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# Dissenting Designers: Reading Activism and Advocacy in Architecture through a Sociological Lens

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**ABSTRACT**
The history of American architecture includes many examples of activists and reformers who sought to make the profession more inclusive, just, and socially engaged. This article provides a review of the academic literature discussing the efforts of such architects in order to identify historic trends in the study of activist architects in the United States—this paper's focus. After an initial period of growth and consolidation in the profession, contemporary forms of social engagement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Subsequent decades have seen many of these efforts continue, or be revived, alongside increased academic interest in these same efforts. The article then reviews three areas of sociological research pertinent to the scholarship on socially engaged design. These focus on institutional change within the profession, the "logics" that guide architectural work, and the relationship between the profession and the academy. This article explores these institutional perspectives for their potential to complement frameworks for analyzing dissent in design.

**KEYWORDS**
Activism; architectural historiography; architecture profession; social architecture; sociology

> To talk of socially engaged architecture is surely to talk of a given. All architecture is socially engaged. Period.
>
> —Jeremy Till (2018)[1]

> What is called *social* architecture is the practice of architecture as an instrument for progressive social change. It foregrounds the moral imperative to increase human dignity and reduce human suffering.
>
> —Anthony Ward (1996)[2]

> To challenge or expand the conscious goal of architecture, the practitioner must also challenge or expand the rationality designed to realize this end. Thus, the creation of humanitarian and activist architecture is not simply a matter of offering services to new clients. It is a matter of creating a new field.
>
> —Scott Shall (2009)[3]

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## Introduction

These epigraphs suggest a paradox within the scholarship on socially engaged architecture. While scholars and practitioners make frequent statements in support of those forms of practice that are robustly engaged with progressive social values, designers face institutional barriers when it comes to realizing these ideas. "All architecture" may be, by definition, "socially engaged," yet architects have to make a living in a system that does not necessarily support "progressive social change." In this article, we consider ways in which the tension between the ideological and practical positions on socially engaged design have become thoroughly institutionalized. A 2014 report of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) finds evidence of significant barriers to architects' participation in public interest design projects, including a lack of jobs in public interest design, lower pay in those jobs that do exist, and a lack of meaningful training in these practices.[4] At the same time, the report highlights many successful examples of socially engaged projects and documents a widespread belief in their value among architects. Despite its long history and prominent place in the contemporary field, socially engaged architecture continues to face significant challenges to its institutionalization within organizations of the American architecture profession.

This article comes out of an interdisciplinary study of activism and social justice advocacy among American architects, undertaken by scholars of environmental design and sociology. While architects are passionate about social responsibility, the ways in which these passions find institutional support within the field—or not—stand to benefit from insights drawn from interdisciplinary perspectives. An analytical framework for studying the institutionalization of social justice activism would provide sociological insight toward answering the following questions: How might the architecture profession change to allow it to fulfill a socially progressive mission? What does it mean to "create a new field," as the third quotation, above, demands?

We offer, here, a view on these complex questions from outside architecture. First, we reflect on a series of dominant perspectives in the historiography of socially engaged practice in architecture. This review centers on the United States due to the scope and mandate of our ongoing empirical research. We review secondary, academic sources—rather than original, historical documents—because our goal is to identify trends in architecture scholars' collective understanding of social engagement and social critique within the field. In the second part of the paper, we present sociological theories that we believe can offer new terms of reference to scholars examining socially engaged architectural practices and architecture's professional institutions. Here, we present from the domain of sociology concepts to account for the kinds of institutional processes illustrated by dissent and activism among professionals generally. Broadly speaking, internal critique of the field as socially unjust or of the design process as insufficiently engaged with social problems represents a broader phenomenon: diverse position-takings and beliefs about core missions that are found within every professional field. Institutional circumstances and power relations within the field determine the success or failure of advocates' efforts to advance change in a profession. Thus, the sociological theories we present here are intended to stimulate new ways of conceiving

of the dissent and socially engaged work that many architects practice as representative of processes found in other professions. In short, these include: theories of institutional change, theories of the multiple "logics" guiding professional work, and theories on the relations between "ecologies" or domains of professional work. These are areas of swift development in sociology currently, rooted in empirical studies of the flow of material and symbolic resources within organizations and, more broadly, within professional fields.

Throughout the article, we approach socially engaged design as a broad category of practices, spanning design practice in the public interest—such as affordable housing, pro bono work, and humanitarian projects—as well as efforts to reform the profession itself, including advocacy around social justice issues, such as racial and gender inequality. Both involve architects working together to advance a cause that stands in critique of mainstream forms of contemporary American architectural practice, and both require architects to conceive of and practice their work in new ways. The primary difference between socially conscious design and social justice organizing is the type of work being performed: design practice in the former; administrative and political work in the latter. Our discussion of sociological theories of professions serves to rearticulate existing work on this distinction in institutional terms, and to do so through a study of the American architecture profession.

## Instituting Architecture's Jurisdiction (1850s–1950s)

The first century of the institutionalization of the American architecture profession was a period of establishment and growth, as formal organizations and modes of practice that are now taken for granted began to cohere. Professional organizations first formed in the mid-nineteenth century; academic degrees and state accreditation policies soon proliferated, along with the profession's first formal codes of conduct.[5] Although the AIA faced early challenges from regional organizations seeking to represent their architects, the profession cohered nationally along a "professional project" that is well documented by the sociologist Magali Sarfatti Larson.[6] In addition, the period spanning from late in the nineteenth century to early in the twentieth saw the emergence of large, corporate architectural firms that would come to dominate the field.[7] With that shift in scale, scholars argue, came a shift in the understanding of the public that architects serve. Bernard Michael Boyle writes: "[L]ike the older professions it imitated, the new profession of architecture replaced the ideals of society with the ideals of the profession itself. For the ideals of the profession, the modern architectural office in its turn substituted service to the firm, as in other modern businesses."[8]

Scholarship on American architecture reveals little about forms of socially engaged practice in this early period. Important exceptions include works that explore the relationship between socialist ideology and the Arts and Crafts Movement, and uncover the hidden history of women intellectuals and designers in reimagining domestic space.[9] In general, however, historical works within architecture often present the rise of modernism as a significant moment in the institutionalization of design with a social agenda.[10] The introduction of Bauhaus modernism to the United States in the 1930s

reshaped the predominant aesthetic and pedagogical methods of American architecture. One characteristic of modernist architectural discourse is the refrain that industrial technology can be leveraged to improve quality of life on a mass scale; thus, it is in discussions of the modern movement and its legacy that socially engaged design most overtly comes into focus in writings on American architecture.

For sociologists, a central factor in a profession's development is the identification and consolidation of jurisdiction: the set of problems that the profession's members are trained to address. Historic processes of professionalization are marked by the expansion of jurisdiction, as groups increase their power; at the same time, however, members pursue increasingly specialized jurisdictions in order to distinguish themselves from other practitioners.[11] In his study of alternative architectural practices specializing in socially engaged practice, Thomas Fisher prompts the question of how architecture's development as a field was different from that of medicine or law.[12] For example, public health split from medical practice and research in an early-twentieth-century schism; in contrast, the legal profession continues to contain its most socially engaged practitioners, as the state-mandated role of public defender became a specialization rather than a distinct occupation. The outgrowth of town and country (or city and regional) planning, as a profession independent of architecture in the twentieth century, marks a delineation of jurisdiction for spatial professions (such as architecture and planning), rather than the expansion of architecture's scope. The end of this early period in American architecture's professional history, then, can arguably be interpreted as a time of lost opportunity for architectural practice, which could have developed a more public-facing engagement in the field of mass housing. Urban redevelopment and suburban expansion reshaped the American built environment in the first half of the twentieth century. While architects played a lead role in developing early plans for suburban homes and developments, this practice remained a small part of the profession's mission and business model.[13] Architects' absence in the rapidly expanding American housing market left civic and business leadership in this sector to other occupations and building trades.[14]

## Revolt and Reform (1960s–70s)

As in many American professions, the 1960s were a period of profound upheaval in architecture, giving rise to new ideas and ways of organizing that would have lasting effects on the profession and its practices. The spirit of the times manifested itself in strenuous critiques of the profession and organized protest by and among architects and architecture students. Protests addressed architecture's role in urban redevelopment and the profession's internal power structure. Examples of activism during this period include: the formation of advocacy groups by architects of color and women; diverse forms of community-engaged urban design; the development of environmentalism in the profession; informal publications presenting radical and visionary design; and student activism that spurred the development of progressive pedagogic practices in architectural education.[15] These efforts frequently developed in tandem. For example, community design initiatives began in 1963 with the Architectural Renewal Committee in Harlem; these centers brought together progressive architects and

architecture students seeking meaningful engagement with disadvantaged urban communities, rather than imposing design upon them.[16]

From a sociological perspective, this period represents an explosion of new organizational forms in the architectural field, innovations within existing institutions, and a new wave of progressive and radical students moving into the American profession with hopes of making a difference. Many of these changes reflect the absorption into the profession of ideas about fairness and justice characteristic of broader social critiques, as expressed in the Civil Rights movement, New Left social movements, and urban uprisings.[17] Simultaneous to this explosion of new ideas and new practices in architecture was the continuation of conventional forms of practice; as a result, the contribution of these decades to the development of socially engaged architecture is complex. While many of the new practices to emerge at this time would become institutionalized in new organizations and policy initiatives, others faded away, reflecting a profession that was able only to reform rather than radically shift its priorities and practices.

## Retreat and Rebuilding (1980s–90s)

Subsequent decades saw a cooling of the spirit of rebellion that had been escalated in some quarters in the 1960s and 1970s, with some ideas about fairness in the profession and the built environment finding newer, more institutionalized modes of expression and with other such ideas fading away. The 1980s and 1990s saw a continued rejection of modernist formalism and its agenda of social reform. But what took its place? Some scholars saw the postmodern era as a retreat from social engagement. Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann, writing in 1996, argued: "During the past three decades [the] progressive social imperative in the field of architecture has lost its moral authority and its momentum."[18] They identify several distinct forms of "disengagement." Most of these advance formal innovation as a metric of architectural success, although Dutton and Mann also recognize "socially responsible practice" as a form of retreat from a more politicized engagement with social problems. In their critical perspective, the institutionalization of social engagement represents a taming of once-radical ideas, and the use of design to accommodate established power structures rather than to dismantle them.[19] Margaret Crawford was even more pessimistic, writing in 1991:

> [T]he answer to the question "can architects be socially responsible?" is, as the profession is currently constituted, no. Both the restricted practices and discourses of the profession have reduced the scope of architecture to two equally unpromising polarities: compromised practice or esoteric philosophies of inaction. After nearly a hundred years of professional existence, architects have almost completely surrendered both the tools and the ideological aspirations that might allow them to address the economic, political, and social concerns posed by modern life.[20]

In a sociological perspective, the "retreat" of progressive ideals into new organizational forms is an important manifestation of change. While some scholars see the 1980s and 1990s as a period of abandonment of the revolutionary motivations of the 1960s, others see it as a period of founding new institutional forms of socially engaged practice. Sam Davis's influential text, *The Architecture of Affordable Housing*, for example, revolutionized that sub-field by envisioning low-cost domestic building as

aesthetically worthy.[21] These years also saw soul-searching in the American profession concerning architectural education, a theme highlighted by the publication of Ernest L. Boyer and Lee D. Mitgang's extensive report on the topic in 1996.[22]

Some architects used new forms of institutional support during this time to translate activist ideas into viable professional practice. Thus, it is important to note that the perceived rise and fall of an activist agenda among architects was fueled as much by the gain and loss of institutional support—primarily, federal funding for community-based economic development—than by a shift in interest or attention among architects. For example, the Women's Development Corporation (WDC) was a nonprofit housing developer created by members of the Women's School of Planning and Architecture, "a radical pedagogical project."[23] WDC members took advantage of a federal government funding stream to develop housing using feminist notions of domestic design, implementing several projects in Providence, Rhode Island. Their example demonstrates that some activists were eager to put ideology into practice, but also illustrates their dependence on institutional resources to provide the means to do so. Another example is the community design model, which developed a loosely institutionalized organizational form from a grassroots beginning. Mary Comerio describes the history of community design centers in two phases: the first, "idealistic"; the second, "entrepreneurial."[24] Thus, the 1980s and 1990s saw some radical activists channel their efforts into new ways of working that allowed them to work in solidarity with underprivileged communities while also nurturing successful projects and careers.

## Pragmatic Resistance and Renewed Interest (2000–Present)

The early twenty-first century has seen renewed interest in social engagement in both scholarly architectural discourse and institutional forms of organizing and practice.[25] For example, members of the Architecture Lobby—an activist organization pursuing several social justice causes in the field—published a series of provocative essays in 2016, putting focus on the challenges and inequalities facing young architects.[26] Another recent book profiles innovative teaching practices at Portland State University in Oregon, a leader in bringing progressive design into the American architecture curriculum.[27] In this period, professional institutions are increasingly reckoning with their mission to serve broader publics. Jay Wickersham explains:

> [T]he 1987 version of the AIA Code of Ethics contained a non-binding clause that urged architects to render public interest professional services, although it was not until 2007 that the language of the non-binding ethical standard was clarified to explicitly include "pro-bono services," such as "for indigent persons, after disasters, or in other emergencies." But we have seen only limited changes in the structure of professional practice to make design services more widely available to the poor and the middle class.[28]

Wickersham usefully contrasts contemporary architectural practice with that of law. While the professions share a similar range of public interest practices—encompassing "free clinics, pro bono services by for-profit firms, and nonprofit advocacy organizations"—architecture's versions of these institutions lack the official sanction and significant public funding support of public interest legal training and practice.[29] Still, highly motivated architects continue to find diverse ways to incorporate social ideals

into their work. A recent text provides examples of nine distinct forms of public interest architectural work in the US: design as political activism; open-source design; advocacy design; social construction; collective capability; participatory action research and practice; grassroots design practice; pro bono design services; and the architect-facilitator.[30]

One clear trend is a wave of interest in social justice and social problems in the academic discourse on architecture. Published works since 2000 cover a wide range of related topics, including humanitarian design, public interest design, participatory design, and ethical issues in architecture, as well as works that review and reformulate the conceptual questions underlying these forms of practice.[31] In addition, a number of recent works address the critique of capitalism and architecture's structural and intellectual implications with power structures of the contemporary economy.[32] Finally, several recent books reveal the histories of the field's radical tendencies; these include Sharon Sutton's *When Ivory Towers Were Black* and William Richards' *Revolt and Reform in Architecture's Academy*.[33] The depth and breadth of recent publication indicates a broad interest in the past, present, and future of socially engaged design practice and architecture's responsibilities to the public.

This brief account argues a series of general shifts in the historiography of American architecture's engagement with social problems through activist design and organizing to advance a more just profession. Critical scholarship is flourishing, but important questions remain unanswered. Why does socially engaged practice remain on the sidelines or in the avant-garde? What limits the architecture profession from becoming a more powerful force for social change? In order to bring a sociological perspective to these questions, we turn next to institutional interpretations of the field's social role, functioning, and context. To that end, the next section of this article presents three themes through which sociological theory might contribute to the toolkit of architectural theory and criticism in its task of asking, and answering, critical questions about the nature of the architecture profession.

## Sociological Tools for Advancing Architecture Scholarship

This section of the article introduces three contemporary sociological constructs that could yet be made to figure in the research into the past, present, and future of socially engaged architecture in the profession. We present those frameworks in brief, providing ample references for those who wish to read further.

The first of these sociological themes involves *institutional change* in a professional field: how do new ideas and practices come to be accepted by the mainstream? Particularly germane to the topic of socially engaged architecture is the question of how social movements influence a profession and its practitioners. Sociologists define social movements as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities."[34] However, the tendency of that discipline to treat movements as sources of external change that act upon a profession ignores the involvement of professionals who are already participating as activists—within or in parallel to their professional lives. One of the few studies that treats a professional field

as itself evolving with the times looks at the expansion of Black Studies departments in American universities. Its author concludes: "[M]ovement-inspired organizational forms are often hybrids combining new politics with old values."[35] The growth and development of academic subfields serves as a useful example of how the institutions shaping professional work adapt and advance. If Black Studies departments developed by forming hybrids with existing models, this provokes the hypothesis that new forms of architectural practice develop similarly. Another study of the social work profession in the US demonstrates similar institutional change in response to social movements. Its author identifies professional institutions as spaces that carried the goals of the Civil Rights movement "beyond the streets" and into civil society.[36] The implication of these observations is that new ideas from outside a field can result in new kinds of organizations: hybrid forms that merge conventional with unconventional practices. Once they are established in one professional setting, new forms tend to be copied by other organizations.[37]

A related concept is "identity movement," in which members of an occupation apply internal pressure to transform the conventional way in which work is done—particularly when such changes are aligned with the articulation of a new professional identity. A prominent example of this phenomenon comes from a study of nouvelle cuisine in France, describing how "activist" chefs identified problems with the traditional model of French cuisine and began to break away from it.[38] The resulting formation of nouvelle cuisine as a distinct identity in the culinary sphere is a significant expression of institutional change. The concept of identity movement may be extended to other aesthetic transformations and in professionalized occupations. Professional identities are multiple, rather than uniform, within a field. Indeed, professions are large, diverse constituencies; their members are likely to hold competing ideas about what matters most in the work and how it should be practiced. The identity movement perspective provides a useful tool for studying change from within design professions, rather than changes that are instigated by external forces such as technology, politics, or market shifts. Simply put, the ways chefs institutionalized an identity movement in the culinary field may be analogous to the ways that architects institutionalize identity movements in the design field. Larson's sociological study of the rise of postmodern architecture suggests one way that this has worked in architecture. The identification of practicing architects with postmodernist discourse and design has had profound ramifications for architectural practice and the profession. The identity movement approach gives architecture scholars a way to analyze the efforts of reformist architects in light of their socio-political contexts, paying close attention to the ways that participants leverage resources to overcome the resistance of those who seek to maintain the status quo. A contemporary example is the incorporation of gender equity advocacy by the AIA through its commitment of material and symbolic resources (such as the establishment of working groups, changes to professional ethical guidelines, awards and recognition, and the expansion of equity discourse). Whether internal organizing that resembles an identity movement within the profession plays an important role in mobilizing resources to support gender equity is a reasonable hypothesis that is worthy of empirical testing.

Studies of the architecture field involving detailed accounts of the rise and fall of activist movements in the profession shed light on the institutional perspective we

advocate in this paper, particularly instances in which those practices "go mainstream," gaining widespread acceptance and the official imprimatur of organizations like AIA. A sociological approach to this research would highlight the web of influences both within and beyond architecture that enable leading practitioners to shape the field as it exists today.[39] For example, the emergence of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards in the 1990s was a crucial step in advancing an understanding of the ecological damage posed by building practices, as well as providing institutional support for architects' efforts to act as responsible stewards of the natural environment. An important innovation in architecture and related building professions, LEED has received fair criticisms for the commercialization of environmentalist intents; and as such, it represents an apt case for appreciating the conflicting imperatives of movements as well as the compromises taken in institutional change. Did the new standards arise from external pressures, i.e., market demands that enabled environmentalists within the profession to act with greater influence? Or were ecologically conscious architects able to exert this influence internally, once growing awareness of climate change increased their numbers? Systematic analysis of the flows of material and symbolic resources that precipitated the creation and development of LEED are instructive not only to interpret the effort's successes, but also to explain its limitations in practice. Creating fundamental and institutionalized change benefits from understanding the political processes that lead to structural reforms, even those considered inadequate in hindsight.

In thinking about the institutionalization of movements within the profession, it is pertinent to ask: why do many activist movements that challenge professional organizations (such as the AIA) disappear without gaining broad institutional support? The exhibition series "Now What?!" provides myriad articles on, and examples of activist organizing among US architects in the past fifty years.[40] Few of the actions that "Now What?!" illuminates have, though, led to the development of independent organizations that could carry on activists' work—as suggested by the exhibit's stated aim to "examine *the little-known history* of architects and designers working to further the causes of the civil rights, women's, and LGBTQ movements of the past fifty years." This may be a normal occurrence, in that professions are able to withstand such structural challenges without making significant changes. Revolutionary professional change would require professional systems and structures to be transformed radically. Measures of reform are more easily ceded. The AIA did not respond to the demands of the civil rights movement through any sort of transformational change. In the US, deep racial injustice still persists within architectural and other professional institutions. Meaningful gender parity across measures also has yet to be achieved in the American profession. Indeed, many young professionals who begin their careers as radicals may eventually find traction in a more moderate role, becoming reformers who work within official structures of power. A sociological study of 1960s activism argues that a "more conventional version of the radical professional" exists in most professions: a professional with "a critical stance and an intense interest in social change" who also enjoys the rewards available to members of the profession.[41] Examples of this reformist model of professional activism come from a study of the feminists in the military and the Catholic church who use "unobtrusive mobilization" to transform

their workplaces incrementally.[42] But the question remains: what is distinctive about how these processes unfold in architecture? Studies of social movements within architecture have yet to draw upon sociological analysis of professional institutions to understand the field's activist history. The approaches we discuss here provide a useful complement to what scholars in related disciplines such as science and technology studies (STS) already offer, in that they can be used to create hypotheses that can be tested through additional empirical research.[43]

A second body of sociological work that could further inform studies of socially engaged architecture concerns the multiple, *conflicting "logics"* that coexist within professional fields.[44] These logics include taken-for-granted understandings that guide conduct and shape participants' identities. The taken-for-granted understanding that architecture is responsible for the health, safety, and welfare of building occupants is an example of one such institutionalized logic. Sociologists suggest that a "constellation" of four primary logics—oriented to the market, state, corporation, and profession, respectively—shape professional practice; within a given field, this constellation varies in composition over time.[45] Expertise is always central to the experience of professional work, as professionals define themselves and are defined by others as practitioners with the skill to solve particular kinds of problems. The logics guiding professional practice are first instilled in the specialized training programs that distinguish elite professions like architecture from other occupations. For example, one study highlights the tension between the logics of "science" and "care" that both play key roles in US medical schools.[46]

Joining expertise as a dominant logic guiding many professions—including architecture—is the logic of public service. A leading sociologist of professions writes: "The professional ideology of service goes beyond serving others' choices. Rather, it claims devotion to a transcendent value which infuses its specialization with a larger and putatively higher goal which may reach beyond that of those they are supposed to serve."[47] An open question is whether logics of public service are shared among the members of a profession—thus serving as a source of collective identity—or are themselves a source of conflict, given the diverse environments in which professionals work. There is evidence that conflicting interpretations of the public service logic shape how professional activists accomplish change. As an example, consider architects in the US advocating for the further institutionalization of LEED and their peers who criticize that work as reinforcing commercialization of environmentalist ethos. For another, beyond architecture, consider recent research on the rise of "green chemistry," which finds that chemists who advocate for ecologically sensitive practices target distinct audiences with different ways of framing the issue.[48] Thus, the public service logic can be tailored to the ways that specific groups of professionals understand the concept and enact it in their work.

Several studies of professional architectural practice note conflicts between the guiding logics of art and commerce that both shape design practice. Architecture is not alone in this. As noted above, sociologists have also studied chefs as an occupational group whose work is shaped by the conflicting demands of aesthetic excellence, such practical matters as time, and the cost of materials.[49] Larson—one of the few American sociologists to study architecture in depth—argues that architecture's artistic

foundations also animates disagreements among architects: "What distinguishes architecture" from other professions, she writes, "is that cultural plurality is permissible in the arts, but not in science or the law."[50] Larson's analysis spurs a number of new research questions regarding the methods used by architects who bring social justice motivations into their work. How do those working in different roles and sectors enact logics of professional service? Do activist architects tailor their messages in an effort to broker broader changes in the field? The answers to these questions would represent important steps toward a more nuanced understanding of architecture's public service agenda and the challenges that advocates face in advancing this agenda. Architects striving to improve the lives of underserved community members through pro-bono design work, for example, serve the public differently from architects advocating for racial inclusivity within the ranks of the profession.

A third area of sociological research has to do with the *linked ecologies* maintained between the architecture profession and the society in which it is embedded. Of particular interest for both architects working on making the profession more socially engaged and for sociologists who study professions is the relationship between the profession and the academy. The roles of the academy in nurturing and disseminating critique of the current form of architectural practice and fostering its transformation are often presented as an important consideration among critical architecture scholars. The addition of institutional analyses of the relationship between academia and the profession would expand these critiques. While design scholars have studied these relationships, sociological approaches to understanding institutional change, analyzing the flow of material and symbolic resources across organizational structures, could provide a productive complement.[51]

Sociologists have developed a number of models for analyzing the social role of higher education. The authors of one review article identify four ways in which higher education acts vis-à-vis society at large: first, as a sieve, sorting students based on race, class, and other criteria into enduring social strata and, thus, reproducing social inequalities; second, as an incubator, inculcating students with skills and other resources they apply later in life; third, as a temple, in which the pursuit of abstract knowledge is consecrated as sacred and therefore worthy of protection from the market and political influence; and fourth, as a hub, connecting educational institutions to the state and markets, such as by nurturing technological innovation.[52] Although each is useful, the incubator and hub models are particularly pertinent to the question of academic architecture's relationship to socially engaged design practice in the US. Several studies show how academic environments have stimulated activism among students—i.e., "incubated" certain beliefs and practices among nascent architects—that then expanded beyond campus. Examples range from the founding of The Architects' Resistance in Chicago in 1969 to the formation of Black in Design at Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 2015. In addition, architecture schools incubate pedagogic strategies that may influence professional practice beyond the academy. Two historical advocates of this phenomenon are Lawrence Kocher, the Carnegie and Black Mountain College professor who advocated for architects' involvement in creating quality housing for the masses and invented design-build pedagogy; and Sim Van der Ryn, the Berkeley, California professor whose support of Freestone Collective and other early ecological

design practices played a key role in publicizing their methods. The more recent example of Samuel Mockbee's community-engaged design-build pedagogy at Auburn University's Rural Studio is another patent case.[53]

## Conclusion

Sociological perspectives on professional institutions foreground valuable perspectives for architectural theory and historiography. By reading architectural scholarship through the lens of sociological theories of professions, this paper hopes to buttress efforts to study the mainstreaming of social engagement in architecture. The institutionalization of architects' attempts to make the US profession more inclusive and more committed to social engagement present and reinforce lessons for today's reformers, activists, and dissenters. If many architects are motivated to embrace a critical view of the profession and to imagine new modes of practice, they also face stiff institutional barriers to enacting these goals—barriers that remain little understood, both in architecture and in sociology. Sociological work on institutional change, social logics, and the profession–university relationship provides opportunities for framing and researching the dynamics shaping architectural production. By reviewing sociological frameworks for studying the social institutions and meanings of work that animate design practice, this paper hopes to complement the analytical tools we use in our continued goals of moving the architecture profession toward a more just and sustainable future. Sociological perspectives on institutional change complement the work that design scholars are already doing to understand the flow of material and symbolic resources within organizations and, more broadly, fields of practice. Institutional logics, including multiple and conflicting ways of identifying with the architecture profession, may help explain how designers respond to structural changes in contemporary practice, as well as how they respond to new calls for change from within the profession. Finally, further research into cross-field dynamics can provide a more systematic explanation for the subtle dynamics of academic-professional relations in which many design scholars find themselves implicated. In each case, sociological tools have been developed that supplement the already large body of work on design practice as it is socio-historically situated.

As architectural scholarship continues to theorize radical expressions of dissent in the profession, we consider the urgency of expanding our epistemological toolkit. What analytical frames do we use to study the history of activism and advocacy in architecture? How have we framed progress and reform? And how do we reconcile discursive shifts with respect to institutionalized transformations? In presenting alternative epistemologies, interdisciplinary inquiry offers productive analytical potential. More importantly perhaps, in this context, interdisciplinary inquiry may also offer political potential. Like architecture scholars, sociologists of professions bring nuanced understandings of structure and agency to our understandings of activism and dissent. In the spirit of sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, we advocate that the interdisciplinary studies of institutions and social problems be leveraged to enact social change.

## Notes on contributors

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## Notes

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3. Scott Shall, "Review of *Design like You Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises* by Architecture for Humanity; and *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism*, by Bryan Bell and Katie Wakeford," *Journal of Architectural Education* 62, no. 4 (2009), 132.
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24. Comerio, "Community Design," 282.
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29. Wickersham, "From Disinterested Expert to Marketplace Competitor," 150.
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37. Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147–60.
38. Hayagreeva Rao, Philippe Monin, and Rodolphe Durand, "Institutional Change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle Cuisine as an Identity Movement in French Gastronomy," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 4 (2003): 795–843.
39. In this article we are focused on a particular set of theories in American sociology concerning organizational and institutional perspectives. Note, however, that work from scholars in related disciplines also provide useful insights into the institutional processes shaping design practice. For example, see Albena Yaneva, "Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design," *Design and Culture* 1, no. 3 (2009): 273–88 for a useful review of insights from actor-network theory (ANT) into architecture; and Łukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) on the application of Lefebvre's philosophy for studies of urban design.
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41. Robert Perrucci, "In the Service of Man: Radical Movements in the Professions," *The Sociological Review* 20, suppl. 1 (1972), 192.
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