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Crowdsourced and crowd-pleasing: the new architectural awards and the city

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ABSTRACT

A new system of architectural recognition, rooted in web-based design awards, is poised to impact city branding by redefining what constitutes popular architecture. This paper uses a qualitative discourse analysis of crowdsourced architecture awards, such as ArchDaily's Building of the Year, to show how hierarchies of recognition are flattening, becoming more transnational and increasingly democratic. The production and consumption of recognition are tied to place branding by the idea of symbolic capital. It is argued that a shift is taking place in the fame that architects leverage to become the sought-after designers of our cities.

The relationship between fame and architecture practice is a fundamental aspect of the contemporary building process, particularly in the context of high profile civic commissions.

(Chance and Schmiedeknecht 2002, 5)

Introduction

The study of cities requires an understanding of architectural fame. In the epigraph above, Julia Chance and Torsten Schmiedeknecht (2002) emphasize the connection between recognition, prestige and city branding. Architecture awards have the power to produce recognition, and as such, they are an important basis of prestige within and beyond the profession (Larson 1993; English 2005). "Just as star power presells films", Donald McNeill writes, "so developers are very conscious of the importance of world-renowned architects to pre-sell buildings ..." (2009, 62).

A new system of architectural recognition, crowdsourced and web-based, is poised to impact urban design by redefining what constitutes 'star architecture'. Research on design competitions, city branding and star architecture shows how fame and prestige in architecture are connected to city branding and urban transformation (Harvey 1990; Larson 1993; Gospodini 2002; Spaans 2004; Jones 2009; McNeill 2009; Patterson 2012). The literature details ways in which prestigious architects produce star architecture, or 'starchitecture', that is iconic (Jencks 2006; Sklair 2006; Jones 2009), popular (McNeill 2009), that generates critical

dialogue (Larson 1994) and lures donors (Jones 2009). What this literature does not do, however, is critically examine the *basis* of those architects' fame and prestige. Recognition, fame, city branding and urban design have yet to be analytically connected.

The goal of this paper is to make that connection. It does so by contributing to a theory of recognition and urban form that draws an analytical line between architectural awards and recognition at one end to city branding and urban form at the other. That line is anchored by the ways symbolic capital is produced and consumed by architects and their clients. By casting light on the emergence of web-based awards, this paper offers an understanding of how crowdsourcing judgement for architecture can affect urban branding.

Architecture *awards* are defined here as accolades bestowed for excellence in the craft of architecture in an effort to recognize achievement in the field generally (English 2005). Architecture *competitions*, by contrast, are intended to choose a favourite building for a specific site (Larson 1994; Lipstadt 2003). Traditionally, awards, such as those bestowed by the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), have been decided by expert juries and layered deliberation processes (Bozdogan 1992; Wood 1999; English 2005). Awards and competitions both contribute to recognition, but awards do so directly. The link between city branding, flagship architecture and buzz has been made with design *competitions* (Larson 1994; Lipstadt 2003; White 2014). However, that link has not been made with design *awards*.

The system of architecture awards is changing. Architecture award websites, from ArchDaily to the World Architecture Community (WAC) Awards, are crowdsourcing judgement of architectural excellence. By ranking recognition of architecture through a more democratized process that bases awards on public or member votes, this new regime of architecture award website sources recognition from the crowd, rather than experts. By disseminating that recognition widely through popular media channels, these new sites generate distinction through exposure for the award recipients.

This changing system of architectural recognition has its merits and limits. On the one hand, recognition based on the perspectives of architects from around the world is more democratic. A greater number of architects from more parts of the world participate in shaping the field. On the other hand, by compromising the selectivity of juried awards, the legitimacy of new awards is at stake (English 2005). The ramifications of these merits and limitations reverberate in the star architecture that is then leveraged in urban transformation by city branding efforts. Less selective, web-based awards, for example, more loosely allocate recognition to photogenic architecture. Writing on the twentieth anniversary of the Pritzker Prize, William Curtis (1999) presciently considers the implications of growing recognition on architectural design: "Recognition can lead to a facile success in which quantity rather than quality may reign, and in which a signature style is the defining feature" (35).

Linking the prevalence of 'signature styles' to flagship architecture, Ali Madanipour writes about the aestheticization of flagship design as an excessive focus on appearance detached from substance (2006). He sees the tendency to overemphasize the aesthetic value of flagship architecture over its use-value as a growing trend in competitive place making. Supporting Madanipour's concern, the literature on competitive cities suggests that popular and crowd-pleasing architecture is an important factor in urban design decisions (Jones 2009). City branding sells popular designs with symbolic capital to groups that consume

'starchitecture': other architects, critics, institutional and corporate clients, and users of these spaces. Alexander Cuthbert (2006, 188) reminds us that, "symbolic capital in many cases transcends the use-value of built form". Indeed, many of the discussions on star architecture and urban regeneration that take the Guggenheim in Bilbao as their starting point speak to the symbolic capital attributed to Frank Gehry (e.g., Jencks 2006; McNeill 2009). In this vein, this paper takes as axiomatic that the 'starchitecture' leveraged for city branding is bound to the fame, prestige or recognition of the architect.

It is worth noting a counterpoint to Cuthbert's assertion. Direct public input on project ideas (White 2014) or the anonymity of competition entrants and the structure of juries make it difficult to claim that symbolic capital transcends use-value in the case of competitions. Awards, however, offer the analytical opportunity to better understand how symbolic capital and use-value compete where the popularity of an architect, and not architecture, is being judged.

Building on the analytical opportunity offered by awards, this study employs a qualitative discourse analysis of award websites and the publications related to them by attending to their discourse of recognition, global exposure and distinction. The analysis focuses on the changing forms of production and consumption of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1993; Lipstadt 2003; Moallem 2011), a framework that is developed in the following section. Combined with a history of the transformation of architectural awards – from juried to crowdsourced – the findings show that the basis of symbolic capital in architecture is evolving. As a result, it is argued that the basis of what constitutes star architecture is shifting. The analysis shows that new international, web-based design awards are lowering barriers to entry into the star architecture system, enabling the production and consumption of recognition transnationally at a scale previously unseen, and democratizing recognition by crowdsourcing the judgement of projects. The case is made that scholars of urban regeneration, city branding and competitive cities need to attend to this changing basis of architectural recognition.

Analytical framework: the production and consumption of recognition

Symbolic capital

'Starchitecture' is a reflection of prestige and fame (McNeill 2009). Prestige and fame are built on recognition (Braudy 1997; English 2005). To better understand the system of recognition in architecture, it is helpful to think in terms of its production and its consumption. On the one hand, recognition is *produced* by award sponsors, professional societies, architects, critics, foundations and news organizations (Larson 1994; English 2005). The buzz generated by these sponsors and the media is an important aspect of the production and dissemination of recognition. On the other hand, recognition is *consumed* by the architects that receive accolades and awards (Larson 1993), the clients that hire them (Cuthbert 2006; Jones 2009), city marketers who leverage recognition for branding (Patterson 2012) and the broader public that participates in the commodification of 'starchitects' (McNeill 2009).

When recognition is produced and consumed, an exchange of symbolic, cultural and professional capital takes place (Bourdieu 1993; Lipstadt 2003; English 2005). When awardees get prize money or project commissions, financial capital enters the mix as well. The currency

of symbolic capital can be understood in terms of distinction as well as exposure. Distinction is defined here as a function of the degree of honour conferred to architects and their buildings (Stevens 1998; Lipstadt 2003). Exposure, by contrast, is used to emphasize the buzz generated around award-winning architects and their buildings. One can exist without the other. Buzz around awards gives architects exposure among peers, clients and sometimes the broader public. Exposure, in itself, is highly coveted – whether it is accompanied by distinction or not (English 2005).

Pierre Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital captures the transaction of recognition well, and has been used in discussions of architecture competitions (Bourdieu 1993; Lipstadt 2003) and urban regeneration (Jones 2009). In his study of prestige in the arts fields, James English (2005) uses Bourdieusian ideas about symbolic capital to scrutinize cultural prizes. English argues that the ways that symbolic capital is exchanged with other forms of financial, professional or political capital is shifting with accelerated global flows of culture and finance. His observations are extended here to show how symbolic capital is being produced and consumed in new ways through web-based and crowdsourced architecture awards.

Bourdieu's differentiation between symbolic and cultural capital helps to articulate the difference between exposure and distinction. Recognition is a "structure of distribution of... capital", and symbolic capital is defined as a "dialectic between knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)" (Bourdieu 1993, 7). Symbolic capital is connected to an accumulation of prestige. Cultural capital is a form of knowledge or the ability to decode cultural relations and artefacts. Architecture awards offer symbolic capital because they distribute recognition and accolades for an architect among peers and clients. (This capital translates to financial capital when, for example, an architect uses past awards to gain a commission.) However, awards cannot bestow cultural capital. Cultural capital is accumulated through longer, pedagogical processes as a result of social relations, education and institutions (Bourdieu 1993). This paper shows how, in the case of web-based international design awards, recognition distributes symbolic capital transnationally. In doing so, these awards are shaping a new global system of architectural recognition.

Discourse

Discourse is defined here as the language used in speech and, particularly, writing around awards (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). This analysis builds on the performative role (Lash 2015) of recognition by bringing attention to the performative power of everyday language (Searle 1969) of design award websites. Focusing on the ways in which award websites and publication content articulate recognition, this approach offers insight into the production and consumption of symbolic capital.

Magali Sarfatti Larson (1993) shows that architecture's discourse is produced and disseminated not only by member societies and publications, but also through juries and awards. Through these channels, discourse interacts with design education, thinking and practice. Relevant to the arguments of this paper is a key thesis in Larson's (1993) seminal text, *Behind the Postmodern Façade*, which draws a connection between cities' ethos of product differentiation and architectural discourse. Elsewhere, Larson (1994, 472) examines architecture competitions as 'discursive events', because they "have the potential of changing (more

indirectly than directly) authorized notions of what architecture *is ...*” among architecture’s audience of professionals and critics. Larson cites such projects as Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Peter Eisenman’s design for the Wexner Centre of the Arts as exemplars of discursive events that are talked about and emulated – consumed – by architecture critics and practitioners. In both texts, Larson (1993, 1994) shows how discourse shapes, and is shaped by, symbolic capital.

Transnationalism

In the case of global, web-based awards, a transnational dimension is added to the production and consumption of recognition. Architects from countries not previously empowered to weigh in on global recognition now cast votes – and with global web access, architects from many more parts of the world are receiving recognition and accolades. In terms of the consumption of recognition, the global recognition offered by a WAC award, for example, might have a greater effect on the career of an architect in Slovenia than on the career of an architect in the UK. The symbolic value of an award has different currency in different countries (English 2005).

In her study of transnationalism in cultural consumption, Mino Moallem (2011) shows how the symbolic value of goods is misinterpreted by consumers in foreign contexts. In the case of architecture awards, the symbolic value that the sponsoring organization (or profession) places on an award is communicated to an audience of consumers across the world through press, publicity and buzz. Architects in different professional-cultural contexts consume recognition offered by websites such as WAC differently. In the case of web-based awards, where textual content is a primary means of communication, the cultural meanings of that text are interpreted and misinterpreted by architecture cultures as diverse as the countries with access to the web. Exposure, for example, may be mistaken for distinction. Architects in different countries may consider the prestige offered by the ACAA and WAC awards as closer in stature than they actually are.

What Moallem calls the decontextualized consumption of symbolic capital becomes salient in the case of web-based awards, which disseminate varied ideas of recognition in connection with broad calls for entries, loose judgement criteria and numerous categories of awards. The superstars (of Pritzker-level prestige) still exist, but the universe of recognition – to make an astronomical analogy – now has many more stars of different sizes. From a transnational distance, large, medium and small stars can emit an almost equally attractive glow. To an institutional client in a city in a developing country, the importance of the global *exposure* of an award-winning architect might eclipse the *distinction* offered by that award.

Design awards are complicit in defining a specific geography of recognition in architecture. As one might imagine, the consequences of the unevenness of this geography are vast. Much architecture, and many architects, are relegated to obscurity by the currents of globalization. A global inequality in design practice exists in which a select geography of architects (typically from Europe, North America and Japan) receive the majority of global celebration. The legitimacy of these architects is reproduced through awards and is consumed around the world through the ways that recognition is mediated, as William Curtis reminds us, “the sacralisation of talent runs the risk of playing directly into a star system that corresponds to the internationalization of markets and advertising in most realms of activity in the global economy” (1999, 35).

Design award websites are a central space through which this production, reproduction and consumption of recognition and legitimacy takes place. The recognition offered by design award websites is transnational. Their *transnational* nature is different from the Western production and global consumption of recognition that marks previous *international* awards. The transnationalism of web-based design awards marks a historical evolution in architectural recognition. To explain this in more detail, a history of the evolution of awards is now presented.

A brief history of architectural awards

Recognition has played a central role in the emergence of the architecture field's institutions. From the Prix de Rome 300 years ago (English 2005), to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Gold Medal at the turn of the twentieth century (Woods 1999), and more recently, the Pritzker Prize (Curtis 1999), awards have recognized talent (in emerging architects) and achievement (in established ones). The known history of awards begins in antiquity with architecture competitions of the Middle Ages and extends to the rise of royal and national academies and professional institutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (English 2005). Today, awards offered by transnational organizations such as the WAC or weblogs such as ArchDaily, which emerged in the mid-2000s, represent an addendum to this history.

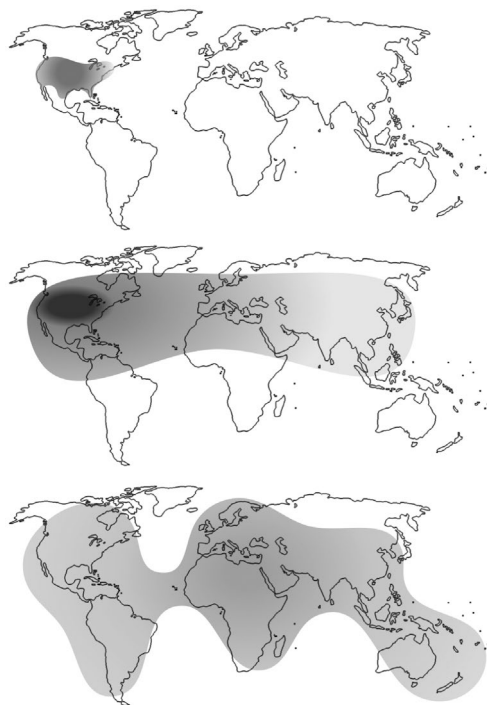


Figure 1. The changing geography of architectural awards from national (top) to international (middle) to transnational (bottom).

The geographic distribution of awards has expanded historically (Figure 1). Through the 1900s, awards were often nationalistic affairs. National academies and professional associations used them as a way to elevate architects in their country and to celebrate national culture (English 2005). In the US, the more entrepreneurial professional societies used awards to elevate the architecture profession. This was an important strategy for capturing prestige in building industry occupations under their jurisdiction (Abbott 1988; Woods 1999). The first AIA gold medal was awarded in 1907.

With growing internationalization, the 1970s saw a desire for more global forms of recognition. In the late 1970s, the Aga Khan envisioned an award for architecture that would “set new standards of excellence in architecture ... and identify and encourage building concepts that successfully address the needs and aspirations of societies across the world, in which Muslims have a significant presence” (*The Aga Khan Award for Architecture*, accessed July 2015, <http://www.akdn.org/architecture>). At around the same time, cultural entrepreneur Carleton Smith sought a patron for a Nobel-equivalent for architecture (Curtis 1999). The internationalist model of the Nobel Prize distributed global recognition while also identifying it with a national body of academies (e.g., the Swedish Academies). Smith found patrons for his grand architecture prize idea with a notable wealthy American family, the founders of the Hyatt Hotel chain, the Pritzkers. The buzz, publicity and prestige generated around the Pritzker Prize helped shape highly marketable ‘starchitects’ (English 2005). The ‘global’ prestige offered by the Pritzker Prize suited the branding demands of increasingly powerful international corporate clients of the 1980s well. The power of ‘starchitects’ similarly grew into the 1990s and 2000s with commissions that fitted within neoliberal city branding projects (McNeill 2009). The iconography of spectacular architecture was increasingly leveraged by developers, corporate clients and state patrons to nudge their cities up the ranks in a global network of command and control nodes of global finance (e.g., Saskia Sassen [1991] 2001).

With the growth of the Internet, images of architecture found a new channel for distribution. Architects in even remote geographies were tapping into a new global circulation of architectural ideas and architectural recognition (Roudbari 2013). Architecture blogs such as ArchDaily started to change patterns of production and consumption of architectural knowledge. In 2008, web-based, global design awards took off with the first rounds of The World Architecture Festival (WAF) and the WAC awards. In their first round, a WAF jury (comprising a panel of architects, related professionals, clients and critics) awarded 17 buildings in 12 categories of culture, energy, waste and recycling, health, holiday, housing, learning, nature, new and old, office, pleasure, private house, production, religion and contemplation, shopping, sport and transport. A WAC jury of ‘honorary members’ (including architects, critics, academics and curators from a range of sectors) awarded projects in 14 countries: Bangladesh, China, Denmark, France, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Spain, Turkey, the UK and the US. These awards are live online and they are predicated on the ability to upload images of designs. Anyone with an Internet connection can participate in these awards. As the findings below show, there is no explicit geography to them.

Shortly after the WAC and WAF were established, yet another form of recognition emerged – the recognition offered by increasingly popular design news websites such as ArchDaily and Architizer. ArchDaily launched its Building of the Year recognition in 2009 and Architizer launched its A+award in 2013. ArchDaily’s award is crowdsourced. In 2017, ArchDaily

leveraged 75,000 voters to select 16 buildings from an initial set of 3000 (“The 16 Stories Behind the Building of the Year Award Winners”, *ArchDaily*, accessed March 2017, <http://www.archdaily.com/805254/the-16-stories-behind-the-2017-building-of-the-year-award-winners>). The categories included applied products, commercial, cultural, educational, healthcare, hospitality, housing, industrial, interior, offices, public, refurbishment, religious, small scale and sports architecture. Architizer’s A+Award is evaluated by a large, but more selective, group of over 400 jurors from around the world who evaluate winners in dozens of categories (“Architizer A+Awards”, *Architizer*, accessed March 2017, <http://awards.architizer.com>). Both ArchDaily and Architizer are websites with very high readership – logging hundreds of thousands of visitors a month.

The symbolic capital associated with awards, their discourse, patterns of transnational production and consumption and their histories make up the analytical basis of this paper. These dimensions of awards have evaded discussions around architecture competitions (Larson 1994; Lipstadt 2003) and flagship and iconic architecture (Falconbridge 2009; Jones 2009; McNeill 2009). A deeper understanding of awards adds an important dimension to the study of recognition and branding. A deeper understanding of the changing landscape of architectural recognition, in turn, will help us better understand ways flagship and star architecture respond to new forms of symbolic capital.

Research design and methodology

To investigate the global landscape of recognition, this study conducted a search for architectural awards that had a geographic range at the national, regional or global level. State-level awards in the US, for example, were not included in the search. The global search yielded 53 awards. For each award, information was tracked on the following seven topics: geographic reach and scale of relevance (e.g., national vs. international awards); stated objectives of the awards (e.g., recognizing architects, buildings, specific themes such as Islamic architecture); types of sponsorship (e.g., national professional institutions, governmental organizations, independent foundations); submission processes (e.g., nomination, web submission); eligibility criteria (e.g., requirements for licensure, completed buildings); selection processes (e.g., jury structures, building visits and evaluations, voting); and publicity practices (e.g., location of dissemination of results, buzz).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of these awards by sponsor type, award type (as related to the stated objectives of the award) and geography. Among these awards almost half are sponsored by professional associations and a quarter by news organizations and magazines. Others are sponsored by private foundations, governmental organizations, NGOs or universities. Approximately half are awarded to projects and approximately one-quarter are awarded to architects. Almost half are international or global, nearly half are national and a small number are regional.

Of the set of 53 awards, the six that claimed the broadest distribution of global recognition were selected as case studies. These six awards represent three typological pairs: the Pritzker Prize and Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) are both high-prestige awards that represent architectural excellence in built works with impact at the regional or global scale. The Pritzker and the AKAA have elaborate judgement procedures that include extensive site visits and evaluation. The AKAA, for example, devotes three years to the nomination, evaluation and selection process. They enlist local building specialists that collaborate with a

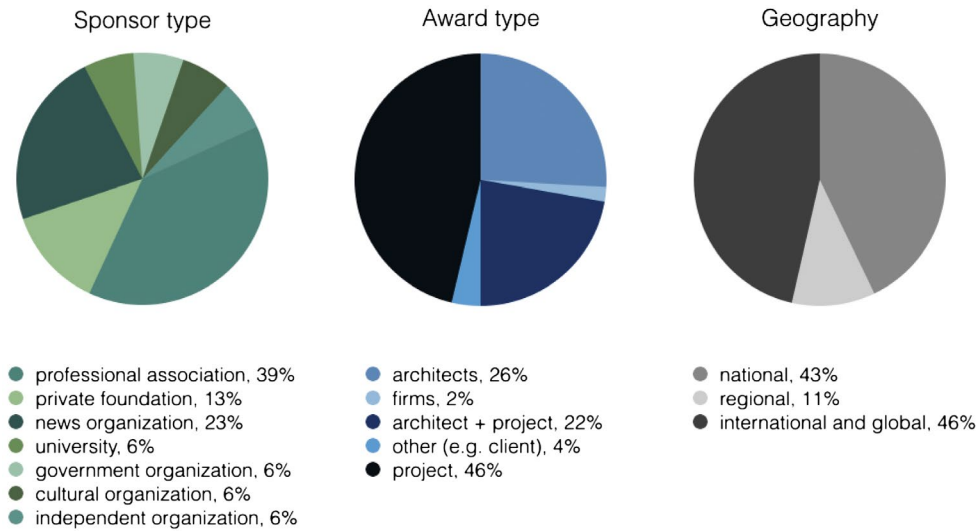


Figure 2. Distribution of awards by sponsor type, award type, and geography.

master jury made up of elite members of the architectural and cultural criticism circles (Bozdogan 1992).

The WAC and WAF awards represent a second type. They are independent, wide-distribution awards established through the web. They have a stated intent of representing architects in all parts of the world. Submissions are based on digital content; photos and information about projects are submitted through the award website. Site visits are not part of evaluations. The awards associated with ArchDaily and Architizer represent a third type. They are news-website-based with tremendous global readership among architects. Among the six awards analyzed, the Pritzker is the only award to an architect. The others award architecture – built and un-built.

For each of these six case study awards, a qualitative content analysis was conducted to study discourses of recognition, prestige and globalism (Schneiberg and Clemens 2006). Website and other publications around each award were coded and tested against themes from relevant scholarship (Saldaña 2009). Content was imported into the NVivo qualitative analysis software. An iterative and emergent coding scheme was used to inductively generate the themes presented in the findings below (Miles and Huberman 1994; Saldaña 2009). Deductive and inductive coding iterations were undertaken to ensure an accurate and insightful reflection of the data. As coding progressed, a coding dictionary was created to operationalize each of the codes and ensure they were consistently applied throughout the dataset (Singleton and Straits 2010).

The methodological approach used adheres to the tradition of critical discourse analysis, which holds that “discourse is a form of ‘social practice’”, and that “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people ...” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 258). In this analysis, it is assumed that content on award websites pattern behaviours of production and consumption. As such, the language of award websites studied here are examples of what Fairclough and Wodak (1997, 258) describe as “discursive practices [that]

can have major ideological effects ... through the ways in which they represent things and position people”.

Consider, for example, this statement from Architizer:

Architizer A+Award Winners and Finalists have an unparalleled opportunity to promote the recognized entry and the firm or professionals that created it. There is tremendous recognition, prestige and press opportunities associated with being selected. (FAQ, *Architizer*, accessed July 2015, <http://awards.architizer.com/about/faq/>)

An appreciable number of architects early in their careers, or those seeking global recognition where such recognition is scarce, will connect their award with the recognition and press opportunities offered by such sites, even if those opportunities are primarily discursive.

Findings

Three salient themes on the transformation of architectural recognition emerged from the analysis. First, *the lowering of barriers to gaining recognition* result in more people with a more diverse range of qualifications competing for awards. Second, as suggested in the history outlined above, *more people in more parts of the world are consuming architectural recognition*. Third, the process of judgement is being relocated from the domain of expert juries to the crowd in what can be described as *a democratization of judgement*. Collectively, these findings demand a reconsideration of the recognition that flagship and star architecture are based on.

Lowering the barriers to recognition

Online awards present evidence of the lowering of barriers to obtaining recognition. One way they do this is through their eligibility criteria, submission criteria and evaluation processes. Consider the following statement from the WAC:

Architects from ALL countries can submit ALL of their buildings (realized or not) for the appreciation of the WA Community. Recent projects (not older than 10 years) will have more chances to be shortlisted for the Awards. Students, landscape architects, engineers may also submit for the awards projects they are the author of: we do not check for accredited diplomas. (“Eligibility”, *World Architecture Community*, accessed July 2015, <http://www.worldarchitecture.org/presentation/>, emphasis in original)

Two important moves are marked in this declaration. First, the requirement of a building’s actual existence is removed. Professional design awards maintain built work as a requirement for evaluating architecture as a functioning space and not just as a visual concept. Second, many profession-based awards require that entrants are licensed or otherwise registered members. This serves the dual function of gatekeeping (Abbott 1988; Larson 1993) while also promoting professional membership. In this statement, that requirement is subverted. This represents a vastly different concept of recognition from the types of awards that were historically used to grow the profession and its membership.

A result of this lowering of barriers to participation in awards is that a broader range of projects (which include photogenic but dysfunctional buildings) are increasingly getting global recognition (e.g., Curtis 1999). Furthermore, the social nature of the web enrolls more architects in the production of recognition. Websites such as that of WAC make it easy for architects to become members, submit work and even serve as jurors.

International design award sites broadly encourage participation, thereby increasing the pool of consumers of recognition. This encouragement is often at odds with the language of prestige and selectivity. The previous quote (from WAC) exemplifies this. In that passage, the note that accreditation is not required broadens the pool of participants while flattening hierarchy. For participants that become eligible with this caveat, a new site of production of recognition becomes available. They become activated as consumers in a transnational economy of recognition and a transnational exchange of symbolic capital.

Simultaneously, the socialization of web content and the ease of sharing digital data through the web allow architects in remote geographies to share their work with the world. The number of architects able to participate in awards is notable. Architizer claims a global audience of over one hundred million viewers, with over two hundred thousand votes on awards (“About”, Architizer, accessed July 2015, <http://awards.architizer.com/>).

Web access is making it easier to consume recognition. Recognition through global awards carries the ability to grow architects’ careers. WAF and WAC capitalize on the symbolic value of the exposure they offer. For example, WAC offers frame-ready, signed certificates of award-winning projects that can be downloaded in Portable Document Format and shared with peers and patrons. The following statement, displayed prominently on WAF’s website, is from a South African architect:

Winning the WAF award has given credibility and respect to the work of the practice, an unquestionable kudos which speaks for itself – we are taken seriously and shown respect. (“Testimonials”, World Architecture Festival, accessed July 2015, <https://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com>)

Testimonials and stories abound of architects who obtain well-paid jobs at noteworthy firms halfway across the world because they have these prizes on their resumé.

Transnationalization of consumption

The recognition that awards produce is transnational in geographic reach as well as in the nature of how it is consumed. Web awards are accessible by a global audience. Not only do visitors of these sites log in from countries across the world, they also participate, submit projects, vote and judge from these locations. Web-based award organizations actively strive to define themselves as key distributors of transnational recognition. One way they do so is by connecting their legitimacy with the legitimacy and symbolic capital of judges, participants or past winners, often with a focus on a global reach of influence:

Be inspired by some of *the most influential and innovative architects’ voices shaping the global architectural profession today*. The Festival’s industry-shaping talks and thought-defining speakers, will deliberate today’s big questions and define the way you work tomorrow. (“Seminar and Keynote Programme”, World Architecture Festival, accessed July 2015, <https://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com>, emphasis added)

The *gateway to global recognition*, WAF is where the world architecture community meets to celebrate, learn, exchange and be inspired (“What’s at WAF?”, World Architecture Festival, accessed July 2015, <https://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com>, emphasis added).

World Architecture Festival is *the world’s largest international architectural event*. It includes the biggest architectural awards programme in the world, dedicated to celebrating excellence via live presentations to delegates and international juries. (“What’s at WAF?”, World Architecture Festival, accessed July 2015, <https://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com>, emphasis added)

Even in cases where claims to grandeur or influence are more humble, there remains a discourse of global transformation. In some cases, the mechanisms of consumption and production even appear trivial. This is exemplified in a quotation from the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, which speaks directly to the potential impact of 'small scale' mechanisms of knowledge consumption:

Global Award [winners share] experience and engagement in addressing their specific problem. The projects and publications, despite their small scale and slow rhythm, then enter into the collective memory, becoming emblematic signs of change. ("A Community for Change", *Global Award for Sustainable Architecture*, accessed July 2015, <http://locus-foundation.org/index2.htm>)

Indeed, these small mechanisms are sometimes the only mechanisms available to architects less connected to global circuits of knowledge exchange.

The consumption of recognition is spread to the audience of readers of ArchDaily, for example, through statements about how the Building of the Year Award bestows recognition not only on those architects in the global spotlight, but also to obscure architects from around the world ("Winners of the 2015 Building of the Year Awards", ArchDaily, accessed July 2015, <http://boty.archdaily.com/us/2015>). Similarly, Architizer, cites testimonials that illustrate the way they bring recognition to those in obscurity: "Nobody knew about us ... There was no way for anyone to find out about us" ("Architizer A+Award", Architizer, accessed July 2015, <http://awards.architizer.com/>). Architects in cities off the beaten path of globalization can see such statements as invitations to engage in transnational flows of recognition. They are urged on as consumers in a new global market that is accessible to them. Exemplified by the Architizer quote above, such discourse not only broadens the geography of consumption, but more importantly, it is poised to pattern behaviours of consumption as well.

Crowdsourcing recognition and the democratization of judgement

For ArchDaily, the democratization of judgement on architecture occurs through crowdsourcing:

Selected by votes from over 31,000 architects and architecture enthusiasts around the world, the winners of the 2015 Building of the Year Awards represent the best architecture of the past year. *By using the intelligence of the crowd to judge over 3000 entrants the awards provide a refreshing antidote to the decisions of expert juries.* ("Infographic", ArchDaily, accessed July 2015, <http://www.archdaily.com/598,374/infographic-archdaily-building-of-the-year-awards-2015>, emphasis added)

In another case, the WAC website advertises the participatory nature of their selection process thus:

Awarding follows a most democratic procedure where all members' ratings and the votes of all Honorary Members are effective in the final decisions. Registrations are completely FREE so that all architects can participate both as candidates and judges. ("What is Distinctive about WA Awards", *World Architecture Community*, accessed July 2015, <http://www.worldarchitecture.org/presentation/>, emphasis added)

The WAC Award draws from the votes of over 250 invited Honorary Members. Similarly, Architizer's A+Popular Choice Award is framed as crowdsourced to its online community ("FAQ", Architizer, accessed July 2015, <http://awards.architizer.com/>).

These awards represent a turn from the expert jury and, therefore, a turn from the control of selective groups of tastemakers. They do so by discursively placing the democratization

of awards in tension with ideas about expertise and authority. Consider, for example the following statement about the selection process of ArchDaily's Building of the Year Award:

At ArchDaily, we don't believe that 'expert' juries are necessary to determine quality architecture. *We trust you, our readers, to select the buildings that – due to their beauty, intelligence, creativity, or service to the community – represent the best architecture of the year.* ("Building of the Year 2015", *ArchDaily*, accessed July 2015, <http://boty.archdaily.com/us/2015>, emphasis added)

A point of contrast between juried and crowdsourced awards lies in their claims of organizational legitimacy. The awards of the AIA and RIBA, for example, are closely tied to those member societies. They both build upon and contribute to the legacy of their sponsoring professional organization. Even outside professional societies, high-prestige award organizations construct legitimacy through selectivity. Consider the Pritzker and ACAA selection processes, respectively:

The Executive Director actively solicits nominations from past laureates, architects, academics, critics, politicians, professionals involved in cultural endeavors, etc. and with *expertise* and interest in the field of architecture ... Additionally, any licensed architect may submit a nomination to the Executive Director for consideration by the jury for the Pritzker Architecture Prize. ("Nomination Process", *The Pritzker Architecture Prize*, accessed July 2015, <http://www.pritzker-prize.com/about/nomination>, emphasis added)

Architects and other team members are welcome to submit their own projects. Projects submitted to the Award are sent to the Award's 'nominators,' a network of dedicated contacts including architects, professionals, scholars and others who are familiar with current architectural developments. The nominators are responsible for confirming that the submitted projects comply with the Award's eligibility criteria before they are officially nominated for review by the master jury. ("Submission Procedures", *The Aga Khan Award for Architecture*, accessed July 2015, <http://www.akdn.org/architecture/submissions.asp>)

Award projects such as WAF, WAC, ArchDaily and Architizer challenge the connection between legitimacy and expertise that have, until now, anchored the production of global recognition almost exclusively in awards such as the Pritzker and ACAA. In doing so, the new regime of recognition threatens the cultural capital that global awards built. Crowdsourced recognition prioritizes *exposure* over the *distinction* that expert juries bestow. (In Bourdieusian terms: the discourses of web-based awards favour readily available symbolic capital over cultural capital, which relies on slower and education-intensive processes.)

With award systems such as ArchDaily, WAF, WAC or Architizer growing in presence – or otherwise capturing a dominant share of the global market of recognition – a stage is set for them to challenge, redefine and redistribute ideas about expert authority in the global architecture community. Many architects around the world engage with peers and clients who attribute tremendous capital to recognition from sites such as ArchDaily. In interviews with transnational migrant architects, the author (Roudbari 2013) documented stories that corroborate testimonials on these websites. ArchDaily is a prominent, highly referenced and global resource, particularly in parts of the world with more restricted access to global flows of architectural knowledge where *any* global recognition is a valued commodity.

Professional institutions expend resources to couple legitimacy with expertise. A primary function of professional associations is to broadcast a definition of a professional as an expert capable of performing a specific scope of work (Abbott 1988; Larson 1993). Groups such as the AIA, RIBA and other national professional advocacy organizations employ various strategies to define a jurisdiction of expertise. Awards are one important mechanism for doing

this. Whereas the statement quoted from the Pritzker Architecture Prize speaks to a stringent and closed selection process, the ArchDaily statement speaks to an accessible and open one. By overtly dismissing 'expert juries', ArchDaily's selection process represents a force in the opposite direction of the AIA or RIBA's efforts to legitimate expertise.

Ironically, however, democratic judgement processes benefit professional advocacy groups by generating buzz around architecture. Democratization of awards encourages public participation in the award process. Indeed, an important effect of architecture awards is to generate discussion about architecture among professionals, critics, potential clients and the general public (Larson 1993; Woods 1999). A driving intention of the Pritzkers was to "bring increased recognition to the field of architecture and, in turn enrich public concern for and awareness of the built environment" (Wood 1999, 6). As a hotel magnate, Pritzker appreciated the importance of buzz around flagship architecture in urban regeneration (Curtis 1999; Wood 1999). Discussions on the competitiveness of cities in urban design research cite ways cities leverage the buzz around flagship architecture in branding (Gospodini 2002; Lindsay 2016). The profession of architecture benefits from buzz in much the same way as city branding initiatives and projects employing flagship architecture (Larson 1993; Stevens 1998; White 2014).

Cumulatively, the effects of the democratization of awards, the transnationalization of consumption and the lowering of barriers to recognition represent fundamental shifts in the role that awards and recognition play in the global architecture field. The global awards studied here have ushered in a new paradigm in the global production and consumption of recognition, and in doing so recognition has expanded from a source of distinction to a source of exposure. The web has changed the production of awards, participating in them, submitting projects and selecting winners. Not only do web-based awards pave the path to participating in these processes, but their discourses also encourage more architects from more parts of the world to take to that path.

Implications: bringing the new recognition to bear in cities

Aspa Gospodini argues that "prestigious and symbolic landscapes" are leveraged for urban development through popular designs (Gospodini 2002, 68). By disrupting the basis of prestigious architecture, the new system of architectural recognition presented in this paper is positioned to affect what constitutes the popular architecture that is used to brand cities. As web-based awards entangle the production and consumption of recognition, they make the relationship between prestige and recognition more complicated in the calculations of city branding.

Conversations on city branding (e.g., Larson 1993; Spaans 2004; McNeill 2009; Patterson 2012; Lindsay 2016), competitive cities (e.g., Gospodini 2002) and 'starchitecture' in urban regeneration (e.g., Jencks 2006; Jones 2009; others in this volume) all connect with the idea of the symbolic capital of architecture. However, symbolic capital is not static. The findings presented above show that it is changing; it is being offered to more architects, in more parts of the world and crowdsourcing judgement is intensifying the rate of these changes. Symbolic capital is no longer the domain of an elite group of architects and tastemakers; new crowds of participants in and observers of architectural recognition are taking part in its production and consumption.

The symbolic capital that is leveraged in city branding and urban regeneration operates with the same currency as the symbolic capital produced by the award sites and processes examined above. Because of the new and crowdsourced ways recognition is being produced, it behoves scholars of urban design to attend the historic shift in how recognition is being consumed. A framework for doing so connects the way symbolic capital is produced and consumed in the three areas of architecture awards, popular architecture and urban regeneration.

First, the analytical framework above draws from debates in the history of prestige (English 2005), fame (Braudy 1997) and architecture competitions (Larson 1994; Lipstadt 2003) that are founded on the notion of symbolic capital. Through the qualitative content analysis, discourses that reflect the production and consumption of symbolic capital in architecture awards were evaluated. The findings show how crowdsourcing recognition is not only transforming the system of producing recognition, but it is also patterning new ways of consuming recognition.

Second, star, flagship and iconic architecture are linked to ideas of popularity and legitimacy (e.g., Jones 2009; McNeill 2009; Patterson 2012). Matt Patterson (2012) argues that the symbolic capital of iconic architecture is a way to generate public buy-in for urban regeneration. In studying the clients and sponsors of iconic architecture (in the context of public institutional buildings, such as museums), he finds that the symbolic capital of architects plays a role in their selection and that this capital goes beyond the architecture they will produce to include the marketability of their name to patrons and donors (Patterson 2012). The new system of architectural recognition promotes more architects into a broader range of stardom.

Finally, reminding us that, “the star system within architecture is a critical part of the story”, Paul Jones (2009, 2529) uses symbolic capital (combined with cultural political economy) to show how iconic architecture is leveraged in place marketing. The analysis of web-based awards in this paper extends Jones’ reading. It does so by urging us to consider those architects not at the “top end of the profession” (Jones 2009, 2529) who are increasingly participating in the production of recognition by means of crowdsourced awards. Further support comes from considering the practices of place branding of secondary and tertiary cities (Gospodini 2002). Even primary cities in peripheral countries, which are not destinations for Pritzker-winning architects, remain destinations for architects that carry the symbolic capital of WAC and WAF awards on their resumés (Roudbari 2013).

Charles Jencks succinctly captures the spaces through which symbolic capital expresses itself across these areas in his assertion that, “*architects and their commercial products must compete for attention*” (2006, 3, emphasis added). That attention has evolved to incorporate an online presence; it now has a new type of logic, one that is simultaneously crowdsourced and crowd-pleasing. Attention and recognition are being produced and consumed in new ways. At a fundamental level, the question this paper raises is whether patterns of production and consumption of urban landscapes (Zukin 1998) can be influenced by changes in patterns of production and consumption of architectural recognition. The results remain to be seen as the effects of the new system of recognition make their way into what constitutes the flagship architecture of our cities.

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