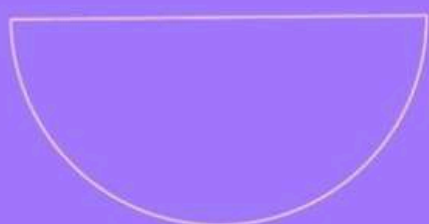


FEMINIST ARCHITECTURE ASSEMBLY ^(BE)

PAF X L'ARCHITECTURE QUI DÉGENRE



7 FEB¹

The Feminist Architecture Assembly brought together more than fifty architects, spatial practitioners, researchers, and community builders from across the country, who were all actively working to transform architectural practice through feminist values. This assembly is an initiative by PAF - platform voor architectuur en feminisme and L'architecture qui dégenre, and took place in Belgium on February 7th, 2025.

The assembly asks: How can feminist modes of spatial practice be connected and amplified in Belgium? How can we create the conditions for feminist architecture and urbanism? And how can we build more equitable futures through our work?

The primary aim of the gathering is to strengthen connections, share knowledge, and foster collaboration. Together, we want to craft new narratives that shape feminist practices in the built environment. This initiative serves as a platform for discussing how feminist spatial practitioners and organizations can build lasting alliances in Belgium, empowering future generations of designers and activists.

The Feminist Architecture Assembly in Belgium is moderated by Evelien Pieters and Apolline Vranken, building upon the legacy of previous initiatives by the New Institute and IABR (Catherine Koekoek) in Rotterdam.

Verlag: Tine Pillaert

Foto's: Tatjana Huong Henderieckx

PAF x L'architecture qui dégenre

L'architecture qui dégenre est une plateforme qui questionne l'ordre dominant, construit l'égalité, édifie l'optimisme. L'asbl est un espace de partage des pratiques et des connaissances en rapport avec l'égalité architecturale, artistique et urbaine.

L'architecture qui dégenre est à l'initiative des premières Journées du Matrimoine en Belgique (depuis 2019) et de la Saison Matrimoine (depuis 2021). L'association crée et organise des visites guidées féministes, des formations et des workshops sur le genre et la ville. Elle accompagne également les architectes, urbanistes et décideur·euses pour intégrer la dimension du genre dans les projets d'architecture.



PAF (platform voor architectuur & feminisme) is een community waar vrouwen, en iedereen die zich betrokken voelt, kennis en ervaringen delen over de architectuursector in Vlaanderen en daarbuiten. We spreken over hoe de werkcultuur en vastgeroeste normen in de sector het gebrek aan perspectieven mede veroorzaken, én over hoe we vanuit alternatieve, feministische waarden kunnen vormgeven aan de architectuurpraktijk.

Programme

13:25 - 15:15 Story Circle

15:15 - 15:25 Coffee break

15:25 - 16:30 Toolshare: practitioners share a specific tool, strategy or skill

16:30 - 17:15 Group discussion and building alliances

17:15 - 18:30 Drinks @Café Boudin





Story circle

After an introduction by PAF and L'architecture qui dégenre, the event moved into a story circle where each participant was asked to share a short story about a feminist moment from their practice. A wide range of stories were shared, covering topics such as the importance of feeling safe within the architectural world and community, how a feminist moment can lead to starting an initiative, and choosing to organize activities every year on International Women's Day with female employees within one's architecture office. Some shared stories about women occupying public spaces - drinking tea or doing Zumba in a park. The conversation highlighted the importance of empowering each other, the role of being a mother, both at home and at work, and personal stories of having to justify oneself as a feminist during a job interview. There was also a moment shared about the fight for more women to sit on jury panels. Participants reflected on how they could make a difference, whether big or small, asking themselves how they could create change in their own practice or life.

The stories touched on issues such as quotas in committees and using undercover tools in our practice or daily life. A beautiful conclusion drawn from the stories was that while a feminist moment requires time and space, the value of community and solidarity is immensely important.

After a coffee break, four different practitioners shared tools, strategies, and skills.

Tool share

Petra Pferdmenges (Alive Architecture) - Public Space 4 Her

With her socio-spatial design agency Alive, Petra Pferdmenges focuses on inclusive and participatory urban development in Brussels.

The Public Space 4 Her Project began by testing ideas in Molenbeek, and then the team returned to public space to test these concepts using cardboard. The young women involved made the decisions, painted, and created an installation. The participatory construction site took two weeks to complete. Politicians visited to discuss urban transformation. The public space is now used by both men and women, but it was built by women, and the space is designed for everyone. A publication was created to document the project.

This initiative is the starting point of a series of projects. The project will continue in the Creative Europe partner cities Nicosia and Ljubljana. You can find more details on the [website of Alive Architecture](#).

Louise Deprins (A2D Architects) - Reimagining Motherhood in Architecture

Louise Deprins has been working as an architect since 2015. She started her talk by saying she is a mother to a daughter, and at the moment pregnant with twins. Louise feels fortunate to be a woman in Belgium. However, upon entering motherhood, she encountered significant economic challenges as a self-employed architect. She faced difficult choices and struggled to balance her professional life with motherhood. There was no support from l'Ordre des Architectes de Belgique francophone et germanophone, and when she inquired about maternity leave, they informed her she could unsubscribe from the register during maternity leave and return afterwards. She was shocked by this response. This led her to delve deeper into statistics regarding women in the profession and whether the issue was personal or structural. The data revealed a significant gender disparity, with a sharp drop in the number of women compared to men, especially after motherhood. There is no gender gap at the start of a career, but it emerges when it comes to balancing motherhood and work.



She wrote to l'Ordre des Architectes de Belgique francophone et germanophone, prompting discussions and the formation of a gender commission in 2025. Her key question is: "How can we bridge the gender gap in architecture?" She advocates for normalizing motherhood at work, equal paternity leave, and workplace flexibility. In her office, HR strategies are implemented that support fair pay, flexible hours, and structured discussions on career growth.

Louise urged women to stop apologizing for motherhood, emphasizing their efficiency and the need for supportive work environments. She also highlighted financial strategies for maternity costs, the role of family support, and personal well-being, promoting "vital selfishness" - prioritizing oneself to maintain balance and long-term health.



Tine Poot (VAi) - 'Leaving behind the Myth of Neutrality': the Flanders Architecture Institute as gatekeeper

Tine Poot spoke about the search for an inclusive approach of the VAI (Flanders Architecture Institute), focusing on bringing more voices to the table and making underrepresented designers visible. VAI includes various teams that focus on architecture culture, contemporary architecture, and the heritage of the built environment.

One of their significant projects, *Wiki Women Design*, was initiated in 2020 by Nina Serulus when she was part of VAI. This project aimed to make available data on female architects more accessible and start the process of creating a database of archived information. Through this project, they discovered that, as a collective and knowledge center, they do not hold a neutral position. By filtering the available data, they created gaps and silences in the representation of female designers.

Tine emphasized that they want to post critical questions and challenge the current representations. Kaat, the head of the collection at VAI, is taking a deep dive into the archives to explore the hidden roles and contributions of overlooked figures, such as Danie Staut, the cofounder of Architectenwerkgroep AWG, who led a series of conversations on emancipation with a group of women architects in the late 80s and 90s.

Tine also highlighted a participatory approach championed by Hülya Ertas, who questioned who is invited to the table and who is not. Hülya used a peer-learning methodology to share knowledge and drive a shift in architectural practice.

Aurélie Hachez (AHA) & Elseline Bazin (Elseline Bazin) - Egalitarian Housing in Action: Insights from the Petite Île/Citygate Project in Anderlecht

Aurélie and Elseline presented a winning project in Anderlecht, Brussels, involving the urban development of 20 buildings designed for a mix of small economic activities and social housing. This project was driven by the desire to create more egalitarian designs, collaborating with several architects and institutions. BGHM and citydev.brussels have written out a public contract. This allows the site to be developed through a cohesive regional approach (optimizing space and creating a more integrated urban project) and enables synergies between the initial programs (shared use of spaces or facilities).

The masterplan aims to create a 'city within a city', where living, working, and communal activities can blend together. One of the corner buildings features communal housing with public facilities on the ground floor, such as a café. The design encourages connections and interactions among the residents.

A key feature of the communal housing is the creation of shared spaces, including larger kitchens, living rooms, and additional spaces such as a game room for kids and a gym. These spaces are designed to foster collaboration and engagement.

Aurélie and Elseline also explored the idea of flexibility in housing. They created three types of flexible and evolving domestic spaces that could adapt to residents' needs. These spaces were designed to accommodate a diverse range of typologies while respecting intimacy within a communal building.

They reflected on gendered tasks in housing design, particularly in kitchens. The idea was to design flexible plans, where inhabitants can choose or change their spaces. Function mixing is central, with work, living, and learning going hand in hand.





Collective conversation and building alliances

After the tool sharing, we opened up the conversation to the group. We asked what the participants took away from the day, and what was missing.

The discussion centered around various aspects of feminism in architecture and the importance of inclusivity, authorship, and creating alliances. Participants shared experiences and perspectives on how gender influences the field of architecture, from the challenges of authorship and visibility in projects to the need for more diverse voices and perspectives.

There was a discussion on archives and databases, highlighting the additional challenges of archiving and conducting archival research. It was noted that women often changed their names when married, making it difficult to trace their records. Another key topic of discussion was the importance of archiving women's contributions to architecture, not only in formal archives but also through digital and community-driven initiatives. Women in Architecture Belgium (WiA) has called for projects by women architects to be shared on their interactive map to enhance visibility. Sustaining such initiatives and properly preserving their content is crucial to prevent valuable histories from being lost. Additionally, archiving events and initiatives of this kind is essential to documenting the broader impact of women in architecture.

Gendered dynamics within the architecture field were also discussed, particularly the subtle biases that lead to women's work being undervalued or erased. Participants raised the point that authorship is often awarded to the most prominent office or individual, and collaboration, especially between genders, can be fraught with difficulties in how credit is assigned. This also extends to disciplines like interior design, which are often seen as more female-associated but are still underappreciated in the broader architectural community.

Several participants emphasized the importance of understanding how gender, race, and other identities intersect in shaping architectural practice. There was a call to ensure that feminism in architecture remains inclusive, particularly of people of color, queer individuals, and other marginalized voices. The discussion highlighted the need for diverse perspectives in designing spaces—especially public ones—and the ongoing challenge of creating truly inclusive environments that serve all communities. This critique was also directed at the event itself. As organizers, we recognize that better representation, with more voices and experiences at the table, is essential. We acknowledge that this was something we missed in this first assembly and are committed to improving it moving forward.

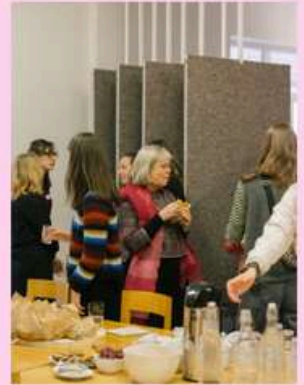
The session concluded with a focus on how to build alliances and ensure that these conversations extend beyond academic or professional circles. It was acknowledged that feminist values must reach broader groups, particularly those who may not be as familiar with these ideas or who might not have a loud voice in the conversation. The need to engage a younger generation and reach out to those outside the traditional architectural elite was raised, as well as the question of how to create discomfort in spaces to push for change and open up more inclusive dialogues.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the need for critical self-reflection within the feminist architectural movement and the importance of inclusivity and collaboration in building more equitable futures for architecture.



The collective discussion about the next edition of the Feminist Architecture Assembly focused on where it should move towards. There was a shared understanding that the conversation needs to move beyond diversity, towards more plural and inclusive thinking. The group emphasized the importance of creating spaces that allow for discomfort, where voices that are often left out can be heard. The urgency isn't just about improving current systems, but about opening up and broadening the scope of the conversation. There was also a strong consensus on the need to build alliances, not just within the academic realm, but reaching younger generations and those less familiar with feminist values. The group explored the idea of involving broader communities and advocating within universities, as essential steps to make feminist architecture more accessible and impactful for a wider audience.

We celebrate the first step with appropriate modesty, we listen and learn, and we continue with motivation. Towards a second, more comprehensive Assembly in late 2025. Because we continue to feel the urgency to bring together the many feminist spatial design and research practices, learn from each other and build alliances.



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Contact

- E-mail: evelien@paf.community or mail@paf.community
- Instagram: [@paf.community](https://www.instagram.com/paf.community)
- Website & nieuwsletter: www.paf.community



- E-mail: a.vranken@architecturequidegenre.be
- Instagram: [@architecturequidegenre](https://www.instagram.com/architecturequidegenre)
- Website & nieuwsletter: www.architecturequidegenre.be

