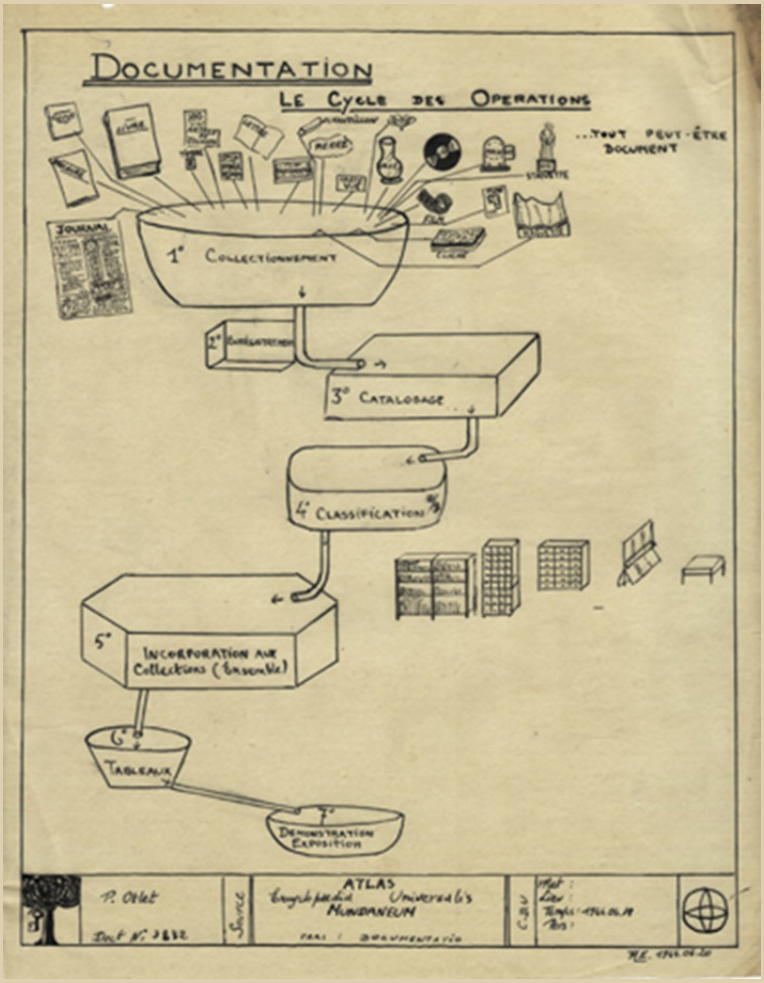
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Exploring the relationships between the Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda - Multi-Year Plan 2024-2027 and the Knowledge Organization of legislative proposals under processing on women in Brazil

Carla Maria Martellote Viola*, Carla Beatriz Marques Felipe**

Abstract: Law Nº 14.802 (2024) established *Brazil's Multi-Year Plan (2024–2027)*, highlighting five cross-cutting agendas, including the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda*, which guides this study. The research aims to represent and organize legislative proposals concerning women under analysis in the Chamber of Deputies. It proposes a classification aligned with the agenda's goals and examines how these proposals correlate with their objectives. The study combines bibliographic and documentary research, using the keyword *mulher* to retrieve proposals from the *Sileg-Tramitação system*, adopting both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A total of 713 proposals were identified; 691 were classified into five dimensions: living free from violence (287), economic autonomy (135), equality in decision-making and power (58), health and environment (136), and institutional capacity (75). The research highlights the importance of organizing legislative data to support inclusive public policies and promote *Sustainable Legislative Infofeminism* – a framework for transparency, data access, and gender equality.

Keywords: Knowledge Organization, Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda - Multi-Year Plan 2024-2027, Legislative proposals, Women in Brazil, Sustainable Legislative Infofeminism.

1. Introduction

Law Nº 14.802, enacted on January 10, 2024, established the *Brazilian Multi-Year Plan* for the period 2024–2027 (Presidência da República 2024a). This normative act of the Executive Branch defined four cross-cutting priority agendas: (1) Children and Adolescents; (2) Women; (3) Racial equality; (4) Indigenous peoples; and (5) The environment. The priority agenda guiding this research is the Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda, which encompasses various objectives and targets to be achieved through collaborative efforts among fed-

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eral entities. However, a compilation of legislative proposals concerning women is already under consideration in the Chamber of Deputies (Ministério do Planejamento e Orçamento 2024), a body of the Brazilian Legislative Branch, preceding this plan.

Based on the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda*, how can legislative proposals concerning women currently under consideration in the Chamber of Deputies be represented and organized? The general objective of this research is to propose a classification system for legislative proposals under review that address women's issues, in alignment with the principles and dimensions outlined in the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda*. The specific objectives are: (1) to classify the legislative proposals introduced and under deliberation during the 56th Legislature; and (2) to assess the extent to which these proposals correspond to the thematic axes and priorities of the Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda.

The justification for this research is grounded in the principle that gender mainstreaming in public policy must acknowledge that inequalities between men and women – considering their diverse identities – permeate all areas of society and governance. This recognition requires concrete, cross-sectoral actions coordinated among various levels of government. Accordingly, it is essential to represent and organize parliamentary initiatives in order to assess whether they effectively address the diverse needs, realities, and experiences of women and girls, thereby contributing to the promotion of a more inclusive and equitable society.

2. Deconstructing Power and Reimagining Representation in Knowledge Organization

Knowledge Organization (KO) is the invisible architecture of our intellectual world. It is the intricate system of principles, schemes, and practices that governs how information is structured, described, and made accessible. From the Dewey Decimal system arranging books on a library shelf to the metadata tags ordering search results on the internet, KO systems are the foundational frameworks that shape how we navigate, encounter, and ultimately understand the vast universe of human knowledge (Zeng 2008; Hjørland 2016).

For much of its history, this field operated under a paradigm of universalism and neutrality, aspiring to create a single, objective map of all knowledge that could be universally applied. However, this seemingly benign mission of efficient retrieval has come under intense scrutiny. Scholars from critical, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives have compellingly argued that these traditional systems are anything but neutral. Instead, they are cultural artifacts, deeply embedded with the biases, hierarchies, and power structures of the dominant societies that created them. This critique reveals that the act of

classifying is never a simple act of ordering; it is an act of defining, of including and excluding, and of asserting a particular worldview as authoritative (Bowker and Star 2000).

A contemporary, socially responsible approach to KO must actively dismantle the epistemological assumptions of traditional universalism. By integrating the profound critiques of feminist theorists like Olson (1998; 2002; 2007), postcolonial thinkers like Spivak (2010), and the practical innovations of phenomenological and user-centric models, KO can transition from a discipline focused on mere document retrieval to one centered on epistemic justice and equitable representation. To achieve this, KO must move beyond rigid hierarchical structures, embrace the complexities of context and experience, and empower marginalized communities to participate in the construction of their own representation.

2.1. Cracks in the Traditional KO Paradigm

The traditional model of Knowledge Organization, exemplified by systems like the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and the Library of Congress Classification (LCC), was born from a 19th-century positivist ambition to create a comprehensive and objective order for the world's knowledge. The underlying assumption was that knowledge could be neatly divided into discrete, mutually exclusive categories arranged in a logical, hierarchical structure, mirroring a supposed natural order. This top-down, universalist approach promised efficiency and standardization, allowing any user in any library to navigate its collection using the same logical framework (Hjørland 2008).

The critical flaw in this paradigm, however, is its unexamined claim to neutrality. As Berman (1971) famously exposed in his *Prejudices and Antipathies*, library classification systems and subject headings are replete with biased, pejorative, and outdated terminology that marginalizes entire groups of people. His work demonstrated how subject headings often rendered women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic minorities invisible or pathologized them, using language that reflected and reinforced societal prejudice. For example, topics related to women were frequently subordinated under broader, male-centric headings, and non-Western belief systems were often categorized under *mythology* or *folklore*, while Christianity was treated as the normative standard for *religion*.

This critique reveals that classification is not a passive reflection of reality but an active construction of it. As Bowker and Star (1999) argue in *Sorting Things Out*, classification systems are powerful political and ethical tools that have profound real-world consequences. By creating categories and setting their boundaries, these systems create "visibility and invisibility," conferring legitimacy on certain ways of knowing while erasing others. The hierarchical

structure itself, a hallmark of traditional KO, inherently creates relationships of subordination and superordination, often mirroring colonial and patriarchal power dynamics. This structure struggles to accommodate interdisciplinary knowledge and complex, intersecting identities, forcing them into ill-fitting and reductive categories. The result is a system that, under the guise of objective order, perpetuates a specific, dominant worldview – typically that of the Western, white, male academic – and in doing so, commits a form of epistemic violence against those who fall outside its narrow parameters.

2.2. Weaving Webs of Situated Knowledge

It is precisely this illusion of neutrality and the rigidity of hierarchical structures that feminist KO scholars have sought to dismantle. Leading this charge, Olson (1998; 2007) provides a powerful framework for rethinking the ethical and political dimensions of knowledge organization from a feminist perspective. Olson argues that the very foundations of traditional KO – its universalism, its hierarchical logic, and its disavowal of context – are fundamentally patriarchal in nature. She proposes a radical alternative, not as a replacement system, but as a set of guiding principles for creating more inclusive and just organizational structures.

At the heart of Olson's critique is the rejection of a single, universal framework. Drawing on feminist standpoint theory, which posits that knowledge is always situated and that marginalized groups possess a unique and valuable perspective on the nature of power (Harding 2004), Olson argues that any claim to a universal "view from nowhere" is a disguised "view from the top." Instead of a single truth, she advocates for a system that can accommodate a multiplicity of truths and perspectives. This requires shifting from a hierarchical pyramid to a decentralized network or web. A web-like structure, unlike a rigid tree, allows for multiple points of entry, non-linear relationships, and the representation of complex, intersecting concepts. It reflects a world where categories are not mutually exclusive but porous and interconnected, better representing the messy reality of lived experience (Olson 1998; 2007).

This emphasis on context and experience is crucial. Olson insists that KO systems must move beyond organizing abstract concepts and instead engage with the concrete, embodied experiences of users, particularly women (Olson 1998; 2007). This aligns with Haraway's (1988) influential concept of "situated knowledges", which rejects the false dichotomy between relativism and objectivity, arguing for an embodied objectivity rooted in specific, partial perspectives. For KO, this means that the knowledge of communities, especially those historically silenced, must be treated as a valid and essential resource in the design of information systems. It necessitates a participatory approach where catalogers and system designers are not distant authorities but

facilitators who work in collaboration with knowledgeable communities. Finally, Olson (2002) demands that we recognize power as an inherent factor in knowledge, acknowledging that the "power to name" is a significant political act that shapes discourse and reality.

2.3. The postcolonial challenge

Parallel to the feminist critique, postcolonial theory offers a potent lens for understanding the limitations of Western-centric KO systems. Spivak's (2010) seminal essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, while not about library science, resonates deeply with the central dilemmas of knowledge representation. Spivak introduces the "subaltern" to describe those who are socially, politically, and geographically outside the hegemonic power structures, rendered voiceless by colonial and neocolonial discourse. Her question challenges the very possibility of authentic representation, asking whether a person from a marginalized position can ever truly be heard or understood within the epistemological frameworks of the dominant culture.

In the context of KO, this translates to a critical question: "Can subaltern knowledge be represented without being distorted or co-opted by the very systems that have historically marginalized it?". Spivak's work pushes beyond a simple call for inclusion. She challenges the liberal belief that the mere production of information or the provision of access automatically constitutes knowledge or empowerment (Spivak 2010).

Access to a library or a database is of limited value if its underlying organizational logic erases or misrepresents one's history, culture, and way of being. For the subaltern woman, who exists at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression – gender, race, class, and colonial history – this problem is compounded. As Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality powerfully demonstrates, systems of power are interlocking, and an analysis that focuses only on gender without considering race or class will fail to capture the specific nature of her experience.

Spivak's interventionist and contestatory style provides a model for an alternative KO practice – one that is not content with simply adding new categories but is committed to questioning the foundations of the system itself (Spivak 2010). This requires an approach that, as argued by scholars in the decolonizing knowledge movement, actively works to center knowledge systems, treating them not as objects of study but as valid, parallel frameworks for organizing the world It means creating spaces for "epistemic disobedience," challenging the hegemony of Western scientific and bibliographic standards and fostering a pluriversal, rather than a universal, approach to knowledge.

2.4. Synthesizing a new path forward

Considering these powerful critiques, a path forward requires synthesizing their insights with emerging models within KO itself. The work of thinkers like Vignaux (2000), Souza (2006), and Szostak (2024) provides practical and philosophical tools for building this new paradigm. Vignaux (2000) reminds us that classification is a fundamental cognitive act. In a world perceived as fragmented, humans constantly seek to create order by classifying, subdividing, and applying labels to understand phenomena. This impulse to name and categorize is not inherently oppressive; the challenge lies in how it is implemented.

This is where the principles outlined by Souza (2006) become essential. Souza argues that any effective classification process must be developed based on two fundamental reference points: the nature of the information being classified, and the specific characteristics and needs of the user community. This user-centric principle directly counters the top-down universalism of traditional KO and aligns perfectly with the feminist call for context, experience, and community involvement.

Building on this, Szostak (2024) advocates for a fundamental shift in the very purpose of KO. He argues that the field should embrace purposes beyond merely classifying documents for retrieval, moving toward a phenomenon-based approach that aims to reflect ontological reality. Instead of organizing books about women, such a system would seek to organize knowledge about the complex, multifaceted phenomenon of "womanhood" itself, drawing connections across disciplines like health, labor, politics, sociology, and art.

This approach, like the work of Gnoli et al. (2018) about the Integrative Levels Classification, favors a holistic, interdisciplinary model that can better capture the richness and complexity of the world. Such a system would be inherently more web-like and less hierarchical, allowing users to explore the myriad interconnected facets of a given phenomenon, providing a practical structure for realizing the theoretical goals outlined by Olson and other critical scholars.

3. Methodological Procedures

For conducting the research, the methodological procedures are outlined based on a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative dimensions with exploratory objectives, aiming to deepen the knowledge on the identified theme. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), this approach allows for a more complete and robust understanding of the phenomenon, integrating the breadth of numerical data with the depth of content analysis.

The investigation begins with bibliographic research to build a solid theoretical framework. This conceptual foundation is grounded in two main areas: Knowledge Representation and Organization (KRO), which explores how social categories are constructed and maintained in information systems, based on authors like Olson (2002) and Hjørland (2017); and gender studies, using the theoretical contribution of Scott (1986) to analyze how gender operates as a primary category of power in social and political relations.

The next stage consists of documentary research, which, according to Gil (2008), uses primary sources that have not yet undergone analytical treatment. The documentary corpus is composed of the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda* and the legislative proposals of the 56th Legislature, retrieved from the Chamber of Deputies' portal through the *Sileg-Tramitação* system. The collection was carried out on October 14, 2024, using the descriptor *mulher* (woman).

The quantitative dimension of the research is manifested in the mapping and categorization of the legislative proposals found. In contrast, the qualitative dimension focuses on the content analysis of the documents, seeking to understand the different representations of the term *mulher* and the underlying logics of the agendas and proposals, to unveil the knowledge structures that support them.

4. Results

After reviewing the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda*, which is part of the Brazilian federal government's 2024–2027 Multi-Year Plan (2024b), the classification of legislative proposals concerning women initiated and under review in the 56th Legislature of the Chamber of Deputies was organized into five dimensions (Fig. 1): (1) Living free from violence; (2) Economic autonomy; (3) Equality in decision-making and power; (4) Health and the environment; and (5) Institutional capacity.

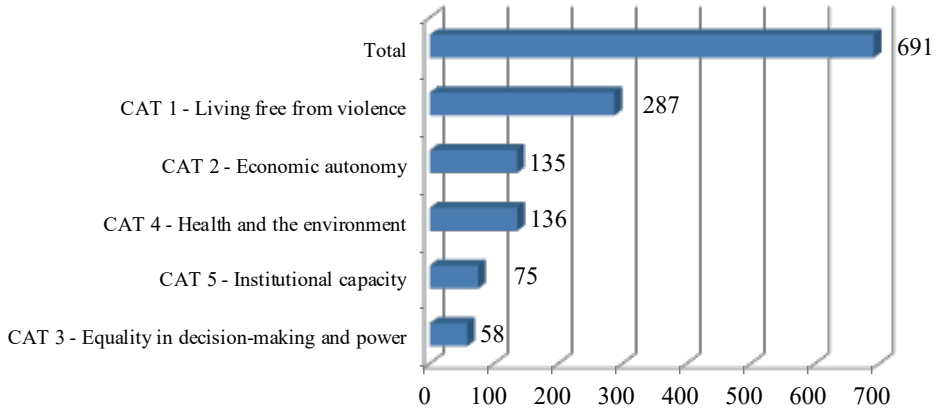


Figure 1. Legislative Proposals on Women.

Based on these five categories (CAT), 713 legislative proposals were classified, retrieved from the legislative system using the Portuguese descriptor *mulher* in titles or indexing terms. Of this total, 22 proposals were discarded: 5 (five) for addressing topics contrary to the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda*, and 17 for being related to honors and commemorative dates (Fig.1).

Proposals were considered contrary when they reinforced stereotypes, denied gender rights, or promoted setbacks in equality. The assessment was context-sensitive and aligned with the guiding principles of the *Cross-Cutting Women's Agenda (2024–2027)*.

Out of the 691 classified proposals, 58 are in *CAT 3 - Equality in decision-making and power*; 75 in *CAT 5 - Institutional capacity*; 136 in *CAT 4 - Health and the environment*; 135 in *CAT 2 - Economic autonomy*; and 287 in *CAT 1 - Living free from violence* (Fig.1).

CAT 1 – Living Free from Violence (287 Proposals - 41.5%).

This category overwhelmingly dominates the legislative agenda. It reflects a persistent political and societal recognition of gender-based violence as Brazil's most urgent women's issue. The large volume of bills suggests broad consensus and possibly public pressure, driven by high-profile femicide cases and alarming national statistics. However, the breadth of this category may also mask duplication and reactive policymaking rather than systemic reforms.

CAT 4 – Health and the Environment (136 Proposals - 19.7%)

This category shows strong representation, likely influenced by growing awareness of reproductive rights, mental health, and environmental justice as intersecting feminist issues. It may also encompass maternal health, access to healthcare in rural areas, and women's roles in environmental protection. The prominence of this dimension reveals an expanding policy vision that integrates social determinants of health with gender.

CAT 2 – Economic Autonomy (135 Proposals - 19.5%)

Legislative activity here suggests growing concern with women's access to employment, entrepreneurship, equal pay, and financial literacy. This near-equal representation alongside health points to a policy shift from protection to empowerment, aligning with international agendas.

CAT 5 – Institutional Capacity (75 Proposals - 10.9%)

Proposals in this category are likely addressing legal frameworks, data collection, gender mainstreaming in public institutions, and training of officials. Although smaller in number, their strategic significance is high. They underpin the successful implementation of all other categories, suggesting that while the quantity is lower, the quality or impact potential of these proposals may be foundational.

CAT 3 – Equality in Decision-Making and Power (58 Proposals - 8.4%)

This underrepresentation is concerning. Despite being central to dismantling structural inequality, this area is least legislated. It reveals the inertia in

shifting entrenched patriarchal political structures. Policies in this area likely involve quotas, leadership incentives, and political participation reforms. The low number may indicate legislative discomfort or resistance to redistributive changes in political power.

The legislative distribution across the five categories of the *Agenda Transversal das Mulheres* reveals a strong emphasis on combating violence, but significant underrepresentation in proposals promoting women's political empowerment. This pattern underscores a reactive rather than transformational legislative approach to gender equality. While Brazil is making strides in areas like health and economic rights, more deliberate action is needed to institutionalize gender perspectives and democratize power structures within governance.

That way, the imbalance across categories suggests that while immediate and visible threats to women's safety receive attention, transformative policies targeting systemic inequality, especially in politics, remain marginalized. Like this, the classification process enhances transparency and accountability, enabling civil society and researchers to track legislative alignment with national gender goals.

These results contribute to *Sustainable Legislative Infofeminism* (Viola 2023), a movement advocating for the enhancement and expansion of data access and information dissemination, based on technology, to develop knowledge about the evolving rights of women.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the evolution of Knowledge Organization from a technical discipline of ordering to a critically engaged field of social ethics marks a vital paradigm shift. The foundational critiques offered by feminist and postcolonial scholars have irrevocably demonstrated that traditional, universalist systems are inadequate and often harmful, perpetuating biases that silence and marginalize.

By embracing the principles articulated by Olson – of networked structures, situated knowledge, and the recognition of power – and heeding Spivak's challenge to create space for subaltern voices, KO can begin to redress these historical injustices. The future of a responsible and effective KO lies in synthesizing these critical insights with pragmatic, phenomenon-based, and user-centric models. This is not a quest for a new, perfect universal system, but rather an ongoing, collaborative commitment to building a pluriverse of knowledge systems that are flexible, contextual, and co-created with the communities they are meant to serve, ensuring that the power to name is shared by all.

Ensuring women's rights and gender equality depends on eradicating violence, promoting economic autonomy, and increasing female participation in positions of power. This transformation requires the collaboration of various government bodies and public policies based on data. Therefore, it is important to monitor future public policies that may arise from legislative proposals.

The transparency and accessibility of these results foster women's participation in the legislative process and promote awareness of and tracking legislative proposals in the Chamber of Deputies, thereby providing visibility to legislative data and information, with the aim of achieving the sustainability of women.

While the legislative content is Brazil-specific, the methodology – grounded in gender analysis and knowledge organization – is transferable. The five categories resonate with global frameworks like *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Wom*en (United Nations 1979) and the *2030 Agenda* (United Nations 2015), allowing for adaptation to different national contexts.

This research also promotes citizen engagement and supports public policymaking. Systematizing legislative data with a gender perspective also counters disinformation and strengthens the democratic process through evidence-based monitoring.

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