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# Social Responsibility for Architects in a Global Construction Practice: A Theoretical Foundation

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This article seeks to conceptualise an understanding of the role and the nature of socially responsible architects and their architectural firms in a rapidly growing global construction market. Recognising a construction site as a key field for architectural and urban research, the theoretical framework reflects the need for working interdisciplinary to understand current phenomena, the social conditions of global building production, the role of the architect within a globalised building practice, and the perspective of governance ethics. Therefore, it brings together various theoretical perspectives from (1) the profession of the architect, (2) the role of ethics in globalised professional design services, (3) corporate governance and business ethics, as well as (4) stakeholder theory. In particular, the paper describes the rapid intensification of moral challenges in this contemporary global construction practice, and it concludes that the social principles of justice and inclusiveness need to be embedded in architecture, planning, and construction.

**Keywords:** Global architectural practice, construction, architectural ethics in practice, social responsibility.

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**Please cite as:** Rhomberg, C. (2018). Social Responsibility for Architects in a Global Construction Practice: A Theoretical Foundation. *pl*Next* – next generation planning*. 7: 136-149. DOI: [10.24306/plnxt/54](https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/54).

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### Introduction

While globalisation generates new working opportunities for architects and other related professions, it also has brought with it issues of ethical and social behaviour (Gunder & Hillier, 2007, 2009; Marcuse, 1976; Spector, 2001; Sadri, 2012). One of the major contractually tied responsibilities of architects is to meet the client's needs within budget and on schedule. This however often conflicts with human resource issues, such as working hours, health, safety, and health insurance for the construction workers. Accidents at construction sites are tragic. For example, over 974 Indian and Nepalese migrant workers have died of sudden cardiac arrests 'or an accident at work' in Qatar since January 2010 (Gibson, 2014). This highlights the dilemma of the production chains in building on a global level where standards (ILO, 1932) and human rights are violated. Such precarious working conditions in a fast growing global building boom can also be found on other large construction sites, such as in China (Bronner & Reikersdorfer, 2016) in the projects for the FIFA World Cup in Brazil 2014 (Bloomer & Neiva, 2014) and the Winter Olympics in Sochi 2016 (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2013, 2017). These incidents do not only happen in authoritarian regimes or developing countries but also in metropolises like New York (Chen, 2015). In the last years, the building boom in New York claimed a rise in deaths and injuries of construction workers, who are mostly from Latin America and are not authorised to work in the United States. Chen points out that 'the deaths make clear that the city is being built, or in some cases rebuilt, heavily on the backs of recent immigrants' (Chen, 2015, p. 5). The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) also reports poor working conditions, long working hours and significant underpayment for mainly Eastern Europeans working on construction sites in various Central European countries (FRA, 2015, p. 11). These cases hint at deeper social issues within the construction business as well as in the political realm; Bhacker (2016) claims that in her article 'the construction industry must step up on human rights'(p. 1). The roots of this situation have not been sufficiently taken into account because there is inadequate training and because workers in the construction industry are not at all socially integrated, which is a condition that essentially precipitated from the rapid global urbanisation (Linder et al., 2013, 2014).

In the context of this paper, special attention is drawn toward the site of production – the construction site, which is still a neglected 'place' within architectural research and discourse. The building process takes a back seat in the global debate on contemporary urbanisation processes. However, 'the social processes on architectural construction sites are a key entry window to understand current phenomena of the social production of urban spaces' (Knierbein, 2016, p. 9). Furthermore the role of the architect within this global building practice is questioned.

Architects are involved in these global construction processes (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Their actions and decisions, directly and indirectly, affect construction workers. Their decisions have ethical, social and environmental impacts and require processes of reasoning on multiple stages (Human Rights Watch, 2013, 2017). This involves the exercise of judgment rather than the 'mere application of rules' (Campbell & Marshall, 2005, p. 199). In this context, the notion of responsibility goes beyond contractual obligations and their fulfilment. Therefore, they are compelled to consider increasing environmental, economic and social planning challenges in their practice (Desai, 2010; Fischer, 2010). Even though there is today a growing awareness of the responsible use of resources (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996; McDonough & Braungart, 2002), as well as the environmental and social impact of buildings (see systems for certifying sustainable buildings), scholarly research so far has paid little attention to the social responsibility in construction processes. By addressing ethical issues that arise during the process of production in a globalised building practice, such as the labour conditions of construction workers with insufficient training and poor work safety conditions, this paper aims

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to build a theoretical framework not only for understanding current global construction practice but also for promoting fairness, sustainability, and shared values in the process of building.

In this understanding, this paper investigates the role of social responsibility of architects in today's global construction practice from a planning theory and governance perspective. It is the objective of the author to raise awareness by embedding the research in the scholarly discourse on the issue of social responsibility of architects during the planning and construction process. Accordingly, this paper is organised as follows: First, the author focuses on stances of social engagement of architects and combines historical analysis with contemporary examples. Second, an overview on the globalisation of the profession of the architect and its capabilities to act in a responsible way in daily globalised practice is given. (AIA, 2007; Gunder & Hillier, 2007, 2009; Marcuse, 1976; RIBA, 2005; Sadri, 2012; Spector, 2001). Third, as it is crucial to investigate the relationships, stakes, claims, dependencies and organisation of the various actors involved in construction for the understanding of leadership in planning processes, the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984, 1991; Wieland, 2014) as well as discourses on governance ethics (Wieland, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2017) serve as further theoretical anchors to build the link between competitive advantage and social responsibility (Porter & Kramer 2006, 2011).

### **Social Engagement of Architects**

To create a broad understanding of the development of the profession of the architect and its social involvement, it is essential to contextualise the concept by means of a historical view, followed by a brief characterisation of the job profile. Investigating the social role and responsibilities of architects is especially based on the perception that architecture affects society; it can create better places, and it can even have a role in making a place civilised by making a community more liveable (Jubany, 2011). Architects have engaged with political, social, and environmental issues, and dealt with them in their writing, designs, plans, and utopias. This was specifically evident in their response to the rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, standardisation, and serial production that engulfed Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries (Curtis, 1996). For example, Sir Ebenezer Howard's concept of the garden city came as a response to the rapid urban development, promoting planned, self-contained communities surrounded by greenbelts, and organised in residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas (Howard, 1965 [1902]). Another response in the early 20th century to address social problems and urban poverty in growing cities was the architectural modernism movement, which first relied on rapid technological advancement in production and functional design (Nerdinger, 2012).

Drawing on the connections between architecture, modernity, and dwelling, a modern utopia of the ideal city, a functional city, was created and the architect was perceived as the creator of the visions (Heynen, 1999). In the modernist understanding, master planning is a powerful economic and political instrument that can improve social issues through transformation of the environment (Bergdoll, 2010). In the 1920s and 1930s, the vision became real in the form of large-scale social housing projects, such as various European developments like Karl Marx Hof (1927–1933) by Karl Ehn in Vienna, Kensal House (1938) by Maxwell Fry in London, or the Horseshoe Estate (1925–1933) by Bruno Taut and Martin Wagner in Berlin. Through formation of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in 1928, universal architectural principles were formulated, the most mentionable being is the Athens Charter by Le Corbusier, which substantially influenced the modern movement (Bergdoll, 2010). Bergdoll (2010) points out that 'this view of the architect's role, often laced with technocratic utopianism, was perhaps most clearly embodied in Le Corbusier's appeal for a system of modern architecture that was integral to a unified urban vision' (p. 7).

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After post-World War II reconstruction, the visions of the modernist architects and their 'strong sense of social responsibility in that architecture should raise the living conditions of the masses' (Henket, 2002, p. 10) were extended to a global scale, and the aesthetics of modernist projects were associated with prosperity and progress. The example of Le Corbusier's masterplan for Chandigarh (1951–1956) was an attempt to apply the concepts of the *Unité d'Habitation*, a symbol for modernist residential housing, to India. However, Prakash (2002) states '*...not only architectural but also economic and institutional modernism, certainly produced a great deal of professional expertise, but failed to stage the decolonisation of India because it's elitist, top-down framing never enabled it to gain the legitimacy to represent properly, to speak for the people in whose name it was exercised. The failure here was not one of translation, as Spivak points out, but one of transfer of idiom*' (p. 152).

The perceptions changed in the 1970s and criticism was levelled at the modernist top-down planning attitude of architects who systematically neglected the needs of the individuals. After 1960, a less evolutionary and more revolutionary critical reaction to modern architecture emerged with the development of postmodernism (Rowe, 2011). The clean lines and functional orientation of modernism were questioned, resulting in a broad, diverse, and pluralised discourse towards context and tradition, as first articulated in the writings of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown (1972). One line of thought is known as 'critical regionalism'. Its representatives – for example, Glenn Murcutt, Sam Mockbee, Peter Zumthor, Jørn Oberg Utzon, and Alvar Aalto – reflected differences in climate, ecology, culture, and architectural traditions in their designs (Frampton, 1983). Simultaneously, the focus of a wider perception shifted to environmental burden, the harm to the environment, and a rising awareness of the need to protect it.

In the 1980s, participatory planning approaches gained a ground and the involvement of users and communities became an important topic in planning processes. Concepts like co-housing promoted the creation and maintenance of affordable living in communities with shared facilities (Tummers, 2015). In 1986, Clare Marcus-Cooper formulated a call for 'housing as if people mattered' in a book of the same title, where she proposed design guidelines for medium-density family housing with a focus on community places (Marcus-Cooper & Sarkissian, 1986). In 1982, the organisation Architects for Social Responsibility was founded to promote 'peace, environmental protection, ecological building, social justice, and the development of healthy communities' (ADPSR, 2015, para. 2). And already three decades ago, Murvin stated:

The architect is responsible for imparting distinctive aesthetic qualities to our buildings, yet his realm is not buildings alone. The proper fulfilment of the architect's responsibilities requires competent, ethical, and impartial service, not only on behalf of the client, but also in the public interest. Seldom does a building effect only its owner, nor does it stand alone. For this reason, the architect is responsible for designing buildings that protect the health, safety and welfare of all who use them and also enhance the environment by taking due regard for the natural environment, existing physical factors, and circulatory patterns. (Murvin, 1982, p. iv)

In the course of the ongoing internationalisation of architectural firms from the 1990s onwards, architectural practices placed a stronger focus on the needs of their clients (Till, 2009). Nowadays, an architect is mainly defined as a person who is professionally engaged in the design, planning, and construction of buildings and, in this process, has to fulfil various obligations and services. Architecture transformed into a globalised business with prominent celebrities of international renown branding cities with their iconic cooperative designs (see, e.g., Guggenheim effect in Bilbao, Guasch & Zulaika, 2005). In contrast to these

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developments, the architectural profession also had to deal with growing social, economic, and ecological issues in the course of rapid urbanisation, climate change, and overuse of resources (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007; Droege, 2006, 2012).

Today, a shift in the profession – from the architect as an individual creator of buildings towards a more collaborative way of working – can already be observed as the product becomes more and more globalised and complex. More importantly, the architect is not the single creator of a building and thus needs to see him- or herself as a part of a wider network and as the conductor or facilitator of processes that span between varied realms, such as knowledge and action, design and processes, and different interests and places. Since the advent of the 21st century and the impacts of the economic crisis, there have been an increasing interest and discussion in the planning community about socially responsible design. Mangold (2015) identified a variety of names for socially responsible design, including *Design Activism*, *Public Interest Design*, *Human-Centred Design*, *Social Impact Design*, and *Social Design*. Up until now, there has been no common definition for socially responsible design, but in general it is characterised by ‘attitudes that value justice, equality, participation, sharing, sustainability, and practices that intentionally engage social issues and recognise the consequences of decisions and actions’ (Mangold, 2015, para. 1). Furthermore, architectures of social engagement tend to focus on the design of communities that respond to their localised needs and are embedded in the local environment by using local materials (Lepik, 2010). The recent example of the 2016 International Architecture Biennale in Venice showed the growing engagement of architects in issues that pertain to the socially responsible and sustainable architecture. By bringing these considerations onto the stage of international architecture and planning; the curator and Pritzker Prize laureate Alejandro Aravena drew a broader attention with his exhibition *Reporting from the Front*, which was ‘scrutinizing the horizon looking for new fields of action, facing issues like segregation, inequalities, peripheries, access to sanitation, natural disasters, housing shortage, migration, informality, crime, traffic, waste, pollution and the participation of communities’ (Aravena, 2016, para. 5).

As shown through historical contextualisation, the social engagement of architects through socially conscious design is not a new phenomenon, but the focus on socially and ethically responsible concepts concentrates mainly on the final results (built infrastructures) and not on the production process (touching the ground on the construction site). Consequently, the role of architects, their responsibilities, and their social engagement need to be more and more questioned and redefined, especially in a more and more globalised practice. Therefore, within the next part, the author takes a closer look at the impact of globalisation on the profession in order to understand its interrelated dependencies.

### Global Architects and Their Firms

We live in a world of global flows and connectivities. An action on one side of the world can have profound impact on the other. Responsibility has taken on a global dimension. (Gunder & Hillier, 2009, p. 161)

The inception of globalisation over the last decades has dramatically changed the working practice of architects and architectural firms. As a result of these cross-linking and global standardisation processes, contemporary architectural practice requires, among other aspects, knowledge about numerous different local, regional, and international building codes and laws as well as skills in cultural diversity, cooperation and communication (UIA, 1999). Moreover, the planning and construction field today is heavily influenced by free trade agreements (e.g., the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT], 1994), regulatory organisations (e.g., the World Trade Organization) and economic interests (e.g., foreign direct

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investment). In the understanding of McNeill (2009), architecture is a range of 'spatial products' (Easterling, 2005, p. 2) that plug territories into global economies. While transnational economic processes with flows and exchange of capital, labour, goods, and raw materials have shaped the urban environment over centuries (Freeman, 1991; Sassen, 2002), a major shift in the planning practice occurred in the early 1980s as a result of privatisation and deregulation (as reflected in 'open door policies' of national markets to foreign architectural firms) and with the development of computer-aided design (CAD) and modern communication devices. This electronic technology changed the architectural profession, giving it endurance and increasing the architect's ability to play a vital role in globalised building processes, and thus in global markets.

Simultaneously, the emergence of global architectural firms like Gensler, Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM), Kohn Pederson Fox (KPF), and AECOM reflects the changing patterns of global trade rules. These particular architectural firms from Western countries (North America and Europe) took the opportunities to expand their architectural services into emerging markets at that time, such as China and the Middle East. The distinct asset of these big global players is that they have 'transnational corporation networks' (Castell, 1996; Dicken, 2003; Faulconbridge, 2009) throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. This global practice has been accelerated as corporate clients (e.g., industry, banks, etc.) take their architects with them as they expand their businesses to growing foreign markets (Keune, 2007; McNeill, 2009). Winch and Schneider (1993) point out that they have a 'strong service' towards their mainly corporate clients in meeting their needs, creating an iconic and distinct corporate design, and managing complex, challenging, and innovative building projects. This increasing flexibility and mobility in the architectural field is not just having a powerful impact on contemporary architecture, its production and on-site conditions but also on the organisation of planning offices.

Architectural firms have different service delivery processes compared to other global service firms, as buildings have a project-based nature and furthermore, and they are unique inasmuch as they have fixed locations (Faulconbridge, 2009). In this context, architectural firms, with their global production networks, have to adapt to the local circumstances because their product is embedded in cultural, economic, political, and social contexts, which they need to take into consideration when designing their buildings. Building remains very local in its implementation and has a direct impact on the involved actors and people's lived environments. In this diverse, multinational and multifaceted field of action, individual architects can be confronted with ethical, moral, social and environmental challenges like human rights issues, the shortage of building resources or climate change, which are not always codified by international law. Therefore, the rules for international practice need to be redefined as responsibility extends across borders.

If talking about the global dimension of social responsibility in a more and more internationalised architectural profession, one has to take a closer look at the existing codes of ethics and guidelines for practice, which have been introduced as a set of rules for social norms and standards by various national professional governing bodies. The most influential national bodies like the Royal Institute of British Architects (referred to hereafter as RIBA) and the American Institute of Architects (referred to hereafter as AIA) have been established for the governance of the architectural profession and the advancement of knowledge, and to assure ethical standards and serve in the interest of society (Appelbaum & Lawton, 1990, p. 4). Moreover, the codes govern the process of architectural practice and include various obligations of a registered architect to the client, the public, the profession, colleagues, and the environment and refer to the honesty, integrity, and competence of the architect (AIA, 2007). However, the existing ethical codes of conduct of national professional bodies like RIBA

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or AIA are considered too weak for rising ethical challenges in a globalised practice (Till et al., 2015).

In a globalised world, where internationally oriented architectural firms have many projects in various countries, these codes of ethics and conducts need to go beyond national borders and have to be universal. Throughout the 20th century, various national architectural registration bodies have established an exchange or founded additional representative organisations like the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) at the European level, and the International Union of Architects (UIA) has emerged as an organised umbrella body to unify architects across the globe (Keune, 2007). The UIA developed the 'Accord on International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice' (UIA, 1999), as steps towards establishing a more social practice for internationally practising architects; however, these standards are recommendations and not legally binding. Still, rapid urbanisation and intensive urban growth are built on cheap available labour and have enabled a highly exploitative labour subcontracting system because construction requires very intensive labour work (ILO, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary that current architectural practice goes beyond national codes of conduct and builds greater awareness towards a more universal, socially responsible, and just architectural approach, especially during the building process. For this purpose, this debate needs to be built on existing frameworks such as the international labour standards monitored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), or the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS, 2013) and the ISO 26000 (2010). These standards are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 23 and 24: the ILO 'helps advance the creation of decent work and the economic and working conditions that give working people and business people a stake in lasting peace, prosperity and progress' (ILO, 2016, para. 2).

A theoretical framework is provided for building on the notion of a universal, socially responsible architectural approach and the link between ethics and architectural services as a business. These considerations of the architectural firms as organisation form, which can serve society and meet economic interests, are written from the perspective of governance ethics.

### **Governance Ethics: Architecture as Globalised Practice**

When designing, planning, and building abroad, architects and their firms deal not just with cultural differences, country-specific building regulations, and local working practices, but could potentially find themselves caught up in work on the construction site that violates various labour laws and human rights. Even if the architects are, generally speaking, not legally responsible for health and safety issues on site because these are executed and monitored by the construction companies, these activities still need to be put into the larger social, economic, and ecological context of the production of space. In this understanding, architects are embedded in wider systems such as commercial and economic systems (Olds, 2001; McNeill, 2006, 2009; Till, 2009). Therefore, the evolution of the role of architects and planners, in a global context, has to be considered by discussing issues like moral or value conflicts. In addition, the on-going withdrawal of national state regulations have elevated the discussions on the aspect of governance ethics of construction processes, which focus on the 'process of the emergence of normative global orders involving the establishment and implementation of globally accepted "rules of the game"' (Wieland, 2014, p. 61).

Social and environmental standards are set not only by policy frameworks but also by the firms themselves because, according to Freeman (1984), they are understood as the owners of resources who create value in the production chain. Hence, architectural firms are socially legitimated governance structures for the realisation process of a design service. Therefore,

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one of the basic assumptions is that the organisation of the firm – in this specific case, the architectural firm – needs to implement and create a governance structure to deal with ethical issues during this process. This is not only important for solving the moral conflicts but also for generating values like integrity, fairness, inclusion, and justice for all actors involved in a construction project (Wieland, 2015). The assumption in this context is that nowadays, architectural firms, as global players, are not only standard-takers but also standard-creators for moral values (Wieland, 2014).

In common practice, architecture firms often conceive themselves as commercial organisations working for the owners of resources (i.e., the capital investors or the clients) for the purpose of providing architectural services, which range from the design to the preparation of construction documents and the construction administration. In delivering these services, the cooperation 'is an interaction between owners of resources to their mutual advantages, whose underlying stability depends, on the one hand, upon a preponderance of shared interests over conflicting and diverging interests and, on the other, on the shared moral values of actors' (Wieland, 2014, p. 49). Here, the concept of intersectoral governance allows to internally develop moral values for decision-taking and decision-making.

'Intersectoral governance is a specific form of the management of cooperation of individual and organisational, material and immaterial resources and capabilities. Its goal is the creation of shared value through the efficient and effective implementation of transactions across two or more sectors of society. Its method is polylingualism meaning the ability to reconstruct the interests of all relevant stakeholders at their intrinsic value and to integrate them into a common perspective' (Wieland, 2015, p. 11).

Applying these remarks to construction means that intersectoral competence and capability are constitutional preconditions for the existence and success of a construction project and this is per se a polylingual organisational system. In this understanding, construction projects are characterised by their uniqueness, temporary nature, dynamic process, financial, temporal, personnel or other limitations, clear demarcation of other projects and project-specific organisation structure (Brandenberger & Ruosch, 1996). Along the realisation process of a construction project, various stakeholders are involved, and the interconnections and dependencies between those can be very complex as different disciplines, interests and hierarchical levels are engaged. Consequently, construction projects are a temporary nexus of stakeholders during the dynamic planning and building process.

As part of the construction process, architects have direct contact with clients and other stakeholders such as planners, regulators, and construction companies. Similarly, architects' choices determine the subsequent actions of partners in the production chain of construction. Therefore, their implementation of the decision-making process is relevant for all involved stakeholders. Architects and their firms not only have an obligation to their clients; they also have a responsibility toward society and the environment. The discourse on social responsibility in architecture and planning is an old one and highly connected with the perception of the profession and the role of architects; however, corporate social responsibility in the construction business is a rather new topic (Heerze, 2010). Thus, the debate about the standards of social responsibility for architects needs to be connected to the framework of governance ethics and the debate about the nature of the architectural firm in a globalised practice. Not only the individual architect but also architectural firms need to deal with the issue of social responsibility in moral situations; they are asked to assume leadership and set standards for architecture and construction. In other words, clients or contractors may not increase their governance of job site safety unless they feel pressured to do so, and if no architectural firms are willing to work for certain clients or cooperate with certain contractors



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because those clients or contractors are violating human rights standards on their construction sites, this might sufficiently increase the pressure. This approach is not only legitimate but also inevitable if the social responsibility debate is implemented into the business models of architectural firms. All stakeholders, from investors to clients, architects, construction firms, and decision-makers, need to cooperate to achieve actual change in the construction business.

For this purpose, the shared value creation (SVC) concept developed by Porter and Kramer (2011) serves as a further theoretical and practical anchor to bring issues concerning society and business together. According to Porter and Kramer, this 'involves creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges. Businesses must reconnect company success with social progress' (2011, p. 49). In that sense, Porter and Kramer's SVC concept (2011) 'is essentially about "creating", "developing", "opportunities", "to help", with the cooperation of organisations, i.e., about a common learning process involving business, politics and society, that includes the possibility of failure' (Wieland, 2017, p. 10). Here, it is crucial to understand the current social processes and dynamics on construction sites, as they are a reflection of production patterns of contemporary urban spaces. As construction is a multidimensional process, increasing awareness must take place among all the different stakeholders involved in construction sites, starting with the client and the investors and continuing with communities, planners, managers, executing companies, private enterprises, trainers, and future residents of the building. In order to further build on 'shared values, principles and priorities for a common destiny' for more inclusive and sustainable societies and built environments (UN, 2014, p. 5), it is necessary to define a common learning process involving these stakeholders.

To follow this theoretical framework of governance economics, the understanding is that an architectural firm can integrate 'social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations' (EU, 2011, p. 6). Consequently, one of the objectives of this theoretical framework is to create a shift in the perception of architectural firms and for them to implement a value management system to fully meet the requirements of their corporate social responsibilities.

### **Conclusions**

Today more than ever, architects need to be prepared to act in an international environment and to deal with the growing global challenges of climate change, limited resources, social inequality, and its related moral issues on construction sites. Within this setting, there is a growing need for new global leadership to encourage sustainability and social planning developments, particularly as global architectural practices are closely intertwined with political, economic, cultural, and social forces. It becomes obvious that there is an urgent need for improvement of the moral and ethical standards in the global construction industry, and this must also involve the architect. Therefore, the theoretical framework reflects the need for interdisciplinary work to understand current phenomena, the social conditions of global building production, the role of the architect within a globalised building practice and the perspective of governance ethics. Only integrating these various approaches helps gaining a broader understanding of the interwoven social, economic, and ecological interconnections, dependencies, relationships and conditions of globalised construction practices. Consequently, the role of architects, their responsibilities, and their social engagement needs to be more and more questioned and redefined within the process.

Architects do not only work in a highly interwoven and transnational construction sector, they are an integral part of the production of space. They are also a vital part of the global

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construction value chain and are affected by commercial, legal, and economic rationale. Therefore, first, it is essential to position the profession of architects as creators of space in both historical and contemporary contexts and to describe their social capabilities and engagement. Secondly, it is imperative to reflect on the responsibilities and duties of globally practising architects and their firms during their work by referring to the code of conduct. Above all, codes alone are insufficient to ensure the ethical behaviour of architects, as they need to be unequivocally implemented and lived. Ethical standards that are contextually-sensitive should be developed to enhance a more responsive global architectural practice. Third, by drawing attention to the role of the architectural firms within the global network, the consequences of design and planning decisions, and their direct contact with other stakeholders such as the client, the developers, the authorities, the contractors, and the construction companies, reveal the architectural firms as a central and active stakeholder for leveraging change in the construction process. Consequently, this article claims more awareness of social issues among those involved in the global construction business. It calls for action that includes principles of fair construction conditions for workers, which can be considered in a fair planning and design approach in early project stages.

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