

## 9 Other Nations' Professional Architectural Associations

### “International Architectural Associations: Comparisons and Concerns”<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

My interest in examining professional architectural organizations outside of the United States began with the conjecture that other countries probably did more to address an unrewarding and increasingly irrelevant profession than the American Institute of Architects (AIA), an association that has proved indifferent to a faltering discipline. (See Chapter 8.) The examination of architectural organizations in France, Germany, and Sweden, however, revealed more than anything how deeply steeped these organizations are in their own national heritage and, hence, the non-importability of their models to the United States. While there are lessons to be learned about how architectural associations everywhere can more effectively nudge architecture into the public consciousness as a focus of national concern, the overriding revelation is how much architecture is used as an agent of nationalist ideology.

In the study, certain positions affecting organizational efficacy extracted from the AIA's value research were used as points for comparison<sup>2</sup>; regardless of whether these are or are not the essential variables establishing an organization's strength, they are in any case markers allowing reasonable comparisons between countries' architectural associations. The following indices are not sociologically verified categories but rather entail certain necessary (though not sufficient) positions for establishing a healthy profession: the relationship of the organization to the state; the desire or ability of the organization to address issues pertinent to both employees and employers; the relationship between agencies controlling academic accreditation, licensure, and professional regulation; the conditions of licensure; the organization's disposition toward advocacy; and the organization's openness to other industries.

France, Germany, and Sweden are used as examples not as a result of an empirical, thorough sociological analysis, but because these countries have reputations for organizing architecture differently than in the United States and because I had access to people in these countries who provided helpful insights. Continued research on other countries indicates that these three are indeed good candidates due to clear differences defining and structuring “architecture” in their particular national context.<sup>3</sup>

## The Nationalization of Architecture

### *France, the Ordre des Architectes, and UNSFA*

France, with a highly centralized government and economy, produced a professional organization first and foremost structured around French cultural hegemony. Stemming as far back as the French revolution, citizens continue to identify strongly with the Republic. They complain endlessly about their government, but they are national chauvinists through and through. The president wields enormous power, and the ministries, controlled by the president, are the main tools of institutional control.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the French legislature is notoriously weak, and France ranks only 29th in experiencing “true democracy,” according to *The Economist’s* Democracy Index.<sup>5</sup> Centralization goes hand in hand with a cult of personality that focuses on people in power as much as the structure of, or access to, power. Those rarified individuals, like other national entities and artifacts, are symbols of cultural hegemony.

France has a form of mixed capitalism—both market- and socialist-driven—that veers toward dirigisme, a highly controlled approach in which the state doesn’t merely regulate investment but also directs it. Dirigisme relies on various incentives to induce public and private actors to behave in an optimal fashion and produces general guidelines for optimal investment. Toward this end, the French government has encouraged the formation of large industry groups backed by the state. While dirigisme has come under attack in France by neoliberal, market-oriented politicians like Emmanuel Macron, it remains the embedded approach to the national economy.

Architecture occupies a special place within French centralized ideology, dirigisme, and Republican fervor: it is the principal symbol of her national identity. Yes, France boasts numerous great works of art by its many painters, sculptors, film-makers, and writers, but architecture is what people flock to France—particularly to Paris—to see. The Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame Cathedral, Haussmann’s boulevards...these are both objects of reverence and economic drivers. President François Mitterrand’s *Grands Projets* are a clear example of the mobilization of architecture for state legitimacy, itself tied up with Mitterrand’s own administrative legitimization. Within this context, architectural competitions for important public projects hosted by the state are part of the professional food chain, and even small offices are organized around winning them. Very few firms pursue private houses, a situation due in part to that fact that after 1977, projects measuring less than 150 square meters no longer required an architect under French law. In addition, the extremely low fees that architects receive for private houses make this type of work atypical.

France’s professional architecture association, the Ordre des Architectes, fits logically into this construct. Established in 1977, the Ordre is regulated financially by the Ministry of Culture, to which members pay dues then

allocated to the *Ordre*. The Ministry of Culture oversees, in addition to architecture, artistic creation (theater, dance, music, painting), communications media (cinema), and literature.<sup>6</sup> While the *Ordre* focuses exclusively on architecture, the Ministry coordinates the concerns of architects with those of contractors, engineers, developers, and clients and facilitates interactions between these players. The official in charge of architecture in the Ministry takes pride in addressing the complex but mutually dependent needs of those in the AEC industry.

Membership in the *Ordre* gives architects free access to contracts, **workshops and** missives on new technologies (like BIM), and reassurance that the *Ordre* is “facilitating” the client-architect relationship. It also ensures that public projects are presented yearly to the French president. In managing competitions that fuel professional practice, the *Ordre*, in many ways, continues the *Beaux-Arts* tradition that links these competitions to the production of cultural grandeur and assures the visibility of architecture in public consciousness.

All architects must be registered with the *Ordre*. Unlike membership in the AIA, membership in the *Ordre* is not voluntary; you are not a legal architect in France without also being a member. Prior to membership, one must graduate from an accredited school of architecture—generally a five-year, post-lycée education—and complete one year of apprenticeship. No exam is required. This makes entry into the profession relatively easy, assuring a continuous supply of *Ordre* members. The link between the *Ordre* and academic accreditation is indirect but still centralized and regulated: the Ministry of Culture manages the National Superior Schools of Architecture, from which the *Ordre*'s members are drawn.

The *Ordre*, the Ministry of Culture, and national patrimoine yield an attention to architecture that the United States can only envy. For example, the 1977 French Public Building Procurement Law (*Loi MOP*) states:

Architectural creation, the quality of buildings, their harmonious integration into the surrounding environment, respect for natural or urban landscapes and heritage are of public interest....Consequently [t]he contracting authorities are required to call on the assistance of the architects.<sup>7</sup>

However, centralized control also makes the profession vulnerable to the whims of a given presidential administration. A weak official in the Ministry, or a weak Ministry, can drag all of architecture down with it. For example, Macron passed laws threatening the long-standing requirement to use architects to assure the construction of high-quality housing, an attempt to boost faster, cheaper, lesser-quality housing. These laws, calling for the private development of badly needed social housing, have generated protests by outraged architects.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, in France's move toward a freer, market-driven economy, public projects, originally making up

over 60% of all construction, have dropped to half that amount, with little adjustment in how architects are meant to secure or be compensated for their work.

For all the cultural and political support for architecture in France, the *Ordre*, as a “public delegation of service,” neither advocates for the profession of architecture nor for architects; instead, it defends the public’s engagement with architecture. The *Ordre* is clear that unlike the AIA, it is not a trade association promoting the goals of its industry. This resonates with US antitrust laws, which, guarding against collusion, prevent the government from promoting a trade or profession.<sup>9</sup> The fact that French architects are nevertheless proud of their association with and acknowledgment by the *Ordre*, despite its taking the side of the public, is perplexing until one remembers that, through their competitions, the *Ordre* controls the distribution of state projects. Architects compete to be in the *Ordre*’s good graces. But even if this fidelity is understandable, it doesn’t necessarily deliver a happy outcome for architects. There is a certain cynicism in regard to the whole institutional system, particularly from the many staff architects who realize that they will never need to stamp a drawing and wonder why they should register with the *Ordre* and pay its hefty 700 euro annual fee.

Complementing the *Ordre* is a voluntary syndicate of architectural firm owners, the National Union of French Trade Unions of Architects (UNSFAs).<sup>10</sup> Created from within the *Ordre* 50 years ago, it withdrew 30 years later, frustrated by the *Ordre*’s directive to serve the public rather than the profession. UNSFA advocates for higher fees (although fee schedules were made illegal 15 years ago in accordance with EU regulations), rights, and representation at the regional and national level. In comparison to the *Ordre*, which ensnares all architects and all their dues, the UNSFA represents less than 8% of French firms. It has little prestige or money, few staff, and thus little power.<sup>11</sup> Some have explained this lack of recognition as a function of UNSFA’s uncharismatic leaders, but it also speaks to cultural snobbery and an ideological distain for treating architecture as labor or work. This distain, however, seems to be changing in response to the new laws, which by-pass the need for architects in housing projects. Increasingly, architects realize that they may not be able to rely on the Ministries for their commissions.

Still farther down the chain, architectural employees (as opposed to firm owners), excluded from UNSFA, have the option to join one of five national employee unions—but only one—the Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT). A branch of CFDT, the *Syndicat National des Professions de l’Architecture et de l’Urbanisme* (SYNATPAU), represents the employees of architects, surveyors, and building economists. Perhaps because French labor laws are already strongly pro-employee, or perhaps because few workers identify with the syndicate when they understand their livelihood to be *Ordre*-dependent, SYNATPAU draws few members and has virtually no political presence in the profession.

The upshot: Architecture in France is an agent of French cultural hegemony. The pride that the government and the public take in architecture is enviable, and the *Ordre* is in a strong position to leverage the French allegiance to *patrimoine*. The identity of French architects and the state is folded into their monumental objects. However, that same pride in the magnificence of architecture is part and parcel with disdain within the profession for the idea of the architect as worker. That architects are more devoted to an agency that serves the public than one that serves to bolster their own relevance indicates a gap in their professional consciousness that is only now beginning to haunt them.

***Germany, the Architekten Kammern (Land of Chambers), and the Bund Deutscher Architekten (BDA; The Association/Federation of German Architects)***

Germany is a country that honors order and takes pride in the quantity and quality of its manufactured goods. As far back as 1914, it led the world in the production of steel, chemicals, and electrical equipment.<sup>12</sup> German industrialization is directly related to its creation of the first welfare state that, in addition to supporting its new urban class with progressive labor laws, initiated a universal education policy to give its citizens superior mathematical, technical, and managerial skills. Moreover, as the *Werkbund* and its multiple national expos demonstrated, the government has historically been invested not only in branding and exporting its technical expertise but also in its innovative buildings.

Germany's government—a combination of UK parliamentarianism and US federalism accommodating its 16 separate regions—is structured to capitalize on export strength. As a socialized market economy that mingles market-driven systems with Christian-values-based social welfare, it contains, as Matt Phillips writing for *Quartz* explains, what seem to be multiple contradictions:

muscular unions and corporate efficiency; high-cost workers who can compete in global manufacturing; generous unemployment benefits and low levels of unemployment; and a fragmented base of independent small-and-medium manufacturers—the *Mittelstand*—able to compete on the highest levels of productivity and efficiency.<sup>13</sup>

This united approach to, and pride in, the GDP does not, however, translate into the same jingoism that marks the French. Germans are the least likely nation in Europe to be nationalistic—an understandable sentiment given its World War II history—and they put more stock in their judiciary system than they do their legislature. German respect for law, order, and authority comes from a belief that there is a right and a wrong way to act, and the faith that these moral values are shared by the general population.

Germany's cultural traits influence the profession of architecture and affect its main organizing body, the *Architekten Kammers* ("Land of Chambers"). Architecture in Germany, as is well known, is closely aligned with engineering, linking it to German technical expertise. German buildings, showcasing material and performative capabilities, are an entirely different breed than those designed in France, which demonstrate spatial and stylistic splendor. Architects' proximity to engineering, while clearly adding luster to the technical quality of their work, also makes the discipline anxious about their formal virtuosity. They hear the public's criticism that they just produce "concrete boxes" and feel the profession diminished from early, modernist, formal exploration; likewise, they feel the anxiety of knowing engineers could do the same work for lower cost.

To be an architect in Germany, one has to have a diploma from an accredited school, complete a two-year internship, and join their region's *Architekten Kammers*. No exam is required. Accreditation is controlled by the universities, not the *Kammers*, indicating Germany's prioritization of education as a national policy driver. Its technical emphasis typically makes architectural education at a German university last a year longer than elsewhere in Europe, a fact of which German architects are both proud and frustrated. The post-university two-year internship requires demonstrating expertise in various complex competencies.

Architecture in Germany is a very well-respected profession. As in France, it enjoys high social status. However, German architects hesitate to pursue licensure because the two-year apprenticeship is so difficult and because, in a field dominated by large firms with the large teams needed to complete technologically complex buildings, many are certain they will never need to stamp a drawing. As a result, 50% of those graduating from accredited architecture schools in Germany do not complete registration.

Cooperating with the Federal Chamber of German Engineers (the professional association of architects, engineers, and urban planners), and participating in the Office of the German Council for Building Culture, the *Kammers* "promote the building culture, architecture, construction, urban planning, and landscape management" of the nation.<sup>14</sup> The *Kammer's* institutional link to other disciplines follows from an assumption that "building" is a multi-disciplinary act and that "building" as much as architecture is the goal. For architects, this might be considered an asset with regard to built environment advocacy but is also a concern that, in this multi-disciplinary environment, architecture struggles to prove its specific value.

As in France, the German *Kammers* are semi-public entities housed in a government Ministry, although the *Kammers* position in its Ministry is less stable than in France. The *Kammers* have been shuffled around to various Ministries, including the Ministry of Finance, and have never been part of the Ministry of Interior, much to the frustration of the architectural profession.<sup>15</sup> Unlike France's *Ordre*, however, the *Kammers*

represent the profession, not the public, and herein lies Germany's unique approach to labor. In Germany's pro-employee environment, all workers, whether firm owners or staff, must have written employment contracts with their Kammer that reflect key aspects of the employment relationship. In other words, there is no self-employment, no freelancing. Everyone is a worker. As with certain other professions, the German government gives the Kammers the responsibility of controlling architecture's own labor relations and pensions, semi-independent of the government. Architects pay a portion of their monthly salary to the government, which, in turn, filters it back to the Kammers.<sup>16</sup> This system helps connect individual architects to the system at large and to each other.

The amount of attention that the Kammers pay to labor is also indicated by their fee schedules. Despite the fact that the European Union has banned fee schedules (as has the United States; see Chapter 6), Germany continues to use what is known as the *Honorarordnung für Architekten und Ingenieure* (HOIA) system, which delineates the appropriate compensation per building type and size. To the envy of many other countries (besides Sweden, where they feel such schedules are not necessary), the schedule argues that competition should be based not on fee but on quality and qualification. While the HOIA system is under constant review, it helps prevent architects from undercutting fees in order to compete against each other.

As in France, Germany also has an architectural association for firm owners. Unlike France, however, this organization, the *Bund Deutscher Architekten* (BDA), has historically garnered significant prestige. Established in 1903, when anyone could call themselves an architect, membership is by invitation only. The approximately 4,300 BDA members account for one-third of the construction volume in Germany, proving the ongoing value of this elite designation. But the organization, full of aging practitioners, is seen to be obstructively conservative and increasingly irrelevant, especially as small offices, which the BDA members represent, disappear.

The upshot: The buildings produced by German architects, once exports themselves (through the Werkbund and the Expos), are today appreciated less for what they are and more for what they point toward: technology. On the positive side, this connects the industry to national economic concerns, and the fact that architecture is conceptually and administratively linked to other industries, especially engineering and construction, positions it for relevance in national decisions that shape the built environment. On the negative side, this threatened autonomy does not fully satisfy German architects or develop an independent sense of worth within the profession. Architects manage (and maintain) their own safety net and operate in a system, the HOIA, that limits a competitive race to the bottom of the fee schedule. However, architects worry that the HOIA has stifled innovation. In summation, Germany provides a full display of the pros and cons of a highly organized and governmentally connected profession.

***Sweden and the Swedish Association of Architects  
(Sveriges Arkitekter)***

Sweden, a small country whose homogeneity allows it to gain public consensus relatively easily, is a welfare state.<sup>17</sup> It employs a corporatist system of capitalism that organizes society by corporate sector, such as agriculture, the military, research and development, and so on. These various groups are unionized, and through them, the government mediates wages and labor market policies. The mix of unionism and free market capitalism decentralizes the work of the government not by region but by trade.<sup>18</sup> When each corporate group performs its designated function well, the assumption is that society will operate harmoniously. This semi-top-down approach to government is matched, seemingly inconsistently, with excellent ratings—no. 3 in the world—for democratic, bottom-up representation. This confluence is explained by the trust the Swedes have in their government, bolstered by their Freedom of Information laws which state that any piece of paper produced by any government agency is public property.

Sweden's GDP, among the highest in the EU, is based on an economy of technical and workplace innovation. Volvo, Ericsson, and Sony are examples in traditional industries; Spotify and Skype in IT; and Skanska, the fifth largest construction company in the world, in construction. Sweden's innovation economy relies on governmental commitments to research and development, and its support of various initiatives linking the academies to industry, and linking both to the public sphere.

The Swedes' view of their architectural heritage is, at best, neutral. Proud of their modernist architects, especially Gunnar Asplund, the general homogeneity of Swedish buildings foregrounds practicality and conformity over formal flair. Historically, the reputation of architecture plummeted during the "Million Program," a government initiative instigated in 1965 that aimed to build a million new homes within ten years to house the massive population increase following World War II. No one likes the patterned, repetitive architecture that this program yielded. The irony is that architects were blamed for what they didn't do: the contract for this housing initiative was given to construction companies which generally by-passed architectural input. This program, interestingly, also spawned the growth of Sweden's construction industry, especially Skanska.

On the flip side, formal neutrality is also indicative of the emphasis Swedes place on function and the need to serve its citizens; foregrounding "shelter" logically melds architecture with construction. This social and pragmatic emphasis gives the profession its particular "how can we best address it?" attitude and makes the average citizen a participant in the architectural process. A new law, for example, says that any project that involves new spatial programming must consult the future users of that space.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, the "law of public procurement" stipulates that an

investor must receive “full value” for his or her money, requiring full transparency regarding an architect’s expertise, experience, and financial stability. While Swedes may be indifferent to the designs of their buildings, these procedures insure that they trust architects and respect the profession of architecture.

Architecture as a “political field” is under several ministries within the government; the latest policies of February 2018 being presented to the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Housing, and the Ministry of Environment.<sup>20</sup> The interpenetration of architecture in multiple governmental agencies has numerous benefits. Primary among these is direct support for architectural research. The Swedish Research Council, Sweden’s largest governmental research funding body, oversees the Swedish Council for Building Research, which distributes architectural grants not only to universities but also to private architectural firms—particularly those innovating across construction, design, the environment, and finance—that often operate as mini research centers. Likewise, the infiltration of architecture across government ministries allows architecture direct access to policy-making. The union for architects recently initiated and successfully lobbied to pass the “Stamped Living Environment” bill proposing that “architecture, form and design will contribute to a sustainable, equal and less segregated society with carefully designed habitats, where everyone is given good opportunities to influence the development of the common environment.”<sup>21</sup> An innovative method for financing housing initiated by a private architecture firm aimed at the under-served rental market, championed by the architectural association, is being evaluated in the Ministries.<sup>22</sup>

Despite its status, architecture operates in the shadow of Sweden’s powerful construction industry. While builders, not architects, are liable for building flaws—a boon for architects and exceptional in architecture practice worldwide—most architectural contracts are placed under, or nested within, the owner/builder contract, making architects secondary players in a given project. Likewise, to meet the demands of these construction-driven projects, architecture firms are increasingly large and heavily staffed. The private housing market is tiny, and small firms suffer as a result.

The Swedish Architectural Association (*Sveriges Arkitekter*), reflecting the unique ethos of bottom-up openness and top-down control, neither regulates nor cares about licensure; anyone in Sweden can call themselves an architect. Rather, the *Sveriges Arkitekter* sweeps up and systematizes those graduating from accredited schools of architecture who must join the *Sveriges Arkitekter* upon graduation, new architects becoming Members of Associated Architects (MSA). In a system in which a plumber can call herself an architect, the *Sveriges Arkitekter* guarantees potential clients that its members are sufficiently trained. The *Sveriges Arkitekter*, in other words, provides more than general architectural branding; it provides genuine quality control for the public. And while the government, not the *Sveriges Arkitekter*, manages academic accreditation, the

Sveriges Arkitekter helps direct the distribution of funding in the academy, the public sphere, and private firms.

True to the Swedish system, the Sveriges Arkitekter is a union—indeed, a union of employees. Employers are members of their own union, the Employers Organization for the Service Sector, but it gives employers little voice in the profession. The significance of having an employee-run union to represent architecture and architects isn't merely a pro-forma Swedish contrivance; it showcases awareness of the real conditions of architectural production. The reward for the Swedish architects is not merely labor-oriented pride. A survey conducted by the Swedes determined that Swedish architects are the highest paid among architects in Europe. As they put it, “the securer the title, the lower the fee.”<sup>23</sup>

Like architects everywhere, those in Sweden complain about the lack of aesthetic diversity, express dismay over the fate of small firms, and chafe at the confines of a highly monitored and homogenous institution. An anti-union “Free Architects” association has formed in opposition to the Sveriges Arkitekter, but in general, Sveriges Arkitekter members are, relative to architects other countries, pleased with their professional lives.

The upshot: Swedish architecture is promoted as a product of the knowledge economy and innovation. The emphasis on research and development is not applied to technical advances as it is in Germany; rather, it is directed to less physical and more social constructs. The emphasis on the user instead of the buildings is part and parcel with the Swedish view of the architect: she is a citizen first and a designer second, hence the profession's emphasis on the employee-led, unionized worker. Clearly the cultural homogeneity and the small physical size of the country of Sweden are essential to an administrative system that believes it can find a common built environment solution for its citizens, for its owners and employees, and for its various and integrated trades. They seem to have an unusually enlightened model of architecture.

### ***The United States and the American Institute of Architects***

The United States has a capitalist economy blending free markets with state intervention. It is characterized by private ownership of the means of production through profit-seeking enterprises and the accumulation of capital. Increasingly, however, this mixed economy is transforming into a laissez-faire market, where state activity is limited to providing only the most basic public goods and the legal infrastructure to protect property rights and enforce contracts. The United States has the world's largest GDP, fueled by natural resources, industrial production, technological innovation, and the world's largest and most influential financial market, all powered by an ethos of entrepreneurialism and individual success. The government trusts that the best products, practices, and services will flourish as consumers vote with their pocketbook. If the market yields

conditions that are not in the public interest, change doesn't come from above, though executive action, but from below—legislative action initiated by representatives who trust that the legislation they introduce matters to the people they represent, so as to insure they will be re-elected. Of course, architecture is not one of the issues that citizens demand their legislators address, and architectural lobbying is weak. Moreover, the rich and the powerful—including well-organized lobbyists who don't represent the general public—are heard more loudly than others. The power of private lobbies is one of the reasons that the United States is ranked 25th in the world in terms of the strength of its democracy, falling into the “flawed democracy” category.

The United States, unlike Sweden, is neither small nor homogeneous. This makes governance and legislation difficult. Diversity renders consensus hard to find, and fragmentation, exacerbated by the division of power between the federal government and state governments, makes comprehensive legislation affecting the public good nearly impossible to pass. While once-upon-a-time the parallel success of the labor movement and industrial advancement created a type of American commons (albeit a highly exclusionary one), today there is virtually nothing political, economic, or cultural that could be so designated. Architecture—as object, symbol, infrastructure, urbanism, technology, or social programming—has virtually no political presence. Unlike France, which views architecture as a source of national pride; Germany, which views its buildings as demonstrations of technical expertise; or Sweden, which understands its built environment as a social experiment, the United States has no particular collective view of architecture other than an ability to build tall skyscrapers that speak to capitalist development.

Within this construct, the profession of architecture obviously suffers. Construction in the United States is 78% privately financed, while in Europe at large construction it is under 50% privately financed. As a consequence of private market dominance in the United States, there is no governmental stake in architecture. Yes, there is a Department of Housing and Urban Development within the federal government, but its emphasis is on development, and architecture is nowhere to be seen.<sup>24</sup> The effect on architectural practice is a plethora of small offices that primarily design private houses, offices, and retail space. This not only fragments architectural workers across an infinite field but ensures that offices compete with one another over a very small prize.

While this condition is handed to architecture from the outside, one could say, the profession and its architectural association have not done themselves any favors by insisting on its cultural exceptionalism. Without repeating the entire discussion of the AIA's failures, identified in Chapter 8 (which sparked this comparative research), fundamental failures can be identified again here. Architects have increasingly limited their scope of responsibility, shedding risk for reduced liability. The idea is not

merely that architects will be spared the cost of potential litigation but that singularly owning the aesthetic dimension of architecture will add to professional luster. The difficulty of entering the profession—the normal path to licensure post-high school is ten years (four years for a Bachelor of Arts, three for a professional Master's degree, and three for an internship), plus a difficult examination, four years longer than elsewhere—means that only the exceptionally well-off ever enter. The defensive laws that protect the profession from infiltration by construction, “designers,” engineers, and developers, fragment it; this guarantees that all those with a stake in a better built environment will not speak with one voice. The assumed cultural caché that presumably comes with architecture's uniqueness is matched by an assumption that such caché will pay off financially. Here, one must recall the Swedish observation that “the securer the title, the lower the fee” and the fact that Swedish architects are better paid than elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, US architects are identified as uniquely underpaid.<sup>25</sup>

In this context, the American Institute of Architects both succumbs to reality and exacerbates it. As a fraternal, voluntary organization, its main goal is to secure work for, and celebrate the achievements of, its members. It has nothing to do with licensure and, hence, has no role in indicating to potential clients that membership delivers quality (as in Sweden). Membership doesn't give one access to contracts or insurance, or free access to technological upgrades as in France, nor access to governmental policy-making, as in all three European countries. AIA dues support risk management and the security of ethical neutrality alone. Innovation is assumed to exist within individual practices or in the universities, and the AIA has no stake in, interest for, or money to support it. As Chapter 8 points out, fragmentation between the AIA, dealing with architectural protocols; NAAB, dealing with accreditation; and NCARB, regulating licensure, hinders a profession already struggling for governmental attention. Likewise, the fact that the AIA refuses to make a distinction between owners and employees, consistent with an American lack of labor consciousness, means that it can't speak to the actual, on-the-ground conditions of architectural production and can't participate in the increasingly important debates on the value of organized labor in an era of entrepreneurialism.

The upshot: Architecture in the United States is seen as an expensive add-on to building by the public and potential clients. The nation, dominated by private development, has no national stake in architecture or the quality of its built environment. Within the profession, firms competing for projects by lowering fees yield a race to the bottom. In this, the AIA mainly tries to manage expectations and secure its own centrality in the industry, despite the fact that it has virtually no power, disengaged as it is from licensure and accreditation. The AIA pretends that there is no difference between employers and employees so as to maintain a positive spin on our supposedly fulfilling work. The avoidance of taking on ethical and practical problems leaves the profession leaderless.

## **Coordinated Architectural Empowerment**

As mentioned, the goal of this research, to learn from other nations' architectural professional organizations in order to transform and empower the United States' AIA, proved to be misplaced and rather naïve. The other architectural associations investigated here are, as this paper has argued, embedded in the particularities of each country's national cultural ethos. However, national particularity does not prevent certain mechanisms that might increase professional authority in the United States, or really, anywhere, from emerging.

If a professional organization wants to speak for its professionals, it should represent all architectural workers. In trying to convince the authorities and the public that architects offer value, speaking for the whole is essential. In fact, it should be mandatory. Likewise, avoiding the fragmentation of different entities managing accreditation, licensure, and professional conduct is critical for a strong voice within government; better still is the placement of architecture, as in all three European countries mentioned above, in a ministry or federal department. At the same time, the notion of the "profession" needs to expand. Integrating architecture with other areas of expertise in lieu of isolating "architecture" through artificial protectionism combines voices advocating for the built environment. Engineering, construction, planning, landscape architecture, and "designers" are not the enemy; a public that doesn't know that we matter to their lives or the lives of their children and a government that ignores material quality and long-term thinking when planning civic spaces are.

At the same time, if membership in a professional organization becomes mandatory, members must get something in return. The Kammers manage pensions and fees, the Swedish union arranges all architects' benefits, and the French manage competitions as well as client/architect relationships; these are real advantages. Even having a body that looks critically at what can be improved procedurally or ethically to make architecture more effective and architectural work less precarious—a low bar for an organization advocating for the industry—would be an asset.

Speaking for both employees and employers is essential for a number of reasons. Conceptually, it makes it impossible to ignore the fact that architects labor; practically, it ensures that those involved in the production of architecture (and not merely those attending to profit) are heard; and financially, it ensures that offices calculate the value of labor in their business plan. The fact that Sweden sees no conflict between being a union and effectively advocating for the profession is illuminating. Germany's careful categorization of workers, its dispensing of pensions according to these categories, and its fee schedules offer advantages similar to unionization. It might take a very long time for US architects to accept unionization, but the importance of some form of employee representation is undeniable.

And finally, research and development is necessary for architecture's participation in the current economy. In the United States, where R&D in

architecture is not supported by the state—as it is in Sweden and Germany, and to a certain extent in France—architects rely on non-profits offering grants, or on individual firms to take money from their profitable projects to plug into (non-profitable) research. Architecture schools that support R&D are few and far between despite the fact that all people live in a built environment, with direct impact on society and on individual mental and physical health.

## **Conclusion**

For all of this analysis to unearth the mechanisms of empowering various architectural associations, one has to recognize that more fundamental factors are amiss. Architects across the board are unhappy with their lot, underpaid, and feel attacked from within and without.<sup>26</sup> Is this the condition of all workers, or at least all professional workers, in today's neoliberal world? Lawyers in the United States are miserable, as are doctors; workers at Facebook are striking; journalists are unionizing. The entrepreneurial mandate that resides uneasily in an increasingly oligarchic system implies that work today is not meant to be empowering, satisfying, or rewarding to the individual worker. As pointed to herein, architecture has its own particular battles within this context. Thus, while this paper began by looking at the necessary but not sufficient mechanisms for empowering architecture in today's economy, a list of the "sufficient" conditions—or, perhaps, the conditions required for the "necessary" to be possible—might reflect elements specific to architecture while also indicating more systematic necessary changes.

Five final points. One: we should reconsider professionalism altogether, as Chapters 6 and 8 argue. As a construct that inappropriately preserves our sense of entitlement and exceptionalism while offering virtually no advantages to architects as a group other than a reputation of elitism, ego, expense, and indifference to practicality, and as a set of protocols that ensures we do not easily connect with other areas of expertise, like landscape, construction, engineering, or finance, professionalism is no longer effective in today's economy and is furthermore a hindrance to systematic economic change. Sweden shows that the lack of strict professional accreditation represents neither the end of social influence nor the curtailment of financial reward. Two: we should directly address the ethical issues in which architecture is implicated: global warming, sea level rise, border incarceration, prisons, and refugee housing and services. The "profession" might think that this is "too political" and scares off potential public and private clients, but the long-term benefits to our reputation would far outweigh any immediate backlash. Society needs to know that these issues are within our purview and that we not only care about the future of our planet but also want to lead the transition away from our current policies. Three: we should dismantle the pro-private real estate ethos that allows developers' monetary interests to determine our urban environments. In a struggle between who determines the environment we live in, the state or the market, we should choose the state and argue for its attention.

Four: we should weigh in on production automation and its consequences for architectural and construction work. Developments in drones, 3-D printing, AI, VR, and so on that implicate and enthuse architects need to be studied holistically and not rely upon an assumption that society and AEC workers will automatically benefit from these advances. Five: we should resist the cooption of architecture into national ideology that this paper outlines and, instead, present a coherent image of architecture that our states adopt, not manipulate. We should not be surprised that the public neither understands what we do nor knows what we are capable of if we cannot ourselves define these things. It is less that our brand is tarnished than that it doesn't exist. What would it take for architects and architecture associations to debate a shared agenda? What would a global, contemporary CIAM look like? This is a topic for another paper, but it needs to be asked. What might we do if architects all over the world united behind a clear position that stood up for the future of the planet?

## Notes

- 1 A version of this chapter was first published in *Time + Architecture* 5, ed. Xiahong Hu (Tongji: Tongji University Press, 2018), 12–18. It is modified and shortened here with permission from the editor and the publishers.
- 2 Peggy Deamer, Keefer Dunn, and Manuel Shvartzberg, *Avery Review – And Now: Architecture against a Developer Presidency*, April 2017. Also reprinted here as Chapter 8.
- 3 The other countries studied are China, Denmark, New Zealand, and, partially, the UK. China offers its own unique lessons on a state-controlled profession battling with privatization of practice.
- 4 Ministries in France are Ministry of Interior, Ministry for Ecological and Solidarity Transition, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Armed forces, Ministry of Territorial Cohesion, Ministry of Solidarity and Health, and Ministry of Economics and Finance. A comparison of each nation's Ministries/State Departments is interesting in and of itself, indicating what matters and what doesn't.
- 5 The Economist/Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2018: Me, Too?" Norway ranks no. 1, Iceland no. 2, Sweden no. 3, Germany no. 13, UK no. 14, and US no. 25. The United States and France are in the category of "flawed democracy." [www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=-Democracy\\_Index\\_2018.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy2018](http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=-Democracy_Index_2018.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy2018)
- 6 Think of France's support for its film industry, for example.
- 7 "Law No. 77-2 of 3 January 1977 on Architecture: Consolidated version as of July 23, 2019," [https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate\\_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.com&sl=fr&sp=nmt4&u=https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do%3FcidTexte%3DJORFTEX-T00000522423&xid=17259,15700021,15700043,15700186,15700191,15700256,15700259,15700262&usq=ALkJrhi0WmS9zZjZkpzIJOZTtjJX4Bu98Q; accessed 08/15/2018](https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.com&sl=fr&sp=nmt4&u=https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do%3FcidTexte%3DJORFTEX-T00000522423&xid=17259,15700021,15700043,15700186,15700191,15700256,15700259,15700262&usq=ALkJrhi0WmS9zZjZkpzIJOZTtjJX4Bu98Q; accessed 08/15/2018)
- 8 The placement of housing in the Minister for Urban Affairs and Housing, attached to the Minister of Territorial Cohesion and not the Ministry of Culture where the Ordre, and hence architecture, resides, facilitates this move. It also is indicative of the fact that housing isn't seen to work in the ideology of hegemonic culture.

- 9 Those working in the Ordre say that architect-client relationships are problematic; those in the Ministry of Culture, on the other hand, say they are fine. Who knows, but both attitudes support their mission. The problematic story suggests the need for the Ordre to guard the public from architectural abuses; the positive story works for the government view of a shared public pride the French have for architecture.
- 10 See Note 4.
- 11 It was very indicative that my Parisian colleague who was into my project and made many of the connection to the Ministry and the Ordre didn't even think to mention UNSFA until it was brought up by the Ministry, and when pressed, my colleague said, "Why would one be interested in an association that just argues for more fees?"
- 12 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London: Fontana, 1989), 270–271.
- 13 "Germany's bizarre version of capitalism—where bosses and workers actually cooperate—is winning," Quartz, Matt Phillips, August 9, 2015, <https://qz.com/452076/this-just-in-german-capitalism-has-won/>; accessed 08/21/2018.
- 14 Bundes Architekten Kammer, "Regulation of the architectural profession and practice in Germany," [www.bak.de/eng/regulation/](http://www.bak.de/eng/regulation/), accessed September 14, 2018.
- 15 The German Federal Ministries are German Foreign Affairs, Federal Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth, Federal Ministry of Finance, Federal Ministry of Health, and Federal Ministry of the Interior.
- 16 Told to me by Professor Dr. Lutz Beckman, an architect in Oldenburg Germany, in a phone conversation on July 6, 2018.
- 17 Welfare states are those which have a strong social safety net, in which the state protects and promotes the economic and social well-being of the citizens via the principle of equal opportunity for all.
- 18 The Ghent system—an arrangement in some northern countries whereby the main responsibility for unemployment welfare payment is held by the unions rather than the government—asks the various trade unions to take on the care of its workers benefits and safety net.
- 19 Told to me by Marie Strid, Senior Lecturer and Head of Division for Building Design, Art Design and Architecture, University of Gothenburg.
- 20 As told to me by Fredrik Nillson, Dean of Art Design and Architecture, University of Gothenburg. The Ministries in Sweden are Culture, Defense, Education and Research, Employment, Enterprise and Innovation, the Environment, and Finance.
- 21 "Nytt nationellt mål för arkitekturformoch designpolitiken," February 22, 2018, accessed August 25, 2018; translation by author.
- 22 This was told to me in an interview with the owner of the firm that has introduced this bill, Magnus Mässon, on March 9, 2018.
- 23 From an interview with Tobias Olsson, the Federal Director of Sveriges Arkitekter in Venice on May 28, 2018.
- 24 The US Federal Executive Departments are Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Housing and Urban Development.
- 25 See Robert Gutman's insightful analysis of the condition in his *Architectural Practice: A Critical View* (Princeton, NJ, 1988) Princeton Architectural Press.
- 26 See BBC's "3 Careers You thought Mad Megabucks," [www.bbc.com/work-life/article/20160812-three-careers-you-thought-paid-megabucks-but-dont](http://www.bbc.com/work-life/article/20160812-three-careers-you-thought-paid-megabucks-but-dont), accessed July 20, 2019.