture was that […] they were trying to make renaissance men. Single individuals with big egos, who could do everything and would do everything. […] But at the time I couldn't articulate any of this, because I didn't really know what the problem was' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor).

Sophia suggests the idea that male students are more comfortable in their professional identity because they are more comfortable during university. This has been also noted by Ella:

> 'More guys are in the studio space. I never would have noticed it... like whether people are and how they work. But I noticed that guys are super comfortable... spending lots of time in the studio. Sometimes even sleeping there' (Ella, 29, MA student).

Ella suggests that male students physically spend more time in the studio spaces and therefore they feel more entitled to be there compared to female students. This ingrained attitude leads to an inevitable consequence: also tutors are more comfortable in engaging with male students, because they are more used to it, as noticed again by Ella:

> 'I noticed that there are some tutors that are more relaxed and confident in hanging out with guys than with girls' (Ella, 29, MA student).

The role of the tutors is particularly relevant to the enjoyment of the course, and if many participants did not experience any discrimination or favouritism, some others gave me accounts of different attitudes towards male and female students. Therefore, the students' cultural capital is able to influence both their experiences at university and also teachers' perceptions, who often misread *genius* with having high levels of cultural capital (Payne, 2015). Linking back this mechanism to the genderization of architectural habitus (Ahrentzen and Anthony, 1993), the suggestion is that the dominant cultural capital recognised in architectural

education is the one possessed by white male students from a privileged economical background. For example, Bell has a male tutor who is particularly harsh with male students, and she links this attitude to better results:

> *'Our tutor is brutal to guys. And with girls, for some reasons, he would calm down. He's extremely harsh to guys. [...] But from my experience male students produce faster. 'Cause the tutor pushes them the most. So he's horrible to them, and they get the best work out of it' (Bell, 21, BA student).*

Or Alice who denounced the 'lad culture' of the university (Phipps and Young, 2015) through the example of common episodes of sexual harassment from old tutors towards young female students during field trips.

> *'You soon realise that all the tutors were male and that there was a lad culture, and that I would have been Mr [Surname] because they would have assumed I was male. This was in 1996 to 1999, and I'd say that a lot of the tutors were older men who would try to take advantage of young female students on field trips' (Alice, 48, Partner).*

The examples illustrated above highlight a feeling of discrimination derived from the culture of architecture education rather than from direct episodes of sexism. In fact, most of the participants agree that they never experienced gender-based discrimination, at least not during education, as explained by Shirley:

> *'When I chose architecture it didn't even occurred to me that there may be such a thing as sexism in the industry that I've had chosen... because education happened to that point had suggested that I could do anything. Any career. It really didn't occurred to me, until I finished my degree and I was working in London' (Shirley, 46, Academic).*

Many other participants highlight that they first experienced gender-based discrimination after education, at the moment of entering the labour market. This aspect leads to some considerations regarding the reasons behind the dropping-out rates of female students, as explored in the next section.

Drop-out

In contrast with the general feeling of equality experienced during university, especially voiced by younger participants, there is the unambiguous phenomenon of the drop-out of women from architecture courses. This divergence suggested that if it is not gender-based discrimination that leads women to leave architecture during university, there must be another factor, because the drop-out rate is still remarkable. According to official data from the RIBA, the drop-out rate of women is higher than men's (RIBA, 2018a: 15). The RIBA's report highlights the awareness of institutions about the phenomenon, which is also well known from participants themselves.

> *'We were made aware at the beginning that there would be more girls dropping out than males. They told us. […] I've found strange the way they told us that that was going to happen. Are they making that?' (Kathleen, 55, Academic).*

Kathleen's question implies that the problem is known at an institutional level, however not much has been done to address the problem.

Among the main reasons to leave given by the participants was a reference to wellbeing and length of the course. The pathway to fully qualify is 7/8 years long, considering the three parts plus the time requested to carry out internship in practices. Ella reflected:

> *'I thought about how many years I've spent studying without really earning anything. And how much I've invested in it. […] But when you spend 10 years of your life doing it for something that you're going to get later... you start to question whether that's a healthy choice' (Ella, 29, MA student).*

Ella doubted the validity of her choice because she found that the investment was not worth the outcome. In addition to this, many students have the necessity to work while studying, therefore they apply to part-time courses, making the pathway longer and more difficult, considering the fact that architecture courses are not flexible towards timing of working students. As explained by Courtney:

> *'[…] we had set periods for things like 'crits', so it would be like 'we're going to do 'crits' on Thursday, from 10 to 5'. And every single time the 'crits' would start late and at 8 in the evening you would still be there. And I remember saying 'look, I need*

> *to be at work. You said this was finishing at 5', and the tutors would be angry with you. 'Why are you working? You should be dedicating yourself to your studies''* (Courtney, 47, Board Member).

This dynamic described by Courtney originates from the culture of architecture itself: the idea of *vocation* does not allow for distractions during the course of study. Not even if the distraction is necessary to provide an income for a student coming from a disadvantaged background. Again, Courtney described this discriminatory mechanism:

> *'I didn't have much money to buy materials. […] I did take a loan, but I also did continue working. So I was quite unusual, a lot of the students were not working. I remember one student from Greece saying 'I don't understand why you're working. Why would your parents do this to you?' (laughs). […] This is a different mind-set. […] I feel for those students that are coming in now, where the fees are so much higher. If you don't have that support and you need to work, it must be tougher. Because that margin between 'I'm doing ok' and 'this can't work, I'm leaving the course' must be even worse. I remember people before Year2 leaving the course because of money issues. […] Although they advertised the course for a specific number of hours, it's a degree where the expectation is that you live, breathe, sleep, eat architecture for the whole time you're there'* (Courtney, 47, Board Member).

It is here evident that university culture and expectations do reproduce, once again, a material barrier which affects diversity in the profession, as also argued by Anthony (2002).

Other reasons that lead students in general to leave the profession are linked to the scarce enjoyment of the course itself which, as described by Allison, is unnecessarily stressful:

> *'The course was good, and we had really good experiences, but it was a little bit disorganised sometimes. It could be quite confusing. […] And they did put a lot of stress on you. They made it unnecessarily stressful. Education doesn't need to be that stressful, especially at that level and at that age'* (Allison, 28, MA student).

This focus on wellbeing has been described also by Bell, whose father noticed her mental health issues and pushed her to leave the course:

> *'My father told me to stop doing architecture because he saw the effects that it was having on me mentally… so he was like 'just stop it'' (Bell, 21, BA student).*

However, not every student has this sort of understanding and support from their family, and the responsibility of having taken a grant pushes many students to carry on a difficult pathway, as denounced by the Architects' Journal student survey, which revealed that 33% of students sought medical help for mental health problems related to their course (AJ, 2018c). Although the sample of the survey is limited (469 respondents), the resonance that this data had on general and specialised press is substantial, with featured articles on mainstream platforms such as Dezeen and The Guardian, highlighting the relevance of the phenomenon.

There is another mechanism that acts internally without affecting drop-out statistics, namely the choice of specialisation, which leads women to cluster in paths considered more adequate for women, as happened in this example described by Kim:

> *'The way the course was structured is that they combined architecture with interiors, and the second year you can choose if going into interiors more in particular. […] in Year1 we were 50% of girls, in Year2 most of the girls migrated towards Interior architecture. And then there was 6 of us that continued to the architecture course. I'd tell it was about 85% male and 15% female. There was 3 of us in total who finished the course. We had probably started about 40 women in Year1. […] They marketed the course […] to draw female students into interior architecture and keep the males into architecture' (Kim, 35, Architect).*

Kim perceived a direct intent from the university to encourage women into the specific interior course, however she did not comment on the reasons that might be behind this intention. However, it is clear the intention of pushing women in courses tailored on presumed gendered interests and needs, based on essentialist assumptions.

Discrimination in academia

Another aspect overwhelmingly pointed out by many participants, especially the two academics Kathleen and Shirley, is that academia is a sexist environment, at least with regard to architecture. This sexism takes different forms, from denying promotions to a lack of support network (incremented by the fact that women are outnumbered by men), or other strategies aimed at limiting women's opportunities:

'In terms of the departmental politics, there's definitely sexism. There's definitely a gender imbalance and strategies and tools used to try and limit women's ability to take opportunities that maybe are there' (Shirley, 46, Academic).

The lack of support was particularly relevant in Shirley's experience. She shared with me her feelings after an important promotion, when she received congratulations only from two female colleagues, and this led her to question her validity:

'And if anything, there's this slightly feeling that maybe I didn't deserve it, or whatever'.

In contrast, in her former employment in another university Shirley experienced a sense of wellbeing: her Head of School was a woman aware of gender issues, and she felt looked after, valued and supported by her presence and her practice.

On a different note, I suspect that the fact that both the academics I interviewed are step-mothers in a same-sex relationship is a confirmation of the culture rather than a simple coincidence. It just echoes the reality of the limited number (34%) of women in senior positions in Schools of Architecture in the UK (HESA, 2017), where strategies aimed at a smoother return after motherhood are not contemplated.
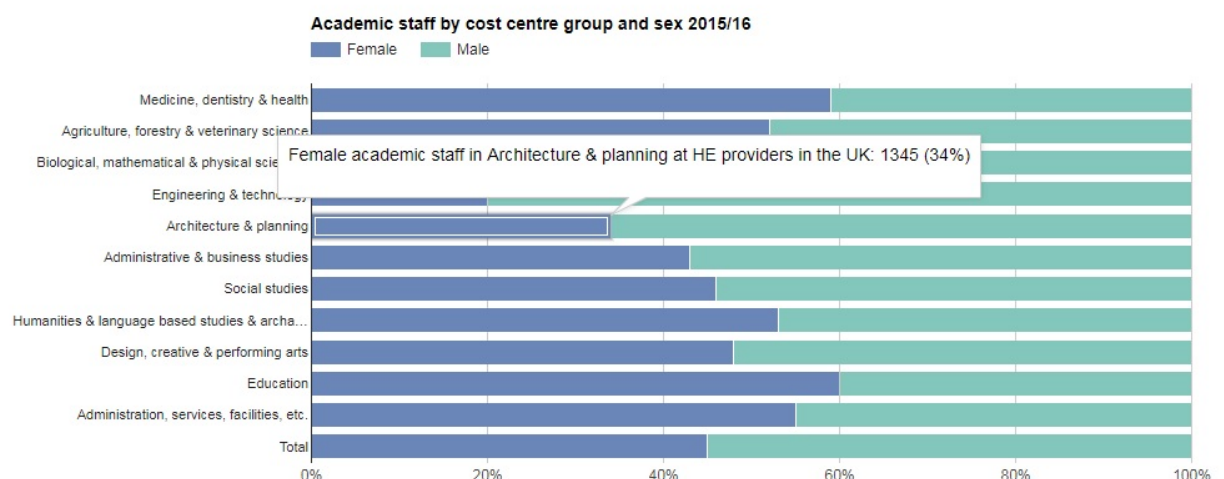
Figure 6 – 'Academic staff by sex and sector (UK)' (HESA, 2017).

Furthermore, academia, and the construction industry in general, is characterised by a lack of diversity, not just in terms of gender. Sophia shared an emblematic episode of racism from her experience in a big university in the north of England.

> *'There were no female [tutors] at all. I think that during my second year for the first time ever they employed a female tutor. She was also black...which both things were quite unheard of there. But she left after a term, because she was being abused. Not by the other faculty, but certainly by the porters and staff. They wouldn't open the door for her. I think it was racism, because they would open the doors for female students. Because there were no other black people or other women, I don't know how much support she would have got' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor).*

In this particular instance the abusers were moved by racist reasons in an environment which was lacking diversity, highlighting the need to consider different intersections of marginalised identities when analysing a phenomenon of discrimination, as suggested by the *intersectionality* approach (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990).

In this section I explored what it means and feels like to be a female architect in the UK. In particular, I considered the concept of professional and personal identity, and their construction through education and everyday interactions. In doing so I drew upon Bourdieu (2001; 1984), in particular his concepts of habitus and various forms of capital, the lack of which affects women's ability to fit-in with architecture's culture. Reflecting on the data illustrated, I argue that the drop-out rate of female students between Part1 and Part3 of architectural courses is not necessarily linked to experiences of gender discrimination, as agreed in literature, but it has more to do with the culture of architecture education itself. Yet, architectural education has been described to be characterised by a macho culture (e.g. the use of the crits), therefore carrying a gender-based reason for female drop-out anyhow.

4.2 – Material Experiences of Female Architects in the UK

In this section I illustrate the material consequences of being a female architect in a male-dominated profession. A substantive part of this section explores implications of childcare on women's working patterns, and the following one investigates participants' feelings of sexism and discrimination experienced at work. To start with, I offer a brief overview of specific

dynamics which cause material effects and have been shared by most participants, namely practice specialisation, support network and clients.

4.2.1 - Labour Market and Workplace

Size and practice specialisation

The rise in the request of back extensions and small projects at the beginning of 2000 has been regarded as a big market for women, especially considering that those jobs are able to offer a good amount of work flexibility, which is mainly needed for women as they need to carry out unpaid care duties. This aspect suggests how important is the size and specialisation of the practice of employment. Among the participants of this study, there are mixed feelings about whether women prefer to work in smaller or bigger practices: it has been argued that bigger practices tend to be better at equality, where smaller are either good or not, depending if they are flexible and family-friendly or dense sexist working environments. Alice's position can be used to voice many participants' experiences, and she offers examples of both these aspects present in many small practices. Flexibility has been a positive attribute of her job, where her boss allowed her to work only 4 days a week to fit in childcare. However, her boss was not experienced in dealing with employees, and used to frequently comment over aspects of her private life, such as boyfriends or the way she was dressed. Participants mainly agree that smaller practices usually offer less chances for promotion, having fewer roles available, mostly only either as Director or Architect, and that bigger practices offer less chance to design, since the job ends up being mostly about management. I have found the position over the preference towards design or management equally split in half among participants: this argument is able to challenge the biological essentialism that often regards women as more inclined to management roles rather than design (Adams and Tancred, 2000).

The size of the practice also leads to a subsequent dynamic: a bigger practice works on bigger projects which involve working alongside larger contractors. Those are considered as more professional and thus offering a less sexist working environment. This has been noticed by few participants who worked in both smaller and bigger projects and confirmed that when employed in bigger practices they experienced more respectful working environments. For example, Janet compared her experience to the one of her colleague D.:

> '*Fortunately, because we worked on big projects we tended to be involved in big, larger contractors. And they seem to be a bit more forward thinking. Not that much (laughs), but a bit more. A little bit more professional. […] But I know my colleague*

> *D., she's been working on a smaller project, a bit more like 'one-man band'. And the*
> *engineer has been terribly sexist, in the meeting room, in front of the client' (Janet,*
> *39, Architect).*

Considering some peculiar typologies of practice encountered in participants' experiences, I noticed that working in cooperatives or in public authorities is more enjoyable for women. The support offered by colleagues in cooperatives and by public laws in local authorities offers many possibilities of flexibility, supportive networks, different forms of employment, and environments '*where I don't have to fight for everything, prove myself with the boys*', as highlighted by Carrie. On this note, it is interesting to notice how working in all-female practices, or practices led by women, is often perceived as offering the same positive working experience outlined in the previous cases. When working in a practice in London, where only women occupied top positions, Alice noticed that she had a better experience compared to previous and subsequent ones: the environment was more relaxing and less controlling, especially the attitude towards her pregnancy:

> *'I found out I was pregnant and I had to tell [my boss] before starting the job. And I*
> *thought she may have said 'I just can't...'. And I would have understood, but she said*
> *'that's fine'. So I worked there, had my baby and went back to work 3 days a week'*
> *(Alice, 48, Partner).*

This example supports the well-known argument that women are more sympathetic towards the need to arrange the working time in order to fit childcare duties, having had the same experiences (Cheung and Halpern, 2010). This is confirmed by the director and the employees of the all-female practice of the British focus group:

> *'Kathi: we're just more sympathetic in general that women have more*
> *commitments. And not just towards babies, but people in general... parents [...]*
> *Molly: we found that if we're sympathetic people stay, and they are committed and*
> *work well. It's good for the practice really'.*

This idea of *safe* all-female working environments stems from the daunting feeling of working in an all-male one, as explained by Janet:

'I phoned to the London office […] and I was listening them talking to each other in the background of the call, and it was a really manly tone. Kind of slightly geeky nerdy stuff (laughs). […] It was an all-men office and I can tell over the phone. […] They've got a different vibe in the office. It's a bit subtle to say what it is exactly, but the idea of working there was quite daunting. […] As much as I liked all the individual guys, I'm glad that I don't work there (laughs)' (Janet, 39, Architect).

Although she does not make clear what the problem with that environment was, she perceived a subtle diffidence in the workplace dynamics. Dynamics that, instead, a friendly office would offer: flexibility and alternative employment patterns, and the possibility to not having to perform normalised masculine behaviours, as analysed in organisational settings by Silvia Gherardi (1994). According to participants, this ideal office is likely to be led by women.

Lack of network of support

Linked to the notion of a friendly office is the need for a 'network of support', an instrument highly theorised in feminist literature (Ahmed, 2017; Macoun and Miller, 2014). Support can be obtained from bosses, co-workers, mentors, and also from family members. For example, Shirley, who is currently employed in academia, remembers her time spent in a non-supportive workplace as extremely challenging as a female architect.

'[…] there were all sorts of challenges that I felt could be attributed to the fact that I was a female architect. Ways in which the office was, and more than anything ways in which the office was not supportive enough. […] I could have been better supported. But at the time I just felt I should be able to handle it. That I should be able to deal with it on my own. And I found it very stressful' (Shirley, 46, Academic).

But why is this aspect particularly relevant for women? One of the keywords utilised by many women in this regard is 'nurturing'. Men, according to participants, have infrastructures around them, they are looked after by their superiors. Therefore, the lack of support can be considered a very subtle sexism because if superiors are giving women authority without offering the same support they are offering to men in the same position, they are indirectly causing their failure, as clearly explained by Shirley again:

> *'I was hired at the same time as a male colleague. […] On the one hand it may seem that I more quickly have had a project that I was running by myself, on the other hand it may be said that he had more support and guidance. I think that that is a very subtle feature of sexism that women get on being given a position of authority but then left on their own with it. Definitely there was this nurturing… you know the young man being the project architect for the first time, and there was a sense of a sort of infrastructure there to support him' (Shirley, 46, Academic).*

This episode fits in the current reflexive attitude of women who are put in similar situations, they tend to question their validity instead of acknowledging the lack of support as the main problem. This subtle double outcome is brilliantly explained in a song by musician Courtney Barnett:

> *'Put me on a pedestal and I'll only disappoint you' (Barnett, 2015).*

The lyrics leave an open interpretation of why she would be disappointing: it is either because she does not trust her value and abilities or because she is being put by someone else on a pedestal without being provided the conditions to succeed. Some authors (Powell and Sang, 2015; Sang et al., 2014) ascribe this attitude mainly to the concept of '*homosocial behaviour*': in the British architecture scene men are able to maintain their presence at higher levels thanks to their support network: '*architecture is a boy's club*', as candidly put by Carrie. And when I asked her about creating a girls' club she agreed:

> *'I think the girl's club it's a good idea, we should get better at doing clubs like boys do' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

This club would offer that sort of support that some female bosses are already offering, which can be mainly summarised as having '*consideration to people's individual circumstances*' as argued by Amanda, the founder of her practice which she is very proud to define '*family friendly*'. In other words, to be sympathetic and supportive of employees' caring needs, being them either female or male. In addition, challenging the concept of biological essentialism and different innate attitudes between women and men, some participants agree that *empathy* is not a gendered characteristic that only women have. Allison argues that being empathic '*it's not a gender but a life experience thing*', as her previous boss, who was a single father,

demonstrated to her. Women as a group appear to be more empathic just because more women share similar experiences and have similar needs.

At the same time, employees also need support from their co-workers. For example, during a construction workshop where Jen participated as an undergraduate student, the manager has been extremely sexist. Her colleagues noticed that she was annoyed by his attitude but, despite being her friends, they defended him because he was nice to them. '*Being quiet is just as bad as committing the crime*', Jen frankly pointed out. Luckily, the importance of a support network has been recognised and addressed by institutions through specific policies. For example, the RIBA offers the possibility to study while working with its office-based examination route, which requires for the working student to have both a mentor from the practice where they are working, and also a personal tutor, independent from the office. The idea behind the role of the mentor is not only to offer an example to follow, but also to have someone more experienced able to offer tailored suggestions for career development, or for alternative pathways maybe not familiar to the mentee. Kim, for example, was concerned about the possibility for her to proceed to the last part of her qualification. Her previous boss was happy about her abilities and her work, therefore never pushed her to go back to university while working. But her plan changed as soon as she started working for her female boss in another practice: not even four months in and her boss already pushed her into concluding her education, offering her the flexibility to take some days off for university commitments. This is another example that shows in what ways practices with women in charge offer a friendlier working environment.

Clients

Access to clients is reached through different networking strategies, and it has been often considered particularly problematic for women given its functioning through mechanisms of *homosocial behaviour* (Kanter, 1977), which favour interactions between actors with shared characteristics, gender *in primis*. Therefore, women tend to adopt specific strategies aimed at overcoming this innate mechanism, and I have found various ways in which self-employed participants of this study accessed their clients: through competitions, social media, leaflets, and word of mouth from friends. Some participants like Anna do not like a self-publishing approach, whereas Amanda considers herself as chatty and able to pick up work from everywhere. However, this approach does not offer a sustainable way of working, not offering enough stability. In addition to these issues faced by self-employed women, also employees in bigger practices find the access to clients one of the most problematic barrier that women encounter

compared to men (Sang et al., 2014; de Graft-Johnson et al., 2003). Networking outside the working time is considered a hardly accessible possibility for women, which are often constrained by caring duties (Burns et al., 2015, Watts, 2009). In addition, limited possibilities of access experienced by a particular group are not relevant only in terms of gender. In fact, other categories of individuals also experience limited possibilities of networking, such as religious minorities for whom the consumption of alcohol is prohibited, therefore their participation in pub gatherings is difficult; physical or mental disabilities, for which the physical access to certain places is precluded; economic limitations that might discourage some people from participating; or geographical location which makes difficult to go back home after the gathering (Watts, 2009). This has been problematized by Courtney when she told me:

> *'Well… I didn't realise how important it was to go for a drink after work. I just thought 'I've been working for the whole week, now I want to have a drink and relax'. I didn't realise that going for a drink was such an important part of how you're perceived. And the opportunity to engage in a slightly different way. And I think there are many people from different backgrounds who will struggle with that'* (Courtney, 47, Board Member).

What Courtney highlights is women's need to make a double effort. Fostering relationships with clients requires both a 'masculine' interaction, summarised by many authors in the 'pub gathering' example (Watts, 2009; De Graft-Johnson et al., 2005), which women need to learn how to perform; and a 'feminine' one, intertwined with essentialist female predispositions of care and subordination. This latter aspect can be explained through the metaphor of the '*office wife*', a term associated to secretaries functioning as the 'angels of the home' in the office (Kanter, 1977: 91). This concept can be identified as *emotional labour*: Hochschild (1983) theorised this aspect in various sites of performativity in both the economic and domestic sphere, including working relationships with co-workers and clients.

4.2.2 – Implications of Childcare

There are different aspects of working in the architectural industry that, due to structural reasons such as gendered commitments and dynamics, mostly regard women. In particular, in this section I analyse how childcare, and caring responsibilities in general, influence women's choice of working arrangements and their career progression. Despite having only two questions in my interview's list about childcare and caring duties ('*did the care of the family*

influence your professional choices?' and '*are maternity leave and part-time jobs contemplated in your office?*'), the relevance of this theme arose immediately during the analysis process, for various reasons extensively argued in this section.

Childcare and caring duties

Childcare and its implications have been considered in literature as the main reason that affects women's participation and progression in the field (Caven, 2004; Fowler and Wilson, 2004; de Graft-Johnson et al., 2003). Women are not considered reliable because of the assumption that they will prioritise their children, or having children, over their job. This '*threat of motherhood*' (Watts, 2009) ends up affecting every woman, even if not interested or not ready yet for motherhood. Furthermore, this social stereotyping is also able to create confusion about the length of this commitment: childbearing is not the main issue as much as childcare is, and women react differently to the expectations of staying on parental leave for the legal minimum or for longer. For example, Amanda, as other self-employed participants, went back to work after just four weeks. She took her baby at work and, despite she considered stressful to combine childcare with work, she '*couldn't bear not working*'. This example leads to a consideration about how different it is to go back to work as an employee or as self-employed. Working as self-employed gives women more flexibility and it does not require negotiating hours with a boss, whereas the possibilities for an employee are more limited. A common pathway as an employee is to go back to work as part-time for few years. However, this has a negative effect on career progression, because after having had children women need to start again and prove that they can still do it, which is difficult to achieve as part-timer, as they are perceived by bosses and colleagues as inconstantly available. Carrie summarised it clearly:

> '*It's very hard when you have children to keep your presence [...] I think that was the bit that really hit me, when I realised there wasn't a career path for me in the same way it would have been before I've had children. Before I had children I was running big projects*' (Carrie, 48, Partner).

This reflexive view corresponds to bosses' perceptions too, as highlighted by Donna, a practice director with no children:

> '*There are some people there who have children and they've gone down to work part-time, and has meant that this has affected their careers. Because you know you*

> *can't give them a certain project to run because they're not there all the time. They can't get to meetings because it's a long way to travel. […] It has affected some people's careers. Having children they haven't been given the opportunity to move up and run bigger projects' (Donna, 47, Director).*

I have noticed from many accounts that the narrative of the woman who 'wants it all' (Hochschild, 2003) creates a complex tension on women who want to go back to work, as being keen on working would make them less motherly, as also argued by Stratigakos (2008). Whereas men who are actively seeking parental leaves to spend more time with their children are perceived as the 'new man' (Hearn, 1999; Watts, 2009), which is able to understand the importance of childrearing over his job. This double standard plays a negative psychological effect on women, to the point of doubting their validity as mothers and therefore as women. Ella, a Master's student at the end of her 20s, was reflecting on this aspect:

> *'I think about children but it's impossible […] If I have a child I think it would absolutely destroy my chance to become an architect. As much as I want to do it, I will drop my kid off to the nanny or whatever. […] Instictually that would probably wouldn't happen. When you have a baby you don't want to do it. Ideally I would just go back to work in a week, but… in reality I have this emotion that I won't be able to make it go that way' (Ella, 29, MA student).*

This account is quite emblematic if considering that this is the perception that young women have of career opportunities in architecture.

The attention to planning maternity is pivotal in many participants' accounts: is it better to have children early and develop a career later, or have them later having gained a stable position? The majority of the participants found it easier to have a baby while working in senior roles, because this let them organise the workload independently from the team, allowing for more flexibility. This highlights the importance of planning in details a long period of someone's lifetime, and this is not always possible. Especially considering that the 'right moment' is not a definite time frame, as brilliantly explained by Anna:

> *'It nearly didn't happen for me, I was busy working and setting up the practice. So I nearly missed having children, but I made it happen' (Anna, 56, Self-employed architect).*

And if Anna's experience ended up being positive, not everyone thinks that things worked out in the best way, as explained by Janet:

> *'I wasn't really planning it [having a baby...]. I haven't [fully qualified yet, but I thought:] 'I need to get this [have a baby] out of my way'. [...] So I waited to qualify, but initially I was hoping to get my course and qualifications out of the way first' (Janet, 39, Architect).*

Janet is not sure yet of how things are going to adjust in her career, she had to postpone her plan to fully qualify in order to have a baby first. She perceives that her slow qualification and her limited participation as a part-timer make her less reliable to get more responsibility jobs, a worry shared by many women.

Vocation

Another aspect linked to negative stereotypes about motherhood and the profession itself is that architecture is considered as a vocation rather than a regular profession, as well explained by Courtney:

> *'You get onto a project and it may be 2-3 years long, and it's a sense that you're committing to the project, to your practice and your career. So stepping away, having children is like saying 'my career is not important to me'. [...] We don't seem to accept people stepping away for any reason, because the perception is that it's a vocation' (Courtney, 47, Board Member).*

This example shows how the idea of a vocation is particularly problematic for women, since motherhood is considered to be inherently in contrast with being a real architect, which requires presenteeism, working long hours and at weekends, and need to network outside working hours, to name a few. This concept of the 'long working hours culture' has been frequently highlighted as a negative downside of the profession, particularly for women who carry out both paid and unpaid work (de Graft-Johnson et al, 2003; Fowler and Wilson, 2004). However, from the experiences of many participants this appears to be a paradox: if you have a family then you work all day, half a day invested in unpaid household duties and half in paid employment; but if you do not have a family you often end up working the same number of hours, mostly for your

paid job. Ironically, the more available hours you have every day, the more you work. This idea has been pointed out by participants during discussions about the adversarial position of full-time employees towards part-timers: the latter are more likely to work the number of hours they are paid for, whereas full-timers are perceived as not having other external commitments therefore they cannot just leave after the end of their working hours if a task has not been concluded in time.

Alternative working arrangements

Part-time employment is adopted either as a temporary solution for women that are going back to work after childcare (Caven, 2006), or as a permanent solution which, although, comes with many limitations. For example, the difficulty in being promoted since it does not allow to take responsibility roles and to guarantee constant availability, as pointed out by Carrie:

> *'There wasn't a kind of role I could play in a part-time capacity that was interesting, challenging and rewarding...as the ones I would have played before I had children' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

Some women manage to negotiate alternative working arrangements (such as compressed weeks or job sharing), either to allow them to fit-in childcare duties or to have a different lifestyle, for example Janet got the possibility to work compressed week (working full-time in four days) in order to be able to spend one full extra day with her son; while Donna decided to work compressed weeks even without having children, in order to have longer weekends and also because she was '*working longer hours anyway*'. Men are also starting to negotiate alternative working patterns, as happened with some fathers in Janet's workplace. This attitude of rejection of traditional careers has been already highlighted by Val Caven (2004) in her analysis of career trajectories of female architects in the UK. Moreover, it is quite common among the participants of my study that after having temporarily worked part-time after having had a baby, they decided not to go back to full-time employment, as frankly explained by Anna (56): '*I wanted to have a life!*'. However, not all practices allow their employees to work part-time, they perceive this as potentially problematic on many fronts: dealing with clients that expect constant availability, being able to bear limited management roles, or offering a difficult evaluation of overwork.

This last aspect is particularly inherent to the very nature of the architectural profession itself: overtime is a common practice (Burns et al., 2015; Sang et al., 2014) and, as noticed by Alice,

this leads to a collision between part and full-timers, where the latter end up working more overtime. She was working in an office as an associate three days a week, spread over five days:

> *'Generally I felt that the office was supportive, but it wasn't 100% supportive because […] one of the teams they agreed that these part-timers were just 'it's 3 o'clock, I'm leaving', whereas they were doing longer hours. And there was this debate about overtime and how do you evaluate it' (Alice, 48, Partner).*

Alternative working arrangements are often resisted by employers too, because difficult to control, especially in bigger practices, as explained by Donna:

> *'Yeah, everyone has different needs, concentration hours… I guess we're going to reach this maximum flexibility at some point. Even if in bigger practices is harder to control because it's easier to standardise. It's easier to control if everybody is doing the same things.' (Donna, 47, Director).*

Moreover, not many people are able to negotiate alternative working arrangements: these are usually only granted after a long history of employment in the practice where the person earned enough seniority and respect.

Part-time employment is not just difficult to negotiate but it also carries negative connotations and implications, as summarised by Coyle (2005: 75): '*part-time is mostly constituted as low paid, low status and gender segregated work*'. Thus, many women decide to avoid this form of employment and either work as freelancers or to run their own practice. Freelancing, other than offering the possibility to manage her own time and work from home, has been considered by Kim as a way to test practices in order to find a suitable workplace where to settle, after having had many problematic experiences in her past.

> *'I started freelancing in practices, because I wanted to find a practice where I could stay in and I found the freelancing was a good way to do it, because it wasn't committing, and I could test the waters. […] I freelanced for 4 different companies, and then I applied for a job where I am now, and that's where I am on a permanent full-time basis. And I have intention to stay there for a long time' (Kim, 35, Architect).*

This highlights the importance of the working environment on the personal wellbeing. However, setting up your own practice is not generally regarded as the best solution, despite offering the most in terms of flexibility. More than half of the participants who work in their own practice describe it as being extremely stressful and risky, other than carrying huge responsibility and uncertainty. According to Allison, it comes with the illusion of being in control of your own time, whereas eventually you end up working more than as an employee:

> '*I did really enjoy it, but I think there's more pressure when you're on your own. And it would consume a lot more of your life, because it's your own work, and you put a lot more of yourself into it*' (Allison, 28, MA student).

In addition to this, some participants found it particularly stressful having to spend more time networking in order to get more clients, or managing their practice and employees, rather than spending their time on designing and doing 'actual architecture'. Anna, who is self-employed and works from home, told me that she misses the social part of being in an office, but the idea of looking for a job as an employee is not considerable because the workload would be less flexible, and she is '*too old to have a boss*'.

This section shows how finding a balance between flexibility, economic stability and enjoyment of the job is difficult to obtain, especially for women with caring responsibilities.

Career progression

In terms of career progression, being a woman in this field leads to various practical limitations (Caven, 2004; 2006). As Courtney summarised, for who feels different or underrepresented it is harder to progress:

> '*You keep running, you get through the exams, you get qualified, you're in a practice and... 'Yes! Now watch me going!' and it's like 'ehm... no'. There are only certain projects you're given, you don't always get a chance to prove yourself, so that perception can be around for quite a long time that 'you're an assistant, you're a team player, you're not quite a team leader'*' (Courtney, 47, Board Member).

Although this account highlights common problems faced by employed women, it needs to be considered that the concept of ideal career progression is very different among women. For some it is to set up and run their own practice, for others is to work as an employee in a small

practice which offers flexibility and a variety of jobs, for Allison, a young Master's student, is to have a varied experience – '*work in a big practice to learn but then stabilise in a medium one*'. Some of the participants in this study are already employed in their ideal working situation, where others are aiming towards their goal. However, job satisfaction is something that not only needs to be reached, but also maintained. Laura, talking from her personal troubled experience, explains the dynamic by which finding a positive working environment is harder for a woman compared to a man, and she concludes:

> '*I'm happy about my job in this moment. I have my kids. I'm extremely happy and thankful for my life at this moment. I just pray that my job stays like it is, because it could change tomorrow. A new project, a different director, and I could be miserable*' *(Laura, 45, Architect).*

She is aware that wellbeing in a job can change easily, from minor things such as a change of boss, like it happened in her case when she had to leave her job because of a sexist manager. Contrasts with bosses are one of the main reasons of attrition for women, like described by Donna:

> '*I've been really happy there until this guy turned up, and all this macho culture, it was just awful. And I was thinking about leaving, I was seriously looking for another job. […] Fortunately it turned out he was actually setting up another business and he left. So then I ended up staying and the person who replaced him, who's my boss now and who is a woman, she promoted me to director*' *(Donna, 47, Director).*

Moreover, women in particular need to find suitable projects that would fit their flexibility and in general struggle more in finding a support network from their colleagues, given the strong 'homosocial behaviour' typical of the construction industry, as already noted in previous literature (Sang et al. 2014; Watts, 2009). On this aspect, I have found one account particularly interesting if considered in the sense of the self-perception that some women have of their own abilities. Janet justified her lack of progression through some personal limitations, as she considers herself as a slow, technical person that got a late full-qualification:

> '*I don't think I've got many prospects where I am. […] It's been 2 years since I've been qualified and still I haven't been given a chance […] I feel like I need to move on onto*

something else. In the office I constantly feel like I'm still a junior person. In terms of tasks, responsibilities. And it's also other people's perceptions… and it's probably my fault (laughs)' (Janet, 39, Architect).

She feels that other people in the office perceive her as not ready for promotion, this causing her to have the same perception of herself: a junior person in the office in terms of tasks and responsibilities, despite having been employed in the same practice for more than 15 years.

Overall, this section illustrates how caring duties, in particular childcare, affects working patters for women. Through perceptions and stereotypes linked to the 'threat of motherhood' (Watts, 2009) and the vocational aspect of the architectural profession, women have limited possibilities of employment and career progression.

4.2.3 - Sexism

Sexism in the construction industry in Western countries has been covered by many studies in the last 20 years (Mattewson, 2017; Powell and Sang, 2015; Watts, 2009; de Graft-Johnson, 2003). The architectural sector is part of this wider construction industry, which was widely argued by participants in the UK to be deeply male-dominated. This section explores how subtle and direct sexism influences women's working practices in architecture.

Construction site

The construction site is the area of working interaction generally considered the most sexist: many participants noticed that being the '*only woman in the room*' is the norm there. Contractors, builders and consultants are mainly men used to work in a male environment. On a positive note, the experiences of being in meeting rooms filled with pornographic images are considered as something of the past, as argued by both Carrie and Amanda, architects in their 50s, who told me:

> *'On that building site there were naked women pinned up in the warehouse. That was what building sites were at the time, that was considered fine. 'This is the culture, we shouldn't stop it, this is a male environment'. All these things. But the industry started to shift and they realised that it wasn't ok' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

And Amanda (54, Self-employed architect):

'When I first went on site they were still having pin-ups in the side house, with women with their boobs out. I mean… that's how much culture has changed. Contractors have gone a long way'.

This situation has been noticed also by Shirley, who is slightly younger, however she links these episodes not only to a simple display of masculinity, as underestimated by the previous two accounts, but she considered them as a proper power struggle that she felt she has been subjected to:

'There were things like going to meetings in contractor's site office at 8 in the morning and clustered all around the walls of the office there were pictures of naked women from newspapers or calendars. And you think 'well, if that's the starting point, perception of women, then it's going to be quite difficult for me to make a point, or to assert my authority'. And this is what I felt all the time, and everything all around felt a bit like a power struggle. I felt that things may have been easier to negotiate if I've been a man' (Shirley, 46, Academic).

Even if these attitudes are described as old fashioned and overcame, it was not that long ago that sexism in the building site was happening. And it still does, as illustrated in the next examples. Some participants described their feelings of discrimination as *subtle* sexism, characterised by the feeling of being patronised or not being taken seriously, like described by Corin:

'So when you're managing projects on site and you're giving instructions, confirming the way it needs to be done, I've found in few occasions that either people were not listening or I didn't have the same authority that I perceive I would do if I was a man' (Corin, 37, Partner).

She described perceiving a sort of discrimination, but she immediately added:

'I sort of feel that I've quite had a good experience overall in smaller businesses, and working with contractors that were quite professional, I think that I've not experienced anything terrible, I think it's just little niggles here and there'.

This highlights the not-serious character she associate with this kind of sexism. However, depending on the individual, the reaction to these attitudes can be also perceived differently or even in the complete opposite way, as happened with Anna who refers to the same dynamics as *direct* sexism:

> *'Sometimes when I was doing building works on site I've had experienced the most direct sexism. There are just those easy assumptions that women wouldn't be able to… 'She won't have such experience, she wouldn't know about some practical aspect'' (Anna, 56, Self-employed architect).*

On the other hand, some participants described sexist attitudes just as the result of people not being used to see women in the field, as clear from this example from Sophia:

> *'I remember going on site once, and this builder coming up to me and say 'your boss is really good, she's really good at her job'. And he was surprised because he probably never worked with a female architect before' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor).*

This account stresses the need for representation in order to normalise the presence of women on the building site, thus challenging both subtle and direct sexism on a structural and cultural level. This aspect will be further explored in chapter 6 with a comparison between the experiences of British and Italian architects.

Reflexivity

It is interesting to notice that women are extremely reflexive about their understanding of discrimination, what they consider discriminatory and how they internally deal with this conflict. Ella blames the fact that her boss was from an older, different generation:

> *'I do sometimes [feel discriminated against…] But you don't want to drive yourself mad. […] But if you're working with people quite old... A different generation. Maybe it's just that they don't really mean it' (Ella, 29, MA student).*

This example echoes one of the main strategies that many participants adopt to cope with discrimination on the workplace: minimise it or blame a particular 'sexist' person as an individual problem rather than a structural one. Allison had a similar reaction while dealing with a client:

> *'I've had one client who was really awful to deal with. He would insist on the phone with me as the secretary even if I was the person doing his drawings. He would refuse to talk to me because I was the secretary and he'd only talk to my boss. And I see more like problems of the individuals rather than a gendered thing. I wouldn't put like down them being male and I'm female. Those are just assholes (laughs)' (Allison, 28, MA student).*

These automatic self-defence strategies employed by participants, such as not perceiving inappropriate comments as offensive or minimising sexist attitudes, can be considered to carry a contradictory attitude. For example, Janet noticed that when men were using inappropriate language they were apologising to her as the only woman in the room:

> *'This was slightly annoying but didn't really bother me. Nothing serious…' (Janet, 39, Architect).*

The contradiction of the episode being *annoying* but not enough to *bother* her suggests that women are normalising sexist attitudes, as already noticed by Powell et al. (2009).

Gender stereotypes

Another form of subtle sexism can be considered the varied set of gender stereotypes which, in turn, leads to various forms of more direct sexism. It is meaningful to notice how many women have been asked to deal with conflict in the office just because they are women. This has been openly demanded to Allison from her boss, to the point of pushing her away from the job:

> *'[My boss] said that I was going to deal with conflict because I was a woman, so any problems in the office, which were happening quite a lot because he was quite a character, they'd always put to me to deal with. Because I was a woman and I was going to sort them out. […] And all of this sort of built up into a situation when I just had to leave. I didn't feel comfortable there' (Allison, 28, MA student).*

This example offers a tangible idea of what it does mean for a woman being expected to offer 'emotional labour' in the practice (Hochschild, 1983). This overlapping of caring roles stereotypically associated with women in the household takes many forms, again present in Allison's experience:

> 'My boss decided it was part of my role to order everything for the practice and make sure that everything was there, all the supplies that we needed. It just suddenly became my job, just because I am a woman, and I am organised and I am better at knowing what's needed'.

Other episodes of discrimination that derive from stereotypes involve male colleagues' assumptions around women's ability. As in this example brought up by Alice, who experienced a male colleague publicly attacking her:

> 'It would just be in front of the whole office 'no you're wrong. You don't understand the difference between something and something else'' (Alice, 48, Partner).

The attack stemmed from his assumption about her lack of expertise about a software. Stereotypes about the conflictual position between women, and their feminine characteristics, and technological expertise are still relevant in the construction industry, as illustrated previously in the chapter (Grint and Gill, 1995).

Job application

Another circumstance where women experience discrimination is during job application processes. Research has been conducted to track differences in responses rate from employers to male/female applicants, or other intersecting characteristics, such as ethnicity or disability (Pinto et al., 2017; Derous et al., 2017; Bendick and Nunes, 2012), highlighting high degrees of bias from employers. In particular, what women find problematic is applying for part-time employment, as experienced by Alice who applied to various jobs without success, despite her experience in senior roles. Until she decided to apply for a full-time job and disclose her employment needs only at the moment of receiving the offer.

> *'I sent out 20 or 30 applications with the cover letters saying I wanted to work 3 days a week, I've heard nothing from anyone. And then […] I sent out 10 or 12 where I didn't say that. And I got 4 interviews (laughs). And then two of those offered me a job. At that point I said 'would you mind me working 4 days a week?' (laughs). But when I said I was staying in the office 5 days a week [spreading the hours] both of them said 'fine'' (Laura, 45, Architect).*

This episode highlights that working part-time is doable, but it is just not envisaged as a possibility from employers.

A consideration to be made with regards job application is whether more women apply to all-female practices. The interview with Carrie, who is one of the three partners of an all-female practice in London, and the focus group with the director and the architects of an all-female practice in London have been useful in answering this question. I had already explored this issue before conducting my fieldwork in one of my blog posts, in which I tried to understand why the practice led by Zaha Hadid employed a higher number of women and BAME architects.

> *'Probably Zaha Hadid Architects received a higher proportion of applications from women and BAME architects, from which recruiters choose the most appropriate candidates. And, of these, a high number is likely to be female and/or from an ethnic minority. […] Probably, people from minorities are more attracted by something that looks more similar to their own characteristics. This leading to an increase of the number of the offer and the likelihood that minorities would be employed' ('Diversity is not synonymous with architecture', October 2016).*

During the interview with Carrie, a few months later, I brought up this question and I asked her opinion, as someone directly involved in this mechanism. We kept on discussing this issue via email after the interview, and I got this emblematic yet clear answer: '*I think your reflection is probably right. Certainly, we get a high number of female applicants. As well the better applicants tend to be female*'. During the interview she also mentioned that she thinks that more women apply because it is a small practice, and men are more ambitious and tend to apply to bigger ones. Carrie's point was quite in line with the response I also had from the participants in the UK focus group:

> *'Kathi: You can say it's self-selecting.*

> *Miranda: Yeah, I guess women are more inclined to apply, knowing that all partners are women. […] It's the feeling I've got straight away, that it's a little bit safer'. […]*
>
> *Molly: For example, we asked the question 'why don't you want to work for a bigger practice? We can't pay the same money'. And a woman answered: 'because they're out of focus'.*

This short exchange among the women in the room confirmed both that more women tend to apply to all-female led practices, and they have less aspirations compared to men, so they do not mind working in smaller firms for less money.

Diversity

Sexism is a major aspect affecting equality in architecture, but at the same time it is important to consider how similar discriminatory mechanisms act towards other kind of minorities. An intersectional approach informs the need to consider ethnicity, economic background, age, and ability as few of the other characteristics to be addressed in discourses about equality. Diversity is an aspect particularly problematic in architecture. Many articles on diverse online platforms (e.g. The Guardian, 2017; SGS, 2016; McKinsey&Co, 2015; CityLab, 2011) denounce the situation: diversity is not only fair, it is also good for the economy. Furthermore, what diversity offers to the profession is also something more, as elegantly expressed by Courtney:

> *'I think one of the things I'm proudest of is that in being different, having a different perspective meant I've added something to your office that you didn't really have. And I think diversity is not just about the background. The actual things that just happened to me to be born with. There's diversity of thought, of perspectives and approach. There are things that I would do and I would say that you can see them going 'well... I haven't thought about that…'' (Courtney, 47, Board Member).*

The difference of thought, perspective and approach is particularly relevant for this profession in particular, because everyone lives in the built environment and this should reflect the needs of everyone, not just of the 'norm'. Adding a gendered lens to this thought, Courtney reflects that men advance more quickly and get more responsibilities:

> *'And this became revealed to us over time. Because you saw lots of women in the office but when you looked at what they were doing … so a very good balance of women but no one was project running, leading a project. No one was managing client's relationships. Most of the women seemed to be on housing'.*

This comment shows that it is not just numbers which are important in increasing diversity, but also the roles that those individuals hold, in order to avoid 'tokenism' (as described by Kanter, 1977: 210).

Harassment

After having described different ways in which subtle sexism has been experienced by participants, I move the focus on episodes of harassment as a form of direct sexism. I was carrying out my fieldwork during the peak of the Harvey Weinstein scandal and the rise of the '#metoo' movement, and it has been timely to encounter an online article that was discussing the presence of Weinsteins also in the architecture field (Dezeen, 2017). It was a general article not intended at calling out any particular architect; however, only a few months later there has been a scandal involving the famous architect Roger Meier, accused by five women of sexual assault (The New York Times, 2018). Looking at my data, I was surprised to realise that sexual harassment was something not that unusual in architecture and, at the same time, I was amazed to see how openly the participants have been about it with me. Episodes of harassment do not make sporadic appearance among participant's accounts: Amanda's boss touching her at work and being overly familiar and sexual, Alice's boss asking her to pose nude for paintings, something that he used to ask to all his female employees, or the episode of sexual harassment experienced by Carrie from a younger male colleague, already discussed above. After this episode Carrie made a complaint to her boss because she felt it was the right thing to do in order to challenge the culture by targeting the individual.

> *'And I thought that someone […] needs to stop this power thing going on. And it's interesting that I chose the guy who wasn't the Harvey Weinstein' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

Carrie's mention of Weinstein suggested me that the #metoo campaign was actually having an effect on women's awareness and confidence in calling out sexism and sexual harassment. Other participants highlighted the need to expose sexism and make it public, a method not always

implemented by women because of the fear of ruining someone's career or their own working dynamics, like happened in Carrie's case by 'losing some friends'. The common assumption when talking about women harassed in architecture is that the perpetrators of catcalling and assaults are workers on construction sites, as these environments are hyper masculine and less institutionalised. Interestingly enough, this assumption has been discredited by the majority of participants who, instead, considered discrimination from male colleagues, clients and contractors as more vivid and problematic. This aspect will be discussed further in chapter 6. To make that kind of episodes even more difficult to deal with, harassment is often put as a 'joke':

> *'I remember he did a proposition to me on a stairwell 'oh come on, go on. Give us a kiss'. There were always a bit of joke joke joke' (Carrie, 48, Partner).*

Carrie's example highlights the peculiar power dynamics involved between the two parts, where the harasser holds the possibility to play a power game able to both dissimulate the attack under the use of *humour* (Holmes, 2000) while still holding his authority by which '*you want the job done and don't want to piss him off, because you need to have a relationship with him where he does what you say*', as further explained by Carrie. In other words, sometimes you need to be nice and play along, despite experiencing direct sexism.

In this section I outlined how women are influenced and affected by structural inequalities and unbalanced gender power dynamics in the architectural field. The profession has been drastically changing over the last 10 years, since the impact caused by the 2008 recession all over Western countries, and the economic difficulties are affecting the dimension of architecture practices, the relevance of their clients, the size of their jobs and, therefore, the typologies of employment. Many women need to juggle their careers with caring responsibilities, mostly childcare, despite institutional attention and policies aimed at equality. Finally, I offered an overview of different kind of sexism, either subtle or direct, that women face every day in their working lives; and how this affect their career choice and their wellbeing in the workplace and, by extension, their life.

4.3 – Role-Exit in the UK

The first two key areas discussed in the previous sections of this chapter are the result of a thematic analysis of the data collected with the interviews and the focus groups, whereas

this last section, Role-exit, is structured in a different way: it follows the narratives of specific participants, some of those who have left the profession. One of the main interests of this study is to understand the processes of professional identity construction for women in architecture, as extensively analysed in the first section of this chapter and in the corresponding one in the following chapter. However, the various yet similar accounts of participants who left the profession suggested me the need to analyse these subjective narratives in a different way. As already discussed in Chapter 2, the term Role-exit refers to the mechanism happening when a person steps out of a role previously fulfilled, and the implications that this has on their identity (Ebaugh, 1988). Ebaugh's concept of Role-exit, together with two other key texts specific of architecture, prompted a mixed approach aimed at understanding how different subjects develop their identities as ex-architects. Those texts have been Karen Burns' essay '*The woman/architect distinction*' which explores the concept of lived subjectivity in the architecture sector (Burns, 2012), and the collection of autobiographical essays in '*The Architect: Reconstructing Her Practice*' (Hughes, 1998). Therefore, in this section I draw from those frameworks in order to add an extra layer of understanding to the previous section about professional identity construction by specifically focussing at the micro-level of what happens to those who have left the profession, in material, cultural and identity terms. In developing the argument, I draw on two specific interviews as case studies: **Sophia** and **Shirley**.

Sophia (48, Writer and Editor)

The position embodied by Sophia can be considered as privileged since she ticks the box of hereditariness, as her architect father was an influential figure in the RIBA, and economical privilege. Thanks to this position she has been able to meet good role models before studying:

> '*I worked in an office in Camden Town where almost 50% were women. They weren't at director or partner level, but they were some extremely competent women who I saw working in this office, before going to university. And I know some other female architects, because my dad was an architect.*

However, she left education before finishing her Masters, after having had only two working experiences, one before going to university and one after her BA. What she considers as the main factor which put her off is the traditional culture of university:

> *'I wanted to go to that university because it was quite popular university to go at that time. But the school of architecture was very old fashioned, very stiff, traditional...old school, modernist thinking. […] There were no female [tutors] at all'.*

Also, she had the feeling that everything she was interested in was not accepted at the university, therefore she started questioning if she has been interested in architecture at all:

> *'I just thought that everything I was interested in wasn't relevant. I was interested in research, in working collaboratively, in evidence. […] And questioning the course wasn't something that you were allowed to do. […] I was interested in […] collaboration and maybe working with some social scientists or artists. That was very much not accepted in that culture'.*

Reflecting on her decision to study architecture, Sophia realised that she should have been aware since school that it was not the right pathway for her:

> *'My teachers at school...some of them were quite disappointed when I said I wanted to study architecture, because I think they felt that - and they probably knew me better - it wasn't right for me'.*

Those two last examples confirm what has been argued above in the chapter: education is able to affect women's self-identification as architects through both a university culture in which they do not feel to fit-in, and influences from school and teachers that seem to '*know better*' about students' inclinations.

Shirley (46, Academic, 1 child - stepmother)

Shirley experienced a common and standard educational pathway and she never experienced sexism or discrimination at university. Which, however, eventually happened in her two working experiences across seven years.

> *'When I started working in 1995 there were 2 of us who studied at the same university. We were exactly contemporary, we both done very well in our degrees. And yet the kind of jobs he was given were kind of different from the sort of jobs I was given. There was definitely a little bit of imbalance to how we were treated. […]*

> *There were all sorts of challenges that I felt could be attributed to the fact that I was*
> *a female architect. Ways in which the office […] wasn't supportive enough'.*

Throughout the whole interview she puts a lot of emphasis on the lack of support that women experience in the workplace, compared to their male counterparts. This imbalanced situation put her in the position to immediately take the opportunity to move to academia, when she got the chance to have a part-time job as a tutor, and gradually migrate into this new working environment.

4.3.1 – The stages of the exit

Following the four stages approach developed by Ebaugh in her pivotal study on nuns who left their role and gradually tried to establish a new sense of their self (1988), I analysed the different ways in which participants realised the exiting process, and the possible effects of leaving the profession on the individual's identity and in relation to different aspects of their lives.

Sophia and Shirley went through the first stage, ***doubts about the role commitment***, at different points in their lives: Sophia realised that architecture might not have been the best choice while studying:

> *'I've decided that I wanted to be an architect when I was 14, and I was really quite*
> *passionate about it. But I've just felt that the more I went through the education*
> *system, I've just felt getting further away from something that I was interested in'*
> *(Sophia).*

Whereas Shirley went through this phase of doubts when she was working as an architect, with feelings of not being supported and getting exhausted:

> *'In that practice there was definitely a recognition of my skills. But then there was*
> *insufficient support. […] It was getting really stressful on the building site, feeling*
> *that I was in a vulnerable position. […] We handed in all the hand drawings for that*
> *project and I was absolutely exhausted' (Shirley).*

This suggests that the moment of realisation might differ from each individual, depending on their interests, their passion, their experiences, and singular episodes that might have

influenced that decision. Both Sophia and Shirley's examples can be considered common and relatable, but in other circumstances more specific episodes can influence the decision. For example, Kathleen left the profession after a serious incident happened on a site that she was directing, and the episode affected her personal ability to stay in the field. However, this is a quite individual and uncommon reason to leave, therefore I did not include Kathleen's life history in the developing of this section.

The stage of **evaluating alternatives** has been only described by Shirley, when she disclosed how she was feeling during the year in which she worked as part-timer in both practice and academia.

> *'[…] completely out of the blue, I've been asked if I would be interested in running the first year at [university], a design studio. […] It sounded great. […] They agreed to let me be out of the office for 2 days a week, and I worked in the office for the other 3 days of the week. […] And at the end of that year the office felt they would have me back there full-time. But by then I've done one year of teaching and I really enjoyed it' (Shirley).*

Instead, in Sophia's account I only observed the pre and the after situation, without encountering the reflection that led her to consider one pathway over the other.

In terms of making the actual **decision to exit**, both the participants did not put too much emphasis on the moment itself.

> *'A friend of mine sent me a text that said: 'there's a lectureship position, would you be available and interested in applying for it?'. So I did, and I got it. And that was that, changed direction (laughs)' (Shirley).*

Shirley concluded the anecdote about her change of career with a laugh, although I expected this instant to be a meaningful moment of their lives, a sort of cathartic rite of passage, '*an event that mobilizes and focuses awareness that old lines of action are complete, have failed, or are no longer personally satisfying*' (Ebaugh 1988: 123). A moment which, in fact, took this meaningful role in the Italian examples analysed in the next chapter.

The last stage, **creating and adapting to the ex-role**, occupies more space in their accounts. They both highlight their closeness to architecture but, rather than in the attempt to

affirm that they are still architects even if not practicing anymore, they do it to assert that they are qualified to have a job linked to architecture. Sophia stated:

> *'I work as a writer and editor […] I work on projects mostly around architecture, and some graphic design for architects and a bit of writing. I still stayed quite close to architecture. As an editor and a writer, you need a background in architecture. […] I worked in architecture. I did some architecture journalism, I worked in an architecture publisher as an editor' (Sophia).*

Sophia clearly explained the unavoidable link between her current job and her background in architecture, in an attempt to create a continuity between her two practices. Shirley, instead, only made reference to her 'previous' life when I asked her if she missed designing and drawing, the aspects more inherently architectonic of the profession:

> *'Oh yes I do! I reflected about that a lot actually. I think that one of the things I thought were very exciting about architecture when I was a young person, was the idea it was an open career and you could navigate it. And you could teach and write and draw' (Shirley).*

Differently from Sophia, Shirley is not too strict in excluding the possibility to go back to architecture one day:

> *'And I don't see there's any reason why I shouldn't be building buildings again at some point. So maybe that would happen, who knows? Maybe it won't. Which would be fine' (Shirley).*

This strategy gives her the opportunity to avoid being labelled as an 'architecture ex', she stresses the ties that she has with the profession and asserts her confidence in being able to come back at any point. While, at the same time, displaying her peace of mind in case this will not happen.

In addition to these stages which, as outlined in Chapter 2, have been profitably adapted in other studies (eg. Stier, 2007; Harris and Prentice, 2004; Drahota and Eitzen, 1998), I noticed that another specific moment has been mentioned in most of the accounts in my research, therefore I identified a further stage: ***awareness of their own otherness***. This fifth stage, like the

other states, is not necessarily present in each account and can be positioned at various moments, but mostly happens at the same time of the first doubts. It is caused by specific gender dynamics therefore it needs to occupy its own space. For example, Shirley appears to be fully comfortable in her role, her ex-role and her decision to leave, but, at the same time, during the interview she finds a way to highlight the discrepancy between the profession and her possibility, as a woman, to remain and be satisfied in the profession:

> *'I can think about many talented young women, but I can't think about them being treated [the same way young men were]. Some of these young men are now young directors at top firms in London. And I can't think of any of these women at that time who are directors at top firms now. Probably there are other things, like families have come in in between. There was definitely this sort of cultural 'the young male genius' whose incredibly promising career is ahead. […] Young women had lots of opportunities too and I've had plenty of opportunities, but there was an element of it' (Shirley).*

This account shows her attempt to justify, in general terms about the professional culture, the reasons why she left: there is no room for women in higher positions in architecture. She initially speaks in general terms about women she knows, then she positioned her own experience among those generic individuals.

Overall, Ebaugh's method demonstrated a useful application to these two specific examples, however it needs to be considered that every person performs different roles in their everyday interactions, and many participants criticised the mainstream role of the profession and found alternatives within the profession itself. Therefore, it can be loosely implied that they also went through a sort of role-exit.

4.3.2 – Material, Cultural and Identity implications

While analysing the challenges and consequences that women who left the profession face, I realised that identity is dramatically affected by exit. Whereas economic, cultural and social capitals are more intrinsic in individual characteristics of the person. For example, Sophia was telling me about her current job and her satisfaction:

> *'I'm self-employed […] and I do a bit of what I want to do, and I also do stuff other people ask me to do, which is not necessarily what I want to do. You know? It's….*

> *Q: Compromises.*
>
> *A: Yes'.*

She did not leave architecture for economic reasons, as much as she did not stay for these. Although, her words highlight an evaluation of her job that is quite different from how other participants describe their architecture jobs, which are led by an innate vocation. This suggests that her job is merely an activity aimed at sustaining her in material terms. In fact, when I asked her if she has ever considered going back to architecture, her answer is quite resolute:

> *'No, never. Also because I studied in a funny time where there were no computers. […] I learned how to do all the boring drawing by hand, with the razor, but that was all going out of the window'.*

She accepts the fact that the type of education she had is not relevant anymore in the current highly technological word, however she links this cultural difficulty to an aspect of her own identity, in an attempt of confirming to herself that leaving was the right thing to do. In fact, in the immediate next sentence she added:

> *'And another reason, seems crazy, but I didn't have the kind of desire or the motivation to learn. I always found CAD... quite weird, it was all working with coordinates. And it was like architecture… was maths. And that put me off even more, because I didn't want to do that'.*

She positions her identity as opposite to what is required by the profession, but she appears at ease with this outcome: she is confident in her choice and satisfied with the direction of her working situation.

Shirley's reflexive account, instead, highlights other aspects of attrition and, since her fracture with the profession happened later compared to Sophia, she develops a narrative that is less definitive towards her role as an architect. First of all, she clarifies her active role in deciding to leave the profession, and gives a plausible illustration of what it could have been if she stayed:

> *'If I have stayed perhaps by now, well A) I would have been more experienced, and B) I'd be much more able to make these points. When at the time I felt like I shouldn't*

> *because it was a sign of weakness. […] And that may have reflected badly on me'*
> *(Shirley).*

This shows that she left her job because she had another offer at the exact moment in which she was experiencing distress and conflict in her current position. She thinks that if she stayed, she would have overcome the reasons of conflict eventually. This confidence in her ability to cope with her conflicts leads her cultural capital to positively influence her identity. Her background in architecture is the reason why she is effective as an academic, and the reason that makes her enjoy her academic job:

> *'I get to design when I work with students in tutorials. I get to think intellectually*
> *when I work with PhD students, and I get to write but I still draw. I use visual*
> *methods. I'm very aware about having made a choice at one point to leave*
> *architecture practice. But then I think that the benefits of this sort of hybrid career*
> *are definitely there'.*

In Shirley's account there is no mention at all about the material factors that had an impact on her decision to leave, or its consequences. The only reference appears during the discussion about maternity leave: she defines her family situation as unusual, because her partner was the one carrying their child, so she did not have to take the time off from work and develop her career later, as most of her female colleagues had to do. But when we talked about full- or part-time employment, she argued:

> *'Our school has a good approach to women taking time out to have children. And*
> *there've been really nice gestures recently, giving women who come back from*
> *maternity leave a bit of time to get their research up and running again. But then*
> *there are challenges at a more senior level. Women taking senior roles within the*
> *school. My situation is different because my partner is mainly at home, so usually*
> *that means that I could work' (Shirley).*

This account suggests that not being the main caregiver is helpful in academia as much as in architecture. And alternative family dynamics had an effect on her career progression, since she is one of the only three women in her department with a role higher than lectureship.

To conclude, both Shirley and Sophia are satisfied by their current working position, which they stress being linked to architecture in the attempt to give more validity to their skills. In fact, they regard their architectural training as essential in their new positions as academic and editor respectively. In their experiences, the choice to leave architecture practice follows two different reasons: working dissatisfaction in Shirley's case, and the conflict between her personal identity and architecture's culture for Sophia. Both reasons can be linked to gender dynamics that they experienced in their education and working experiences, namely the inherently traditional and male university culture and a lack of support for women in the profession.

4.4 – Summary

The main conclusions drawn from the British sample is that the profession of architecture is in decline, both in material and cultural terms. The 2008 economic crisis heavily affected architecture and the construction industry, limiting jobs in number and variety. However, the diminishing of the architectural market towards smaller scale jobs, mainly back extensions and interior modifications, positively influenced women's ability to undertake a self-employed career, and therefore their flexibility. However, limited investments in the profession are increasing negative practices of long-working hours and unpaid overtime, which mainly affects women, who are more likely to have limited time availability as the main caregivers of their family. The implications of childcare have been highlighted as the main barrier for women's retention and progression in the sector, together with effects of subtle and direct sexism that women experience in their everyday working life.

In cultural terms, the aspect of elitist profession is being eroded by an increased competition from other more 'technical' professions, and by an education that still relies on traditional macho culture, which causes attrition to students, particularly female ones. Moreover, stereotypical images of architects still depict them as white wealthy men, thus reproducing this as the norm and affecting diversity in the profession. Therefore, women (as much as other minorities) are affected by stereotypes and assumptions which portray them as incompatible with the profession, to the point of struggling to make their personal identity as architects fitting in the professional identity typical of architecture. This is clear from a discussion that arose during the British focus group, when Molly shared a comment that she received from a site manager early in her career: '*I don't approve women doing this job, but since you're here I'm gonna treat you like a man*'. Kathi replied to this episode saying that '*you can try to be and act like a man, but you're not and you'll never be. You're kind of destined to fail*'.

The last section, Role-exit, shows how implications of leaving the profession are relevant for architects in general, but the framework of analysis focussed on lived subjectivities offers an understanding of various specifically gendered effects on female exiters. These same three thematic areas are also discussed in the following chapter, which analyses the empirical data obtained from Italian participants.

Chapter 5 - Tales from Italy

This chapter mirrors the previous one in discussing how the empirical data collected through the 20 individual interviews that I conducted in Italy contribute to the understanding of the three main thematic areas arose from the overall analysis. In particular, I present different experiences, practices and conflicts that Italian architects face compared to their British counterparts, before moving to a direct comparison in the following chapter. In the first section I highlight how education, experiences, assumptions and influences affect women's construction of their professional identity; and in the second section I illustrate how material factors delineate women's experiences in the field. Eventually, I draw upon three accounts, Carmela, Bruna and Marta, to analyse their narratives through the framework of Role-exit, in order to understand what consequences these participants faced after leaving the profession in terms of identity and material and cultural aspects.

5.1 – Culture and Identity in Italy

The main aim of this section is to discuss how female architects develop their professional identity according to their specifically gendered experiences in the sector. As already outlined in Chapter 2, different professions are located at different levels of the occupational scale and their position depends on certain characteristics of the profession itself, for example the educational pathway to qualify, or the set of skills required, which needs to be obtained before employment but also needs to be constantly updated. It is clear how this process requires possession of great social and cultural capitals. Furthermore, access to professions is restricted and its certification is institutionalised, confirming that some professions are reserved for elites. Therefore, the study of a profession can be implemented on two different levels, namely economic and social, as illustrated for architecture in this chapter. It is important to analyse the labour market in which a professional worker acts (e.g. is architecture a remunerative profession? How easy is to find a job? Are there possibilities for promotions?), and at the same time it is essential to consider the social activities which connect this worker to both the specific community (who holds the characteristics that are more likely to make them successful?) and the broader community (how is an architect socially perceived?). In this sense, occupational identity refers to the extent to which someone's identity is attached to their career. Social- and self-validation are key aspects in the development of individual professional identity, and this is particularly true for traditional and elitist professions such as architecture. Furthermore, women need to face an additional process of identity construction

as female characteristics are still perceived as in contrast with the profession itself, adding an element of conflict on both the personal and the social level.

5.1.1 – Professional Identity

While analysing the data I realised that participants' feelings and experiences are very different from one another, an observation very similar to the one arose from the British sample. For example, Rosa is bold in her self-perception as an architect:

> *'I don't feel like an architect. I don't just practise as an architect, I AM an architect. I'm an architect also when I do everyday stuff' (Rosa, 43, Self-employed architect).*

She *is* an architect, according to what an architect is for her, while for others architecture is a possibility over many others:

> *'I don't even know if working as an architect is what I want to do in life. I wanted to study architecture? I've done it. [...] Now I'll try to find a job that'd make me happy. [...] It could be a shop assistant or… an architecture studio' (Carmela, 26, Left profession).*

Alessandra (32, Self-employed architect) told me that studying architecture '*happened by chance*', and Piera (35, Academic) serenely admitted that she never considered the idea of being a traditional architect, '*not even during university*'. Ludovica summarised this discordant perception when she argued:

> *'I find the architectural world fascinating. But being an architect itself not as much' (Ludovica, 34, Left profession).*

What these accounts suggest is that it is possible to like architecture to the point of fully qualifying without feeling like or becoming an architect. Even liking architecture and working as an architect is not enough to offer someone the confidence to perceive themselves as an architect, as explained by Laura:

> *'I work as an architect, but I don't perceive myself as an architect, as commonly intended. [...] Before telling anyone that I am an architect it takes a while. And if I mention it, it's by mistake'* (Laura, 40, Self-employed architect).

This could either happen when someone's values and interests do not fit the traditional understanding of what an architect is supposed to do, as in Laura's case, or when external criticism keeps on questioning someone's role as an architect employed in a blurred sector, as happened for Vanessa. She works in the telephone operator sector, which is mostly perceived as an engineering sector, and many people around her criticise her role arguing that:

> *''It has nothing to do with what you've studied'… and that's totally true'* (Vanessa, 33, Architect).

She internalised this critique to the point of starting the interview saying that she does not work as an architect. However, after openly discussing these criticisms, she argued:

> *'There are many architects and engineers who work in this sector, the telephone industry. […] No one expects that behind telephony there's this professional area, architects and engineers. You think it's not relevant, but it is'.*

This contrast suggests that some people communicate their identity as it is commonly socially understood, despite having a self-perception of themselves that challenges that norm.

In addition to self-perception, also external people can refuse to address someone as an architect, as happened to Alessandra:

> *'[…] sometimes I witness their little respect in agreeing to call me architect. They say my name and then a pat on the shoulder… Or they say 'architeeeeeect', as to mock me. […] I realised that IF they called me architect there was a pinch of irony surrounding it'* (Alessandra, 32, Self-employed architect).

Or Tonia:

> *'On the third telephone call, even if he knew that I was an architect, he called me 'Madam' in a clear condescending way. So I stopped him and I said 'First of all, call*

me architect' (laughs). Which is something that I've never said before. I don't usually care. […] But in that situation… after the third time… well in that case then yes, because his intent was openly derogatory.' (Tonia, 38, Architect).

Tonia did not even have the benefit of the doubt that the mistake was happening because of her gender. The use of a term in a derogatory way happens also in other forms, for example assuming that the role of a woman is subordinate compared to the man standing next to her. Angela confirms this attitude with an emblematic episode:

'I was on the building site […] standing next to him [her boss] and I simply was the secretary. Even if I had a degree in architecture too' (Angela, 43, Architect, public sector).

This episode recalls the image of 'the secretary', considered as a status more than a job, as extensively discussed by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977).

Experiences and Examples

Drawing upon participants' answers to the question of whether they knew any architects before deciding to pursue this career: over half did not have any example of female architects when they decided to study it, with six of them specifying that they did not know any architect at all. The fact that the numbers are well balanced (nine yes and 11 no) suggests that the importance of cultural and social capital in order to be an architect is useful but not essential, especially considering that some of the most affirmed architects that I interviewed were the ones that did not have any architect in their family. This also suggests that some women are able to imagine themselves as an architect even without having examples, as confirmed by many participants.

Examples do not only come from surrounding people but also from images and representation available. For example, Daniela noticed that there are no projects designed by women on architectural magazines:

'It's hard to be one of them if there are so few… right? Why should it be me? If only few others made it, then I won't be able to make it. It's normal to think like this' (Daniela, 26, Student).

Daniela's account suggests the limits on identity construction created by the lack of representation of individuals sharing similar characteristics, and it is emblematic to consider that this comment comes from the youngest participant among the Italian sample.

First Working Experience

Another element that plays a big role in identity construction is the first working experience, as already noticed from the British sample. Few participants claimed that they have been put off architecture after their first job, either as internship or paid one. Carmela, for example, had a traumatic experience because after she concluded her internship her boss would not let her go. She worked, for free, twice the time needed for the mandatory internship. Her boss never mentioned the possibility to pay her, nor that she could stop going:

> *'A: So at one point I stopped going in after the Christmas holidays. Because I've fallen into this loop where I felt I was in the wrong. And I was feeling guilty of abandoning her. […] So, after this experience I said: 'never again'. […]*
> *Q: So, for now you gave up architecture completely?*
> *A: Yes. On one hand I'm a bit sorry for this. […] But I'm not able to say 'no' that easily.*
> *[…] So, to avoid finding myself in that loop again…' (Carmela, 26, Left profession).*

Carmela experienced that the architecture sector has little consideration of the individual and, knowing her difficulty to deny her constant availability, she preferred to leave the field rather than challenging prospective bosses. However, the feeling of being put off does not depend exclusively on episodes of discrimination or exploitation, but also on realising that the job itself is not in line with personal needs and interests. Daniela, for example, worked in a small practice with other three women, the environment was nice and positive, but she realised that she did not like the job:

> *'Maybe I'm not too apt to work in a studio. The idea of working 9-6, being under someone… I understand that for everyone is normal, but I'd like to do something else […] without having to deal with all the boring aspects that happen in architecture practices' (Daniela, 26, Student).*

First working experiences can also be positive. Arianna got introduced by a friend and colleague to the small studio where she has been working since her qualification, six years ago. Despite

some minor problems related to pay increase, the working environment is enjoyable, and her tasks are varied and stimulating. She confessed that her decision to study architecture has been accidental and she did not feel like having done the right choice until she started working. However, a key element to take into account in this episode is the role fulfilled by her friend who introduced her to the job: she offered her support both before and during her employment, highlighting the importance of the support network in personal and professional wellbeing, as highlighted before in the British context.

Doubts

Despite passion and interest setting the working standards for many architects, the career pathway for many others is paved with doubts and failures. First doubts can come during university. Alessandra, for example, mentioned that she lost enthusiasm during university: she expected it to be more stimulating and to prepare more for the labour market. The concept of the need to be constantly stimulated came up frequently in the accounts, also after education.

> *'I like my job but then I picture it in the everyday life. The percentage of fun compared to the total… the things I like less are dramatically increasing (laughs). So… that's why I'm trying to figure out how to go back to a greater enthusiasm' (Tonia, 38, Architect).*

Tonia's feeling of dissatisfaction is also mentioned by Stefania in her account of her first employment, which she left only because '*it wasn't stimulating enough*'.

Other participants, like Arianna or Vanessa, do not even have the chance to question the possible lack of stimulation of their job because they are too worried about the uncertainty of their future. The recession in Italy is concerning architects at any level of experience, the whole field is affected by the lack of opportunities and, consequently, stability. This situation is leading many women to question their career choices, and wonder if they should have studied something more required on the labour market, for example engineering.

> *'If I'd be able to go back... as a personal baggage I'd do it again. But if I'd think about finding a job more easily… maybe I'd choose engineering' (Carmela, 26, Left profession).*

Carmela's account echoes the feeling of other participants: thinking that they should have done something else, despite the fact that studying architecture has been enjoyable. It is possible to further problematise this aspect by adding a gendered perspective to the problem. I use Bruna's words to frame this concept:

> 'I decided to study engineering but once I started to talk with people I realised: 'why engineering? I am a woman…'. We're talking about the 70s… and then I thought 'well… better architecture then'' (Bruna, 66, Left profession).

She argues that, despite being aware of her interest in engineering, her choice has been influenced by her gender. This suggests that the choice to become an architect, and therefore the construction of the professional identity, does not only depends on attitudes, interests and possibilities, but it is also influenced by wider structural forces, such as society's assumptions, limited educational choices for women, and biological essentialism about women's assumed abilities and roles.

5.1.2 – Personal Identity: Being a Female Architect

In this section I explore the internal and external forces that shape women's personal identities in relation to being professionals in the architecture field. In particular, I have found that participants relied on three main areas to define their identities: different influences (such as family, teachers, TV and media), assumptions and stereotypes about the profession, and the negative experiences they had on their pathway.

Influences

In line with what already argued in the previous chapter, also Italian participants agree that the influences for pursuing this career come from different spheres: mainly from the family, with parents in particular, and the school. Parents' opinions are able to influence their children to the point of carrying on a certain pathway, as happened for Piera:

> 'During my first year I was unsure if I should change course. I have been influenced by my mother's interest in architecture, interior design. I followed this path. But it's been a choice which today I'd probably not do again' (Piera, 35, Academic).

The role of parents in influencing their children's choices has been already noticed in other studies, for example, Caven and Navarro Astor (2013) found that Spanish architects interested in art have been pushed by their parents to pursue architecture as a more prestigious career. In addition, parents' experiences are also able to indirectly influence their children's choices, as described by Lara, which sees in her parents' working struggles a deterrent towards a similar career direction.

> *'No, I'm not thinking about having my own practice… my parents run a building company. And I see the sacrifices they make, too many. […] There's not much work… and you need to pay so many taxes. I witness all these problems personally. No. In this moment I prefer to be employed' (Lara, 25, Student).*

These influences from parents have been extensively researched in literature about aspirations, see for example recent studies from Shapiro et al. (2015) and Fuller (2009).

Domestic traditional roles are also influential in shaping women's educational interests and career pathways. As clearly illustrated by Giada:

> *'My parents have always supported me. But my father would have preferred… rightly… [that I didn't study architecture]. Now I understand that maybe he had a good point. He told me: 'you're a woman, you'll have a family. Try to become a teacher, so you'll have more time to spend with your children'' (Giada, 43, Self-employed architect).*

The focus of this account lies on the crucial word '*rightly*' that Giada uses to agree with her father's suggestion about what her priorities should have been: family over career. Her role of prospective mother should have been the main engine to suggest the obvious choice of being a teacher. Family criticism related to traditional female/male roles also comes up heavily throughout the whole interview with Pamela (38, two children). Her practice, co-founded with her husband, is suffering from the latest recession, and her husband's family criticised her choice to stay in the business instead of looking for an external job. This would have given him the possibility to keep the business while having her part-time income from a secure employer, and *'according to his family […] the choice of looking for another job should have been mine'.* In other words, traditional families expect that is the woman who needs to step back and let the men keep the lead of the business.

Assumptions and Stereotypes

Architecture as a male job

General assumptions about the gendered aspects of the profession rely on a shared social understanding that women and men have different abilities and predispositions, this leading to a task segregation in many practices. For example, architecture offers a wide range of specialisations, and some sectors are perceived as more masculine, such as construction and structural jobs, and others more feminine, in particular interior design. Therefore, the assumption that women are better at design because they are more precise, whereas men are more pragmatic and direct, influences their bosses to consider men over women for site visits. Women are still considered more able to design interiors because of their insider knowledge of the house and its management, thus recalling the outdated image of the woman as the *angel of the hearth*. The example of the success of Grete Lihotzky, the female German designer who introduced the renowned Frankfurt Kitchen in the 20s (Henderson, 1996), explains this point further. The rationale behind this episode is that she had a better understanding of the kitchen because her femaleness, and this outdated concept still resonates in today's culture, as echoed by Rosa's words:

> *'Well... the attention to detail is typically feminine [...] maybe it's also about the management of the house… women have more… practical management. So, if it's an environment closer to a woman, it's easier that she would have a better understanding… an extra perspicacity. For example, to place 3 more wall sockets near the hob' (Rosa, 43, Self-employed architect).*

Overall, architecture in general is perceived as a male job, and also women working in the industry seem confused about whether or not this is the case:

> *'The perception is that if you're a woman you don't understand certain things, even if this is your job. That's not true! Actually, sometimes I'm proud of doing a masculine job… because it's not true! We are perfectly able to do it. For me it's a stupid preconception, deeply rooted' (Vanessa, 33, Architect).*

From this quote it seems that Vanessa internalised the fact that architecture is a masculine profession: she challenges this stereotype while, at the same time, reproduces it. The reasons behind these assumptions are mostly hidden behind the expression '*it's commonly believed*', as

used by Daniela in an attempt to give validity to her claim and avoid being perceived as sexist. On the other hand, a particular concept that arose from many interviews is that inclinations, attitudes and predispositions are not gendered but depend on the individual character, whether the person is female or male. In other words, if a woman is more interested in pursuing a career in interior design it is not because she better understands the house (either because of her biological inherent femininity or because she has been socialised in those gendered terms), but because she just likes this sector more, independently from the fact of being a woman, or from the things she learned by being a woman. This view is optimistic in its attempt to avoid biological determinism, but it also lacks a consideration of wider mechanisms: it supports the idea that the gender socialisation does not influence character and interests. In fact, this limitation is reflected in the clear confusion that arises from the topic, as evident in this account from Stefania:

> *'I think that on site a man has more authority. Of course, this depends on the character, because there are women with a strong and assertive character too... that hold respect. But when you talk to builders... you need to set the tone. And women, with our tenderness and politeness, in those cases don't make ourselves heard. So yes, on site men are more appropriate. (Stefania, 28, Architect).*

This account shows a confusion between feminine/masculine characteristics that would make women/men more suitable for a role, and builders' reaction on the site. Her conclusion is contradictory: she is implying that it is someone's reaction to determine who is more biologically suitable. A practical example of this aspect is clearly expressed by a metaphor about parking used by Bruna when we were discussing whether women are less good at maths:

> *'I don't know. I guess it has more to do with mental laziness. I've personally never had any problems, so I don't know if it's my own predisposition. But sometimes when you watch women parking the car... they give you goosebumps!' (Bruna, 66, Left profession).*

Bruna's comment summarises the debate between the essentialist view that women have certain genetic predispositions (and in this case limitations) and the structuralist emphasis on gendered socialisation, as clearly illustrated by Young (1980) with a similar example of gendered physical spatiality in the seminal paper '*Throwing like a girl*'. Driving requires more training and men tend to drive more often, furthermore young girls are constantly reminded that they are

less skilled on many aspects since young age. Women and men are indeed different, but this difference is not relevant in most of the everyday tasks, however it still gets exploited in segregating women to subordinated tasks, according to a legitimate and natural difference. However, some women perceive this difference as actually affecting their abilities in the job, Angela for example argues:

> *'I've noticed that in team management women are way moodier. I think there's also a hormonal factor, physical. So, when we have our period… we go crazy. And it doesn't happen for men. They are less emotional than we are' (Angela, 43, Architect, public sector).*

A position shared by Tonia too, when she commented on gender differences and implications:

> *'After all we're different. You can notice it on the workplace too. Also the approach. I'm clearly generalising here, but I think there's a strong difference between men and women's approach to things. And this influences the job too' (Tonia, 38, Architect).*

However, diversity is not always associated with a negative meaning, as Rosa noted:

> *'A woman can't win against a man's strength. She has sharper weapons. I mean, we're different… and this difference should be accepted and managed' (Rosa, 43, Self-employed architect).*

It is evident how many participants think that *in theory* the ability to be architects is equal for women and men, and if there are differences is because people are different, not as female/male but rather as persons; but *in practice* task division based on gender does exist. This is brilliantly put by Pamela when she talks about the subordinate role that she has compared to her two male business partners:

> *'Even if subordination is not present in the design project… then it happens mostly in the practicalities, in the management of the everyday life' (Pamela, 38, Partner).*

In fact, she is the one more likely doing peripheral tasks in the practice, and the one who needed to switch to part-time to take care of her children, despite her husband also being her business partner.

Being hysterical

Specific episodes shared by participants offer an understanding, on a micro level, of the implications of stereotypical attitudes towards women in the field. External perceptions of someone based on stereotypes can lead to the internalisation of such stereotypes. For example, being 'hysterical' is both assumed as a feminine trait and, at the same time, reproduced by women themselves. Angela noticed that women are influenced by the expectations of them being hysterical, to the point of having to avoid certain behaviours:

> 'You can't be yourself on the construction site. For a man it's different, they can say whatever they want... be nice or unpleasant. But as women we are always labelled as 'hysterical'' (Angela, 43, Architect, public sector).

Whereas other participants feed the stereotype of the hysterical woman, using a dominant and non-critical language. Like Dora (37, Architect) who admitted that her strategy to gain authority on construction site is '*well, I shouted a few times. A bit of healthy feminine hysteria*'. Those two accounts show that there is a double standard: men can shout freely, but when women do the same they are labelled as 'hysterical'. This suggests that 'hysteria' is a consequence of being a woman, not an intrinsic characteristic of being one. Similar to this point is a phenomenon that I observed in few interviews, related to age, present in this episode narrated by Giorgia:

> 'I look younger than I really am. […] On top of this I'm a woman. So, often [people on site] think I've just graduated, although it's been 10 years now…. Well, for goodness' sake, thank god for this! But sometimes I wish I was I a tall, fat, bearded and huge man' (Giorgia, 36, Self-employed architect).

I have noticed a common pattern in similar accounts: women tell the story as they initially felt offended by the comment, then turning their feelings towards a sort of flattery for being mistaken to appear younger. It is not clear if they are really flattered by it (but then why framing the story as a negative experience of discrimination?) or if they are performing their appreciation to the comment in front of me, another woman. These episodes link to both a

Goffmanesque understandings of stage performance (1967) and to a performativity approach more specific to gender dynamics (West and Zimmerman, 2009), especially happening in the workplace (Gherardi, 1994).

Overall, Italian participants, in clear contrast with the British ones, have a deterministic view on gender, which influences their decisions, attitudes and strategies. This divergence is analysed further in the next chapter which compares the two case studies.

5.1.3 – Education

The two main aspects related to the architecture education which emerged from many accounts from both countries are that the profession is not rewarding enough compared to the amount of time, money and energy invested in education, and that university does not adequately prepare to the realities of the labour market. Alessandra illustrated this discrepancy between study and work:

> *'When I started working, I thought I'd be more prepared than I really was. […] I think university prepares you on many useless aspects, but it doesn't at the practical level… on what you actually need to do at work' (Alessandra, 32, Self-employed architect).*

It is difficult for students to understand those limitations while studying, and sometimes their decision to whether carry on or not are based on peculiar episodes, unconscious inertia, or stubbornness. For example, Piera took her decision to stay as a gamble with the fate:

> *'The first year has been really hard, to the point that I considered changing course. […] In June I had my first two exams, I got 27 in maths and 28 in design [note: in Italy, marking goes from the lowest 18 to the highest 30]. I told myself that if I'd get a higher mark in design than maths I would have carried on. I was in a state of total disorientation' (Piera, 35, Academic).*

The feeling of disorientation is a common pattern in students' accounts, and it is more pronounced in architecture by comparison to other disciplines due to the fact that the subjects of study are enormously varied: including scientific subjects, such as pure maths and static, and humanistic ones such as history, in addition to 3D drawing, planning and technology.

Sexism

It is not surprising that architecture schools are sexist environments considering that the difference in number between female and male faculty members is so remarkable: latest statistics (MIUR, 2019) show that in STEM sectors, including construction, only 34% of women work as associate professors (the Italian equivalent of lecturer). Tonia realised that when she was studying all her teachers were male, except for one, an aspect that she '*didn't notice until now that we're talking about it*'. Furthermore, none of the accounts denied the fact that the few women teaching architecture modules were mostly clustered in non-scientific subjects. This lack of representation matches the general feeling that men feel more prepared in scientific subjects, to the point of obtaining higher marks, a mechanism explained by Daniela:

> *'In architecture, which entails scientific engagement, men effectively feel more prepared. […] I see that women tend to step away from scientific aspects. Generally, women tend to accept lower marks in scientific subjects' (Daniela, 26, Student).*

This attitude is reflected in group dynamics, as Daniela continues:

> *'During group exams for scientific modules I noticed that a woman's word sometimes… is less considered. It's something subtle, not obvious at all. But it's impossible to deny it.*

The limited presence of women in academia is undermined by an additional mechanism of sexism: gossip and insinuations about the fact that a certain faculty member obtained her position by exploiting the fact of being a woman, or by being married to a male professor. Simona, from the Italian focus group, remembers that:

> *'You could tell they felt the need to show their value. As a consequence, no one wanted to be in their class, because they were very frustrated. […] They were really mean especially towards female students. It looked like a personal issue'.*

On which Caterina added that she also perceived their need to assert their power and their value in occupying a certain position. This suggests that the power imbalance in women's roles, caused by assumptions and gossip, affects their behaviours and therefore their efficiency as educators.

The prevalence of male faculty is also accompanied by various episodes of sexism towards female students. I have found particularly telling the fact that accounts of sexism described by participants are framed in a wider context which they did not consider as discriminatory. For example, Laura said that she never felt discriminated against '*but sometimes some teachers stared at my tits*'. I immediately perceived Laura as a confident woman, able to play along with sexism and, in fact, used those chances of discrimination to openly mock her teachers. However, not every woman is able to consider something that happened in more than one occasion as some minor inconvenience. Also in Vanessa's account the '*but'* occupies a problematic position when she admits that she '*never felt discriminated against but sometimes some male professors make jokes… a little laugh. A quite confidential relationship with female students*'. What does it count as discrimination then? Differently, Giorgia considers the same attitude as discrimination:

> *'I always worked in group exams with the same 3 female colleagues. We were all good-looking, and we found that some teachers… they were joking around us. […] You get upset and think: 'look at the project instead!'' (Giorgia, 36, Self-employed architect).*

However, the tendency is to downplay the gravity of the episodes, either as a form of self-protection, as to deny having been victims of discrimination, or as a sincere acceptance of a normalised sexist academic culture.

This section illustrates how participants in Italy feel about being female architects. Their experiences are characterised by gendered assumptions and stereotypes, doubts, and specific feminine characteristics which are considered to be in contrast with the profession of architecture, understood as male-dominated both in education and practice.

5.2 – Material Experiences of Female Architects in Italy

In this section I explore the experiences that women in architecture have in terms of employment and the actual job. In particular, how these two areas are influenced by care duties and sexism.

5.2.1 - Labour Market and Workplace

A job in architecture is still surrounded by assumptions, such as the idea of being a vocation, long working hours and demanding job (Sang et al., 2014; Fowler and Wilson, 2004). Those aspects are certainly relevant but they often risk taking over the narrative of the job, influencing the retention on the job of only certain people with characteristics that fit the stereotypes. For example, the idea of vocation affected Carmela's decision to stay in the field:

> *'Because either you have an unrestrained passion... but really unrestrained! That's your whole world, it's all you want to do. And clearly it's not my case. I'm not Zaha Hadid, and never thought I'd be her. Neither in terms of skills not determination. 'I want that lifestyle and I'll do anything to get it'. No. I think that my life it's more interesting than that' (Carmela, 26, Left profession).*

This account shows how for some people it is easier to question themselves rather than question assumptions about what is needed to be an architect. Furthermore, the idea of long working hours and architecture being a demanding job is prevalent, as argued by Valeria and few other participants:

> *'It's a job that takes so much. […] In my previous practice we started at 8:30am and never left before 7:30pm, even when there were no immediate deadlines. Between office, building site and find clients... it's a very demanding job' (Valeria, 32, Left profession).*

Stefania argues that it does affect everything: '*children, partner and also friends*', although not everyone agrees to come to terms to this. For example Giada, who left the practice where she was working because she felt exploited: '*there was even a bed in the studio!*', she commented with disbelief.

An interesting reading of the reasons behind the long working hours' culture is offered by Simona during a discussion in the Italian focus group:

> *'What I find frustrating about our profession is that it's considered a creative job. So everything is considered a design problem: if you need more time and didn't meet a deadline is because it's been a creative problem. The creative process took you*

> *longer, and you did overtime, and no one will pay your overtime, because it's considered as your creative problem'.*

This view offers an original understanding of the reasons behind the normalisation of the behaviour of working a considerable amount of extra time which is not paid for, a working condition largely observed in literature (Sang et al., 2014; Fowler and Wilson, 2004).

The false myth of working abroad

A few participants mentioned the importance of having had a study or professional experience abroad, they perceived this as a way of both getting further knowledge and to be more competitive in the Italian labour market. The general feeling of the importance of having experience abroad and learning another language is summarised by Lara, when she told me her ideal plans for her future after graduation:

> *'I want to have many experiences. I don't want to lock myself up in the first practice I find. […] I hope I'll be able to find a job in an architecture practice [in England] and learn English. Because now this is a big problem, I have many friends who can't find a job' (Lara, 25, Student).*

Learning English and having experiences abroad is considered important to be competitive on the labour market, and this is a recurrent element in participants' accounts, despite not having included a formal question about it. However, having those experiences is not always possible, and does not always have the desired outcome. For example, Stefania worked for one year in Copenhagen until the economic crisis forced her practice to close. She tried to stay in Denmark with no luck, and she had to come back to Italy. After more than one year, she is still struggling to find a job, despite embodying the characteristics commonly considered as favourable to find a job: being fluent in English and having had working experience abroad. Another reason why participants consider working abroad is that they perceive that outside Italy their value as architects would be more appreciated, as exemplified by the experiences of the participants of the focus group. Lavinia highlights the feeling of meritocracy that she experienced while working in the UK: '*In Italy you have the impression that if you're valuable then you'll be exploited. Here in the UK, if you're valuable they'll invest on you*', a consideration acknowledged with a shared nod from the other participants of the focus group. However, Caterina pointed out a limitation of this approach by her experience of never having been trained for a particular task she is

interested in, '*maybe because I'm not British and they think that at some point I'm going away, so no point in training me'*. Therefore, they observe that meritocracy does exist in the UK, but it might be only reserved to British architects.

Social Role of Architects

The following quote from Alessandra clearly summarises the many problematic aspects which surround the role of an architect in Italy today:

> '*We are too many, and there's not much work. We also have competition from similar professions, like surveyor or engineer. [...] And it's a job that has lost its value. As much as its professionalism' (Alessandra, 32, Self-employed architect).*

The number of architects, the recession and competing professional figures are, in particular, aspects that appear in almost every interview. The main discontent comes from the low social esteem towards architects, compared to the past. The role of an architect moved from being a respected creative professional to '*someone that needs to check the bills and spend hours on Excel sheets'*, as described by Pamela. Furthermore, the loss of prestige has been accompanied by the recession, which is forcing many practices to close down, and it is affecting the enjoyment of the job itself, as illustrated by Tonia:

> '*I was enjoying it more a few years ago. It certainly depends on the crisis that is affecting it. The quality of the job is worse because contractors are sinking. So everyone is tenser. Clients too' (Tonia, 38, Architect).*

Every actor involved in the sector is surrounded by uncertainty and tension, therefore affecting the delicate mediating role that the architect needs to embody, mechanism described again by Tonia:

> '*Because as an architect you're in the middle: on one side you need to build teamwork with the contractor, but on the other you also need to 'defend' client's interests. Balancing is complex'.*

Furthermore, the increase of institutionally recognised competing figures is creating many problems for architects: the civil engineer, for example, is an architect who also appears to be

more prepared on the technical level. And this difference is not only socially assumed, but also implemented in public jobs competitions, where architects are starting to be excluded, as mentioned by Dora.

All this mix of recent changes makes the figure of the architect in Italy less desirable compared to just 20 years ago, however the expectations towards the role of an architect remained unaltered while, at the same time, the surrounding difficulties increased. For example, Marta explained how she perceives the consequence of the increased competition in the sector, where also affirmed architects, like her previous boss, need to face challenges all the time:

> *'She is certainly an affirmed architect who works really well. But you need to be aggressive. It's not for me. I can't hold, emotionally, this sort of conflict. A job where you're always on the edge, where you always need to fight. Always need to humiliate the people you're working with. No, it's not for me' (Marta, 44, Left profession).*

As happened for Marta, the harsh environment is affecting the level of retention of architects in Italy, confirmed by the stark decrease in the level of employment, which fell from 84% to 60% in only nine years (CNAPPC-Cresme, 2016).

Clients

In addition to this, another main problem mentioned by few participants is that they find it difficult to get paid by clients. Architects offer a service rather than a good, therefore sometimes it is difficult to prove the amount of time spent on a project, and this is especially true if the project has not been built yet, or it won't be anymore. Rosa admitted that being self-employed is a risk which led her to the point of having had to '*run after a client to get paid […] the risk is that they just steal your work without paying anything for the time you've spent on it*'. However, working in a bigger practice does not protect architects from the same attitude from clients: Carmela mentioned that her boss could not employ her after her internship because her clients were not paying her.

Another episode linked to payment happened to Pamela: a client refused to talk about fees and payments with her, despite talking to her about the design and other aspects of the project. When he added '*I'll talk directly with them [male partners] about payments*' she did not know how to react. And this was not an isolated event, since it happened to her three times already.

Access to clients is very difficult at early stages of a career, especially for self-employed architects in smaller towns. It usually happens through word of mouth, and it starts with small

renovations for friends and family members. However, I have found in the Italian sample a much larger emphasis on the concept of social capital, compared to the British one. I already mentioned above the importance of hereditariness in this profession, and this is particularly relevant among the Italian sample, together with the attitude to undermine its role. For example, Tonia describes her boss as a '*hard-working woman*', who came back to work after just one month after giving birth and is able to get multiple jobs because of her varied and excellent portfolio of projects. She also mentions that her father teaches architecture at the university, although Tonia adds that '*she never took advantage of his position to access clients*'. However, at one point she casually mentioned that she also has a wealthy environment of friends, then admitting that:

> '*She started from a very favourable situation in terms of friendships. […] I'm talking about their economic possibilities. Unfortunately, is all about that*' (Tonia, 38, Architect).

The level of the clients defines the prestige that it is possible to reach, reproducing a mechanism where someone's environment either helps or affects their access to various networks. This is clearly illustrated by Rosa:

> '*If you're in a certain environment then you already have your entourage. For example, the first commission you have it's your starting level. From there you can climb higher. But if you're not there already, then it's really difficult to go higher*' (Rosa, 43, Self-employed Architect).

This comment highlights how important is social capital for a junior architect, despite some participants' efforts to downplay how much it helped them at the beginning of their career.

Different Types of Employment

Partita IVA

One of the main aspects regarding forms of employment in Italy which needs to be highlighted is the employment through *Partita IVA*, the Italian equivalent of working as freelance through the VAT number. This type of employment is really common, despite not being formally regulated: it is a sort of '*fake employment*', as described by Arianna. It is *fake* because architects work regular working hours in one office instead of actually being freelance, as expected by their

VAT status. Therefore, they are bond to all the consequences of being employed (e.g. weekly 9-to-5 job, ask their boss to take holidays, sign the projects using the practice's name instead of their own), without having regular employment benefits (sick leave, paid holidays, parental leave, rights about being fired). This unofficial form of employment is only advantageous for employers because, on top of the lack of benefits, employees also have to pay taxes on their income, as does every freelancer. However, this method is so common and not regulated that junior architects who just graduated find '*almost impossible*' to find a job without this VAT registration, which is not convenient for them to do because of the low incomes at entry levels, as admitted by Stefania and Arianna.

Self-employment

Another common working practice in Italy is self-employment, which is utilised by many architects because of its ability to offer independence and flexibility. However, it also comes with '*many responsibilities and not enough economic gain*', as pointed out by Pamela. This duplicity is reflected in participants' goals and life plans, as illustrated by Alessandra:

> '*Every day I ask myself: 'why shall I live in this insecurity any longer? I should take a look at jobs adverts and see if there's something interesting!'. Then, I think about it and I conclude that it's not for me. But then again I think that I should try it. Then no, then yes. I live in a total hesitation*' (Alessandra, 32, Self-employed architect).

This sense of uncertainty is shared by Giada, who used a simple but effective example to make her point. Her lack of stability affects her ability to make simple life plans, such as buying a fridge:

> '*Ok, now I spend this money to buy a new fridge... but then if I won't get any commission what am I supposed to do? Shall I wait until I have another one?*' (Giada, 43, Self-employed architect).

Moreover, some participants reached the decision to work as self-employed after having had a negative experience of working for free, or for very little. Vanessa admitted that after graduating junior architects are likely to accept unpaid jobs, although this mechanism of having to '*sell out'* is frustrating and not fair, because it can last for months. However, she did work for free in her first 'employment', just after graduating:

> *'You're still learning but you're also working, producing. It's a mutual exchange...*
> *You can pay me less, but it doesn't need to be a complete exploitation' (Vanessa, 33,*
> *Architect).*

Vanessa's argument is that university already costs a lot in terms of money and sacrifices, and of course graduates need to learn practical aspects of the job, but on the other hand they are already formed on many aspects, so this only means they are being exploited to work for free. Junior architects are aware of this power dynamic happening at their own expense (in every sense!), and they are critical of their own participation in this. As clear from Stefania's annoyed account:

> *'I put myself among those who did accept an unpaid three-months job-trial... I*
> *shouldn't have accepted it! Because revolution should start from us too. If people*
> *still accept unpaid jobs then it's obvious that unpaid job is offered and expected'*
> *(Stefania, 28, Architect).*

She is advocating for a revolution that needs to start from junior architects, refusing to be exploited.

This section illustrated what Italian participants expect from the working possibilities currently available in Italy, in particular the idea they have regarding the importance of having a working experience abroad in order to increase their professional value, the declining social esteem towards architects, the difficulty in accruing social capital in order to access better clients and therefore bigger jobs, and the inevitability of working on 'fake' self-employment (Partita IVA).

5.2.2 – Implications of Childcare

Childcare and its implications occupied a big part of Italian architects' accounts, as much as for the British participants. They illustrate the difficulties of being working mothers, starting from obstacles in planning their life, passing through the actual care duties, ending with the consequences of childbearing and motherhood.

Planning

According to participants' accounts, making life decision seems to be a general problem for both women and men: '*I can't have children until I reach economic stability*' says Giorgia (36), her voice echoed by many other participants. To reach economic stability it means reaching that with a partner, so it is a shared duty, a shared life plan. However, other aspects of this planning are more gendered, affecting women in particular, such as the idea of *adaptability*.

> '*Maybe a man would be able to work the whole week in Milan and then come back in Florence just for the weekend. But the woman, if she has kids, needs to consider how doable it'd be*' (Carmela, 26, Left profession).

Carmela is arguing that women need to make decisions based on their family, with particular regard towards the location, whereas men can travel more easily. Moreover, women are aware that their career progression might be affected by having children, or a temporary maternal leave, as explained by Arianna:

> '*If you decide to have a certain career it means that you don't want a family. I don't know… but it's not adaptable*' (Arianna, 33, Architect).

Her view has been influenced by the experience of a friend who worked for 10 years in a big and renowned practice in London and, after having had some time off for childbearing, she is now struggling to go back to work effectively. An experience not uncommon for women in the field.

Care Duties

Expectations

This exchange between me and Maria summarises the state of the discussion in Italy about motherhood and professional career for women.

> '*Q: Do you think that having a baby would affect your career?*
> *A: Yes of course! I am not sure how I am going to handle it, but what I think is that a baby needs her mother around them. I find very sad to see little babies left in nurseries because their parents are working. A child needs to grow up next to their mum all the time, and when I will have children, I will take time off from work. I haven't thought about professional consequences though. […]*

> *Q: Would having a baby stop you from following your dreams of travelling and working in many cities?*
>
> *A: Not at all. I would pack all my stuff, hold my baby and follow what I want to do. No matter what. I would make it work' (Lara, 25, Student).*

This account highlights the contradictions between a biological determinism which requires women to take full responsibility over their babies where, at the same time, this duty is not enough to practically affect choices and career. Personal expectations towards how motherhood would affect someone's choices depends on many factors, but from the accounts I gathered it seems that age is one of the most influential differentiating elements. Maria (25) admits that she did not consider professional consequences of motherhood yet, whereas Pamela (38) acknowledged that she was aware of the consequences, but she realised that she was getting old so she felt she '*had to*' have two children: '*it's never the right moment […] it's a question that has to do with every woman*'.

Moreover, not only women have their own expectations towards motherhood, but also employers do. Those can either avoid employing women in the first place (the '*threat of motherhood*' (Watts, 2009), as already mentioned in chapters 2 and 4), or deny their right to come back after work. The idea of women being less available is also shared by women themselves, as clear in this comment from Giorgia:

> *'Then I see that women in general… I don't want to say it because then I'll look unpleasant… but their aim is the family […] Take for example women who, as soon as they get a permanent job, they get pregnant several times. Because they don't care, since no one can fire them. We need to be careful because sometimes we hurt ourselves as women. Right? Why many employers don't hire women? Because they maybe had some experiences' (Giorgia, 36, Self-employed architect).*

She thinks that women are keener towards their family whereas men are more available, so when I asked her if this idea ever influenced her choices as employer, she replied that is not about gender but about attitudes, as also men can have the same attitudes. Unfortunately, I did not enquire further about how the limited paternity leave (which in Italy is of 5 working days only compared to the 8 months for women) could be compared to women's length of absence. Again, the common argument which I discussed above – '*it's not about gender but it depends on the individual's character*' - fails to address firstly the gendered socialisation, as women and not

their partners are taught and expected to take time off. Secondly, it fails to consider the formal and institutionalised possibilities and consequences which reflect those gendered expectations, such as the length of maternity vs. paternity leave, benefits, and legislation to address discrimination.

However, this discriminatory attitude is not always the main one: Stefania portrayed a positive situation in her previous practice, where two women had children and were allowed to have flexible working time once they returned to work, '*because they earned respect after six years working there*'.

Giada's comment adds a fundamental extra layer to the discussion about motherhood:

> *'I made a life choice. If I'd been interested in a career, I shouldn't have had a family. If a woman wants a career, then she shouldn't have children. In Italy. If you have a family, you're sabotaging yourself. Unless you're a billionaire, so you can afford a nanny and a housekeeper' (Giada, 43, Self-employed architect).*

Interestingly, those sorts of comments were prevalent in the UK interviews, whereas this intersectional understanding is almost completely lacking in Italy, where this has been one of the only two references about economic privilege that I have been able to note (the next one appears in the following paragraph). I identified this absence as a result of a typically Italian mechanism: the help that many women receive from grandparents. This informal and free support is assumed as standard in the working patters of Italian families, as explained in more details in the next paragraph.

Children

Moving the focus from expectations to the implications of actually having children, it is then necessary to distinguish childbearing from childcare. A few participants shared experiences from their colleagues in order to highlight that is possible to have children and go back to work almost immediately. Dora's business partner was in the studio the morning she had her first child and came back to work after only two weeks. She understands that this is a particularly fortunate circumstance: an easy pregnancy, living close to the studio in order to go back home every three hours to breastfeed, enough economic capital to have a nanny to stay with the baby, and also being one of the partners of the practice, which meant not having bosses to convince about her availability. Also Tonia's colleague worked until giving birth and came back after one month, in her case she received help from her grandparents. These examples illustrate how

different favourable circumstances and forms of support are able to minimise the effect of childbearing, showing that women's absence from work can be limited. In this regard, Hochschild's criticism on an article of the Times about working mothers resonates: '*The Times article gives the impression that the working mother is doing so well because she is* personally *competent, not because she has a sound* social *arrangement […] In celebrating such an image of personal strength, our culture creates an ironic heroism*' (2003: 24). Women stand on a thin line where they need to show that they have everything under control, and at the same time need to accept and share their difficulties and vulnerabilities: the neoliberal ideal of individuality and meritocracy goes well along the state's lack of institutional support. Ultimately, both affect women anyway.

However, in most circumstances, childcare affects the regular working patterns of many women who do not have any form of formal or informal support. For example, Pamela's role in her practice has been affected by childcare:

'Clearly my role as part-time is subordinate, because there are the children. And our income doesn't allow us to have a nanny. […] It's clear that it's always women that are affected by this… family care' (Pamela, 38, Partner).

Interestingly, Pamela is the only Italian participant working on a part-time basis, highlighting that this form of employment is not common in Italy, which is in striking contrast with the situation observed in the UK.

Overall, the different positions that women have towards motherhood are summarised by Laura's thought: there are two extreme situations, either women do not want to leave their babies to nannies while working, or women are so committed to their career that do not care too much about being with their kids. However, she argues that there are other ways to be a mum but there is no culture for it yet:

'No one is brave enough to follow a small path rather than the obvious paved road. […] To invent things that don't exist yet. Maybe starting from the Northern European model and carry it forward. There's the fear of re-designing yourself' (Laura, 40, Self-employed architect).

She concludes saying that she cannot tell if a baby would have influenced her choices, it is hard to tell since it depends on too many factors.

Flexibility

Many of the arguments illustrated above can be reduced to the need to have more working flexibility. Which can be obtained in different ways, namely working in the public sector or in alternative employment and relying on a strong network of support.

Arianna has been working from six years in the same practice, but she feels insecure in terms of planning her future with regards to having children. Therefore, she started to apply to public jobs in order to gain economic stability, time flexibility, and also the possibility to avoid unpaid extra hours of work, which will offer time for herself and a potential child. Dora's business partners both have children, so they are including a children's room in their new office. This attention is probably possible because they are the partners rather than employees. Furthermore, the female solidarity and understanding of shared needs enabled them to develop a support network: a peculiar case where 'homosocial behaviour' (Kanter, 1977) can be interpreted in a positive way. A few other participants highlighted the benefits that having their children in a room in the office would have for them, and for their employers too. However, it has been argued that some women find the home environment stressful because of the many caring duties attached to it, therefore *work* had become more attractive (Hochschild, 1997). Having an office nursery can be convenient in terms of organisation for many women, but it should not be assumed that every woman would feel comfortable in being surrounded by her children all the time, as noted by Hochschild in the seminal work 'The Time Bind' (1997), where she argues that the approach 'family comes first' does not apply to every mother.

Overall, in Italy women are still heavily affected by traditional expectations regarding family roles, therefore the relationship between productive and reproductive work affects the gendered division of labour in various context, including both public and private sectors, employment and self-employment. The relationship between these two spheres of production, namely domestic and market economy, has been extensively analysed by many feminist authors, notably Acker (2006; 2004), Federici (2012; 2004) and Glucksmann (1990). Therefore, women's need for flexibility inevitably pushes them to cluster in precarious and subordinated jobs, and this is particularly relevant in Italy as the second worst European country in terms of gender employment gap, which is 8.5% higher, and almost double, the European mean (Eurostat, 2017).

Parents

Although care duties are often connected to children, also the care of other members of the family can be included in this aspect. For example, Rosa's parents influenced her decision

to stay in her small town, for a long time she considered leaving for Spain although she remembers that '*abandoning them wouldn't make me feel ok*'. This sentence highlights the strong bonds between elderly parents and adult children that are often present in Italian culture, where following a career path can be considered as an abandonment of the parents, also in circumstances where they are not even ill, as in Rosa's experience.

Family

A recurrent keyword that came up in the interviews is *family roles*, and its variant *gender roles*. These two co-constitutive concepts highlight how much traditional familial dynamics are still relevant in Italian society. Giada, who works as a part-time self-employed architect in order to have enough time to spend with her children, is quite vocal about how this situation is affecting her job and what the government should offer to women:

> '*From the moment a woman creates a nuclear family she needs to be supported by the institutions. Through her whole lifetime. […] because today is still the woman managing the family. [… institutions] should help the woman to do those tasks by balancing the number of her working hours with the man's ones' (Giada, 43, Self-employed architect).*

Giada is arguing for a welfare state system where institutions support women in different ways: adjusting the school time to reflect the working time or offering schools services usually accessed privately (like sports and music) for after-school activities, in order to allow parents to stay at work in the afternoon. Giada's mention of the insufficient child-related government benefits is in line with Tanturri and Mencarini's (2008) findings about the reasons behind the increasing trend in voluntary childlessness in Italy.

Things are slowly changing in the last ten years, and paternity leave are more socially accepted, but mostly in the public sector. Angela noticed:

> '*In the public sector we had some male colleagues who took the parental leave instead of the mothers. This maybe would be useful to make less perceivable that women are absent for [childcare]' (Angela, 43, Architect, public sector).*

However, despite the traditional culture, the recession seems dominating the gender roles in Italian families, leading both parents to work as much as they can if they are lucky enough to be

able to rely on the grandparents to look after their children. It is ironic to notice that grandparents, addressed as '*social security cushions*' by Giada, fostered women's equality in the labour market: a progressive outcome from a traditional familial dynamic.

Consequences

Some of the consequences of motherhood on employment are well known to participants. The phenomenon of glass ceiling is often commented on and confirmed during interviews, but some practical and more specific issues are illustrated too. For example, Stefania (28) was concerned about the fact that employers ask for life plans during job interviews, meaning that she risks not getting the job only for being in her '*fertile years*'. Furthermore, motherhood carries a sort of social stigma, as noticed by Alessandra:

> '*Sometimes I take a look at job adverts and I wonder 'I'm 32, I'm a woman… who's gonna hire me?'. Of course I think about this*' (Alessandra, 32, Self-employed architect).

The '*threat of motherhood*' resounds in Italy as much as in the UK (Watts, 2009). There is the idea that being self-employed prevents women from having to negotiate their temporary absence with their bosses. But assumptions about pregnancy and motherhood also affect women from the clients' side, as illustrated by Giada:

> '*When I was pregnant some potential clients looked at me and said 'well… if you're pregnant how can you go to the construction site? When will you have time to follow my project? Then you'll need to breastfeed…'. I've lost some jobs just because I was pregnant*' (Giada, 43, Self-employed architect).

She continues arguing that, paradoxically, being pregnant seems to be more of a problem although women actually have more time with babies than with children.

In conclusion, women in Italy are culturally requested to fulfil traditional family roles and this affects their ability to plan their life and be in secure and satisfying employment. However, the strong ties with the family have a double effect on care work: on one hand women are expected to pause and jeopardise their career in order to carry out childcare duties, on the other they can rely on grandparents to help with their children.

5.2.3 – Sexism

Italian participants offer a similar understanding of specific mechanisms that happen in the construction industry: they consider sexist the perceptions that others, especially colleagues and clients, have of their position and their role. A practical example of how perceptions can be sexist is illustrated by Angela:

> *'Generally, initial observations about a woman start from their physical aspect […]*
> *If someone asks: 'how do you find Mrs. X?'. The answer is likely to be: 'she's a*
> *beautiful woman. […] The other day she was wearing heels. But she's good'. If the*
> *question regards a man, instead, the answer is more likely to be: 'he's good, he's*
> *very capable' (laughs)' (Angela, 43, Architect, public sector).*

Angela is suggesting that for a man the first comment regards his professional evaluation, whilst for a woman her appearance. Perceptions of discrimination are experienced individually to the point that '*if you talk with my colleague, she would give you another vision of the same job*', Arianna admits. Her self-defined '*positive attitude*' makes her feel that she has not been discriminated against, in contrast to the opposite feelings experienced by her colleague. The need to be responsible for their own resistance towards discrimination is also shown by Giorgia, who argues that she never experienced sexism because she has '*a high threshold of patience*'. This suggests that discrimination is normalised to the point that women themselves are made accountable for how well they deal with it.

A further reflection about discrimination based on appearance could be introduced by this account from Vanessa:

> *'When I say 'I'm the architect' everyone seems puzzled. I feel like an alien in a male-*
> *dominated environment. Maybe it's because I look very young and I don't seem*
> *credible. Maybe it's because I'm a woman or because I'm young' (Vanessa, 33,*
> *Architect).*

Two considerations can be made from this account: firstly, that even before describing the sort of discrimination she received, she was already justifying the discriminator, saying that she looks very young, therefore it is understandable if others feel surprised to find out that she is the architect in charge. This suggests that for some women the first reaction to discrimination is to read their diversity from the norm in terms of something that is lacking or wrong. This leads to

the second consideration, clearly highlighted by Vanessa's own words: *alien*. The concept of *alienation* could be adapted from classical Marxist theories (Marx, 1992) in conjunction with theories of patriarchy (Hartmann, 1976; Walby, 1990) to demonstrate that male dominance is maintained by reproducing male bodies and aspects as the norm.

Other than on the basis of physical aspect, discrimination can be performed on perceived ability. A consequence linked to assumptions about abilities can be read through the concept of the sexual division of labour. Tasks assignment is perceived from women to be a gendered process: Stefania noticed that in her previous office women were clustered in '*cheap labour*' roles, where they ended up doing menial small jobs. Dynamic confirmed also by Angela, who was about to quit her job because her chauvinist boss '*openly gave responsibility roles only to men*'.

On this note, Alessandra argues that discrimination towards women does not happen anymore because women are less capable but rather for the 'threat of motherhood', which is evident from the fact that in job interviews she always get asked if she wants children. This suggests that gendered discrimination can also happen on the assumptions of availability.

Pay-gap

In 2018 the UK introduced a transparency legislation aimed at regulating the gender pay gap. Italy, unfortunately, still lacks a similar initiative, and employees are aware of their colleagues' wages only if they are informally open about it. Arianna, for example, enjoys working in her current office, however she admits that there is a sexist practice about wages:

> *'When me and my female colleague firstly started, we were paid €800 a month. Now we have two male new-starters and they are paid €1000, since the beginning. And I reckon that this has to do with… them being men. […] Now I can see it, after having been here for 5 years. Our male ex-colleague in our current position was paid way more than how much we earn now' (Arianna, 33, Architect).*

The pay gap stems from two different causes, either from bosses who, directly or indirectly, offer male employees a higher pay, or from the fact that women rarely ask for more, compared to men. In Stefania's words: '*men are more likely to ask for a rise, whereas women wait that their bosses realise they've earned it*'. This mechanism reproduces itself. An example of this dynamic is clearly illustrated again by Stefania:

> *'I find it very difficult to ask for money, I don't really know how to do it. Or asking for a pay rise. For example, recently a friend and I both did the same job interview. The job required a two-months trial period paid €600 a month. I agreed, even if it seemed very little. My [male] friend, instead, asked for at least €800. Then I thought that he's right! Everyone should say that they can't work for less than €800 a month'*
> *(Stefania, 28, Junior Architect).*

She does not comment on where her male friend got the boldness to ask for that rise, this confirming what already suggested in the previous chapter: women are requested to do an extra effort to learn behaviours that they did not learn during their gendered socialisation (Dryburgh, 1999).

In this section I illustrated how, in Italy, employment in architecture is experienced differently by women, since material consequences are affected by gender roles and perceptions, such as the need for flexibility in order to carry out care duties, or sexism from colleagues and clients.

5.3 – Role-Exit in Italy

More than a quarter of the women I interviewed in Italy can be considered as architects who have left the profession. The sample offers varied experiences and outcomes: **Carmela** (26) has finished her Masters and, after struggling to find a job in architecture, has just stopped looking for one; **Bruna** (66) fully qualified while having a job in IT and never practiced as an architect; **Marta** (44) made her passion for craft and creativity her current job, as much as **Valeria** (32) and **Ludovica** (34) with their interest in food, although with different type of businesses; finally **Piera** (35) who never practiced as an architect due to her interest in research and academia. As a compromise between the need to give value to this whole variety of experiences, and the intent of this section to follow only few case studies, I will develop this part around three accounts: Carmela, Bruna and Marta, because each of them offers different and useful insights to the concept of role-exit.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the switch from the thematic analysis of the previous two sections to the analysis of the narrative of exiters is suggested by a framework based on Ebaugh's approach of Role-exit and linked to concepts of lived subjectivity and autobiography (Burns, 2012; Huges, 1998). Furthermore, the specific focus on gender of this approach aims at challenging the canonical positioning of gender as an abstract structural position which,

however, has been useful in understanding material effects on female architect's experiences. In conceptualising identity production, instead, it is useful to employ this approach, which relies on Bourdieu's social theory, in order *'to understand gender as a lived social relation. […] Such an analysis will force us onto the ground of experience […] Social being […] cannot be reduced to experience but will reveal itself through experience'* (Adkins and Skeggs, 2004: 11). Therefore, this approach considers experiences as relational rather than foundational.

Carmela (26, Shop Assistant)

Carmela does not seem too keen in architecture, despite her long and committed educational pathway. She is still working on a portfolio in order to find a job in architecture, but she does it in her spare time, '*with not too much apprehension as before*'. Her main goal is to have any kind of job:

> *'Truth to be told, I don't even know if I want to practice as an architect after all. […] Working in an architecture practice is… something where you never clock out, you'll carry it with you all the time. […] If I think of a lifetime spent like that… it really needs to be your absolute passion'.*

From her words and her recent decisions, it seems that her priority is to have a liveable job, no matter the time that she invested in her education.

Bruna (66, IT service)

Bruna is a woman confident in her abilities, she enjoyed studying architecture, she fully qualified but never practiced as one. When I asked her if she is satisfied with her professional life, she commented:

> *'We're talking about a 66 year old woman. I have a completely different awareness now. My analysis of my own life it's totally serene. I don't have any regret. I've never lived my life with regret'.*

Her words reflect her tranquil attitude towards her life choices. She makes a reference to her age and the fact that she had time to develop this confidence, and her awareness is evident since the beginning, according to the choices she made, as it will be illustrated in the next sections.

Marta (44, Handmade objects designer)

The words that I have heard from the very first exchange with Marta were:

> '*I am an architect and I can work in any sector, I didn't specialise in anything in particular.*'

Therefore, I immediately assumed that architecture was still a part of her life. But this was only reflected in her long and varied architectural working experience, rather than in her current occupation: handmade objects designer. Later in the interview, she added something which I struggled to understand whether it was in contrast with her previous words, or completely in line:

> '*Q: Have you ever considered going back to the profession?*
> *A: No, absolutely not. In fact, just last year I've concluded my last work with a client. I've finished it and I'm relieved that it's over (laughs)*'.

The contrast arises from the fact that she seems to have no doubts about having completely closed with the profession, whereas the previous expression '<u>I am</u> *an architect*' highlights the overlapping of her ex-professional identity with her current personal identity.

5.3.1 – The stages of the exit

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the first stage of exit, as identified by Ebaugh (1988), starts with the rising of ***first doubts***. This could happen at various moments of the professional pathway, as evident in the case studies: Carmela realised it at the moment of entering the labour market, Marta after several years of practice, whereas Bruna during education:

> '*Q: When did you realise you made a mistake in choosing this career?*
> *A: Maybe while studying, but towards the end*' (Bruna).

This shows how the dynamic of the doubt does not follow the same course for everyone. For example, the process of '*reinterpreting and redefining a situation that was previously taken for granted*' (Ebaugh 1988: 41) was not even present in Bruna's experience, because she never

really considered becoming an architect in the first place. For Marta, instead, a change of working attitudes from her boss acted as a catalyst for the reinterpretation of her situation:

> *'Since then, my job as an architect was not satisfying anymore. I was just chasing a wage, I wasn't satisfied anymore. It was probably a signal that something needed to change. Maybe I didn't know how to work as an architect anymore (laughs)!' (Marta).*

Indeed, *organisational change* is one of the most common conditions to influence doubt, in this specific case it can be considered as awareness of a working arrangement which was not clear from the beginning. This new awareness raised discomfort in Marta, eventually leading her to leave.

The second stage, **seeking of alternatives**, usually starts with the realisation and the focus 'on behaviours that were indicative of dissatisfaction. This had the effect of reinforcing their initial doubts and served as justification for the deliberate pursuit of alternatives' (Ebaugh 1988: 96). In Marta's case, this change of behaviour got eventually noticed from others, in particular by her 'supportive husband'. The positive social response favoured the exit; however, a negative response would be able to affect and delay it.

The following stage, ***turning point***, appears to be the one which carries the most symbolic value for Italian participants, since it coincides with a change in their identities and seems to carry their social justification for leaving the profession. This last function acts as an announcement aimed at making '*a commitment to that decision by making it public*' (Ebaugh 1988: 135). However, those two moments may not coincide in terms of timeframe. For example, Marta's turning point corresponds to the change in organisation in her office caused by her boss, but the public announcement can be identified by her decision to suspend her VAT number (*Partita IVA*) and not renovate her registration to the Architects' Chamber. The affiliation with an institutional body is recurrent as a symbolic act of belonging or refusal of professional identity, as also evident in Bruna's account:

> *'I graduated and just two months afterwards I passed the qualification exam. But I've never collected the diploma, nor I did register to the Architects' Chamber' (Bruna).*

This decision highlights her conscious act of disobedience to the social expectations which follow the full qualification to become an architect, therefore it suggests the intention to make the action an announcement. Moreover, Bruna's turning point coincided with a change in her situation, in particular her domestic one: she got married. However, she decided to continue her studies and, at the same time, starting a job:

> *'Because of some contingencies I've started working in IT. It was just a random job, but I ended up liking it. I decided to conclude my course and graduate anyway, on principle. I HAD to finish because all I had left was two exams and the dissertation'* (Bruna).

In other words, the necessity to work led her to start a job which she enjoyed more than the one she studied for. Her initial doubts about architecture put her in the position to be open to consider another career and, when the occasion happened because of the turning point, she was ready to accept it.

Differently from the two cases analysed in the UK chapter, the moment of **creating and adapting to the ex-role** occupies less space in the Italian accounts. This is maybe due to the fact that the transition period took longer, therefore the adaptation began during the moment of realisation. For example, in Marta's experience: '*I've been running the online shop for five years now. But I've only started this job seriously after I've cancelled the registration to the Architect's Chamber… so more or less it's been one year*'. She had had four years to set up her new role, which offered her a long time to adapt, supporting Ebaugh's supposition that '*the process of adjustment and re-establishing a social identity was made easier and tended to occur more rapidly for those people who had built bridges while in their previous roles*' (1988: 145-146). Overall, most of the participants who left the profession tend to stress their unavoidable closeness to architecture, to the idea of 'being' an architect, even if not practicing as one anymore. This depends on many different reasons: to maintain the position in an elitist profession, to reiterate the passion that led them to that point, which appears to be a value, and to avoid admitting a defeat.

Eventually, the specific mention to gender dynamics also in the Italian cases helped me in identifying and confirming the fifth stage: **awareness of their own otherness**. In particular, this has been relevant for Carmela as soon as she entered the labour market looking for a job:

> *'[...] when they saw me, they said 'Look, we are looking for a maternity cover, could you assure us that you won't get pregnant too?'. It's one of the first thing you are asked during interviews [...] I think that it's because they see you in your 30s and they start worrying' (Carmela).*

Despite being aware that this biased recruiting process is a common practice in many sectors, '*I've been asked the same also when I was looking for a job as estate agent*', she perceives it as a stronger impediment in the architectural field. Her perception stemmed from a common pattern that she noticed from her female architect friends' experiences, and also because she considers the construction industry as male dominated, therefore more inclined to employ these practices. While she was studying, she was not expecting to experience this discrimination at the beginning of the career pathway, therefore the awareness of a gender-based discrimination led her to consider her womanhood as an obstacle, to the point of leaving the profession.

5.3.2 – Material, Cultural and Identity Implications

As opposed to the cases analysed in the UK context, in Italy the material factors seem to take a major role in women's decisions to leave and, consequently, on its implications. For example, Carmela mentioned working abroad as a requisite to find a job, accordingly to her friends' experiences:

> *'The only friend I know who actually works in Italy is a girl who works in Milan. Then the others can't find anything. [...] Or the people I know who work are the ones who went abroad for a short experience, two or three months, or even six. And they ended up staying there, working there' (Carmela).*

However, since she is not keen in taking this step, she ended up doing a job in a completely different sector, as a shop-assistant in a supermarket, in order to be able to live in a city where her friends and her loved ones are based. This choice to stay affects her material situation and her perspective on aspirations:

> *'Well... I can't say I'm completely satisfied in my current situation. I work part-time. [...] Although it's not related at all to my sector. [...] The important thing for me is to have a job. And actually I don't even know if practicing as an architect is what I want to do with my life anyway'.*

Carmela shows a good adaptability, which depends on her life priorities: she is pleased with her random job as long as she can live at her conditions, namely close to her loved ones.

Carmela's account can be considered as a *positive resignation*, that is an oxymoronic interest in finding a job in any sector in order to be able to avoid leaving Florence and therefore being happy overall, instead Marta's reflexive account highlights the struggle between her expectations from the profession and her real, inner interest. To be more specific, Marta stresses her passion in creating handmade artefacts. She used to do it as a hobby since university, but soon after she had to abandon it because of her working commitments. This lack, together with the increased awareness of the discrepancy between education and labour market, led her to take the decision to leave.

> *'There's no link at all between university and the actual profession. You think 'as an architect I'll travel a lot, I'll see many things'. The idea of being an architect is to be someone who discovers, who's an artist. A what? (laughs) You end up keeping accounts. Spending your days in front of endless Excel spreadsheets. And you have no clue about it when you're at university' (Marta).*

From her account it is evident her primary interest in being creative, a passion she used in order to create a narrative able to balance the social desirability of her new career compared to the previous one. Considering social desirability as '*the degree of social approval or disapproval of the exit*' (Ebaugh, 1988: 196), it is often the exiter's interest to influence others' perceptions of their new career. In this case the influence is pursued through the continuous reference to being creative as something that she has always been interested in and that she is good at, given the fact that she makes a living out of it.

The need to self-affirm personal qualities is also manifest in Bruna's account: she is often reaffirming her qualities concerning her identity, despite being quite confident about past decisions about her career. For example, she often highlights the fact that she has '*a scientific mind*' and that she had '*the highest grades in all the scientific subjects*'. Moreover, she also reaffirms her identity as an architect depicting episodes in which she advises her husband, who is an architect too.

In terms of cultural implications, there is a rhetoric which appears often in the accounts, as summarised by Carmela: '*If I could go back, I'd do it again. For my own personal growth*', which is echoed by other participants in similar words. However, this romanticising of the

architectural curriculum for the cultural development of the individual is not necessarily shared by everyone. For example, Bruna, probably because she had time to metabolise her exit and to affirm herself in another sector, is firm in her answer when I asked her if she would study architecture again: '*No. No, I'd absolutely not do it again*'. However, just the fact of having concluded the educational pathway led her to carry a peculiar cultural implication: being an influencer for her children, but not in the common sense of acting as an example or role model. In specific, one of her daughters considered studying architecture, and she felt the need to inform her that it may not be what she expects from the profession:

> '*I explained to my daughter, just to give her more information and absolutely not to influence her, that art history is not architecture. So, we reflected about it together. If you like art history then architecture is not the course that allows you to do it*'.

This suggests the importance of a guidance: a parent able to give a tailored suggestion to their children as insider both of the profession and of the child's attitudes, aspirations and interests, in order to reduce the likelihood of attrition and drop-out.

To conclude, the participants demonstrated that they had various reasons to leave the profession, from difficulties finding a job to the awareness of having stronger interests in other sectors. Some of those reasons were influenced by others' assumptions and deliberate acts based on their gender, which affected them on various levels: cultural, material and identity. Therefore, those multiple accounts led me to consider that another stage of exit needs to be added to the ones outlined by Ebaugh: *awareness of their own otherness*. Otherness compared to the norm, which in the architectural sector can be considered to be a white middle-class man. The consequences of the exit are mostly related to the personal and social acceptance of the exit, this has been briefly outlined with the support of quotes from the participants, but it will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5.4 – Summary

This chapter focused on experiences and accounts of Italian participants and it followed the same structure outlined in the previous one, which analysed British participants' accounts. It covered the three main thematic areas that arose from the analysis of the original empirical data obtained for this study, namely the organisational habitus of the profession and how women make sense of their experiences in the construction of their professional identity, their

material experiences in the field, and the consequences of leaving the profession in cultural, material and identity terms.

In terms of the culture of the profession and women's professional identity, the experiences of Italian participants are permeated by doubts and dissatisfaction. Those arose from various factors mainly linked to negative working experiences and assumptions regarding women's characteristics, which are perceived to affect their ability to cope with some aspects of the profession (such as in dealing with clients or having authority on the construction site). In terms of material considerations, women's employment is limited and precarious compared to their male counterparts, with women mainly clustered in self-employment. This is a direct consequence of the traditional values of Italian culture which consider women as naturally in charge of care duties, values also shared by women themselves. Women's labour in the domestic sphere is not sufficiently supported by institutional policies (e.g. limited paternal leave and access to nurseries) to the point of reproducing the devaluation of female employment, which is reflected by a wide gendered employment- and pay-gap in the country.

Overall, the results show that the culture in Italy is deeply grounded on biological essentialism, leading to deterministic views of gendered roles, especially regarding childcare in the domestic sphere and division of labour in terms of tasks in the economic one.
An in-depth thematic comparison of the results from the two contexts is offered in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 - A comparison of the two case studies

In this chapter I outline the main differences between Italy and the UK in the characteristics of the architecture profession and in how women relate to the profession, difference which arose from the qualitative data analysed in the previous two chapters. In particular, my focus lays on five different topics emerging from the analysis of the empirical data, namely identity, education, the job itself, discrimination and strategies, and criticisms. I discuss these themes by keeping in mind the main aims of the study: what gendered experiences women have in the profession and why they leave architecture.

6.1 – Identity

In Western countries, the stereotypical architect is likely to be '*a 40 years old white man wearing very smart black clothes and who speaks very coherently about architectonics*', as clearly put by Kathi during the focus group. In reaction to this, women still feel the need to fit in the heavily male dominated professional identity (Spaeth and Kosmala, 2012; Powell et al., 2009), which seems to be a 'one size fits all'. Hence many women, along with other minorities, tend to leave the profession because of the attrition of fitting in this already-made male identity. In order to challenge this conflicting relationship, it is useful to understand how female architects construct their professional identity. For example, to understand if it is true for architecture what is often presented in professional identity literature: that what you do shapes who you are. Could the opposite also be true, depending on the individual? Who you are can influence your pathway and career decisions, e.g. to be more socially orientated or business driven. It is also essential to take into consideration the role that institutions play into the shaping of the professional identity: is it automatic for most architects to identify with institutionalised organisations? The RIBA in the UK, for example, has been criticised since the 70s and accused of being more focussed on retaining elite privileges than promoting the profession. Therefore, how is it possible for a woman to identify with a traditional institution that is still referred as 'a gentleman's club' by many architects, either male or female? In answering this question it needs to be acknowledged that not joining the RIBA has repercussions not only on identity level but also on practical implications for the job.

6.1.1 – Self-Perception: is gender relevant?

During the analysis of the empirical data, it became immediately obvious the importance of the concept of *professional identity* and how women themselves frame the discourse around their professional identity. When I considered the questions '*what does it*

mean to be an architect?' and *'what does it mean not being like what's expected from an architect?'* I was not surprised to hear about stereotypical images of architects. However, I noticed that in almost every account there was no direct mention to their gender. This suggests that gender-related aspects might not be the main focus of the attrition between women and the profession. Therefore, my main question became: *'is the construction of professional identity more gendered or contextual?'* In other words, is the difference among both architecture actors and practices more relevant between Italy and the UK or between women and men, despite their country of employment?

To answer this question, I started to play with the idea that architecture is a profession characterised by various sites of performativity. Therefore, it requires its actors to conduct different performances of professionalism (Goffman, 1990; Hatmaker, 2012 in the context of engineering): architects are required to act differently in the studio, on the construction site or with clients. Analysing the data more broadly, I realised that participants often referred to the dichotomy female/male, but mostly as a way of highlighting differences when not directly asked about gender differences. Using a mix of participants' words, both Italian and British:

> *'- Men are egotistic, women are more reflexive.*
>
> *- Men are better at getting things done, women are multitasking and better at managing.*
>
> *- Men are mainstream, women fight upstream.*
>
> *- Both men and women are radical, but in a different way.*
>
> *- Men do belong, women are 'the other'.*
>
> *- Male brain is slightly autistic. They're interested in information systems, and these are employed in bigger projects with more money.*
>
> *- Men are led by economics.*
>
> *- Men want to grow, women are more interested in a balanced life in the office and in social projects.*
>
> *- I design differently because I'm female. I'm more focussed on internal space, whereas my male partner usually designs the form first and then fits in the rest.*
>
> *- Men are individualistic and competitive. Women like teamwork'.*

This array of words depicts men as a negative unity of people, and women as both inevitable victims of gender discrimination and, at the same time, entities in charge of their own spaces

and actions. In order to understand what creates these two opposite feelings I compared women's opinions in the two different countries.

I observed that Italian women appear to have more essentialist views on gender, and therefore their position towards the profession is more deterministic. They tend to accept their subordinated role in society and at work, which mainly originates in their caring roles and stereotypes about their behaviours, confirming Woodfield's view that the gender system is hierarchically arranged (2007). Examples of essentialist views on female/male attitudes and abilities are recurring in Italian interviews, as illustrated in the previous chapter, and this account offered by Giorgia is a good summary of that shared view:

> *'I'm sorry for your study, but I love working with men! (laughs) I'm so sorry for ruining you research. But I think they're better. I think women are, on average, more capable. But a smart man is better' (Giorgia, 36, Self-employed architect - IT).*

Giorgia perceived her preference to work with men as a possible problem for my research, and this suggested me that she assumed that I also had an essentialist position, although opposite to hers, aimed at proving women as more capable than men.

British participants, instead, show a broader awareness towards gender dynamics. They are aware of being female architects as much as Italian participants are, but instead of focussing on the cultural limitation of their identity (namely assumptions, stereotypes, discriminatory language), they reflect on the material limitations that their caring roles, actual or just theoretical, bring to their professional lives. This difference exemplifies the main theoretical standpoint of this study: it does not matter to what extent the biological difference between women and man leads society to reproduce essentialist views of their abilities and roles, because the material implications of this perceived difference affects their participation in the labour market anyway. As clearly summarised by Bradley (1999:22):

> *'Reproductive relationships are a crucial part of gender differentiation and it should be emphasised that, while these may predicate on genuine biological differences, it is social arrangements around pregnancy and childbirth, and their effects on other aspects of social life, that create inequalities'.*

In other words, discrimination is not the consequence of biological differences between men and women, but it is how those differences are pathologized and exploited by who holds the

power (men), to the point of having social and material consequences on individuals who lack this power (women).

6.1.2 – Role-Exit

Self-perception as architects is not only influenced by assumptions, stereotypes and influences, but also by women's own experiences, either positive or negative.

One interesting finding of this study is participants' recurrent reference to their *first working experience*, both in Italy and the UK. This specific event influenced many women's self-perception as architects and, in many cases, it also affected their decision to stay in architecture. Overall, the accounts suggest that the first working experience shaped women's behaviour and performances in the workplace, since somehow that experience acted as a mould through which they learned and reproduced what they experienced as the norm.

In particular, negative working experiences lead women to constantly question themselves and their abilities. This leads to another common aspect of stress for women in both countries: the constant worry in the workplace to make an extra effort in order to prove themselves as worth of being there. Women are not only constantly worried about their performance, but also about their presence, which is also perceived in terms of displaying their vocation and their worth. The constant act of questioning themselves and need for extra effort mixed to episodes of subtle or direct sexism leads women to start developing doubts about their career choice. As illustrated in the previous two chapters, role-exit is a process that develops differently according to individuals. The reasons behind leaving were not particularly different between the two countries, instead appeared more tailored to individual attitudes, interests, alternatives and choices, despite women's country of employment. Instead, what I found particularly clear is a cultural difference between Italy and the UK at the moment of changing career, which affects the easiness of making this decision. The British culture is more open towards changing career at different stages. This attitude has been confirmed by Tobi, who moved to the UK from Italy after graduating in architecture, more than 30 years ago. She was surprised to witness a general support throughout her fragmented career pathway, where she moved from being a qualified architect to working as a nurse, and then she took a course as nutritionist in her late 40s. She agrees that:

> *'this could've happened only because I'm in the UK. Here, differently from Italy, changing career is socially accepted. In Italy all my friends have been doing for their*

> *whole life the job they've studied for. Here there's more acceptance towards change'*
> *(Tobi, 56, left profession - UK).*

Cultural expectations are stronger in Italy, explaining the reasons why Italian role-exiters show stronger attitudes at referring back to their identity as architects and how their education is still relevant in their practices in everyday life, such as in being creative, visualising the built space, or their taste in furniture and colours.

The intention to link their current job and their architectural education is present in British participants too, but in a less fatalist way than the one highlighted by Italian participants, for example Rosa (IT): '*stop being an architect? […] I should get reset*'.

To conclude this section, it seems that professional identity in architecture is constructed on two different levels: a *self-perception* of own's abilities and limitations; and an *external social perception* of the architectural role, which is rooted as traditional and male dominated. This double process makes it difficult to answer the question whether the construction of professional identity is more gendered or contextual, because the first level does not necessarily reflect on the gender of the individual and, on the contrary, the second level is deeply influenced by the gender expectations in the profession.

6.2 – Education

When I started my architecture course the feeling of inadequacy became apparent during the very first few weeks. At that time, I knew no more than five names of architects and it was inconceivable for me to act like some other students who were at ease following lecturers in the university cafeteria to talk about architecture. I was feeling inadequate, and the first reaction has been to notice a common pattern about those students carrying architecture books underneath their arm: they were all men. When I found out from this study that not many participants experienced the same gender discrimination during university, I was surprised but at the same time relieved. However, many of their accounts suggested that there were many other layers of inequality to consider. For example, students able to bring expensive printings every week for revision were surely advantaged in communicating and developing their planning skills, compared to students who needed to save money and brought smaller black and white printings; the few foreign students were changing working groups for each module, where the norm was usually to keep the working groups the same across modules in order to foster friendships and therefore understanding, skills and support; students with architects in their

family tended to spend summer breaks doing internships in their family or their friends' practices, with clear benefits for their professional development. Economic, cultural and social capitals, nationality, language and age are some of the characteristics able to influence students' experiences in architectural education. However, gender offers a common basis for inequality and an intersectional approach is able to further strengthen the understanding of those diverse mechanisms.

6.2.1 – Forms of Capital

Data from this study suggests that Italian and British architecture students have a different need of various forms of capital in order to succeed in the educational pathway. Starting from the *economic* capital, the length and cost of education is a common element mentioned by participants in both countries. However, the fact that the number of architects in Italy equate the number of the rest of all European countries (ACE, 2019) suggests that in Italy something makes those factors easier to overcome. There, university is considerably cheaper than in the UK, with yearly fees between €300 and €2400, depending on the family's income (ONF, 2017), and there is a wide availability of scholarships, compared to the infamous British £9000. With regards to the length of the pathway, this is in line with the later age of entry to the labour force in Italy compared to the UK (ISTAT, 2017; JRF, 2015), making the longer time to study more socially accepted. Furthermore, possessing economic capital was shown to be more necessary in the UK, where a few participants denounced the lack of flexibility of architecture courses towards part-time students, heavily affecting their ability to earn money while studying. Despite the practice of working while studying being widespread and culturally accepted in the UK, the specificity of architecture as a vocational, group based, and time-consuming course reduces students' possibility to have a job while studying.

In terms of *cultural* capital, the way the educational system is organised in Italy offers a more egalitarian access to education. Schools from elementary to college are free and organised on geography, which however is not a strict requisite. Pupils attend schools closer to their home for simplicity of transportation, there is not a logic of going to a better school, because schools are not divided by reputation (except some very rare examples in particularly wealthy areas of bigger cities, such as Rome and Milan). This means that in every school there is a variety of students from any economic and ethnic background, and it is common for students from working-class families to be in class with bankers or doctors' children. This offers pupils the possibility to be exposed to diverse examples and develop wider aspirations, in fact breaking reproduction of social inequalities, compared to the British system which has been criticised by

many authors (notably Reay, Skeggs and Taylor) for being elitist and reproducing social class inequality. This is exemplified by Courtney's experience which is similar to many girls from schools in less advantaged areas who rarely meet adults in professional roles, with the few exceptions of their teachers or their GP.

Moving to *social* capital, almost half of the British participants had either their parents or grandparents working in the construction industry, this suggesting that family examples influence children's aspirations, also argued by various authors such as Shapiro et al. (2015) and Fuller (2009). This pattern confirms the character of hereditariness that many British participants linked to architecture. However, this character was not so relevant in the Italian sample, where just few participants had direct family links with architects.

An aspect of *social* capital that proved relevant in studies about aspirations is the function of examples (Barker and Hoskins, 2017). Having an example of someone doing a certain job makes it '*more doable, more achievable*', as explained by Jen, whose older female cousin is an architect and is very excited and supportive of her choice. Furthermore, the importance of examples is key not only at the moment of choosing a career, but also to offer support and confidence in continuing on a career pathway already undertook. Moreover, examples are important not only for the individual but for the whole society: people need to have a certain image to refer to in order to consider a person with specific characteristics entitled to be there. However, this does not necessarily lead to similar outcomes. Sophia, for example, had good female role models thanks to the connections made through her established architect father, however, she did not conclude her Part2. At the same time, many participants who did not know any architect at all before going to university are now accomplished directors or partners in their practices. However, these latter examples are not the norm, which instead suggests that those who had more knowledge of the professions and knew more architects are more likely to stay in the field. This resulted particularly relevant in the UK, whilst in Italy having examples resulted to be useful but not essential, as more than half of the participants did not have any architect as an example. The difference probably derives from the fact that in Italy more children are exposed to professional figures outside the family ties, thus increasing the range of aspirations, as supported by the remarkable higher number of architecture students in Italy compared to any other European country (ACE, 2019).

6.2.2 – University Culture

British participants overwhelmingly agree that architecture education is underpinned by a macho culture, exemplified by the practice of the '*crits'*, which rely on a very confrontational

and aggressive dynamic between the student, who needs to defend their work, and the commission, as already discussed in Chapter 4. It has been noticed that male and female students indistinctively feel the pressure of this practice, suggesting that both genders would benefit from a less macho culture. Moreover, despite the increased number of female students in the last couple of decades, the macho culture is constantly reproduced also due to the fact that women employed as faculty members are only one third of the total (34% women vs. 66% men) both in Italy and the UK (MIUR, 2019; HESA, 2017). However, despite the acknowledgment in both countries of the masculine culture of university, most participants did not highlight particular experiences of sexism, and agree that they have not been discriminated against while at university. This is even more relevant for younger participants, compared to the ones who studied 20 or 30 years ago, suggesting that a positive cultural shift is happening in education. However, if this is true from the point of view of the students it is not as true for academics who, in both countries, agree that the barriers for a woman to enter, be promoted and supported in academia are higher than for their male counterparts. In Italy, Piera highlighted how gossip and assumptions do not spare a single woman in higher positions in her department: '*to be where you are you have been favoured by a male superior. This is the common assumption. Full stop*'. Whereas in the UK, both Kathleen and Shirley commented about the lack of support from their colleagues, exemplified by Shirley's experience: '*when I got promoted to senior lectureship, I only received two emails of congratulations, both from female colleagues*'. This lack of support affects the wellbeing and therefore the retention of women in academia, thus causing a difficulty in fostering a change in pedagogical practices which would, in turn, decrease the macho culture of architectural education.

Overall, architecture has an extremely long and costly educational pathway in both countries. In Italy, university is cheaper compared to the UK, but economic capital is essential for the specific architectural education anyway (e.g. for prints, models, laptops and software). The character of hereditariness is more prevalent in the UK, but in both countries is not essential, however useful, especially in terms of offering examples able to influence children's aspirations. In Italy, the education system offers more chances to enter in contact with a variety of professional figures, however specific cultural capital related to the profession is needed from the beginning of university.

6.3 – Working as an architect

According to various surveys on the profession of architecture all over Europe (ACE, 2019; RIBA, 2018d; CNAPP-Cresme, 2016), gender differences in the division of labour are evident and slow to change. Women's employment, as extensively argued in chapter 2, is mostly affected by domestic responsibilities, in particular childcare. Traditional norms associated to female care of the family automatically translate into the normalisation of barriers to their advancement and promotions. Furthermore, '*motherhood is a highly conscious class-based experience*' argues Skeggs (2004: 25), and this is particularly evident from the differences between Italy and the UK. In Italy, care work lays heavily on employed migrants (in case of the middle classes) or grandparents (in case of lower income families), whereas in the UK the overwhelming employment of women in part-time positions suggests that families need to rely on the means (material and physical – in terms of money and time invested) of the limited nuclear family.

6.3.1 – Type of Employment

Differences in the employment of female architects in Italy and the UK depend on organising practices around the traditional family, and on cultural and social norms related to gender roles. In Italy, female architects prefer self-employment to regular employment, since this offers them more flexibility in order to carry out care duties, expected by the stricter traditional culture. However, this affects their ability to engage with different types of jobs, thus clustering them in small jobs of renovation and interior design. The overwhelming presence of women in this specialisation contributes to reproducing the discourse of biological predispositions and inclinations of women towards those aspects. Therefore, this mechanism prevents the acknowledgment of the material reasons that actually led to this trend. Differently from Italy, British female architects are mostly employed in bigger firms. This is confirmed by the experiences of the Italian participants of the focus group who work in the UK. Their working experiences are exemplified by Simona:

> '*In my short experience in both countries, I've noticed that in Italy it's more likely to find a job in a small practice. The reality there is really fragmented, big practices are very few. Whilst here it's easier to work with medium/big practices. […] Everything is different: your role, wages, benefits… and it really matters to have that experience for the next job*'.

The last sentence of Simona's account shows how the employment in bigger practices carries material meanings which are able to positively influence women's participation in the labour force.

Overall, women in the UK are more likely to be employed in part-time work compared to their Italian counterparts (OECD, 2018). Working part-time does not mean working half of the full-time, instead it carries stereotypes about priorities and is not socially considered as a valuable form of employment. This echoes Coyle's statement (2005: 75): '*Part-time is mostly constituted as low-paid, low-status and gender segregated work*', despite having had the same amount of education acquired. Working part-time is a limited possibility in many senses: it limits the perception of others, offers less responsibilities, and is also not contemplated in many practices. In Italy part-time job is not even formalised in many practices, which not always offer this form of employment.

As evident from this comparison, there are significant differences in the type of employment between Italy and the UK, however those lead to the same outcome: women's work is less valued, less profitable, less varied, secondary, more likely to be paused and more stigmatised, despite requiring the same long and costly education.

6.3.2 - Caring duties: childcare

In both countries, the biological narrative of the presence of the woman as essential for the baby during the first few years of life is still preponderant, also among women themselves. Amanda (UK), which throughout the whole interview seemed to have a strong progressive attitude - she went back to work after five weeks even though her ex-partner did not agree with her decision, thinks that women '*after having children don't need to be at the top, they're sorted. Children come first. That's innate*'.

A consequence of this attitude is that practices of shared childcare among parents are not sufficiently implemented yet, in both countries. This results from a combined action of two different limitations to this practice: cultural and material ones. Women are considered to be essential in the upbringing of their children during the first few years of life, more than their fathers. This need, for example, is demonstrated by the negative narrative around the woman who 'wants it all', depicted as not motherly and only career driven (Stratigakos, 2008; Hochschild, 2003). Material limitations relate to actual policies in place, for example the one regarding parental leave. Men are still offered less paid leave compared to their female counterparts: in the UK men can take up to two weeks of paternity leave and can share some of the parental leave with their partner (GOV.UK, 2018), whilst in Italy men can only take five days

of paid leave and one day of unpaid leave. Furthermore, in economic terms, men earn more than women and are more likely to be employed as full-time, thus reproducing the mechanism by which it is the woman who takes the parental leave almost all the time. This mechanism happens indistinctly both in Italy and in the UK.

Moreover, the limits of shared childcare do not only act on the gender pairing female/male, they also apply to homosexual relationships. Two women in this study are the non-biological mothers of their children, a role they both consider scarcely recognised by society. Being a mother without having the primary caring role for the children is somehow confusing in the working environment, because puts the woman in a position between having to be the main breadwinner and being away from her child. However, their breadwinner role is perceived as prevalent by colleagues and employers and it seems able to overcome the essentialist dichotomy woman/'threat of motherhood'.

Slowly, these economic and social barriers seem to be overcome by various affirmative actions, both at an institutional and an attitudinal level. The key role that institutions play towards promoting gender equality has been highlighted by some participants, such as Kathleen (UK):

> *'Childcare, yes. […] I've been suggesting to the RIBA […] this idea 'why doesn't the RIBA place a mandatory levy on its top 100 practices, and demand that they donate 10% of their profit to childcare initiatives?' And what reaction do you think I got? Zero. […] But I guess their response from not responding was 'we can't enforce that kind of things'. But they could have done it as a voluntary scheme'.*

Kathleen calls out institutional inertia in addressing the problem, highlighting the fact that government legislation around parental leaves and a more supportive welfare state would be beneficial in promoting gender equality. However, the narrative of the welfare state as a necessary step towards gender equality carries a significant theoretical limitation, as argued by some feminist authors (e.g. Land, 1994). '*The welfare state was constructed on the 'male-breadwinner' model of the family*' argues Crompton (1997: 55), where women access benefits only as member of the family, not as individual citizens, as do their husbands who actively contribute to social insurance. Furthermore, a strong welfare state is difficult to introduce and prioritise in austerity times.

An action less institutional and more attitudinal seems to be able to positively influence women's perception of childcare: other positive examples. Corin's business partner had a baby the day after we carried out the interview, and she considered this event as '*an opportunity to*

evaluate the impact the baby will have on my colleague's career' (UK). The practice has been supportive so far and organised the workload in order to facilitate her return in few months. Witnessing this support from her practice is giving Corin the confidence that it would be possible for her to have a baby in the near future, as soon as her position will become more stable.

6.3.3 – Satisfaction and Wellbeing

The main aspect that professionals working in the construction industry are starting to consider as of major importance is their wellbeing. Some participants, both in Italy and the UK, shared episodes of when, in order to avoid problematic and stressful situations, they left their job. Why is this more frequent for women? It likely depends on the fact that women's wage is not the main income on which their family relies, and women have been brought up with the idea that their temporary absence from the labour market is something admissible. Another possibility derives from the fact that, when women take time off during their maternity leave, they have the chance to evaluate from outside the impact that work was having on them, as clearly expressed by Anna:

> *'Having a child certainly allowed me to recognise how important this life balance was to me, to my health and my creativity' (Anna, 56, Self-employed architect UK).*

The discourse about wellbeing is starting to be investigated in more detail during university study: mental health problems during the long educational pathway have been reported to affect 33% of the students in the UK (AJ, 2018c).

Satisfaction is also affected by limits that women encounter in terms of possibilities for promotion and career progression in general. Despite working in different forms of employment, women in both countries experience the same outcome. In Italy, the limits of self-employment do not offer a change of typology and size of jobs over time, and keywords like *'boring'* and *'not engaging job'* were prevalent among participants, both still employed or who left the profession. In the UK, instead, women are more likely to work in bigger practices, but they also experience dissatisfaction, in this case related to the limited possibilities for promotion. Career progression is affected by their need for flexible and part-time work in order to fulfil caring duties, which automatically affects their possibility to hold responsibilities roles. In order to work in favourable working environments, women develop different coping strategies, mostly actions aimed at tackling the problematic aspects highlighted previously. For example, some of the participants found useful to identify people in the workplace to build

alliances with, or senior women, like Donna and Carrie (UK), were unofficially offering guidance and mentoring to young women in their offices, as a sort of positive discrimination.

In this section I analysed the cultural and material barriers to women's employment. I illustrated how the typology of female employment and institutionalised policies on childcare are different between Italy and the UK. However, the outcome of women's employment is similar: women's work is perceived as less valuable and inconstant, therefore paid less. This perception also affects their career progression and, therefore, their satisfaction.

6.4 – Gender Discrimination and Strategies

As extensively explained in the previous two chapters, sexism in architecture can take many forms, which I mainly divided in subtle and direct sexism. Forms of subtle sexism include gendered assumptions and stereotypes, the request to deal with conflict and to carry out emotional labour (Grandey, 2000), lack of a network of support, lack of diversity, self-discrimination (through assumptions about abilities and expectations about caring roles), use of language, and reproduction of the masculine as the norm. In addition to this, some forms of direct sexism are clearly identifiable, such as harassment and open conflict based on gender, where others are less clear despite being heavily gendered, such as discrimination in job applications, task segregation, barriers to access networks and pay gap. Those forms of sexism transpired to be common both in Italy and the UK, however women in the two countries developed a different awareness and understanding of the concept of discrimination and its consequences on their identity and their employment, therefore they engaged in different performances and coping strategies. In this section I will illustrate how women respond to discrimination in different sites of performativity typical of the architectural field, namely the construction site and the office.

6.4.1 – The Construction Site

One of the most recurrent keywords identified in the analysis of the Italian dataset is '*Coping Strategies',* intended as resistance actions put in place by female architects when working in construction sites. From the participants' accounts it was easy to observe how women tend to modify both their aspect and their behaviour when interacting with other actors on site. This is clearly exemplified in Giada's account:

> *'I firstly learnt that you need to go on the construction site dressed anonymously...*
> *you can't go there dressed as you like, otherwise you'll lose authority. Because it's a*
> *man's world out there. Then, you always need to look angry. You need to pretend*
> *you're angry, so they listen to you, you'll instil fear. It's a team job so you need to*
> *socialise, but at the same time you need to be aware of not sending feminine*
> *messages. You need to learn to make male jokes and to get close to them, although*
> *a working closeness. You can't keep your sensitivity, otherwise they'll eat you alive'*
> *(Giada, 43, self-employed architect - IT).*

She pointed out the need to amend both her physical aspect and her attitude, a consideration shared also by other participants, such as Angela (IT): '*on the construction site I'm not myself. A man can be whatever he wants. There are double standards*'; or Arianna (IT): '*on the building site I dress as a man. I mean, apart from security reasons, I don't wear transparent clothes or skirts. After all it's a place where only men work, right? So you think about these things*'. Other than these physical modifications, some participants stressed the need to perform a behaviour which is expected from their role but does not fit their own natural character. This mechanism is particularly clear in Tonia's account:

> *'I consider myself to be particularly spontaneous. I can't really perform a character.*
> *But after working for a while I had to. Over the years I've inevitably learned some*
> *things that made me change' (Tonia, 38, Architect - IT).*

Tonia found herself pushed to change her style of interaction, and her mention to the 'performance of a character' recalls Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor of the stage action in everyday interactions (1967).

Differently, British participants did not mention any of these coping strategies, and they rather expressed the idea of the 'just be yourself' as the only strategy employed. Shirley, for example told me:

> *'I guess my strategy was to find people I could build alliances with. There was one*
> *particular guy on site that I worked well with and I thought I could talk with. So I*
> *worked with him as much as I could. That was one strategy. And another one was to*
> *just be as professional as I could be' (Shirley, 46, Academic - UK).*

This is also highlighted from various interviews with the most well-known female architect, Zaha Hadid, where she argued that the best defence against sexism is hard work, which is also able to improve someone's confidence (Troiani, 2012). However, the understanding of discrimination in the British construction environment resulted to be more intersectional compared to the Italian one. Other ethnic and lower economic backgrounds are often pointed out as 'different', as clearly depicted in Courtney's experience:

> *'[…] they must be thinking 'oh you're not the norm, you must be from some other area then […]'. They rarely think that you're actually an architect. I had one incident, actually happened a couple of times, where they thought that I was a resident. I was working on regeneration and big housing projects. They often said: 'you're a resident, you're here to find out about the regeneration' (Courtney, 47, Board Member - UK).*

On the same note of an intersectional understanding of the profession, I have noticed that Italian architects are reflexive about their position as both women *and* young professionals. Many participants mentioned the temporal element of the sexism they experienced, stressing the idea of an 'initially' that then gets gradually better. They consider the initial discrimination they experienced as young women coming from the aspect of being 'young', rather than from the gendered one. This can be ascribed either to the fact that it actually gets better once they gain more experience, or that they are indirectly dispelling the possibility to be discriminated against because of their gender once they will reach a senior position. Arianna expressed clearly this point when she told me:

> *'Often when I go on site for the first time, they think I've just graduated. […] I definitely look younger than I am, so that's ok. But I wonder if it's going to get better in few years' (Arianna, 33, Architect - IT).*

Some British architects have also noticed this intersection, and Alice, a more experienced architect compared to Arianna, linked this dynamic to the fact that young women often go on site shadowing an elder male superior, as happened in her experience:

> *'When you're a young architect you're always with an elder superior. A man. So you're kind of their sidekick' (Alice, 48, Partner - UK).*

Moreover, another strategy highlighted in few Italian accounts is the use of humour, which is used to counterstrike discrimination, and is clearly different from the humour employed by men to harass women without doing it openly, as exemplified by Powell and Sang (2015). For example, Rosa shared an anecdote in which she answered to an annoyed comment from a builder:

> *'[the builder said out loud] 'can you believe that 11 men are being dictated by a woman?' […] so I serenely said 'yeah, but what a woman!' and everyone burst into loud laughing! And then it was over' (Rosa, 43, Self-employed Architect - IT).*

Her overall point is that it is exhausting to confront discrimination all the time, and sometimes it is more effective to answer with humour.

6.4.2 – The Office

Moving to another site of performativity, the office, I offer some quotes to illustrate how women are asked to perform in this space differently in Italy and the UK. My understanding from most of the Italian accounts is that women need to actively do an extra effort in the office, by both challenging stereotypes and constantly proving themselves. Tonia (IT) admitted: '*in architecture there's a masculine attitude, if you want to work you need to make a bigger effort than a man. This is a thing*', as a taken for granted statement of which everyone working in the field is aware of.

Some British architects, instead, mentioned that they were implicitly requested to perform tasks that required more emotional labour than professionality. For example, Allison clearly sums up this request:

> *'[My boss] said that I was going to deal with conflict because I was a woman, so any problems in the office […] they'd always put to me to deal with them' (Allison, 28, MA student - UK).*

In both countries, women are conscious of different performances required from men and women in working environments. Performativity in the office is linked to two different but overlapping theories mentioned in chapter 2: gender performativity (Butler, 1990) and role

playing (Goffman, 1963). Gender performativity in the office is particularly useful in understanding accounts which highlight women's need to perform masculinity. Angela argues:

> *'I've encountered many women who act as men. Because they ended up exacerbating aspects of themselves in order to limit jokes and other things from the people surrounding them' (Angela, 43, Architect, public sector - IT).*

Or Kathleen, who described an episode about competition with a man colleague when she was working in a cooperative. After months of indirect challenge, she felt the need '*to move from a kind of relational working way to the male model'*. She refers to the 'male model' as something individual rather than relational.

These accounts are powerful in highlighting how women are expected and end up performing the dominant gendered behaviours in highly masculine environments. Troiani (2012: 355) illustrates this idea through the example of Zaha Hadid, the infamous non-married almost-male-architect: how performing a different gender to their own leads women to employ a *transgendered behaviour,* in order to fit male professional standards of behaviour. Following on this attitude, it is possible to apply the dramaturgical approach developed by Goffman (1967) to broader dynamics which involve more actors in a working setting. Examples of gendered role playing are offered by many participants, such as Angela who carries on:

> *'I've had male colleagues quite impulsive, and sometimes aggressive to each other. In those circumstances, having a woman in the team really helps in cooling things down. On the other hand, when there's a woman around men tend to overcome'.*

According to this view shared by participants in both countries, perceived differences in behaviour between men and women reproduce cultural and social understandings of working environments. Therefore, it is clear to see how assumed gendered predispositions and roles in team dynamics are inevitably able to affect hiring and management decisions. Moreover, relevant to this concept is the concept of *homosocial behaviour*, already identified in the construction industry by other studies (Sang et al. 2014, Watts, 2009).

In terms of gender performativity in the workplace, I identified an interesting potential area to develop with further investigation. Two of the women I interviewed in the UK are openly lesbian and both stepmothers of their children. Research carried out on the topic of lesbian women in male-dominated professions (Wright, 2016, 2011; Gedro, 2009) suggested interesting

reflections: lesbian women seems to have an advantage in these environments, either because they are perceived as masculine and therefore fitting the norm, or because they are not considered as a risk in terms of childbearing and childcare. The two cases in my study are in line with the literature, however it would be useful to understand why and to what extent a lesbian woman who gave birth would be considered differently from the equivalent stepmother.

To summarise, in both countries women feel the need to pay attention to how they perform gender, which most of the time happens in order to avoid subtle forms of sexism or harassment. In Italy, participants highlighted different ways in which they had to change their aspect and behaviour in order to fit in male standards, especially on the construction site. These changes also include their own resistance strategies, such as the use of humour. British participants, instead, proved more dismissive of discrimination in this same environment, although they experienced numerous episodes in which they were requested to perform emotional labour in the workplace, specifically linked to roles assumed as more feminine.

6.5 – Criticisms and Alternatives

In this section I summarise the main criticisms to the mainstream image of an architect and what alternatives are available. I consider both of these notions from a gendered perspective. The results of the analysis of the data suggested that Italian and British architects perceive profession in different terms. In particular, Italian architects did not much question the norm in the profession, whereas in the UK participants seemed more aware of the divide between different practices. Overall, the various criticisms focussed mainly on *institutions*, which reproduce traditional norms; the *StarArchitects system*, which fosters individuality over collective actions; a *lack of diversity*, not just in terms of gender but also ethnicity and economic background; *elitism and hereditariness*; and the *work ethic*. These criticisms highlight the need for women to discover and create alternative practices, and also their interest in a redefinition of the concept of being a successful architect. Italian participants, instead, focussed their criticisms mostly on the discrimination derived from the use of *language*, although some of them were also critical of the aspects highlighted above for the British sample.

6.5.1 – Institutions

'*Do not ever mistake the institution for yourself. The institution's interests are not yours*', warns Patricia Hill Collins (1990: 209). Many architects are critical of institutions (both professional bodies and the educational system) and their agenda, as clearly expressed by Carrie

(UK) when she told me that *'architecture is just a bunch of prima donnas pushing their own agenda'*.

Women, more often than men, are critical of the *status quo* of architecture, and this depends on the fact that they did not participate in the creation and developing of the profession. The Architecture Association was the first Architecture School in the UK to open its doors to female students in 1918, and this was just 100 years ago. Furthermore, the RIBA is still considered, by both women and men, a gentleman's club, which re-valorises sexism by perpetuating the image of the white wealthy man as the norm, through outdated images still exposed in its representation halls. Skeggs (1997: 9) argues that '*masculinity and whiteness are valued (and normalised) form of cultural capital*', because those characteristics bring the ability to use whiteness and masculinity to gain power. Furthermore, it can be argued that *'normalcy'* can also be considered as a form of symbolic capital, since it represents accumulated privilege and the ability to constitute oneself as the *universal*. Framing this view into the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), it is possible to add 'professional bodies' as another set of agencies able to reproduce hegemonic domination, as also argued by Payne (2015). On this note, during one event organised in 2018 by the RIBA to celebrate 100 years of women in the Architectural Association, one of the attendees addressed my attention to a picture on the walls. It was ironic that no one at RIBA noticed and took it off, even just for the day aimed at celebrating women in the industry, a picture of many white male architects at work while a token woman stays in the back. This attendee pointed it out also on her Twitter account, as evident from this screenshot:

Figure 7 - Image from the Twitter account of the event's attendee who pointed out the irony of celebrating gender equality in architecture while displaying such a sexist picture on the walls (8th March 2018).

I already had a similar discussion about the role of the RIBA in addressing gender equality during the interview with Kathleen, who I knew was aware of many actions for change implemented in the last 10 years by the RIBA through her first female president, Jane Duncan. Kathleen supports the idea of the RIBA being a gentleman's club, also noticing the same sexist representation element highlighted during the event night:

> *'It's 19th Century at the moment in the architectural profession. […] It is still a gentlemen's club. And they still have all these male pictures on the walls and male sculptures, it's so sexist. Because it's all men. And this thing is continuously re-valorising the sexism inherent in architecture" (Kathleen, 55, Academic - UK).*

This image of 'all men' is recurrent in many accounts and highlights the lack of diversity which is deeply ingrained in the profession, as illustrated in the following section.

6.5.2 – Lack of diversity

The lack of diversity in architecture, not only in terms of gender, is one of the aspects more openly criticised, also by mainstream magazines, such as The Architects' Journal or

Dezeen. One of the first barriers encountered in schools is that students from low-income families do not have access to various career choices, especially architecture which requires a high amount of economic, cultural and social capitals. This dangerous cultural determinism is reproduced by the way in which primary education is structured in the UK, with limited opportunities to access, depending on geographical location and income (Reay, 2017), and specific subjects needed to pursue certain careers. Cultural determinism is also supported by the characteristic aspect of hereditariness prevalent in the profession: while in school, Kathleen has been told that she could not become an architect because she did not have any architect in her family. An observation that reflects the way in which society perceives the elitism of the profession.

Networks of supports, mentoring groups and quotas are some of the actions implemented in the last decade to tackle these problematics, and they have been considered as a good way to offer women a chance to speak and have a voice. For example, Caterina (IT) shares with the other participants of the focus group an episode from her job interview: '*BIM is a masculine specialisation, only men were employed in that practice. They told me: 'that's why we're hiring you, we need quotas!*'. She does not seem offended by the blunt comment, however many women consider quotas as degrading for women, because they lead people to think that some women occupy certain positions exclusively because of the protection offered by the quotas. Those feelings are understandable, however they do not take into account the role that numbers have in fostering cultural change. In specific, the concept of the '*critical mass*' suggests that when there is a sufficient number of adopters of an innovation in a social system then the rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining and creates further growth (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). This number has been identified to be around 30%, however only 26% of architects in the UK are female (ACE, 2019). Moreover, the presence of BAME architects in architecture is currently dramatically below this threshold: only a meagre 12% is employed in the 100 biggest practices in the UK (AJ, 2018d), which happen to be overwhelmingly based in London where the majority of British BAME population lives.

6.5.3 – The 'StarArchitects' system

More complicated is the role of Awards exclusively open to women: are those a useful way to challenge stereotypes and break down barriers, or they just reproduce the StarArchitects system? This question leads to another main criticism moved to the profession, which is that it is heavily based on the idea of the StarArchitect system, where the main form of recognition is being awarded an individual award (Heynen, 2012; Forsyth, 2006). Furthermore, the main

activity of those big names is to design iconic buildings that are not likely to have any social value for the communities inhabiting the surrounding areas. The StarArchitects system offers only one acceptable way of being an architect, as Sophia illustrates in this comment:

> *'Sometimes I look back and I think 'oh, I could have…'. I've never would have been the person who was kind of making an icon, because I wasn't interested in that. But I do think I could have done it' (Sophia, 48, Writer and Editor - UK).*

This observation reflects the narrative about the icon, as prerogative and aim of every architect. However, architecture has not always been characterised by individual geniuses, except from few peculiarities the vast majority of buildings do not really have a name stick to them until the last century. For example, the designers of the London Bridge or the Globe Theatre, to name a few iconic British buildings, are not commonly acknowledged. Radical collectives of architects in the 70s and 80s (such as Superstudio, Archigram or Matrix) ascribed the rise of the individual recognition behind projects to a change of approach in architecture: new buildings are driven by commercial interests, and the dismantlement of local authorities after the economic crisis in the 70s increased this feeling. Men, differently from women, were already in the position of being credible as architects, and easily jumped into this new role.

Despite these considerations, in one of my blog posts from 2016 I argued for the positive value of all-female awards in offering visibility to female-led practices who would not be likely to reach broader access otherwise:

> *'There is a lack of examples for young female students, and this is why it is extremely positive to see a female practitioner affirmed in the field. […] In the same occasion many other projects and female-led practices will have a broad visibility' ('The 2016 Women in Architecture Awards ', June 2016).*

This is a bitter sweet conclusion which suggests that in order to get a platform it is important to play the same game under the same rules, and once gained a larger platform it will be possible to change the rules. However, it is possible to be wary of this mechanism, and consider the possibility that this rhetoric is just part of the same game, which will eventually lead to the usual reproduction of the dominant system.

6.5.4 – The Work Ethic

Linked to the individualism behind the StarArchitects system there is another aspect of attrition for female architects: the professional work ethic. Some participants in the UK described architecture as an '*evil profession*', where political implications have a negative social impact on communities. And the habitus of the profession is not helpful in promoting alternative pathways, as admitted by Courtney:

> *'There's a business model within architecture that isn't helpful in creating cultural change. Things like the long hours approach. Lots of deadlines, constantly being under pressure' (Courtney, 47, Board Member - UK).*

Many of the participants, from any age group, economic background and ethnicity, confessed that they do not like the corporate aspect of many practices they worked for. Bell, a young undergraduate student, sees herself using architecture to promote social change; in this sense we discussed about the Assemble group in London, which won the 2015 Turner Prize for its interest in collaborative design with the local communities (The Guardian, 2015). She is so committed to her activism to the point that she did an internship in a controversial practice in London, just to explore and criticise it as an insider. Another student, Jen, is also interested in sustainability, and after a building workshop in Ethiopia she decided to go back there after her Diploma because of her interest in using architecture to benefit people rather than in feeding consumerism. These approaches may seem radical because they come from young students, still able to follow their ideals because still far from their caring and materialist needs. However, I also gathered many accounts of women who, at some point of their careers, decided to move away from the conventional route and follow alternative pathways, such as social housing and community projects. They all agree that the working experience in social housing was extremely positive, in term of working ethics, benefits, team work, flexibility and support. However, some of them admitted that the design was not very interesting, therefore they ended up moving to another working situation.

Corin (UK) works in a small practice with two other business partners, and she noticed that her male partner is more business-driven compared to the female partners, interested in accessing new clients and expanding the business, '*he is more ambitious*' she commented. Instead, her female partner and herself are more interested in a collaborative model that she refers to as a '*female model*', which leads them to work on community projects, often on a pro-bono basis. This view of women as more community-driven compared to business-driven men

is shared by other participants in the UK. However, Anna's experience with a male business partner is slightly different. She works part-time in order to look after her teenage daughter, and their practice's decision making is not led by income but rather by the intention of fostering their wellbeing.

> '*It means that I don't earn a huge amount of money [...] But we do interesting work, we're stuck to our principles. We're interested in ecological design and the green building world*' *(Anna, 56, Architect - UK).*

They are both interested in community architecture, led by an interest in people and supported by socialist views, rather than in making as much profit out of the business. Despite this different view, the majority of accounts suggests that in participants' experience women are more driven by social interests than men. However, this does not necessarily lead to an essentialist interpretation of gendered predispositions. Women might be more interested in that type of practice not for innate caring inclinations, but rather for being in the position of challenging the dominant architecture practice because of their 'otherness'. A subordinated position which lacks symbolic power in the architecture discourse and practice.

6.5.5 – Language

The previous criticisms were mostly voiced by British participants, with some Italian exceptions; but a specifically Italian phenomenon is linked to language. Language can be sexist (Ahmed, 2000) and this is particularly true for the Italian language, since every noun is gendered, including names of professions. So, if engineer is exclusively masculine, as much as major and firefighter; and doctor, chef and teacher are commonly used in both genders; there are no nouns which are exclusively feminine. Not even some professions that are mostly considered feminine ones, such as nurse or cashier: because every job has been historically available for men, where others have been accessed by women only after centuries of male exclusivity. The historical gendered division of labour is reflected in contemporary language, and architecture is one of these male-dominated professions. However, in the last five years there has been a rise of awareness about this limit in language, and Italian female architects are reclaiming their word, *Architetta*. For example, the activist collective *RebelArchitette*, formed in 2018, is fighting to normalise the noun Architetta and to support female representation in peculiar professional settings, such as awards juries and conferences. The only problem is that the female version of architect is quite unlucky, because it recalls another word typically feminine: breast. This is one

of the main reasons why the word has been criticised (highlighting the level of the debate in Italy), among more relevant questions such as '*why this need to differentiate us? I am an architect despite the way I'm called*' (Archinoia, 2017).

One of the main arguments against the differentiation is that '*the mind is the same, it's sexless*', as supported by Giada. However, this argument fails to consider that even if the mind is sexless, the social implications of being male or female do matter and make a difference in the construction industry.

Among the arguments which support the use of the female term there is the one about representation, which I already illustrated in one of my blog posts:

> '*The importance of using the word [architetta] is to VISUALLY create in our collective imagination the image of women who fulfil that position. […] If our language, and therefore our imagination, is limited, how could we expect young women wanting to be something that doesn't even exist?*' ('Architetta o architetto?' February 2017).

Despite arguments about representation, it is interesting to notice how the trend for English speaking architects is exactly the opposite. Practitioners and theorists mostly agree on their dislike in defining themselves as female architects, because this implicitly genders the term and naturalises it as masculine. Karen Burns (2012: 238) suggests that by using the pair architect/woman architect '*we reinforce the visible and invisible patterns of gender production*', and supports her position by mentioning examples of like-minded authors, such as Francesca Hughes (1998) who uses longer synonyms to avoid the use of the dichotomy in the introduction of her edited book. More recently, an article on Dezeen titled after the straightforward words pronounced by practitioner Dorte Mandrup, 'I am not a female architect. I am an architect' (Dezeen, 2017b), has been widely shared among groups aimed at promoting women and diversity in architecture.

The striking difference between Italian and British (or English-speaking countries more generally) preferences of use can be explained in terms of previous uses of the language itself, and in the disruption that the reclaiming of a non-existent term would make. While for English speakers the expression '*woman architect'* can be perceived as emphasising a defective architect in a denigrating tone; for Italian speakers '*architetta'* is a term made up from themselves to represent themselves, as a form of reclaiming their own identity, which does not need an extra generic term (woman) to be complete.

Furthermore, it is not just a matter of nouns, language can be sexist in many other ways, for example using masculine references to describe capable and affirmed women, as Arianna (IT) described her dissertation supervisor as *'a female architect with the attributes'*. Those habits can easily slip in conversation, and are so normalised to the point that are used even by persons who actively challenge those sorts of everyday sexism, such as Laura, who was annoyed at herself for having said '*she has some attributes*' during the interview:

> *'Sometimes I'm aware of using [sexist language] and I'm disgusted with myself! And I think 'no, for fuck's sake! Why did I say that?'. Because the words we use… the language makes the culture' (Laura, 40, Self-employed architect - IT).*

Following Laura's reasoning, it is clear to see how language reproduces the dominant culture and, therefore, discrimination of minorities.

To conclude, the data I obtained from participants in Italy and the UK highlights different forms of awareness of discrimination and, therefore, women in the two countries developed different types of criticism. British architects were shown to be more critical of institutions and working practices, whereas Italian architects are more focussed on challenging language and representation. This can be understood as a consequence of women's perception of their professional identity, as discussed in the first section, in which I illustrated how architecture practice in Italy is still based in various ways on biological essentialism. The difference between the two contexts is clearly summarised in Roberta's account from the Italian focus group: '*it's also a matter of female mentality, not open to resistance to their role in society. At least in Italy, because here in the UK mentality is way more open than it is in Italy*'. This is likely a consequence of how the structure of society in Italy relies on more traditional norms and family roles, which inevitably affect women's presence in the labour market and their employment.

Chapter 7 – Discussions and Conclusions

In this concluding chapter I discuss the research questions in light of the thematic analysis of the empirical material evaluated in the previous chapters, I then summarise the main contributions to the field offered by this study, before concluding by highlighting implications and strategies for policy and practice, both at the micro and the macro level.

The data in the previous three chapters, thanks particularly to the case study methodology employed in this study, covers various aspects of gender inequality in architecture, from material to social and cultural ones. I identified six themes that cut across the thematic areas analysed throughout the whole thesis. Firstly, (1) architecture is an *elitist and institutionalised profession*: this highlights the importance of holding different forms of capital in order to succeed in both education and work. Linked to this perspective, and in particular symbolic capital, I illustrated how women perceive themselves as (2) the *'other'*, with consequent feelings of alienation and of being defective architects. This perception is reproduced through the use of language and has been the key point in developing a fifth stage of role-exit, which I called 'awareness of their own otherness'. In opposition to otherness there is the concept of 'normalisation', which confirms that both male architects and sexism are the norm in the architecture field. This links to the following point (3): *sexism and discrimination* are heavily widespread in both countries. This happens as much in education (both to female students and faculty members) as at work in every setting (e.g. the office and the construction site), and comes from any actor involved in everyday interactions, such as colleagues, bosses, contractors, builders and clients. Gender differences are still perceived in an essentialist way, especially by Italian participants, who have been socialised in a more traditional social setting. In terms of discrimination and its material implications, (4) *childcare and care duties* are undoubtedly the main barrier to women's employment and progression in the construction industry. Despite this happens in various extents in different contexts, as illustrated by the opposite working patterns of women in Italy and the UK, the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market is similar all over Europe. One of the main strategies employed by women to overcome this structural and cultural discrimination is to develop (5) *'networks of support'*, which foster women's wellbeing and progression at work by accruing their own forms of social capital. Finally, female architects shape their (6) *professional identity* in many different ways. The awareness that professional identity is constructed from a combination of individual experiences, character, aspirations, support and influences challenges essentialist assumptions of vocation and predisposition, which are still prevalent in discourses about professionalism in

architecture. I examine these six themes in more details in the next section in which I answer the research questions of this study.

As extensively argued in this thesis, despite women representing 50% of the total of students enrolled in architecture courses, there is a considerable lack of retention and progression of women in the industry all over Europe. Architecture is still considered a white-male-dominated profession which lacks diversity, and the organisational habitus of architecture, understood as '*the set of class-based dispositions, perceptions, and appreciations transmitted to individuals in a common organizational culture*' (McDonough, 1997, as cited by Horvat and Antonio, 1999: 320), reproduces male dominance at the expense of other minorities on both a material and a cultural level. Previous studies on women in architecture relied on a limited sample of participants and focussed on either material implications for women in the labour market, their professional identity, or the organisational habitus of architecture. This research project aims to fill this gap by developing a comparison of the data obtained from the two case studies, for a total of 39 individual interviews and two focus groups - a number that is considerably higher compared to similar studies. There are no studies conducted so far on Italian female architects. As discussed in chapter 2, this study tested the application of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework based on Marxist feminist, Bourdieusian, interactionist and gender performativity approaches, in order to offer an organic understanding of different aspects relevant to the gendered analysis of architecture as a male-dominated sector. Eventually, the materialist approach resulted to be more adequate in understanding discourses about labour market and gendered barriers to employment.

The importance of the contributions offered by the participants in this research project is highlighted by the space that empirical chapters occupy in this thesis: chapters 4 and 5 heavily rely on quotes and analysis of the data, suggesting the relevance of women's accounts in developing the themes and in comparing the findings from both case studies. The main themes arose from the thematic analysis illustrated in chapter 4 (UK) and 5 (Italy) are divided into three thematic areas, namely *culture and identity*, which makes sense of women's understanding and shaping of their professional and personal identity as women in architecture, *material experiences of women in the field*, which explores various material implications of being a woman in the profession, such as childcare, discrimination, sexism and various forms of employment, and *role-exit*, which follows the narratives of five women who left the profession at different stages of their career, and the material, cultural and identity implications of their decision to leave.

Chapter 6, instead, offers a comparison of the results between the two countries and explores the main differences/similarities arose on five topics: identity, education, the job itself, strategies to address gender discrimination, and criticisms and alternatives.

7.1 – Discussion of research questions

This research project employs a case study approach to analyse the profession of architecture in Italy and the UK. The main aims of this study were to explore the reasons that reproduce gender disparity in architecture and to identify the reasons that lead women to leave the profession. The comparison of the two case studies is intended at exploring and comparing the labour market and the characteristics of the profession in both contexts, and to discern how and if female architects perceive professional identity differently. The original empirical material has been sought through individual interviews and focus groups to women in the profession, and subsequently coded into keywords which eventually have been organised in three main themes and analysed. In particular, this study posed three research questions, which I am going to answer individually drawing upon the findings arose from the empirical data analysed in the previous chapters.

How do women choose to enter architecture and what experiences do they have in professional training and work?

A perception that I received from women talking about their experiences in education and at work is that architecture is an ***elitist profession***. This means that holding a certain amount of different forms of capital is fundamental in accessing and progressing in the profession. The cultural capital hold by a student, defined as the sum of all the cultural resources that describe an individual and locate them in the social strata (Bourdieu, 1977), is able to limit access and retention in education. And this is particularly relevant for architecture, a profession heavily regulated at institutional level in order to maintain its elitist status, where '*educational institutions held the most power in perpetuating one's level of status and privilege*' (Payne, 2015: 10, citing Swartz, 1997) by recognising, and therefore rewarding, student's privileged cultural background and characteristics as natural talent (Payne, 2015). Results from this study suggest that architecture students in Italy and the UK need to hold a different set of capitals. For example, references to hereditariness are more prevalent in the UK, where many participants mentioned a discouragement to study architecture that they obtained from teachers and friends for not having architects in their family. In Italy, instead, having architects in the broader familiar or friendship ties is useful but not necessary to be able to consider a career in architecture. As

discussed in the previous chapter, this is possible because of how the educational system is organised in Italy, where students are exposed to a variety of professional figures among their classmates' parents. In addition to this, higher education in Italy is considerably cheaper than in the UK, thus encouraging more students to enrol to university. However, the need to hold a certain cultural capital in order to feel comfortable in the traditional and elitist architectural environment affects retention of students in both Italy and the UK. This is particularly true for female students, which face a specifically gendered discrimination based on assumptions and sexism. The multiple disciplines that characterise the study of architecture (e.g. humanistic, scientific, and design) influence the socially perceived adequateness of women's participation in the field, which is directly influenced by various stereotypes about women's ability.

The balanced number of women in architectural schools is not reflected in their retention in the profession, and this is not surprising. It is actually the exact consequence of decades of actions for change focussed only at addressing a cultural shift in children's aspirations. Young girls, especially middle-class, are raised in the same way as their male counterparts: they can aspire at being whatever they dream. Parents and schools are supportive, and the increasing number of female students in traditionally male-dominated disciplines is a proof of this cultural shift. It is not surprising, then, that the participants in this study decided to follow this career path, which is fascinating for young people given its link to art and creativity. However, the first signs of contrast related to their gender were quick to follow. Some participants experienced uneasiness since university, but the vast majority linked the first awareness of discrimination to their first working experience. The consequences of telling young girls that they can do whatever they want culminates in a cultural shift that has not been adequately supported by changes on other levels, mainly institutional ones - this is particularly true for working-class girls, as argued by Walkerdine et al., (2001), but it can be extended to young girls in general (Woodfield, 2007). Women's ability to participate in the labour market is limited, mostly by their caring roles, and they are not aware of this until they enter their first job. The fact that architecture, and the construction industry at large, is a male-dominated field feeds women's feeling of disconnection from the profession.

In architecture, women are the *'other'* (de Beauvoir, 1949), and they do not usually challenge this condition of 'othering' because they perceive it as natural and innate (Powell and Sang, 2015). Men, instead, hold symbolic power, which represents the ability to impose one's own definitions, meanings, values and rules on a situation. This power affects women's access, in particular to knowledge, capitals and movement, which, in turn, influence their social construction of the self, as also supported by Skeggs when she claims that '*restrictions on access*

are central to subjective constructions' (Skeggs, 1997: 12). Furthermore, symbolic power is able to control institutional power, which is crucial in the reproduction of the norm. Normalcy is reproduced not only on the institutional and cultural level of the organisational habitus of architecture, but it is also reproduced in everyday interactions. Women entering the profession of architecture should be able to transform their cultural capital into symbolic one (Bourdieu, 1986). However, they sometimes struggle to obtain the necessary legitimacy to actualise this process, due to the feminine characteristics they embody, which contrast with the masculine ones assumed as essential to perform the hegemonic definition of architectural practice.

Despite participants' experiences in education, excluding some specific cases, are mostly positive, their accounts highlighted various examples of gender discrimination in academia. Interestingly, this has been pointed out not only by the three academics which I interviewed both in Italy and the UK, but also by other participants who noticed this gendered discrimination as students. For example, the continue reference to women in senior position within the faculty as being favoured by their husbands' power in the university, or the lack of women in academia which consequently affects the possibility to develop a network of support and informal mentoring.

On the note of gendered discrimination, literature agrees that ***sexisms and discrimination*** in architecture mainly happen in the construction site, a heavily male-dominated environment with a scarce presence of women among builders and contractors. However, an interesting finding I draw from the participants' accounts is that they are aware of this assumption, but they actually experienced most discrimination in the workplace from colleagues and superiors. Molly (UK) summarised this view, echoed in similar words by few other participants, in the British focus group:

> *'Most women I spoke with said that the place they feel they experienced most prejudice is actually the architecture office rather than the outside'.*

This finding highlights the importance of the organizational habitus of the profession, which supports the normalisation of sexism in the workplace to the point that almost every participant shared with me at least one example of gendered discrimination they faced at work, either subtle or overt. What I found different was the reactions that women have towards sexism, with Italian participants more dismissive of the gravity of the episodes, which they often regard as 'just a joke'. I perceived that they were attempting to dismiss the episode as an exception coming from a particularly sexist individual rather than a frequent, socially accepted dynamic.

British participants, instead, were more reflexive on the dynamics that let the sexist episode happen, their reaction and the consequences of their reaction on their wellbeing in their working environment.

This finding leads to the following one, which has been discussed in previous chapters, that Italian participants have a more essentialist view on women and their role as care givers, and therefore on their working possibilities, whereas British participants are more aware of gender dynamics and discrimination. This difference depends on various factors, firstly the more traditional influence that the concept of family has on Italian women, which are still expected to fulfil a caring role towards their children for a longer period of time compared to British women, despite being more used to rely on grandparents for additional informal support. A reason for British architect to be more used to discourses of gender discrimination is the development in the 80s of radical architectural collectives which were challenging different aspects of the profession, such as its approaches, ethics and working arrangements. The collective Matrix was particularly interested in gendered aspects, and it was comprised by women committed to challenging the hegemonic masculinity of the profession (Matrix, 1984). It is curious to notice that different British participants in my study, which I accessed through completely different gatekeepers, at some point of their careers worked in a specific all-female practice in London, which has been set up by members of the Matrix collective, or in various feminist housing collectives all over the UK. This shows that the need to question the norm and find a more welcoming space was already widespread among British women in the 80s, whereas completely lacking in the Italian architectural environment.

To sum up, in the conclusions of their influential study, Fowler and Wilson (2004: 116) argue that '*it is not that women lack the cultural capital to do well in the profession, for nobody has doubts about their ability at architectural school level*', suggesting that inequality problems are exclusively material and structural. Instead, I argue that women lack various types of capitals, including the cultural one, which would be limited to consider exclusively as their ability to do well in education. As illustrated throughout the thesis, cultural capital is essential in access, retention and progression in both education and labour market. Dismissing it as pure educational attainment would suggest an opposite meaning: either that the profession is characterised by structural gender determinism (therefore there is no chance for gender equality) or, allowing for a degree of agency, that women are failing to do well in architecture despite their abilities (therefore blaming them for their subordinate condition).

What are the material barriers to women's employment typical of this profession?

Literature about women and work agrees that ***childcare and caring duties*** are the main reasons for the lack of women in professional careers and higher positions, and my research supports this view. It is telling to notice that the literature which I illustrated and discussed in chapter 2 about this aspect was mostly produced between the 90s and early 2000, highlighting how women's participation in the labour force has not changed much in the last 20/25 years. The possibility for a woman to temporarily leave a job (or move into part-time employment) is seen as structurally incompatible with her professional employment and career progression. This is a result of the double standards which affect women and men with similar life plans, despite most individuals hold progressive views on gender equality. '*Although we endorse equality in marriage, we find it hard to realize*', Bradley (2007: 135) echoes her participants' comments from the study on young couples in Bristol (later published in 2008), which suggested that the process of gendering roles eventually set also in most progressive households. This happens because the conventional nuclear family is formally and informally supported at institutional and cultural level, as also argued by Glucksmann (2005) and Federici (2004), for example through mechanisms such as gendered pay gap, parental leaves, heteronormativity and compulsory motherhood (Oakley, 1980). Double standards towards men and women aspiring to the same life course suggest that social perceptions are able to influence individual deeds and aspirations. For example, the goals behind the 'new man' and the 'woman who wants it all' are exactly the same, namely having a family and a career, however the negative connotation held by the latter highlights the social expectations towards traditional family patterns (Hochschild, 2003). These general observations are particularly relevant if considered in the architecture field, as some characteristics typical of this profession are in strict contrast with the caring duties expected from women, such as the long-hours culture and constant availability, which requires architects to work on weekends and travel for work, or the length of projects which are developed in strict collaboration with clients, which makes alternative working patterns (e.g. shared job, part-time) difficult to employ.

Research argues that family care is organised in different ways in specific countries. Lyon and Glucksmann (2008) show that in Italy family care is mostly executed by the women of the family, or by paid workers sought privately outside the family. In the UK, instead, the interconnections of care are different, influencing British women to make dissimilar life and employment choices to their Italian counterparts. Furthermore, traditional culture and the decision to start a family influences women's working life which, in turn, affects their cultural and symbolic capital. This suggests that it is useless to generalise discourses of female

employment, considering that each country is characterised by different traditional values and policies, which both influence employment patterns, as clear from the two contexts analysed in this study (with British female architects mostly employed part-time in bigger practices and Italian architects working full-time as self-employed). Also, it is necessary to consider exceptions and contrasting dynamics. As it happens in Italy, where women's equality in the labour market has been fostered by the ingrained mechanism by which grandparents look after their grandchildren, thus permitting women to have full-time jobs. I have argued above that it is ironic to see how a progressive outcome comes from a traditional family dynamic.

An interesting finding arising from my data is the recurrent mentioning of the importance of *'networks of support'* for women's progression and wellbeing in the profession. This was particularly relevant for the British sample, and it is probably linked to the observation drawn above about their awareness of the problem of gender discrimination. The absence of an equivalent of 'the boys club' for women carries many material gendered consequences: in terms of networking, women lack the social capital which would allow them to reach clients and better job opportunities. In terms of sexism, women feel isolated and discouraged to challenge sexist behaviours, as mentioned in many examples illustrated in chapter 4 and 5. In terms of working arrangements, a more supportive environment would allow them the flexibility needed to carry out caring duties in their personal lives. Hence the extreme importance that women themselves place on the lack of a network of support in their working environments.

To what extent are processes of professional identity construction and 'role-exit' different in the two countries?

The evidence from my research suggests that processes of personal and ***professional identity*** construction as female architects are various among women and mostly depend on their individual personality, as I did not find striking differences in the accounts of Italian and British participants. In fact, I noticed opposite feelings in both countries, with few women being comfortable in their identity as architects and the majority of them questioning their validity as such. In particular, doubts about their adequateness as architects come from different spheres: stereotypical images of architects portray men as the norm, assumptions about women's abilities, in particular technological, suggest that women are not fit for some tasks, and influence from family and teachers is able to make female students question their 'profile'. An unexpected finding regarding this topic arose when I was coding the keywords from the data: I noticed that almost every participant, in both countries, mentioned their first working experience in order to make a point. The majority of the references were aimed at highlighting the first working

experience as off-putting (not only for the participants who eventually left the profession), and for others it was the moment when they learned how to be architects and adapted to that image, which was not previously taught during university. In general, the examples illustrated were mostly negative and, as I argued in the previous chapter, negative working experiences lead women to constantly question themselves, their abilities and their right to challenge sexist behaviours. Moreover, women consider their need for networks of support as a weakness, not considering that men are constantly supported by spontaneous mentoring from male bosses and favoured by dynamics of homosocial behaviour. This constant worry about their performance and their presence affects their wellbeing in the workplace, and therefore their retention.

The lack of female retention and the high levels of drop-out suggested to me the utility to interpret the findings through the theoretical framework of the 'role-exit' (Ebaugh, 1988). In terms of differences between the two countries, I argued that the need to reiterate the inevitable link to 'being an architect' despite not working as one anymore is more prevalent among the Italian exiters because of stronger cultural expectations intertwined with education. This is also a consequence of more restricted possibilities in Italy to change career, an action that is not socially accepted as much as it is in the UK. Ebaugh theorised the process of role-exit through four stages of the exit, namely *first doubts*, *seeking of alternatives*, *turning point* and *creating and adapting to the ex-role*. The analysis of my data suggested a distinct difference between what stage carried more importance for participants in the two countries: Italian women identified the *turning point* as the key moment of their exit, whereas British ones put more emphasis in describing the dynamics of *creating and adapting to the ex-role*. This confirms the difference highlighted above, with Italian participants being more invested in justifying the reasons why they decided to leave the profession, whereas British participants were more pragmatic in explaining *how* they did it, rather than *why*. Moreover, specific gender dynamics have been mentioned by exiters in both countries, suggesting me the need to identify and develop a fifth stage of exit, to add to the four already theorised by Ebaugh (1988): *awareness of their own otherness*, as extensively illustrated in chapter 4 and 5. This stage is particularly relevant for this study, but it could be easily adapted to other situations concerning gender in professions.

Another difference that I found among Italian and British women regarding their identity as architects is related to the use of language. Generally, many English-speaking women actively protest being described as female architects, they refuse to talk about the gender difference between them and the norm, probably for the fear of being labelled and confined to practices

and ideas considered as 'female areas'. According to Burns (2012), using the pair architect/woman architect reinforces the patterns of gender production. Some Italian female architects also share this view and tend to avoid being labelled as female architects who need an extra adjective to be recognised as defective architects. The difference itself between 'architect' and 'female architect' is seen by many female practitioners as an odious distinction whereas, for others, is '*an unavoidable outgrowth of gender consciousness*' (Coleman, 1996: xi). In fact, there is a new wave of female architects in Italy that is challenging culture and institutions through the use of language, by employing a term never used before: 'architetta'. This term sounds odds to Italian ears, but it is a way of affirming their identity of female architects by introducing a word that simply (and correctly on the linguistic level) offers the female version of the masculine 'architetto', which has been employed so far as a gender-neutral term to refer to architects. As argued in the previous chapter, not every Italian female architect is supportive of this challenge. However, this same battle has been fought in the last five years for other professions, such as major and minister, and the unusual female suffix is starting to be normalised in Italian language.

To answer the two main questions posed by this study, the assumption that it is the organisational habitus of the profession itself that reproduces gender inequality in architecture appears to be justified, as the material and cultural barriers faced by women in the field mostly depend of the lack of diversity in a profession still white/male dominated. This dynamic is confirmed by the variety of reasons why women leave architecture, which span from (1) material causes, e.g. lack of flexible jobs, difficulty to come back to work after childbearing, or job segregation both in terms of specialisations and tasks, to (2) cultural and social ones, e.g. stereotypes about women's abilities, lack of interest in a profession which relies on individuality and the StarArchitect system, or lack of network of support in the workplace and from institutions such as the RIBA, to (3) causes linked to the nature of architecture itself, e.g. the culture of long working hours or the tacit acceptance and normalisation of subtle and overt sexism.

7.2 - Contributions to the field

This study offers contributions to two main bodies of literature, namely sociology of work on the broader level, and women in architecture on a more specific one.
The main contribution to the literature available about women in architecture is the employment of the case study approach to the topic. The comparison between the two cases

made it possible to understand discourses about the profession on a more in-depth level, given the chance to explore dynamics in the labour market and women's lived experiences in two different contexts, as extensively argued above in this chapter.

Moreover, findings about how material, social, cultural and professional barriers affect women's participation in architecture also contribute more broadly to the main four areas of sociology of work and gender relevant to this study, namely the labour market, organisations, professions and the workplace. The discussions raised in the empirical chapters and summarised in the six themes illustrated at the beginning of this chapter contribute to the understanding that these four areas are regulated and influenced by different theoretical and practical dynamics. However, these mechanisms need to be considered in an organic way in order to offer a wider understanding of gender discrimination at work. Therefore, this study suggests the need to employ an interdisciplinary theoretical framework which considers various theoretical approaches in order to conceptualise and address the material, social, cultural and behavioural barriers which influence women's participation in the labour market. In particular, I have mainly focussed on Marxist feminist, Bourdieusian, interactionist and gender performativity approaches in order to discuss and make sense of my original empirical data.

An example of these contributions is the evidence from my research which shows that employment patterns and some material barriers for female architects are different in Italy and the UK. The opposite kind of employment, with Italy characterised by full-time and self-employment (also the specificity of the employment with *Partita IVA*/VAT) and the UK by the exact opposite, shows that different working arrangements have different material implications, such as wages, working hours, benefits, and working relationships, which are eventually able to influence women's satisfaction in architecture. This awareness shows the limitations of the tendency to generalise material barriers employed by most studies carried out on this topic.

On this note, my research supports the widespread view in literature that care duties, in particular childcare, are the main barriers to gender equality in employment, as extensively discussed throughout the whole thesis. A peculiar situation of two of my participants, however, suggested to me the need for further research which should look for domestic dynamics similar to these two. Both participants were in a homosexual relationship where their partners were the ones carrying their children, for whom they are the step-mothers. This family situation positively affected their career development, as both are among the few women in senior positions in their universities. They agree they have benefitted from the possibility to not having to take time off for childbearing and childcare, thus influencing the perception of others towards their availability and career plans. In other words, despite being female in terms of sex, they are

perceived as not female in terms of gender (their gender behaviours are perceived as matching male expectations rather than female ones). This example opens up a discussion about how childcare as a barrier for women can be discussed in a less biologically determinist way, since other people's perceptions are able to regard them as men (or at least non-women) in terms of material implications on their job. This suggests the possibility to explore a different view on childcare which can be less focused on the individual (in this case a woman as a mother) and more on shared collective understanding of gender socialisation and roles.

The tendency to develop an essentialist view on gender has been applied by other studies to many aspects, not only childcare. For example, criticisms of the work values are often essentialised on the ground that women are more interested in the social and collective, whereas men are more individualistic (Woodfield, 2007). This view is heavily reproduced because of the many confirmations in the reality of the labour market, where women tend to create and work in alternative working arrangements (see for example the resonance of the women's radical collective Matrix from the 80s until today), whereas men continue to be overwhelmingly present and celebrated in architecture panels and awards. However, this view lacks a wider understanding that architecture is a male-dominated profession and many women struggle to fit-in, therefore they are more likely to think and create alternatives. Thus, women are more critical of the organisational habitus of architecture and its working ethic not because they are inherently different and more 'social', but because of the need to create something different which does not carry centuries of male domination and reproduction of men as the norm.

7.3 – Implications and strategies for policy and practice

From the examples and discussions offered throughout the whole thesis, it is evident that the best solution to address a positive change to gender discrimination in architecture would be to adopt an organic strategy of combined actions, able to foster a simultaneous change on different levels: individual, relational, cultural and structural.

Individual stands for one's personal thoughts, belief and values. This aspect, applied to the purpose of challenging women's subordinated position in the field, could be translated into the application of strategies aimed at confronting personal stereotypes and gathering '*professional role confidence*' (Cech et al., 2011). Translated into practical actions, programs like Role Models or mentoring would work in this direction. For example, in 2014 the RIBA and CIC (Construction Industry Council) launched a mentoring scheme, the 'Fluid Diversity Mentoring

Programme', aimed at addressing the lack of diversity in architecture, not only in terms of gender but also ethnicity, economic background and ability.

Relational relates to behaviours and skills one has learned and performs. It can be applied to a change in workplace dynamics (relevant to episodes of sexism or women's feelings of inadequateness) and in the cultural requirement to perform dominant behaviours, discussed above as 'acting as a man'. By extension, to challenge sexual division of labour and practices. Useful in this sense is the application of anti-discrimination laws.

Cultural, an aspect deeply interwoven with stereotypes, includes family and relationships in general. A useful strategy of action would address the reproduction of gender stereotypes, employed by any relational environment, from the family to the educational system. These actions can be implemented from a young age with programmes in schools, such as the WISE campaign '*for gender balance in science, technology and engineering, from the classroom to the boardroom*' (wisecampaign.org.uk). These stereotypes influence more generally the social expectations (such as the need to create a family and to be mothers), and more particularly interactions with various actors of the construction industry, such as colleagues, clients, contractors and builders. However, culture is an area where an interaction aimed at fostering change is more difficult to employ and takes longer to occur.

Structural is concerned with institutions, such as education, laws, social services and professional bodies. An action for change focussed on this sphere would be aimed at challenging practices naturalised in education or other social environments, e.g. through the creation of gender-neutral learning environments, or social services, through legislation acting on parental leaves, care services or quotas. Bradley (1999) suggests that barriers acting on changes in the equal access of women in the labour market are influenced by three main tendencies: direct resistance to change of some men (backlash), the individualistic neoliberal ideology of merit which makes both sexes wary of radical forms of Equal Opportunities policy (e.g. quotas), and women's domestic responsibilities. Some of those aspects can be addressed through institutional policies of change, whereas other aspects of these barriers act on the cultural level. Therefore, this suggests that structural change seems to be the easiest of the four categories where to address change, because institutions and laws can easily be promoted and actualised. However, it must be recognised that it would be risky, useless or even counterproductive to force a change from above if the culture is not ready to accept that change.

Therefore, it is clear the usefulness of promoting all these actions at the same time, allowing the possibility for each of them to work as a catalyst for others, or to overlap.

To conclude, the results of the study offer a not very optimistic portrayal of the position of women in architecture. Women are encouraged to study architecture, despite its long educational pathway which eventually collides with their familial plans. The drop-out from the profession starts immediately after the BA and keeps increasing until many years in employment, with a remarkable 21% drop-out between 30- and 50-year old women all over Europe (ACE, 2019). The data from this study suggests that there are many different ways to be an architect, characterised by distinct inclinations, aspirations and coping strategies towards discrimination and sexism. The lack of patterns in the construction of professional identity is able to criticise essentialist understandings of the identity of an architect and of practices of the profession. These essentialist views are able to influence both perception and self-perception of adequateness to be an architect, and hence the critical importance of challenging them.

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Appendices

A - List of interview questions
B - Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form

A – List of interview Questions

Architects:

☐ *Examples*:
- How many women in architecture did you know when you were studying?
  - What kind of tasks they were performing?
- How many women architects do you know now?
  - Do you consider them affirmed?

☐ *Education experiences:*
- Did you ever feel discriminated against during university?
  - Did you notice different attitudes amongst male and female students?
    - Were professors' and students' attitudes different towards male and female students?
- Did you find the training difficult?
  - If yes, what in particular was difficult?

☐ *Social perceptions:*
- Do you think that women are biologically able to study/perform in this field?
  - In which disciplines/tasks do you think women are more appropriate?
    - What are the set of masculine properties considered essential in the performing of the profession?

☐ *Family support:*
- Did your family agree with your educational choices? Were they supportive?

☐ *Task performed:*
- Do women and men perform the same tasks in your office?
  - What do you think it is the reason?

☐ *Goals and Motivations:*
- What did you expect to reach when you were studying?
- Where are you now?
  - Which professional position you aspire to obtain?

☐ *Perceived and ideal achievements:*
- Did perceived and ideal achievements fit, in you experience?
  - If they did not, why not?
  - Are promotions possible or easy?
- How difficult was the path to arrive where you are and how hard was it to decide to follow it?

☐ *Discrimination:*
- Did you ever felt discriminated against or treated differently to your male counterparts?
  - What kind of discrimination did you experience?
  - Who, instead, has been supportive?

☐ *Family duties:*
- Did the care of the family influence your professional choices?
- Or did the job influence past life decisions?
  - Are maternity leave and part-time jobs contemplated in your office?

☐ *Satisfaction:*
- Are you happy and/or accomplished?
  - Do you wish you had made another choice or that someone had warned you about something?
- Did you ever think about leaving the profession?
  - What is your wish for your future?

Students:

☐ *Examples*:
- How many women in architecture do you know?
  - What kind of tasks they performing?
  - Do you consider them affirmed?

☐ *Education experiences:*
- Did you ever felt discriminated against during university?
  - Do you notice different attitudes amongst male and female students?
    - Are professors' and students' attitudes different towards male and female students?
- Do you find the training difficult?
  - If yes, what in particular is difficult?

☐ *Social perceptions:*
- Do you think that women are biologically able to study/perform in this field?
  - In which disciplines/tasks do you think women are more appropriate?
    - What are the set of masculine properties considered essential in the performing of the profession?

☐ *Family support:*
- Did your family agree with your educational choices? Were they supportive?

☐ *Task performed:*
- Do women and men perform the same tasks in your office? (If working)
  - What do you think it is the reason?

☐ *Goals and Motivations:*
- What do you expect to reach after university?
  - Which professional position you aspire to obtain?

☐ *Perceived and ideal achievements:*
- How difficult was the path to arrive where you are and how hard was it to decide to follow it?

☐ *Discrimination:*
- Did you ever felt discriminated against or treated differently to your male counterparts?
  - What kind of discrimination did you experience?
  - Who, instead, has been supportive?

☐ *Family duties:*
- Did the care of the family influence your professional choices?
  - Are maternity leave and part-time jobs contemplated in your office? (If working)

☐ *Satisfaction:*
- Are you happy?
  - Do you wish you had made another choice or that someone had warned you about something?
- Did you ever think about leaving university?
  - What is your wish for your future?

Left the profession:
☐ *Examples*:

- ■ How many women in architecture did you know when you were studying?
  - • What kind of tasks they were performing?
- ■ How many women architects do you know now?
  - • Do you consider them affirmed?

☐ *Education experiences:*
- ■ Did you ever felt discriminated against during university?
  - • Did you notice different attitudes amongst male and female students?
    - • Were professors' and students' attitudes different towards male and female students?
- ■ Did you find the training difficult?
  - • If yes, what in particular was difficult?

☐ *Social perceptions:*
- ■ Do you think that women are biologically able to study/perform in this field?
  - • In which disciplines/tasks do you think women are more appropriate?
    - • What are the set of masculine properties considered essential in the performing of the profession?

☐ *Family support:*
- ■ Did your family agree with your educational choices? Were they supportive?

☐ *Task performed:*
- ■ Did women and men perform the same tasks in your office?
  - • What do you think it is the reason?

☐ *Goals and Motivations:*
- ■ What did you expect to reach when you were studying?
- ■ What do you do now?
  - • Why did you choose this specific job?
  - • Did you know you wanted to do this job even before studying architecture?

☐ *Perceived and ideal achievements:*
- ■ Did perceived and ideal achievements fit, in you experience?
  - • If they did not, why not?
  - • Were promotions possible or easy?
- ■ How difficult was the path to arrive where you were and how hard was it to decide to leave?

☐ *Discrimination:*
- ■ Did you ever felt discriminated against or treated differently to your male counterparts?
  - • What kind of discrimination did you experience?
  - • Who, instead, has been supportive?

☐ *Family duties:*
- ■ Did the care of the family influence your professional choices?
- ■ Or did the job influence past life decisions?
  - • Were maternity leave and part-time jobs contemplated in your office?

☐ *Satisfaction:*
- ■ Are you happy and/or accomplished?
  - • Do you wish you had made another choice or that someone had warned you about something?
- ■ Is there a specific reason why you left the profession?
  - • What is your wish for your future?

B – Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title

Architecture as a gendered profession: a comparison between Italy and the UK to understand the historical and cultural reasons that led to gender disparity.

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is aimed at understanding architecture as a deeply gendered profession, attention will be focussed especially on the reasons that may cause the massive drop off of women from education to actual employment.

I will develop a comparison of the profession of architecture in two European countries - Italy and the UK - with a focus on gender disparities within the industry. The research aims to understand two key elements:

- The profession itself - what are the key features of architecture as both profession and discipline in the UK and in Italy?
- Women in architecture - how do women choose to enter architecture and what experiences do they have in professional training and work? And what leads women to leave architecture?

The study will last three years (from September 2015 until August 2018), and during this time I will investigate existing literature, conduct about 48 interviews, analyse the data, write and publish my findings.

Why have I been invited to participate?

I planned to interview about 24 women in Italy and 24 in the UK, with participants sought accordingly to the different place they occupy in the chronological development of their professional position:

- students, to investigate their expectations;
- architects who are only beginning to practice, to collect opinions on the relationship between expectations and reality;
- architects who left the profession, to investigate possible reasons;
- experienced professionals in higher positions, to record their feelings, opinions and experiences.

This kind of purposive sampling will help me in recruiting those participants who can offer the study both variety and relevance, providing the research with diverse data, able to disclose heterogeneous accounts and personal experiences.

If you are reading this information sheet it means that you belong to one of the above categories, that you expressed initial interest in my project, and that your contribution is suitable and potentially beneficial to the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you are willing to take part in the study we will set up a date, time and location that suits you to conduct the interview. The interview itself will last between 30 and 45 minutes, and will be audio recorded, in order to be easily transcribed (the transcriptions are essential for the following process of analysis). I will be the only person who will have access to the audio records and the transcriptions. You will not be contacted again.

What kind of questions are you going to ask me?

I will ask questions aimed at obtaining information about ten main topics:

- *Examples*: how many women in architecture did you know when you were studying? What kind of tasks they were performing?
- *Education experiences*: did you ever felt discriminated against during university? Did you notice different attitudes amongst male and female students? Were professors' and students' attitudes different towards male and female students? Did you find the training difficult? If yes, what in particular was difficult?
- *Social perceptions*: do you think that women are biologically able to study/perform in this field? In which disciplines/tasks do you think women are more appropriate? What are the set of masculine properties considered essential in the performing of the profession?
- *Family support*: did your family agree with your educational choices? Were they supportive?
- *Task performed*: do women and men perform the same tasks in your office/study group?

- *Goals and Motivations*: what did you expect to reach when you were studying? Where are you now? Which professional position you aspire to obtain?
- *Perceived and ideal achievements*: did these fit, in you experience? If they did not, why not? Are promotions possible or easy? How difficult was the path to arrive where you are and how hard was it to decide to follow it?
- *Discrimination*: did you ever felt discriminated against or treated differently to your male counterparts? What kind of discrimination did you experience? Who, instead, has been supportive?
- *Family duties*: did the care of the family influence you professional choices? Or did the job influence past life decisions? Are maternity leave and part-time jobs contemplated in your offices?
- *Satisfaction*: are you happy and/or accomplished? Did you wish you had made another choice or that someone had warned you about something? Did you ever think about leaving? Why did you leave? What is your wish for your future?

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The only possible disadvantage may be the time spent during the interview, which will not last more than 45 minutes.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Understanding the process that generates and perpetuates discontent in female architects' lives could be of fundamental importance to make a significant and deep change in society.

Will my information in this study be kept confidential?

All the information collected will be kept strictly confidential and confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material. Each participant will be given a pseudonym and a code to refer to in order to protect their identity and to guarantee anonymity of the participants in the study. I will be the only person to have access to the encrypted list containing the link between real names of participants and their pseudonyms and codes. I will use pseudonyms during the final report, and I will also alter connections that would disclose participants' identity (e.g. names of clients, name of the University they attended, their hometown, their projects, etc...).

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part in the study all you have to do is to send me an email at M.D-Avolio@sussex.ac.uk (or just reply to my email in case I contacted you before), saying that you are willing to be interviewed. Then we will set up a convenient date and location for the interview.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the results of the research in my thesis. I might use extracts from the interviews, but the confidentiality of the information and the anonymity of participants will be kept protected. I am also interested in publishing part of my research, in this case confidentiality and anonymity will be also granted in any further publication. If you will be interested in reading any of my

future publications related to the findings obtained from your contribution, I will gladly provide you with a digital copy.

Who is organising the research?

I am conducting the research as a student of the University of Sussex, under the School of Law Politics and Sociology (Centre for Gender Studies).

Who has approved this study?

The research has been approved by the (C-REC) Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (crec-ss@sussex.ac.uk).

Contact for Further Information

For any query or concern you can contact either me (M.D-Avolio@sussex.ac.uk) or one of my Research Supervisors: Dr. Ben Fincham (B.M.Fincham@sussex.ac.uk) or Dr. James Hardie-Bick (J.P.Hardie-Bick@sussex.ac.uk).
University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

Thank you so much for your interest, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,
Maria Silvia D'Avolio,

1ˢᵗ February 2016

University of Sussex
Law, Politics & Sociology

Maria Silvia D'Avolio, Doctoral Researcher
Department of Sociology, Centre for Gender Studies
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CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Project Title: Architecture as a gendered profession: a comparison between Italy and the UK to understand the historical and cultural reasons that led to gender disparity.

Project Approval Reference:

I understand that my participation is **voluntary**, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as **strictly confidential** and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

• I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to **be interviewed** by the researcher, and allow the interview to be **audio recorded**.

• I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

• I consent to the use of sections of the interview's transcripts (anonymised) in publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date: