‘Getting Started’
Follow the white rabbit ...
A
rchitecture magazines are plenty. They cover the latest spectacular building projects and run reports on who won which competition and other important profession-related events. They celebrate the architect whose work has finally arrived on the glossy pages. But you learn little about the route to building. Countless questions about the profession and craft of the architect remain unanswered. Some of the answers occur to you in the course of your professional life only, through ‘learning by doing’. Of course, everybody exchanges ideas with colleagues, but this rarely goes beyond the network of personal contacts. The objective of this magazine is to close that gap.

Wonderland is a publication about the architectural profession – focusing on ‘how’ and not ‘what’. In the form of a multi-part handbook, we will turn the spotlight on specific questions and problems of the profession. Our point of view is that of the small practice. As a start, we will tap the knowledge and experience of the participants in the European Wonderland architecture network – the use of the same name is not accidental. This network developed and expanded with every venue of the eponymous touring exhibition (2004–2006). It was initiated by eleven young teams of architects in Austria in 2003; today, it comprises 99 teams from nine countries. 99 teams mean 99 different approaches and strategies that we have recorded in a survey and which are represented in this issue.

We start chronologically: Issue #1 addresses the theme of ‘Getting started’, a fitting topic, we found, for the first issue of a new magazine. Where and how can you set up office as an architect? We indicate possible answers and solutions in three chapters. We start with the ‘where’ – in ‘Choosing a location’ we survey and discuss legal and registration differences between the EU countries, the advantages of setting up business in the country, in a big city, or in more than one place, and the difficulties involved in moving office. In the second chapter, ‘Finding your profile’, you will find a mix of experiences and individual strategies, and the third and last part deals with the field of tension of money, quality, time. ‘Staying in business’ shows that a good marketing strategy can help to achieve the desired media presence – but is no guarantee of economic success.

‘Getting started’ also applies to us – starting small and growing bigger. In this first issue, we concentrate on the experience of the 99 Wonderland teams and the countries they come from. In the future, we shall expand the network and also include other countries, putting things in the European perspective that is the basis, and the ambition, of this journal.

One last thing: a platform like ours can only survive if recurrent fresh impulses are given. We therefore appreciate any contribution from you: share your experience or professional opinion with us or let us in on your personal tricks of the trade. Any comments, suggestions, or information will be welcome.

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The average architectural practice is teamwork. The partners set up office together after an average of 6.9 years of study and 2.7 years of work for other practices. Their initial investment, during the first year, is less than 10,000 Euros. Most commissions result from personal contacts. Every second practice engages in other fields than architectural design. Taking part in international competitions, having projects abroad, and being based in more than one country is common.

Half of the projects started eventually do not materialize. The practices regularly work unpaid extra time, at least on selected projects, and in half of the cases they work whatever hours it takes to produce the best possible design.

Profile of the typical small design-oriented architectural practice in the European Union

The average architectural practice is teamwork. The partners set up office together after an average of 6.9 years of study and 2.7 years of work for other practices. Their initial investment, during the first year, is less than 10,000 Euros. Most commissions result from personal contacts. Every second practice engages in other fields than architectural design. Taking part in international competitions, having projects abroad, and being based in more than one country is common. Half of the projects started eventually do not materialize. The practices regularly work unpaid extra time, at least on selected projects, and in half of the cases they work whatever hours it takes to produce the best possible design.

**Profile of the typical small design-oriented architectural practice in the European Union**

- **Realized Projects/Year:** 4
- **Employees:** 4.1
- **Gender:** 72.2% male, 28.8% female
- **Revenue Share/Partner/Year:** 49,285 Euros
- **Average Project Budget:** 242,693 Euros
- **In business for approx. 5 years**
- **Competition Entries/Year:** 3

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
Editorial

choosing a location

Rules of admission
Licensing in the EU

Setting up office
Small place, big place, more than one place

Crossing borders
Professional recognition in the EU

Moving to a foreign country
Six architects explain their motives

Out of Europe
Diary of the first eight months in South Africa

finding your profile

Mind your design
Characterization of different types of architecture firms

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Broadened professional perspective

Reality check
A survey across Europe’s small practices

Field of action
Purists, cross-breeders and all-rounders

Who are you and what are you
Naming strategy

staying in business

Negotiation between aesthetics and client demands
Interview with Eva Boudewijn

Dance the marketing mix
The ABC of marketing architecture

Becoming famous won’t save you
Media success and its implications

Return on investment
The classical start-up project

Territory of proximity
or What is Wonderland?
POPULATION PER REGISTERED ARCHITECT

If one had to decide where to set up office on the basis of this index, Romania would be the logical choice. Here, with one architect for every 4,060 inhabitants, one would find the lowest density in Europe. Italy should be avoided in any case: with one architect every 516 inhabitants, it is the European country with the highest density of architects, worldwide only second to Japan. Globally, the ratio has been estimated to be one architect for every 1,757 inhabitants, with a total of 1,268,373 licensed architects worldwide.

Sources for Germany: Federal Chamber of Architects, Germany. All other data: Col·legi d’Arquitectes de Catalunya, 2002–2005 (www.coac.es)

(THEORETICAL) ANNUAL VOLUME OF BUILDING PROJECTS PER ARCHITECT

Next to the density of architects, a second way of estimating potential clients per country is to look at the annual volume of building projects and divide this by the number of registered architects. According to this index, Ireland by far has highest volume of projects per registered architect and should be the place to go in Europe, while Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Cyprus and Romania (!) should be avoided.

Source: Key Figures: Construction in Europe, Activities 2004, edition FIEC 2005
Where to go
One thing is certain: the choice of location for a new architectural practice is about finding adequate office space at an affordable price and deciding on where this place might be. The current generation of architects starting up a practice can in fact fully benefit from a professional title recognized throughout the EU and from the growing globalization of both education and job market. Each location entails specific conditions that determine much of the opportunities and difficulties involved in starting up a practice.
Even if within the EU a common regulation applies, licensing requirements for architect strongly vary among the different countries.

**AT:** In Austria, three years of job experience are required, with at least one year as an employee and one year construction site experience. An examination is compulsory, the job title “Architekt” is protected. The practicing license may be active (practicing) or resting (non-practicing). Only active members may provide full architectural services, but have to join the compulsory pension scheme. Architects from EU countries applying for title recognition need to furnish proof of three years of working experience. [www.arching.at](http://www.arching.at)

**BE:** In Belgium, a two-year internship is compulsory. No examination is required to obtain the job title of “Architect”, but registration is compulsory. [www.ordredesarchitectes.be](http://www.ordredesarchitectes.be)

**BG:** In Bulgaria, licensing requirements include a two-month internship and the passing of an exam by a mixed board of academic teachers, representatives of the Union of Architects, public-administration officials and invited practicing architects. Independent practice for foreign architects is currently not possible, but joint ventures with local architects are allowed.

**CH:** In Switzerland there is no compulsory internship or examination. The “Schweizer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein” (SIA) (Swiss Association of Engineers and Architects) is a private organization, registration is voluntary. Thanks to bilateral agreements for free trade and mutual recognition with the EU, foreign architects are free to set up independent practice.

**CY:** In Cyprus, a one year internship is compulsory, there is no examination. The title of “Architectonas” is legally protected and granted by the Technical Chamber of Cyprus. Registration is compulsory and foreign architects need to meet extra requirements. [www.cceaa.org.cy](http://www.cceaa.org.cy) in Greek only

**CZ:** In the Czech Republic, three years of working experience and an examination are required to become “Autorizovaný Architekt” (Authorized Architect). Limited admission to the profession (without authorization) is also possible. Foreign architects are allowed to practice in the Czech Republic in collaboration with a local architect and by authorization from the Czech chamber of Architects only.

**DE:** In Germany, two years of working experience are required (three years in Bavaria and Hamburg). The title of “Architekt” is protected and may only be used by members of the “Architektenkammer” (Chamber of Architects). The right of establishment for foreign architects from countries outside the EU is regulated by the Federal States. Requirements include a recognized architectural diploma and proof of working experience (with the period varying among jurisdictions). [www.bak.de; www.bda.baunetz.de](http://www.bak.de; www.bda.baunetz.de)

**DK:** In Denmark, neither internships nor examinations are necessary. The title is not legally protected and accordingly no authorization or license is required to practice in Denmark. However, to obtain the internationally recognized title of “Architect MAA”, membership in the “Danske Arkitekters Landsforbund/Akademisk Arkitektforening” (Federation of Danish Architects/Academic Association of Architects) is required. Architects who do not come under the EU-Directive may apply for admission through an evaluation board appointed by AA. [www.architectforeningen.dk; www.dal-aa.dk](http://www.architectforeningen.dk; www.dal-aa.dk)

**EE:** In Estonia, an internship of five years is compulsory, there is no examination. The Kutsekoda (Estonian Qualification Authority) grants the legally protected professional title of “Volitatud Arhitekt V” (Chartered Architect V). Enrolment in the “Majandusegevuse Register” (Register Of Economic Activities) is compulsory, whereas membership in the “Eesti Arhitektide Liit” (Union of Estonian Architects) is not. Foreign architects must refer to the Planeerinisseadus (Planning Act), the Ehitusseadus (Building Act) and the Kutseseadus (Profession Act) in Estonia. For non-EU citizens, an interview is required. [www.arhiitli.ee](http://www.arhiitli.ee)

**FR:** In France, the job title of Architect is issued by the “Ordre des Architectes” (Chamber of Architects). Enrolment in the register is compulsory. Foreign architect can practice independently in France. For non-EU citizens, additional proof of internships or professional experience is necessary. [www.architectes.org](http://www.architectes.org)

**GB:** In the United Kingdom, the professional title of “Architect” is protected by law and can be obtained after a two-year internship and a compulsory examination by the Registration Board of the Royal Institute of British Architects & Architects. Foreign architects need to prove two years of working experience with at least one year in the UK. [www.riba.org](http://www.riba.org)

**GR:** In Greece, there is no compulsory internship, but a compulsory examination and registration with the Technical Chamber of Greece. The title of “Architect Engineer” is legally protected. The Presidential Decrees 107/1993 and 53/2004 regulate the practice in Greece for EU citizens only. Besides all required proofs, architects must sign a declaration that the architect has sufficient knowledge of Greek language. [www.tee.gr](http://www.tee.gr) (in Greek)

**FI:** In Finland, there are neither compulsory internships nor examinations; the job title of “Arkitehti” is not protected by law. Membership in the “Suomen Arkkitehtiliitto” (SAFA, Finnish Association of Architects) is not obligatory. [www.safa.fi](http://www.safa.fi)

**ES:** In Spain, there is no compulsory internship, but a compulsory examination and registration with the “Colegio De Arquitectos” is legally protected. Enrolment in a “Colegio De Arquitectos” grants the right to practice. The practice of foreign architects from EU countries is regulated by The Royal Decree 1089/99, which implements the EU Directive. For citizens of other countries, the Royal Decree 285/2004, regulates the recognition of superior studies in architecture.

**IT:** In Italy, there are no compulsory internship or examinations; the job title of “Architetto” is not protected by law. Membership in the “Ordine Dei Professionisti Architetti” (Chamber of Architects) is not obligatory. [www.oap.it](http://www.oap.it)
HR: In Croatia, three years of working experience with a licensed architect and an examination are compulsory. The “Hrvatska komora arhitekata i inžinjera u graditeljstvu” (Croatian Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers) grants the title “Ovlasteni Arhitekt” (Authorized Architect). Registration is compulsory. Under the “Act on the Croatian Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers”, a number of proofs are required from foreign architects. [www.hkaig.hr](http://www.hkaig.hr)

HU: In Hungary, a two-year internship is compulsory. There is no examination, the title of “Építész rendező” (Registered Architect) is granted by the “Magyar Építész Kamara” (Chamber of Hungarian Architects) and is protected by law. Enrollment with the Chamber is compulsory. Foreign architects from the European Economic Area can obtain a temporary registration for one year to provide services for a particular project. [www.architektura.lv](http://www.architektura.lv);

IT: In Italy, no working experience is required before taking the compulsory examination to become “Architetto”. Membership in the “Ordine degli Architetti, Pianificatori, Paesaggistie Conservatori” (Order of Architects, Planners, Landscape Designers and Curators) is compulsory. [www.archiworld.it](http://www.archiworld.it)

LT: In Lithuania, an internship of three to five years and an examination by the Ministry of Environment are compulsory. The professional title “Atestuotas Architektas” (Certified Architect) is protected. Registration with “Lietuvos Architektų Sąjunga” (Architects’ Association of Lithuania) is compulsory. Foreign architects need a recognized diploma to obtain the professional certificate and a working permit. [www.alas-architektai.lt; www.am.lt](http://www.am.lt)

LU: In Luxembourg, a one year internship is compulsory before registering at the “Ordre des Architectes”. The title of “Architecte” is legally protected. [www.oai.lu](http://www.oai.lu)

LV: In Latvia, no internships or professional-association examinations are required. Practicing permits (certificates) are issued by the Certification Board of the Latvian Association of Architects. Certificates must be annually renewed. To obtain a practicing license, foreign architects must have a diploma as defined in the EU Directive and three years of professional experience in Latvia. [www.architektura.lv](http://www.architektura.lv)

MT: In Malta, one year of practice supervised by a warranted architect is obligatory prior to admission to the compulsory exams in front of the Periti Warranting Board. Once the professional and legally protected title “Periti” is granted, registration with the Periti Warranting Board is compulsory.

NL: In the Netherlands, there is currently no compulsory work experience or examination required to register as an “Architect” with the “Stichting Bureau Architectenregister” (SBA). Work experience is required for admission to the “Bond van Nederlandse Architecten” (BNA). Foreign architects can practice independently; there are no laws that regulate the practice. The SBA is also appointed as the competent agency in the Netherlands for all matters relating to the implementation and administration of the provisions of the EU Architects Directive. [www.bna.nl](http://www.bna.nl)

PL: In Poland, an internship of three years with at least one-year of construction-site experience and an examination by the local chamber of architects are compulsory. The title granted is “Uprawnienia Projektowe” (License to Design). Enrollment in the register of the “Izba Architektów Rp” (Polish Chamber of Architects) is obligatory. Foreign architects from the EU member states are allowed to practice in Poland under the EU Directive. [www.sarp.org.pl; www.izbaarchitektow.pl](http://www.sarp.org.pl)

PT: In Portugal, an internship of one year minimum is mandatory, as is an examination by the “Ordem Dos Arquitectos” (Order of Architects), which grants the protected title of “Architect”. Registration is compulsory. EU citizens seeking a practicing license in Portugal must furnish proof of one year of professional experience in their country of origin, or pass a test with the Ordem Dos Arquitectos and do a one-year internship. [www.oasrs.org](http://www.oasrs.org)

RO: In Romania, a two-year internship supervised by the Romanian Chamber of Architects is compulsory. For architects holding a master’s or doctoral degree, this internship can be reduced to one year. There is no examination, but enrolment in the “Ordinul Arhitectilor din Romania” (Architects Order of Romania) register is mandatory. Foreign architects have no right of establishment in Romania, but joint ventures with local architects are possible under Act no. 184/2001. Mutual recognition agreements are in force with Hungary, Moldavia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russian Federation and Georgia. [http://uar.ong.ro](http://uar.ong.ro)

SE: In Sweden, an internship is compulsory but the minimum duration is not determined. The profession is not regulated, and there is no registration required. Hence foreign architects are entirely free to practice in Sweden. It is possible for foreign architects to practice in Sweden, and since the title and the profession are not protected, no additional proof of qualification is required.

SI: In Slovenia, two years of on-the-job experience and an examination are compulsory. The relevant authority for examination is the Slovenian Chamber of Engineers – Section Architects, Planners and Landscape Architects. The Building Permit Law regulates possibilities to practice for foreign architects in Slovenia. [www.arhiforum.si](http://www.arhiforum.si)

SK: In Slovakia, a three-year working period is compulsory prior to admission to the exams by the Examination Committee of the Slovenská Komora Architektov (Slovak Chamber of Architects). The committee grants the title “Authorized architect”. Foreign architects must furnish proof of five years of working experience and the exam to obtain a practicing license. [www.komarch.sk](http://www.komarch.sk)

TR: In Turkey, a compulsory internship or examination do not exist. However, enrolment in the register of the “Mimarlar Odası” (Chamber of Architects of Turkey CAT) is compulsory. Foreign architects cannot practice independently in Turkey. [www.mimarlarodasi.org.tr](http://www.mimarlarodasi.org.tr)

General sources: [www.coac.net/internacional/praprof_w.htm](http://www.coac.net/internacional/praprof_w.htm); [www.sarp.org.pl](http://www.sarp.org.pl); [www.izbaarchitektow.pl](http://www.izbaarchitektow.pl)
Compulsory registration yes (Y) / no (N)

- Average registration and first-year membership fee
- Compulsory courses and examination fees
- Optional payments

**MONEY:**
A number of EU countries require registration as an architect and membership in a professional association. This often involves licensing examination and recurrent membership fees and sometimes compulsory insurance and pension schemes.
2.7 years is the average working experience obtained by the architects surveyed before starting their own practice. Only 22% jumped into independent practice immediately after completing their studies.

### Duration of Architectural Course (Equivalent to Master)

- AT: 7.4 years
- DE: 6.5 years
- IT: 7.6 years
- FR: 8.0 years
- NL: 6.5 years
- CZ: 6.3 years
- SI: 6.1 years
- SK: 5.7 years
- HR: 6.8 years

### Average Years of Work for Other Offices

- AT: 2.7 years
- DE: 2.5 years
- IT: 2.2 years
- FR: 3.3 years
- NL: 3.4 years
- CZ: 2.4 years
- SI: 1.6 years
- SK: 2.3 years
- HR: 5.0 years

**TIME:**

The prescribed minimum period of study for architecture does not differ widely among European countries. After graduation, compulsory internships of up to 5 years are required prior to obtaining a licence to practice. For nearly 45% of the EU architects, an examination is required to practice in their country of origin.

Compiled by Astrid Piber

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
Setting up office

Big city or small town? Back home or somewhere else? Architects who want to set up their own practice will have to confront the question of location. Six teams of architects report on the advantages of their particular choice of location.

SMALL PLACE

**ü.NN** Founded 2004 by Oliver Rüsche and Tobias Willers.  
Based in Attendorn, Germany – a small town with a population of 25,000. Branch office in Bremen.  
Their first project provided the impulse for Oliver Rüsche and Tobias Willers to set up their practice Ü.NN in the little town of Attendorn. As Attendorn is Rüsche’s birthplace, he had good contacts there. “This makes it far easier to acquire projects, compared to the situation in Bremen, where I am only a incomer”, says Tobias Willers. He appreciates the advantages of a small place like Attendorn. He accounts for this explains by referring advertising agency next door which, like their own practice, is something special in the small town. “They are young, too, and they are successful because they listen to their clients and, at the same time, offer a product that no-one else has in this area. There are people here who are interested in this kind of thing.” Their commissions at present are smaller jobs – twenty per cent of their work consists of organizing trade fairs or events. Tobias Willers is aware that, living in such a small place, you have to be careful not to lose contact to the outside world, but he can imagine moving the practice to a larger town some day, to Cologne, for example.

**spado architects** Founded 1999 by Helmut Rainer-Marinello and Harald Weber, with Hannes Schienegger joining in as third partner. Based in Klagenfurt, Austria – a town with a population of 90,000.  
In 1999, Helmut Rainer-Marinello and Harald Weber set up their practice named spado in St. Veit an der Glan, a small town in Carinthia with a population of 13,000. As both of them come from this southernmost Austrian state, they moved back to Carinthia to live and work here after completing their studies in Graz and Vienna. There were two main reasons to set up office here: the possibility of realizing some projects and the changing circumstances of working in the province. The Alpine-Adriatic Region (Slovenia, Friuli, Carinthia, Croatia) is gradually growing together, and there are new communications which redefine the relationship between city and province. “Another advantage is that there are not too many committed architects in Carinthia, which makes it relatively easy to get involved in exhibitions or to give lectures”, says Harald Weber. Last year they moved their practice twenty kilometers to the regional capital Klagenfurt. But as they stayed in the same province this move made little difference to the way they run their projects.

BIG PLACE

**EXYZT** Founded 2002 by Gil Burban, Nicolas Henninger, Philippe Rizzotti, Pier Schneider and François Wunschel.  
The practice is based in Paris, France – a capital city with a population of 2.1 million.  
The five team members of EXYZT have known each other since they were students at the La Villette School of Architecture in Paris. Following a successful joint intervention in Parc de la Villette, the student friends set up their own practice in 2002. “Paris is a good place for us to start this”, says Nicolas Henninger and names some of the advantages of working in a big city: the dynamic urban life, the cultural diversity, and good travel connections. The five members of EXYZT do not want to work in France only, but also internationally, and indeed they already started to do so. They have a project going on in Barcelona, one in Latvia, and they had a one-month presentation at the Berlin Palast der Republik. To date, they have made their international contacts on their travels or by taking part in workshops and seminars. In Paris, they are now about to move into a new office space which they will share with others, including non-architects: “This is the reality of everyday life in a city like Paris – clubbing together to be able to finance things.”

4A architekti – as the name suggests – are four architects who have known each other since they were students in Prague and who later set up practice together. The unusual thing about them is they are not only members of the Czech Chamber of Architects, but also of the German, British and Slovak institutes. “We are four architects: One British, one Austrian, one Czech and one Slovak. Being members of different authorities helps us to get new clients and new jobs”, explains Leigh D’Agostino. If, for example, a British client comes to their office, D’Agostino can talk to him in his native tongue and can make clear project comparisons between the Czech and British systems. “You know how it works here. It helps communication and it builds trust.” Last year 4A architekti opened a branch in Bratislava, as they have an increasing amount of work in Slovakia. From there, they can also monitor Czech projects outside Prague.

MORE THAN ONE PLACE

elastik Founded 2004 by Igor Kebel and Mika Cimolini. Based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (population 724,000) and Ljubljana, Slovenia (population 266,000).

Igor Kebel and Mika Cimolini, who studied together at the Berlage Institut in Holland, have worked together on projects since 2002. 2004, they officially set up their joint practice named elastik and based in Ljubljana and in Amsterdam. “So far, we have had projects in six different countries”, says Igor Kebel, who runs the Amsterdam office. Working together across such distances has its advantages and disadvantages. “One disadvantage that is an advantage at the same time is that communication must be much more precise and thorough. This is a bit exhausting, for sure, but never superficial. The advantage is that you work internationally. You have the flexibility and also the broadness of approach.” They meet up once a month, either in Amsterdam or in Ljubljana – the rest of the time they communicate by Internet phone. Naturally, projects in Slovenia are handled in Ljubljana and Dutch projects in Amsterdam; international projects are divided between them.


The eight team members of osa got together in their student time at the Darmstadt University of Technology. None of them would have expected that this working partnership would still be operative today, especially since following their graduation they all went to different cities. But they still get together in new project groups. “Someone brings up an idea or a competition, and a team is formed around it. Then we communicate a great deal by phone or Internet, and from time to time we meet. What follows is a short phase of intense collaboration”, says Ulrich Beckefeld, who is based in Vienna. The advantages: “The different locations bring different approaches and cultural influences together – simply through the way the teams function.” The disadvantage: “You always have to find new modes of discussion; ideas are quickly pooled, but making decisions can be very difficult.”

Architetto Francesco Matucci Founded 2002 by Francesco Matucci. Based in Copenhagen, Denmark, Florence, Italy, and Madrid, Spain.

“Let’s say: My office follows me”, says Francesco Matucci, who has had his own office since 2002. Most of the time, he lives in Copenhagen, but, coming from Florence and with part of his family living in Madrid, he doesn’t confine himself to working in Denmark. He takes part in competitions in all three countries and cultivates contacts there. “A very important thing about living and working in different places is the continuous on-the-job training in translating cultural models and habits, different ways of living and working.” He does not see any disadvantage in working at different locations – apart perhaps from the fact that you can only be in one place at a time.
If architects wish to work in a foreign country, the first step to take is enquiring about the conditions applying to be granted a work permit in their chosen destination country. Many countries, like China or the USA, prevent access of foreign architects or set up hurdles through legislation or complex admission processes. In the EU, measures are being taken to implement the two freedoms of services and of establishment in the field of the regulated professions such as architects. The new ‘Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications’ was passed in autumn 2005. This directive compiles various other previous directives on the regulated professions, among them the Architects Directive (85/384/EEC) of 10 June 1985. The curious aspect of the current legal situation is that the Architects Directive is still in force everywhere in the member states, as the scheduled deadline for incorporation of the new directive into national law only is 20 October 2007. That is to say that it will still take some time for the new regulations to take full effect throughout the Union.

The level of training of architects
The Architects Directive was issued to achieve uniform quality of architectural training and facilitate cross-border professional practice for architects and engineers throughout the European Union.

In both the old and the new Directives, educational institutions in the individual states (universities, universities of applied science, engineering schools, art universities, academies, polytechnic schools etc.) and the degrees they award are listed, and graduates of the listed these institutions are automatically entitled to work as architects in all member states of the EU.

The reworking of the directive and the introduction of the two-cycle academic system (with a bachelor and a master curriculum) throughout Europe triggered extensive reforms of academic training in the old and new member countries. Despite national differences in educational programs, the four-to-seven-year curricula for the architectural profession are currently being restructured and modernized in all countries according to the new criteria. This means that education and training of architects in Europe will reach a level that could not be so widespread without the Architects Directive.

The basis of professional recognition
Basically, the freedom of establishment and services applies to everyone throughout the EU. Due to the qualification requirement, regulated professions such as architects or engineers are exceptions to this rule. The basic principle of mutual recognition is: if applicants are entitled to practice their profession in their home member state on the basis of the qualifications they hold, the host member state must also admit them to the profession. This even applies in cases when no diploma or degree is required in the home member state in order to practice the profession, e.g. in Sweden. The sole requirement therefore is a certificate of admission to the profession in one’s country of origin. If applicants come under the Architects Directive by virtue of their academic degree or qualification, they are free to practice their profession throughout the EU.

Unlike professional practice, the recognition of academic titles obtained in a EU member country is normally regulated by national legislation. As community law does not directly apply here, national bodies decide about the recognition of professional titles such as architect or civil engineer. So, while the profession of architect or engineer can be practiced in all member countries alike, academic or job titles cannot be automatically taken along from one country to another.
Admission process

On the basis of the Architects Directive to be permitted to practice in another EU member state all that must be initially proved is that one’s qualification falls within the area covered by the directive. Basically, the host member state may demand that applicants...

... provide documented sworn proof that they have not fallen into insolvency in the past;

... prove that they have the financial means required to offer the planned services;

... have the necessary professional insurance required by the host country and, possibly, provide a document from their national insurer in which insurance coverage is guaranteed as demanded by the host country (outside of France this is generally a formality).

An exact list of these requirements can be found in the Directive 2005/36/EC, appendix VII. As regards practicing abroad for a limited period (freedom of services), the host country may request provisional automatic or pro-forma membership in a professional association so that local disciplinary regulations can apply. As a rule, such pro-forma membership may not be refused to anyone, that is to say no examination must be taken.

If architects wish to establish themselves abroad permanently, the host country is entitled to request proof of their good character (e.g. a certificate of no criminal record). In general, the usual national professional formalities such as membership in a professional association and compulsory professional insurance must be observed in case of permanent establishment.

Application in the member states

Transposition of the former Architects Directive into national law has been fully implemented in all ‘old’ member states. In the new members states, however, this is either still in the legislative phase or transitional regulations are in force. As professional recognition in neighboring European countries is based on national legislation, delays varying from country to country must be expected until the new directive will be fully implemented throughout the Union.

In the new member states, the Directive ensures quick harmonization of legislation with European standards. The protection of the profession, job titles, or the right to practice derives from historically grown structures in almost all EU member states (see illustration).

In contrast to the liberalization in the area of awarding contracts and making payment, there is a clear trend toward stiffening regulation observable in the area of professional protection in Europe. Among other things, registration systems have been introduced in some of the new member countries in addition to existing rigorous professional statutes; Ireland, for example, is following the example of Great Britain and is introducing a registration body for architects to regulate the use of the job title and the practice of the profession in analogy to the British Architects Registration Board (ARB). It is not only domestic planners who are affected by this move, but above all architects from other European countries.
Access to the profession in the Northern European countries such as Sweden is easy, as there are no state regulations or restrictions on the right to practice. In federally organized states with a system of professional chambers such as Belgium, Germany, Austria, or Italy, the path to registration is clearly laid out, but here, too, pro-forma membership is usually delayed by requirements of certified copies, translations, further documentation etc., which, in the case of a specific building project, may naturally lead to problems with the project schedule. The Eastern European states, in contrast, are attempting to urge foreign architects into joint ventures with local planners in order to bring foreign know-how to their countries and to provide their own architects with work.

Even though the legal situation is quite clear, foreign architects run up against concealed protectionism and administrative hurdles in almost all EU states; which, despite the possibility of resorting to legal action, can nevertheless bring a whole string of unnerving formalities in professional practice.

Hence all architects who wish to work in an EU neighbour country would be well advised to make themselves familiar with the Architects Directive or, in the near future, its reworked version. The directives are accessible online and comprise around 40 pages pertaining to the professional recognition of architects.

Sound information is the key to empowerment. This also goes for architects trying to exercise their right to work in other European countries against whatever obstacles local professional associations or registration authorities may try to erect.

Internet links:

Awarding of contracts
Throughout Europe: http://ted.publications.eu.int
EU Directives download: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex
Germany: http://www.architekturexport.de
Spain: http://www.coac.net
Italy: http://www.archieuro.archiworld.it
France: http://www.archi.fr/afex

Bert Bielefeld, Dortmund, Germany, is a free-lance architect and teaches at the University of Dortmund. He is a specialist in architecture export and recently published, together with Falk Würfele, an advice manual entitled Building Projects in the European Union: Architectural Expert Opportunities, Basel: Birkhäuser, 2005 [available in English and German].
Contact: post@bertbielefeld.de

**LOCAL OR GLOBAL?**

- More than 70% local projects: 38%
- More than 70% national projects: 9%
- Mix of all three types: 42%
- Teams with more than 70% local projects: 8%

The majority of the practices operate at local, national and international levels simultaneously. 38.5% of the practices have projects outside their home country, and 28.8% are based in more than one country.

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
Studying architecture abroad is one thing, setting up practice as an architect in a foreign country is quite another. The latter generally involves more serious hurdles to be cleared. We talked to six architects about their motives for making this move.

**Birgitte Louise Hansen (1)**
*Born in Denmark / Moved from Copenhagen to Rotterdam*
*Founded Birgitte Louise Hansen in Rotterdam in 1999*

Birgitte Louise Hansen had several starting points. She started practicing as an architect while still studying architecture in Denmark. Between 1990 and 1996, she realized several projects under her own name with clients from art and cultural organizations ranging from small to large scale, from installation art, site-specific performance art to indoor and outdoor exhibitions. 1997 she decided to move to Holland. “I wanted space to breathe, to get new inspiration and meet new people.” There is no specific reason why she chose Holland. After working for several architectural firms, she started her own office 1999 in Rotterdam. Besides architectural design, her work includes a diversity of other activities such as teaching, concept development and coordination. To set up an independent practice in the Netherlands you need to have at least three clients. The majority of her clients have been Danish. “When I came to Holland, I had done a lot of work for people from the art sector and I continued doing so for several years. My work was therefore often (mis)understood as art, which made it difficult for me to market myself as an architect”, says Birgitte Louise Hansen. She is continuously trying to find more work in Holland. “By now, the character of my work has changed but so has the perception of what kind of work an architect is ‘supposed’ to do.” It is something like her third fresh start.

**Dana Čupková (2)**
*Born in Slovakia / Moved from Bratislava to New York*
*Founded DC-m Studio in New York in 2000*

“I’m not tied to one location”, says Slovak Dana Čupková and recounts her previous stops: from Bratislava, where she studied architecture, she moved to Malaysia for a year. Then she went to Los Angeles, where she completed her Master of Architecture at UCLA, and from there to New York City. In New York, she worked in various firms, first full-time, later part-time, in order to have sufficient time left for her own projects. To set up practice in the USA, registration and an exam are compulsory. “But you can actually manage without registration”, says Dana Čupková. In 2000, she officially founded DC-m Studio in New York City, an office that develops real and speculative projects. From time to time, she also works together with artist Martin Myers.

**Yukiko Nezu (3)**
*Born in Japan / Moved from Tokyo to Amsterdam*
*Founded urbanberry in Amsterdam in 2001*

Tokyo is one of the biggest metropolises in the world, but still insular in spirit and susceptible to one-sided agitation. These were the reasons that motivated Yukiko Nezu to go abroad. She wanted to live on the continent and to experience multi-cultural life. She chose the Berlage Institute in the Netherlands to study. “I like the different way of working”, says Yukiko Nezu. “In the Netherlands, I see that everyone is equal. In Japan, you have a top-down system. This kind of hierarchy does not suit me.” She wanted to stay, and in order to get a visa, she had to open her own practice. This was the beginning of urbanberry. She has to submit at least three new projects every year with the Aliens Police Department to furnish proof that her business is still in operation. She works as a freelance for several architects and does one-person jobs such as organizing workshop for universities, house conversions, or stage designs for events. She has just opened a further office in Tokyo with two Japanese women friends. “Our dream is opening a cross-professional women’s design office.” And her personal dream is to live half of the year in Tokyo, and the other half in Holland.
Laurent Gutierrez + Valerie Portefaix (4)  
Born in Morocco + France / Moved from Paris to Hong Kong  
Founded MAP office in Hong Kong in 1997

Immediately after completing their studies, Valerie Portefaix and Laurent Gutierrez left France. “The atmosphere in France was very bad then”, says Valerie Portefaix, “to avoid frustration, we wanted to go abroad.” The first chance they were offered was a lectureship at the Chinese University. Since 2000 Laurent Gutierrez has been assistant professor at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s School of Design. This gives them a regular income. With their MAP office established 1997 in addition to Gutierrez’s teaching post, they take on interdisciplinary projects in the areas of theory, research, architecture, photography, and art. To be allowed to set up independent practice in Hong Kong, registration with the local Chamber of Architects is compulsory. But this rarely happens, the MAP couple says, since most foreign architects who want to work in Hong Kong look out for joint-venture partnerships, because they want to build not only in Hong Kong but also in China and Korea, and you cannot get registered everywhere. In 2000, they set up MAP Book Publishers as an extension of MAP office.

They have never regretted moving to Hong Kong: “My French colleagues are stuck in frustration. It is so hard to get somewhere in competitions. If you are not in the right group, you will never get in”, says Valerie Portefaix, “here everything is new. If you are good and work hard, it is easy to do what you want to do.” And with increasing interest on the part of the West in current developments in China, the couple is now much in demand, nationally and internationally. They were invited to give lectures and to participate in numerous exhibitions, for example at the 2006 Biennale of Sidney.
Roisin Heneghan + Shih-Fu Peng (5)
Born in Ireland + Raised in the United States and Asia / Moved from New York to Dublin
Founded Heneghan Peng in New York in 1999

Roisin Heneghan and Shih-Fu Peng founded their joint practice Heneghan Peng in 1999 in New York. Aside from working with SOM and Michael Graves, they prepared occasional competition entries together at weekends or during the holidays. They won their first international competition in 2001 – a civic office complex in the Irish county town of Kildare. After this they moved to Ireland. “My wife is Irish. So it wasn’t very complicated. We had to get a license from the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and go through a series of interviews”, says Peng. The office complex is now completed, and they continue to find most of their work through competitions. “It’s very hard. The chances are very slim – less than one percent”, says Peng, who together with his wife is very successful in this area. They attracted particular attention in 2002 when they won the competition for the Egyptian Museum in Cairo as one out of 1557 entries from 83 different countries. Although their practice is in Dublin, they mostly build in other EU countries. “We haven’t really been very successful in finding clients in Dublin, as we are still very new here.” They would like to live in New York again, but as far as building is concerned, they prefer Europe. “New York is the greatest city in the world. But the architectural climate is substantially richer here in Europe.”
Tom van Malderen (6)
Born in Belgium / Moved from Brussels to Valletta (Malta) where he works in an architect’s practice

Tom van Malderen has lived and worked on Malta since March 2001. He is employed there in the island’s biggest architecture firm (50 people). He met a Maltese architect at a summer workshop in Stockholm who offered him this job a few years later. “For someone of my age, this was a very tempting offer, so I went”, says Van Malderen. His particular qualification was that, in contrast to most young Maltese architects, he already had experience in working on large projects. What he particularly likes about Malta is the latent holiday atmosphere and the foreign culture. “Architectural education in Malta is more focused on the engineering aspect, and design aspects tend to be marginalized”, says Tom van Malderen. “This gives you a great advantage on the design level, but it also means that every now and then you have to overcome some reservations regarding the feasibility of one’s designs.” To be allowed to work in Malta, a work permit is required. If you want to open your own practice, things are far more complicated. You need a ‘local warrant’, and additional university courses must be passed to obtain the professional title of ‘Perit’, the official title of an architect on Malta. Tom van Malderen plans to set up his own practice together with friends next year – not in Malta, but in London or Milan: “These are both cultural capitals and therefore usually offer quite a number of opportunities, also in terms of activities on the sideline of architecture.”

Ton Matton (7)
Born in the Netherlands / Moved from Rotterdam to Wendorf, Germany
Has a virtual branch office in Rotterdam and a campaign office in Berlin

Ton Matton always wanted to live in the country with his family. As an urban planner, he came to a point in 2001 when he had enough of Dutch housing policy with its ever-same suburbia developments based on arguments of being urban and rural at the same time. He looked around for a house that would suit his ideas. In the Eastern German community of Wendorf in between Hamburg and Berlin, he found what he was looking for. “There is an unbelievable amount of natural space here. I do research in hypermodernity, finding interesting ways of rural living in history and trying to connect it to contemporary lifestyles”, says Ton Matton, who grows his own wood for heating fuel. Since he has lived in Wendorf, he has had more commissions from Holland than ever before: “When I moved here I became international and thus more interesting for the Dutch.” In Germany, he was Visiting Professor at the Hamburg Academy of Fine Arts from 2003 to 2005. “The fact that I live in Wendorf doesn’t mean that I can’t be reached. I live in Central Europe. I have satellite Internet, a Lada Niva four-wheel drive, and a mobile phone, like everyone else in the Global Village.”

Anne Isopp, morgenbau
Vienna, Austria

Studied architecture and journalism, first worked as an architect, now focuses on architectural journalism. She is partner of morgenbau (together with Christof Isopp and Georg Lippitsch), a collaboration network engaging in architecture, journalism and creative directing.

www.morgenbau.net
The three members of blacklinesonwhitepaper met in Capetown, South Africa. During the first three years, they worked together mainly via the Internet across the long distance between South Africa and Germany. In August 2005, Kiki Doermann obtained a working permit and joined her two South African partners, Solam Mkhabela and Tumi Morule, in Johannesburg. She reports on the first eight months since her arrival in South Africa.

June

After three years of frequent intercontinental flights, blacklines is going to be fully based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Germany remains a postal address, a professional architectural registration in Westphalia, and some projects that will now have to be channeled through the worldwide web. My partners and I have been waiting for this moment. Now legal procedures are awaiting me as a potential immigrant: staying permit, working permit, professional qualification, and recognition of degrees. I know already that, by entering South Africa, my professional (European) license to work as an architect has expired. But start from scratch?

There are two basic options to obtain a work permit as foreigner: a) employment by a South African firm, or b) opening your own business. For the second option, a business permit and a minimum investment of 2.5 million rands (EUR 300,000–350,000) are required. In order to be permitted to employ me, any company has to furnish proof of my ‘specific foreign’ or otherwise ‘exceptional’ skills or get a ‘quota work permit’. At the moment a) is not an option; it seems I need some ‘foreign exceptionalities’ to hype up my CV ...

July

I send a 21 page fax to the ‘South African Council for the Architectural Profession’. Apart from professional experience and registration, every single course of tertiary education has to be listed. The answer is factual manner that is related only to the work of the professional disciplines represented in a practice."

Does this mean that, once we are registered, we cannot do the film clip for ‘Soul Spice’ Fashion Design next year under the name of blacklines architecture?

“Rule 4.3: A registered person shall not, except with the permission of the council and under such conditions it may prescribe, enter into any professional relationship or association with any person who is not a registered person or member of a closely allied profession."

In other words, we will not be allowed to form a multi-disciplinary practice consisting of a professional architect, a professional engineer, a professional quantity surveyor, and an estate agent. An estate agent is not closely allied in South-African Council terms.

September

The financial plan for the first eighteen months is simple: blacklines will be working long hours. With this schedule, we should be able to keep a financially sustainable project going for at least 1.5 persons for one year. This puts us in the company of 70% of all architectural practices here with two to three people. Perhaps we will find a legal way of non-compliance with rule 2.3 of the Code of Conduct: who could forbid us to sell sandwiches?

October

We do a refresher course in order to prepare for the Professional Practice Exam.

We are confronted with the following scenario: "Jones, an architect, is invited by Brown, who owns a residential stand in Hermanus, to be his architect for a proposed holiday home which is to cost no more than R 500,000. Nothing is said about the fees which Jones will charge for his professional services. No formal written agreement is made to define the terms of the architect’s appointment. Jones produces sketch plans which please Brown,

"Rule 2.3: Services rendered shall be described in a
who instructs Jones to prepare all the documents necessary to obtain tenders for the work. Jones duly prepares these documents, and tenders are invited and received. The lowest tender is for R 630,000. This is more than Brown is prepared to spend, and he informs Jones that he has no further need of his professional services.

Jones sends Brown an account for professional fees, amounting to R 47,250, being 7.5% of R 630,000. Brown refuses to pay anything at all.

Discuss the merits of Jones’ claim for fees and state what amount you consider he is entitled to receive for his services."

Find out the answer at the end of this article and ask blacklines@gmx.net for explanation.

November
Robert is a synonym for an English architect who is based in London and interested in North-South collaboration. His proposal: He brings in capital and infrastructure from overseas, we do the design work and local business in a partnership. Robert’s proposal is tempting in terms of conceptual challenge and business opportunity. We are a bit skeptic about the legal aspects as we are not settled yet. Three weeks after introducing his idea, Robert finds out that the land he is planning to develop does not belong to the person who has offered to sell it to him. From now on, Robert will be our name for that category of collaborations.

December
The South-African building industry is booming, and this will probably continue until 2010 when the country will host the Football World Championship. What is commissioned?

Basically, developments are residential and commercial projects, office blocks, and public buildings. And who gets the jobs?

Open competitions are rare; public commissions are awarded according to a points system which gives special consideration to PDIs (Previously Disadvantaged Individuals, i.e. people who had suffered racial or sexual discrimination as well as disabled persons) and supports BEE (Black Economy Empowerment). BEE relates to ownership and employment structure of a firm.

Our chances are not bad. Collaborations, partnerships and joint ventures are the key survival strategies for smaller and middle sized firms.

January

Rumor has it that top developers keep hanging around in bars they have built (Sandton, Michelangelo) to tout for clients; others visit art galleries and introduce themselves.

Other options are the golf club or gym (preferably Virgin Active at Melrose Arch). We joined last December.

Now
We continue to work and are preparing a company profile, and we are working on design prototypes for a new South-African residential house – affordable, ecological, and sexy, not Georgian. What else? We introduce square-foot gardens, build a catwalk, celebrate the 120th birthday of Johannesburg, and expect Wonderland to arrive soon.

Contacts
South African Council for the Architectural Profession
http://www.architecturalcouncilsa.com

Professional Practice Exams are held twice a year, in March and September. The registration fee is R 400 (EUR 50–60). The two-day Refresher Course by Eyvind Finsen is highly recommendable. The fee is R 1,350 (EUR 170–200).

Immigration Services
www.ritztrade.com

I) Jones is not entitled to receive any fees.
What to do

Defining the ‘what’ of an architectural practice provides the basis of one’s identity and will have an influence on everything that follows. Many choices need to be made: small big details like choosing a name and tricky details, such as making it a one (wo)man show or joining a team.

In order decide on a type of organization that will match the work produced, you will need to find out what kind of product you are interested to deliver, and if you are able to deliver it. You will have to face the big question of what your field of action will be. Will you be a purist? An all-rounder? A cross-breeder?
As an architecture student, your primary and perhaps only focus is the craft or art of architecture. Your dream is to make a job out of your passion, so you start your own architecture firm. But starting a successful business takes more than talent, knowledge and passion. Too often, young architects forget that organization design is equally important. Setting up office entails implicit choices about, for example, the business structure, working method, and type of clients. But are these choices the right ones? Do they fit to your strengths, talents and ambitions as an architect, as an entrepreneur, and as a person? And do they combine well?
The Architecture Studio
Distinctive to this type of architecture firm is its strong leader or ‘guru’, who leaves a distinct signature on each and every project. To them, projects are just a means to an end to make their precious and often most creative and innovative ideas materialize their dream. Clients are just considered stakeholders in the process of realizing the ultimate idea.

The Architecture Office
Offices are focused on providing service, experience, and reliability. In projects, offices try to keep a balance between pleasing the client with a design that complies with the client’s wishes and reaching an acceptable aesthetic quality. Offices make sure that the project can proceed as planned and risks are minimized. The relationship that the architect maintains with his clients is often viewed as the most important factor for the continuity of the office. The office is by far the most common of the three types of architecture firms.

The Architecture Business
In the architecture business, technical expertise and quality of the product are essential. Businesses are like well-lubricated architectural machines. Functional and technical feasibility, legal requirements, and a devotion to efficiency are important from the very start of a project. Businesses can deliver good technical quality at a relatively low cost. This makes them reliable contractors, who are able to make architecture a profitable business.

Personal skills and talents of the architect
When you start your own architecture firm, solo or as a partnership with kindred spirits, the entire operation depends on your talents and skills. Your education has provided you with knowledge and skills concerning aesthetics, design techniques, a certain technical expertise, etc. This is an essential starting point, but in itself not enough to be successful as an architect. Other skills have to be developed as your architecture firm evolves. Every type of architecture firm requires different skills to be successful.
## Skills and type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDIO</th>
<th>OFFICE</th>
<th>BUSINESS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architectural Skills</strong></td>
<td>The studio is primarily valued for this skill.</td>
<td>The lack in innovation is compensated with relational and project managerial skills. Creativity is required to meet the client’s wishes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial &amp; Relational Skills</strong></td>
<td>Commercial activities are focussed on ‘brand awareness’. An established distinctive signature can compensate for a lack of relational skills.</td>
<td>Accordingly to its basic principle, offices are primarily valued for their outstanding relational skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managerial Skills</strong></td>
<td>Studios are infamous for bad project management. Basic project management skills are required, but studios do not need to excel in this area.</td>
<td>In order to serve the client, project management skills need to be well-developed, to minimize risks and to control the project budget and planning.</td>
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**To be successful, the structure of the organization should support the identity of the architectural firm.**

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**The structure of the organization**

The outward appearance of an organization is (and should be) a reflection of its character. In practice, organizational structures develop organically over time. The unconscious choices that are made along the way can result in a poor match between firm type and organizational structure. At worst, this could lead to inconsistent self-presentation of the firm to prospect clients, underdeveloped talents and skills, and unproductive and frustrated employees. To be successful, the structure of the organization should support the identity of the architectural firm.

In a **studio** the ‘guru’/dominant architect is in the center of the organization, surrounded by the employees (designers, architects). This structure hardly knows any formal or formalized lines of communication.

In an **office**, the architect concentrates on the aesthetic aspects of a project, while the office manager or ‘chef de bureau’ takes care of the managerial side of the projects and the firm.

The structure of an architecture **business** is the most elaborate one of the three types. This type often comprises several professionally organized units in the form of separate firms or design or project departments, which operate independently within the architecture business. The board of directors does not necessarily consist of architects.

**Image and distinguishing features for clients and employees**

Consciously or unconsciously, clients, prospects and potential employees also distinguish between types of architecture firms. Which clients are attracted to which type of architecture firm? And which company characteristics are attractive for which type of employees?
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In a studio the ‘guru’/dominant architect is in the center of the organization, surrounded by the employees (designers, architects). This structure hardly knows any formal or formalized lines of communication.
The client who chooses to contract a studio likes to be surprised: he knows that hiring a ‘guru’ will make the final result somewhat unpredictable. From his point of view, the budget for building his dream is more or less secondary to the statement he wants to make through his building.

The office-client’s choice is based on his relationship with the architect-director; he knows that his wish is the office’s command. An important criterion in the selection process is the office’s experience with similar projects. For the client, this specialization assures minimization of risks.

The architects of the office aim for effectiveness and client satisfaction. After all, a strong relationship with clients is vital for the continuity of the office.

The architecture business is contracted by clients for its reliability, efficiency, low price and technical know-how. The client’s choice is based on the qualities of the firm, not on those of a specific architect. The business then provides the expertise that is required in these specific stages of a project. Because of their size, vast expertise and structured working methods, businesses can handle large, complex projects.

**Employees and type of architecture firm: what is the attraction?**

The studio attracts young, promising designers from all over the world. Most of these designers have the aspiration to leave the studio one day to become a ‘guru’ themselves.

The architecture office attracts designers who are willing to commit themselves for the long run. Becoming a partner and even taking over the firm is a viable option. The attraction of the office is also determined by its
cliente and specialization. Potential employ-
ees want to realize projects in close coop-
eration with the client. They are prepared to
start low and work their way up the corporate
ladder.

The architecture business attracts design-
ers that appreciate technically complex de-
signs and want to optimize the building proc-
есс. Designers that value a technically reliable
result and like working in professional project
structures will feel right at home at the archi-
tecture business.

Type awareness as an instrument
Even if architects, clients and employees each
may have their own preferences, none of the
types described can generally be said to be
superior to any other. Each type can be suc-
cessful, provided that choices are made delib-
erately and implemented consistently. As is
the case with every theoretical model, these
types of architecture firms hardly ever occur
in their pure form in real life.

The strategy of choosing
Success depends on consistently living the
choices you make. Have you established what
your identity and talents are? Then be bold
and choose to exploit your own strength!
Translate your identity into to genes of your
firm. But be prepared, that sometimes ‘to
choose means to lose’.

Strategies to upgrade your architecture firm
Strategies to enable an architecture firm to
serve different types of clients are: coopera-
tion with complementary types, collaboration
in a professional network, and outsourcing.
The other option is to create hybrid (project)
teams or a hybrid type architecture firm.
When creating an architecture firm that keeps
two types under the same roof, it is recom-
mended to separate the two types into two
autonomous organizational units in which
each type can cultivate its own talents and
ambitions. No matter what choices you make,
it is all about aligning your talents and ambi-
tions with the structure, working method and
skills of your architecture firm. So mind your
design, live your choices and be successful!

The theory of types of architecture firms is deducted from a model of
self-knowledge: achievement of goals, whether personal or organi-
zational, completely depends on the strategy chosen. Parallel to this
model of self-knowledge, organizational consciousness springs from:

- **Imagination:**
  dare to dream of the future – what do you want to be and
  where do you want to go?

- **Conscience:**
  what values stimulate or obstruct the realization of your dream?

- **Freedom of choice:**
  make the choices that serve your dream

It is all about aligning your talents and ambitions with the structure, working method and skills of your architecture firm.

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co-operating skills of architects,
designers and project managers.
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Poaching is a hedonistic principle. It combines cunning, freedom, the wilderness and the lure of what is forbidden. The poacher tracks foreign prey. Yet poaching is also a practice of everyday life, a strategy for survival. As Michel de Certeau expounds, who described this notion in *The Practice of Everyday Life* as an intellectual practice in terms of reading, “The reader produces gardens that miniaturize and collate a world, like a Robinson Crusoe discovering an island; but he, too, is ‘possessed’ by his own fooling and jesting that introduces plurality and difference into the written system of a society and a text. He is thus a novelist. He deterritorializes himself, oscillating in a nowhere between what he invents and what changes him. Sometimes, in fact, like a hunter in the forest, he spots the written quarry, follows a trail, laughs, plays tricks, or else like a gambler, lets himself be taken in by it. Sometimes he loses the fictive securities of reality when he reads: his escapades exile him from the assurances that give the self its location on the social checkerboard.”

**A change in the image of the profession**

Changes in socio-economic conditions hardly allow any possibility of retaining the classic image of the professional architect. Almost imperceptibly, economic neo-liberalism has, under the pretext of reduced aesthetics, made its entry into the field of architecture. To overstate the case: any intellectual approach means a danger for returns on capital and computer-optimized building transactions. At any rate, there will soon be no more demand even for ‘technicians’ in the process of implementation, despite oft-heard claims to the contrary, but rather for lawyers, who are able to play a game of contractual penalties in order to squeeze out what is presumed to be the best price for the client. And so “optimal architectural detail” will be retrieved from computer archives and legally confirmed by ISO-standards, whereas actual payment for the construction work can be organized through “protected companies” by way of premiums. Design and the project submission processes could be reduced to a minimum through the use of archived solutions in the form of simple combinations of tasks for almost any field, like in the planning of prefabricated housing. In customized architecture, for example, this has already become a reality today. Bewailing long-gone professional ethics offers no help here; all that can

“Maybe, architecture doesn’t have to be stupid after all. Liberated from the obligation to construct, it can become a way of thinking about anything – a discipline that represents relationships, proportions, connections, effects, the diagram of everything.”

Rem Koolhaas, *Content*
be done is to confront the question of how creative potential might be introduced again into architecture and urban planning.

In response to neo-liberal economic structures, OMA has entered into an intellectual liaison with them. Creative potential is no longer seen in architecture or classical urban planning, but rather in reprogramming them. In this way, this potential is channeled as a creative force onto the terrain of local authorities and developers. However, OMA has even gone one step further: with the foundation of AMO, a think-tank for programs and counter-programs has been established in which architects can work consistently on selected subjects that are independent of architecture. Here, employees focus on marketing questions in just the same way in which they examine aspects of the worldwide connections of globalization in relation to a variety of subjects and occasions. Yet at the same time, this level of the independent think-tank has in turn become an economic factor for OMA. As a result of this, global players such as Prada, Volkswagen, and Ikea are now among AMO’s prestigious customers. The architecture can immediately be supplied by OMA – where it makes sense to do so. The advantage of the work of AMO lies quite simply in the playful handling of these fields and subjects, where a more open approach is likely to open up new potential (in foreign territory), which could not be detected by a consultant strictly working along the guidelines of his professional expertise.

So why are there so few successful imitators of OMA/AMO? At present, the system only works due to the unique role that OMA/AMO has been able to adopt for itself. Their self-presentation as global players in the media and the authority of a professorship at Harvard provide them with a unique image amongst companies. Yet OMA’s secret also lies in its traditionally anachronistic approach to the formulation of tasks that is ultimately based on a founding structure that was quite unusual for its time: a Dutch architect, who was actually a playwright and journalist (Rem Koolhaas), an artist (Madelon Vriesendorp) and two Greek architects (Elia and Zoe Zenghelis). The know-how drawn from various professions and cultural backgrounds helped to put given tasks in a wider perspective. Today, OMA/AMO certainly works very differently: Rem Koolhaas is at the zenith of his career, but also at the top of a pyramid of many young architects who are ready to work and/or poach a lot for (very) little money.

The image of the profession has undergone great changes, both in terms of its social status and in the eyes of architects themselves. Architecture has always presented itself as a profession for generalists. That may be the reason why some architects still claim that architecture is the ‘supreme discipline’ – the all-embracing art. At the same time, the pressure on an individual to be able to do it all by him- or herself is, in reality, normally far too great. That is why, for some time, specialization has become common in architecture. In many cases, specialists have even set up their own offices, each of which focuses on one specific area, such as planning applications, construction and detail planning. For everything beyond this, experts from the other disciplines are called in. On the other hand, in the big architectural offices, architects from all fields work together.

The ‘designer architect’ likes to see himself at the top, not only as far as the process of implementing a building contract is concerned, but also in terms of his own personal importance. The media then present the architecture as noble profession, which is defined solely in terms of design. Even in the mid-twentieth century, the image of the profession promoted by Le Corbusier, for example, resembled that of an ingenious superman: “I wish that architects would become the elite of society, intellectually the wealthiest of human beings, that they would be open to everything. Architecture is an attitude of mind and not a profession. I see further: the architect should be the most sensitive person, the most well-informed of all the connoisseurs of art. He should be able to judge sculptural and aesthetic productions even better than his technical calculations.”
The team versus lone warriors

On examining Europe-wide networks such as Wonderland or the ‘Young European Architects’ from outside, it becomes obvious that the architects involved are mostly teams and not individuals. Teamwork as a brand label, but also in the sense of the division of labor, is one of the most significant outward signs of the changes in the image of the architectural profession. Yet they still exist, those lone warriors, the ‘model geniuses’, the frustrated owners of architectural offices who feel to have not been given due recognition, who – like Corbusier – still see architecture as the ‘supreme discipline’. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that they represent what is, in all probability, a discontinued model. Moreover, teamwork has gained new significance in an (architectural) world determined by increasingly narrow economical parameters. Flexibility and adaptability to changing conditions give a better chance to a small but well-rehearsed team than to a large architectural firm with many highly specialized employees. Teamwork is also a result of the impossibility of keeping an overview of the architect’s vast field of work. Teamwork thus may take two directions: on the one hand, it is a form of internal cooperation on a peer basis with different roles and skills which are then communicated to the outside as a single entity, and on the other hand, it can take the form of cooperation of the team with other collaborators from related areas or even with local government, investors, developers and administrative authorities.

Teamwork, however, must be conceptualized in order to be successful: it requires much social intelligence and frequent restraint of one’s ego in decision-making processes. In many cases, the corset may become rather tight in the process, conveying a feeling of being caught in a partnership of convenience. In the best-case scenario, a team also provides emotional and social support and helps to cope with the extreme demands of the profession’s reality. Often, it is a economic necessity for one or more team members to work for other office practices or institutions, or alternatively, to teach at a university in order to ensure economic survival. How else could one financially survive the protracted period between competition tender and start construction. Today teams are emerging not only out of necessity, but rather because the added value of teamwork has finally been recognized as the only way of meeting the current complex demands made on the architectural profession. This means that many different skills must be brought together in order to be able to canvassing, planning, and execution in parallel. In return for the reduced appearance of the ego, each team member is equally involved in the success of a project and in the symbolic capital connected with it.

However, not least importantly, teamwork provides the best basis for poaching in other fields without having to completely abandon the field of architecture itself.

Working field versus interdisciplinarity

From cartoonist to writer of children’s books, from curator to artist, from writer on economics to rock musician, trained architects are found in many other fields. Sven Nordquist, author of the famous Petterson and Findus series of children’s books, is a trained architect, as was the former director of the Jewish Documentation Centre, Simon Wiesental, as well as the legendary mountaineer Luis Trenker. The list of architects who turned their back on architecture and were successful in other fields, especially in the visual arts, can be extended almost infinitely. Who would still think of Marjetica Potrc (artist) or Peter Pakesch (curator and museum director), as trained architects?

On the other hand, there are also many examples of successful architects who never studied architecture: Tadao Ando (boxer), Viktor Grün (stand-up comedian), Peter Zumthor (carpenter) or Vito Acconci, who ‘moved on’ from being a superstar of performance and concept art and became an international architect. Moreover, increasing complexity in all specialist areas make clear-cut boundaries between disciplines ever more obsolete. Demand for trans-disciplinary positions grew as traditional disciplines
splintered into ever smaller specialized segments. Today, for instance, lawyers with an additional technology or engineering degree are certainly among the most keenly sought-after job candidates. Meanwhile, project-oriented data have been introduced where previously extensive and time-consuming interdisciplinary exchange was necessary. It is not that we no longer need the expert opinions, but rather that information often has to be incorporated into a project very quickly, in order to keep up with competitors. A quick look at the Internet provides a first insight into the foreign territory, which then becomes decisive for further decision-making. A common working field opens up the possibility of new role distribution in the approach to architecture. In the process, hiding behind the barriers of one’s own discipline is certainly not a possibility; rather, it is facing the task at hand together. The field of work does not enquire about the origin of an idea, but follows tactical and strategic considerations.

**Old pop and new topicality**

The Royal College of Art in London recently organized a series of lectures with panel discussions which took a stance against ‘ego-oriented cliché of the fountainhead architect’ and in which groups of British architects such as Archigram, NATO, muf, UFO or the recently founded G4 (Alsop, Agents of Change, Branson Coates, and FAT) discussed their approach to, and mode of, teamwork. The interesting aspect about G4 is that this group, which is actually comprised of several teams, regards itself as a collective – spanning several generations of architects. Together, they want to establish themselves above and beyond project partnerships reviving the long tradition the idea of the ‘collective’ has accumulated by now.

Particularly in the 1960s and ‘70s, significant groups of architects were formed after the model of pop music. The group became a new strategy of self-presentation that derived from the youth culture of that time and opposes the classical image of the architectural profession. Impersonal group names indicated the primacy of the collective over the individual ego. The groups established pursued a wide variety of utopias: Archigram, for instance, was cherished a boundless belief in technology and infrastructure. They combined colorful collage-like representations as a new kind of aesthetics in the presentation of architecture with the lavish use of material technology and an unbridled belief in technological innovation. A quite different, though also montage-based, approach was demonstrated by the Italian group Superstudio, which communicated the abysmal nature of structure and technology, yet without abandoning the ambivalence between political pessimism and criticism of consumerism on the one hand, and utopian concepts on the other. Their criticism of Modernism was manifested in the way they rejected it. Today, almost all these approaches can be seen in the context of the events of 1968, even where it is only a matter of formal criticism or deconstruction, as in the case of Coop Himmelblau, where ‘Coop’ again is short for ‘cooperative’ in the sense of a manifesto for the collective. What all these groups had in common was that they sought to herald a new beginning and that their manifesto-like character was more easily communicable through the art and university scene than through building projects. These groups did not focus on architecture alone, but rather propagated a collective and holistic lifestyle based on the rejection of traditional social models. The Californian Ant Farm group also proclaimed the rebirth of architecture, based on their experience of the hippie movement. Speed and technological hedonism were coupled with the mobility of the American lifestyle. Thus many of their projects include cars, though not without an element of critique. As with the literature of the Beat Generation at that time, it was hedonism, the moment, and the abyss that expanded the architectural horizons of Ant Farm. The abrupt end of Ant Farm was related on the fate that their office burned down, their whole work was destroyed and their manifesto-like House of the Century in Texas was flooded with mud. This almost symbolical end of the group in 1978 is symptomatic of the (first) failed attempt to
expand the image of the profession. Almost all the groups of this epoch broke up in the late 1970s, when social consensus had it that 1968 had failed as a movement in the face of reality. The claims of utopianism were simply too much. However, the secret wish of many architects to transfer the aesthetics to a holistic lifestyle remained.

As early as 1957, the Situationists around Guy Debord, who had partly helped to organize the revolution of 1968, had also developed a wide variety of methods to include the instant and/or the situation in the design process. Here, urbanism was presented as a new overriding discipline using improved psycho-geographies, and a new subversive view of architecture and urban development became possible. While urban development no longer inspired manifestos about planning, but rather about the construction of situations, Constant, and to some extent also Aldo van Eyck, began to explore dynamic architecture the view of which is manifested through a situation or a moment. An extended notion of urbanism developed: “Unitary Urbanism”, a theory of the overall application of artistic and technical means that combine in the total construction of a milieu dynamically connected to behavioral experiments, is regarded as the basis for the designer’s intervention in the everyday space or the sphere of action.” However, this became manifest rather in the rejection of a society hungry for the spectacular than in the manipulation of individual freedom. Détournement (misappropriation) or dérives (drifting), for example, were developed as urban methods. Naturally, this is a largely unused field of possibilities for urbanists (even though much has been written about it, a broader practice has not gained ground yet).

However, it is not surprising that in the late 1970s or around 1980, the exponents of the dystopian punk movement in London encouraged a revival of Situationist ideas. The group NATO (Catrin Beevor, Nigel Coates, Robert Mull, Christina Norton, Mark Prizeman, Carlos Villanueva-Brandt and Melanie Sainsbury), who at that time were part of a scene that included Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten, Jamie Reed and Vivienne Westwood, attempted to introduce punk culture into everyday life through trash architecture.

More important today is the influence of Robert Mull and Carlos Villanueva-Brandt & Co, who were active as teachers at the Architectural Association and other schools of architecture, and still are today. Their expanded notion of architecture influenced many young architecture groups in the London of the 1990s.

**Groups of the 1990s**

In the 1990s, FAT (Fashion, Architecture, Taste) or muf architecture/art, established a new type of architectural office in the midst of the booming creative scene in London. Although these two groups, which are still active today, are very different, they share an almost programmatic light-heartedness – even in the group names. Art or fashion, taste or art – their expanded notion of architecture applies easily. Whereas FAT were given building opportunities early on in their career, the Museum Pavilion in St. Albans was the first remarkable building by muf. muf (Liza Fior, Katherina Clarke (artists) and Melanie Dodd (architect)), which was originally conceived as a purely female group, have focussed their work on the different notions of space: public space, architectural space and the research in space: “Since 1996 muf has established a reputation for pioneering and innovative projects that address the social, spatial and economic infrastructures of the public realm. The practice philosophy is driven by an ambition to realize the potential pleasures that exist at the intersection between the lived and the built.” muf works extensively in the field of art and culture, as well as in the area of exhibitions and urban interventions. As a consequence, the extended muf group also includes other artists and an urban planning theorist. Their purview is a distinct working field that is defined by the backgrounds of the individual partners.

Around 1993, the group K-architectures was founded in Montpellier, France. Here too, the different backgrounds of the individual
members define an interesting interdisciplinary working field. In 1996, Thierry Verdier (art historian and architect), Karin Herman (graphic artist), together with Jérôme Sigwalt (architect) won a sensational Europan competition in Aubervilliers. Radical urban development and socially ambitious initiatives in the banlieue were transformed into Photoshop representations for the first time. Perhaps it was these representations that helped the Photoshop image-editing program to establish itself as a medium of architectural communication before it became the rather overused general tool that it is today. (K-architectures are now also a part of Wonderland). One could also name many other groups established in the 1990s that work on a more open field: Propeller Z (Austria; architecture/industrial design/graphic design), Stalker (Italy; art/architecture), The Poor Boys Enterprise (Austria; architecture), Crimson (Holland; architecture and research).

New potentials and Wonderland
All in all, it is legitimate to speak of the phenomenon of architecture ‘pop groups’ as a Europe-wide movement in the 1990s. However, in recent years, Wonderland’s way of looking at areas of work has been dominated more and more by the increasingly difficult economic situation. Long project lead-times, together with cuts in the cultural budgets that used to support an expanded notion of architecture have led to changes in production conditions. With Wonderland a new, heterogeneous generation of architects presents itself to the general public, a generation that covers a broad spectrum extending from provider of services to a responsible co-designer of society, and one which explores foreign territory not only within the cultural field.

The gulf between academia and practice continues to widen. Creative thinking today means continual reinventing of one’s job and the professional field, so as to be able to operate in the market and to build, and pursue, parallel strategies.

In fact, the poacher is someone who is pursued, who is always on his guard for fear of being caught. Yet, this also means staying always one step ahead of one’s pursuers, even ahead of capital ‘as the sole power capable of bestowing bliss’. Young architects are increasingly focusing on other ‘creative’ fields of activity, such as web and graphic design, event design or cultural projects in general. The search for new urban development solutions, such as to the problem of shrinking cities, also brings up issues that involve the (practically infinite) extension of the purview of the profession – architects and urbanists are being consulted for their advice on almost insoluble social and structural questions. However, at the same time, in Germany – and above all in Berlin, the center of current architectural developments – unemployment among architects is becoming a serious topic. In this situation, some of the Wonderland teams also go ‘poaching’ in other cultural fields, for example EXYZT (Paris) with their ‘Berg’ at the Berlin Palace of the Republic, or Peanutz, with their spectacular exhibition designs. Yet, more homogeneous teams do better in terms of a more goal-oriented and effective style of poaching. Recently, I met ‘star’ (all of them former AMO collaborators): this young team from Rotterdam today earns a living on making statistics and producing visual statistical renderings. This niche guarantees their survival, while they are still waiting for building commissions. For young architects today, the large-scale and demanding architectural commission becomes the much-hunted prey. Some of these poachers would very much like to bag something in their own territory, for a change …

Alternatively:
Poaching can also mean remaining an amateur, entering foreign territory and looking around with curious eyes, perhaps in order tap some (foreign) potential. Yet those who poach should also accept that others will go poaching in their territory …

Paul Rajakovic, transparadiso Vienna, Austria
Architect and urbanist, is a partner of transparadiso with artist Barbara Holub and architect Bernd Vlay (since 2005). His text is partly based on his doctoral dissertation as well as on transparadiso’s engagement in the programmatic expansion of the architect’s professional field and the development of new tactics in urbanism and architecture.

www.transparadiso.com
A survey about getting started in architecture across Europe

The Wonderland network provided basis for this research project, getting us in contact with 99 practices from 9 different EU countries, five of which (Austria, Germany, Netherlands, France, Italy) are ‘old’ and four (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia) ‘new’ members of the Union.

The survey included a total of 37 questions taking approximately 45 minutes to fill in. Sent out in early November 2005, it received 58 responses. Each country is represented by a minimum of 5 practices; what they have in common is that they are ‘small’ (less than 7 people on an average).

Given the number of participants, it obviously is a very relative measure. We nevertheless consider it an indication of the prospects that small practices are faced with in their first years. We received both positive and negative feedback. Some doubted the relevance of the issues raised. For others, the questions were helpful to create greater awareness of their own strategy, after adding up, for example, for the first time ever the real number of working hours that went into a project. In addition to the quantitative data, the practices were asked to write about their own story and strategy. A selection of these stories offer another, maybe more qualitative, kind of reality check about what it is like to start working as an architect in Europe today.

REALITY CHECK

Silvia Forlati, SHARE architects, Vienna, Austria
Partnership set up in summer 200 in Vienna by Silvia Forlati, Hannes Bürger, Thomas Lettner. Sharing knowledge, research and vision development for urban contexts. Conducted the survey on startup practices in this issue (research collaborator: Carmen Braun).

www.share-arch.com

GROUP IDENTITY OR ONE-(WO)MAN SHOWS

2.3 partners is the average size for the Wonderland-type of practice. The majority of the practices are run by 2 to 3 partners, 21% are one-(wo)man shows, 10% have more than 3 partners.

FEMALE FACTOR

Women are still a minority: of 135 total architects surveyed, only 38 (28.15%) were women.

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
Despite only 5 returns in the survey, the Czech teams appear to be the most successful in business terms. Started mostly 6 to 8 years ago, they got the highest number of projects realized (with, for example, an average of 14 built projects in their 4th year). They have an average of 9.6 employees and their average annual revenues are at least more than twice as much as everybody else’s. One additional detail may be worth noting: they have at least one person employed in administration. A secretary.
Field of action

Asking young architects about their field of work, you will receive a wide variety of answers. This makes it clear that universal definitions of what an architect does have gone out of date. Below we introduce five teams and their highly personal self-definitions.

ATMOSFERA Founded 2002 by Bernarda and Davor Silov. Based in Zagreb, Croatia

“No one who has ideas will sit around and wait for clients to come along” – this is the strategy of ATMOSFERA. And the two architects behind this name do have any number of ideas. In fact, they have some 80 to 90 projects on stock, half of them concrete commissions or competition entries, the other half unsolicited projects. Last year, they built two residential blocks that stand on stilts. Davor Silov and his wife Bernarda who set up ATMOSFERA two years ago want to convince clients of unusual building solutions: “We want to take a step ahead in form and shape.” Both of them reject the term ‘utopian’ that is commonly used to label them, notably so in connection with their ‘Diving club’ project. They say: “We keep fighting against the notion of utopia, because we don’t see that it reflects what we do. To us, all our projects are realistic, and we think it is only a matter of time until they will materialize.” The ‘Diving club’ is a project for a water-filled sphere of stratified glass for people to dive inside while watching the birds and clouds outside. “We want to spend more time investigating all aspects of that project”, they say, maybe in a postgraduate course of studies. Davor Silov would not want to busy himself with run-of-the-mill architecture: “Making architecture for someone who just wants a cube with a roof on it? I don’t have interest and time to do that.” In the future he wants to work on a few nice projects every year – “in a peaceful way”. ATMOSFERA seek to work with people and corporate clients who want genuine identity and forms. In a nutshell, their motto is: “0 % design, 40 % freedom and 0 % work”.

GH3 Founded 2000 by Johann Grubmüller and Dietmar Haberl. Based in Vienna, Austria

GH3 was set up in 2000. Meanwhile, there are two partners: Johann Grubmüller; Dietmar Haberl. Their practice focuses on office and commercial space. Their first project was the artistic concept for the Polytechnic in Villach, Carinthia, followed by their first office and commercial building. “We do most of our projects as general planners”, says Dietmar Haberl. “Clients want to have somebody that they can consult about everything. This is perhaps a sign of the times.” Haberl says he does not believe in doing architectural design and, say, graphic design or furniture on the side: “Then you might soon come to be labeled a web designer or whatever, but not an architect.” From his own experience, he knows that schedules are getting tighter and tasks increasingly complex: “Just think of the building services!” While Johann Grubmüller also holds a teaching post at a technical college, Dietmar Haberl does architecture projects under his own name as well. “GH3 attends to the Vienna market; outside Vienna, I do things on my own.” For him, this does not pose a problem of competing with his partnership firm, since he acquires new projects solely through personal contacts.

no w here Founded 1999 by Karl Amann and Henning Volpp. Based in Stuttgart, Germany

In the beginning, no w here was merely a practice for participation in competitions. Until last year, Karl Amann and Henning Volpp held teaching posts at the university in Stuttgart. It was their success in the 2001 competition for the Domsingschule (Cathedral School) in Stuttgart that brought them a large amount of work. Now the two spend one-hundred percent of their time in their office. From the very start, they sought collaboration with other specialists.
Together with fellow-architect Sibylle Heeg, they established the Gesellschaft für Soziales Planen (GSP, Society for Social Planning) in 2003. Whereas Heeg looks after the consultancy side of things, Amann and Volpp are responsible for the design of social facilities. They have just completed their first nursing home. “We realized that our profile as architects is not much help in approaching people building nursing homes”, says Karl Amann, who, like his partner, divides his time between their architecture practice, nowhere, and GSP. At present, they are establishing their third firm with a structural engineer as additional partner: lightweights which deals with helium-filled building elements and other lightweight constructions. They already had part of a prototype of a flying roof built – now all that is missing to implement the project is investors and sponsors. But Amann is certain that, with time, this area will develop, too. “Once the first part is built, it will start to get noticed – and this really is something new world-wide.” It is important for him to always have projects at all three levels. Success in one area can be an advantage in another: “In the Domingschule project, the client was the Catholic Church. We showed them our GSP work and were promptly invited to take part in a competition for a hospice. As nowhere architects, we would never have been invited.” According to Amann, working in three so very different areas helps you to keep your freedom of thinking.

**ALL-ROUNDERS** Situation-dependent forays from an architectural basis

**encore heureux** Founded 2001 by Julien Choppin and Nicola Delon. Based in Paris, France

Julien Choppin and Nicola Delon are all-rounders. Immediately after completing their studies, they set up their own practice encore heureux, as they wanted to further develop their graduation project, wagons-scènes – a train that is convertible into a concert hall. To be able to afford their independence – “the first three years we worked in our kitchen, but now we have something that resembles an office” – they also worked as graphic designers, 3-D modelers and web designers. “By now we can do so many things – we want to experience different things. I don’t know if we can continue to do everything. Maybe it is nothing”, says Nicola Delon. About the projects that they have completed so far such as wagons-scènes or their design for the annual festival in Parc André Citroen in Paris, they say: “It isn’t really architecture. But we do this kind of work using our feel for architecture.” Do they want to build some day? “We want to find the right conditions for us. We prefer to wait.” In fact, they do not spend their time waiting or doing competitions, but devise their own commissions: “We prefer to start our own projects.” As was the case with their most recent project, Pisteurs on Boulevard Magenta, where the fact that there was no recognizable differentiation between the bicycle path and the footpath led to constant problems. Encore heureux solved these by means of a trail of white paint that meanders along the bicycle path. Julien Choppin: “This is the kind of project we want to do more often: There is a problem, and we find a solution.”

**ARTGINEERING** Founded 2001 by Stefan Bendiks and Aglaée Degros. Based in Rotterdam, Netherlands

“On the one hand, we are an artists’ collective by the name of ARTGINEERING. However, in the ‘N4 Profiles’ project, we are an urban planning research office, and in Belgium, we also work as a design office.” Stefan Bendiks and Aglaée Degros work at the interface between urban planning and infrastructure. The unresolved relationship between architecture and infrastructure come to be one of their main themes. They conducted an extensive examination of the N4 national motorway in Belgium in the form of artistic interventions and also in a research sense. “Just as the motorway and the city are strictly separated from one another, so are urban planning and infrastructure. This is precisely where our projects begin.” Aside from their office, they also work as consultants, and both of them teach at the university in Delft. Thus they rely on three sources of income. Stefan Bendiks: “Over the past five years, we have adopted a particular line when confronted with the question of what ARTGINEERING actually does. It is good for potential clients if they can put us in some category or another.” If this results in concrete design tasks, such as the restructurating of Vorselaar in Belgium, this is very much what ARTGINEERING is out for: “We have been looking for a more effective way of implementing things.” This may equally take the form of a real, or an abstract, intervention. In the beginning, they mostly dealt with architectural commissions in a classical sense: “But we quickly found that this is not so interesting. There are many practices that see what we do exclusively as a prelude to building. But, and this is an important point, for us this is not so. For us, it simply is the most effective way to change reality.”

*by Anne Isopp*
FIELD OF ACTION

**Purist, All-Rounder or Cross-Breeder?**

For more than half of the practices surveyed, a substantial part of the work (above one third of the working time) lies outside of the field of architecture. Apart from the services provided to other companies, their portfolio includes teaching (60.4% of the practices), graphic and webpage design, journalism, and event management (41.5%). While operating in an expanded field of action may help to generate more commissions, it does not offer higher income margins than architecture. See page 52.

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
Overview:
In the Czech Republic, the core activity for all practices surveyed is architecture proper. The Netherlands represent the other extreme, with nobody doing more than 70% architecture. An average of 42.1% of the practices defined themselves as specialized in some way, while 19.6% are not legally entitled to provide full architectural services.
Who you are and what you are

Naturally, without a name nothing is possible. There must be something to put on the doorplate or in the letterhead or have listed in the telephone book. Without a name, you are nobody. With a name, you are somebody.

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<td>An acronym of our first names (Nina, Amir, Norbert).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It used to be con:form, but a friend told us: „You are non-conformers.”</td>
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<td>A name for good vibes in space and about space ...</td>
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<td>It is about approaching contradictions and being open for newness.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>It is related to the concepts metaphors, a parallel (not real) universe.</td>
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<td>Space doctors: our work is diagnostic, surgical, and in the end, healing.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Barak in Hebrew means something like brilliant, magic. In Slovak, it is a temporary house.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>There is the idea of more happiness and the idea of good luck. A minimum that must exist.</td>
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<td>Our concepts are monochrome, and the people make them colorful.</td>
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<td>Referring to the culture of tomorrow: the Chinese.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The name describes our idea of cooperation: complicity. We see our clients as partners.</td>
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<td>An adaptable network of virtual studios.</td>
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<td>4A = 4 architects.</td>
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How to keep up

No other profession requires more skill to strike a reasonable balance of time invested, quality achieved, and money gained. Of the 58 practices surveyed, 95% admit to offering part of their work for free. At the same time, working hours add up to 51 per week, and the project survival rate is estimated to being less than 50% on an average. Clients are difficult to find and easy to lose. Media success is no guarantee of business success.

What counts, and needs to be learnt in time, is the ability of running a business, negotiations skills, trust-building capacities, time management and marketing in all its forms.
Negotiation between aesthetics and client demands

Interview with Eva Boudewijn

In the beginnings of every architectural practice, the essential thing is winning clients. First client contacts and first projects are then hoped to lead to follow-up commissions. Client relations are vital for growing a portfolio and a business. But what is the position that the client/user has in a start-up practice, and how client-oriented are you willing to design? Traditionally, architectural education is focused on aesthetic and creative aspects. The business knowledge of running an office has to be acquired on the job – learning by doing. Eva Boudewijn is a business consultant and founder of the Amersfoort-based firm motion consult.

**Wonderland:** What do you think young start-up architects should consider first?

**Eva Boudewijn:** It all begins with your own identity: knowing who you are and believing in what you want to be and knowing your aspirations, so that you can translate that into a form or type of organization. So soul searching should be the first move to know what kind of architect you want to be.

*Isn’t there a natural conflict between the creative side of architecture and running an architectural business?*

Yes that conflict will always be there. If you want to avoid it, maybe you should keep architecture as a hobby. If you want to make it a business, you will always have to deal with clients and keep your organization running. Maybe you can join up with a partner who focuses on the commercial and business aspect. It is one option of not having to do that all yourself. But, I guess, not many start-ups can afford that luxury.

**Why do you think that architects and designers need business consultants?**

Architects, especially beginners in the profession, are preoccupied with architectural content. But when you start a business, then there is more to it than just architectural content. You have to keep in mind this formula: ‘effect = quality × acceptance’ – that you have to be able to sell your content or your talent and make that attractive for a client. Besides architectural content, the commercial side or networking and the managing of your business are essential.

**How does an architect find his/her client?**

There are several strategies, and they are related to what type of architect you are. I would say that a studio needs to develop some sort of brand awareness and invest a lot in publishing and public relations. The other strategy is networking, making sure you know a lot of people...
to whom you can present yourself and produce good work, because this gives you word-to-mouth to get new assignments.

*Does cold acquisition work for architects?* Cold acquisition is a strategy in which you skip the stage of building a relationship and go for the contract right away. To some extent it could work for a studio-type firm. After all, a successful studio should have established some brand awareness, which means that they have a name that means something to people. In generally, I would say cold acquisition does not work, because you need the client’s trust, and that takes time and effort and networking.

*But many architects are afraid of becoming like vacuum-cleaner salesmen...* I think it is a prejudice. First, you have to find the people to get in contact with. The rule is quite simple: you have to make contact first, and then you can do business. It never works the other way around. That is the big difference to being a vacuum-cleaner sales-

You have to make contact first, and then you can do business. It never works the other way around.

**E=Q × A**

(Effect = Quality × Acceptance)

Architectural talent and skills alone are not enough to be successful. Success depends on your ability to get acceptance for your design or vision. This requires excellent communicative skills. It starts with establishing an authentic relationship, being able to explain and convince and overcome conflicts and irritations.

There will always be someone who offers a cheaper, faster design. How do you bridge the difference in approach and quality awareness between architect and client? Clients’ project calculations usually are very tight. They are not based on real hours, real activities. In other industries, it is common to estimate how many hours it will take, multiply that with your hour rates, and make a price. In architecture, this is different; that is a disadvantage. You should not sell yourself short. I know that – especially when starting out – you will be eager to accept an assignment for a very low fee. That’s okay, as long as you make a conscious choice that this is your investment you make in order to get other projects, to make a name for yourself as an architect. But you should try to calculate beforehand how much you are willing to invest, how many unpaid hours are acceptable for you.

If one successfully made contact (or has established a relationship), how does one make the step to a contract? Well, at a certain point, the relationship is evolving, the prospect is interested in your ideas, your designs, and he’ll give you what I would call ‘buying signals’, and these you have to be alert to. Don’t be afraid to say “This is now the fifth time that we are talking about this project; when are we going to do business?” That may be difficult, but it helps when you know what you want to accomplish. Don’t be too pushy, because this may have an opposite effect.

So, how does one maintain a good client relationship? That does not happen by itself. Even if you had a good client relationship before the assignment, you still have to work on it. It means involving the client and communicating what you are doing, and being explicit about what the client has, or is expected, to contribute.
Do architects have to be afraid that clients become ‘king’ in the process?

No, I don’t think so, it is more of a partnership between the client and the architect. Both provide input, have responsibility, and both have decisions to make. If you want to design without client interference, do it for yourself as a hobby. When the client pays the bill in the end, he has to get a service or building that he is content with. You have to consider the wishes of a client, and see it as a challenge, see it as an input and inspiration and try to find creative solutions.

How do you find a client whose interest matches with the ambitions of the architect?

As an architect, you have to be aware that everybody involved in a project has different ambitions. If the client wants to have something very fast, it will probably be more expensive, and maybe the quality will have to be lower. This is the field you have to negotiate. Don’t be tempted to make decisions for the client, but present the decisions that the client has to make and make him aware of the consequences of his choices.

But sometimes your client does not know what he/she wants. Can you as an architect influence him?

Yes, I think it is worthwhile to invest time, and money, too, to get a clear picture of your client’s requirements and wishes before you start designing. So you could use workshops, exchange ideas to help your client form a picture in his head. This is not very common for architects, who often want to start designing right away.

A client is coming back to you for a new project; does that mean you delivered a good design?

Yes, but it also might also be – since designing is only one part of the service – that the client is very satisfied about the process or the way you have cooperated. I think that it is a good sign in any case, and I think it would be worthwhile to ask the client why he’s coming back to you, what qualities he really likes in your work or the way you work, so that you can use that to readjust and confirm your own strategy.

Interview by Astrid Piber

In every project there is a tension between quality, budget and planning. Better quality often is more expensive and takes longer to realize. The challenge of every project is to balance these three aspects. This can be complicated when the designer and the client have different ambitions. When it comes to making decisions, explore the consequences for the quality, budget and planning together, so that each party can make their decision.
START-UP INVESTMENT

Did not answer the question 33%

Above 30,000 Euros 0%

Between 10,000 and 30,000 Euros 25%

Between 0 and 10,000 Euros 42%

The average start-up investment is lowest in Slovakia (approx: 3,000 Euros) and highest in the Netherlands (12,500 Euros).

GETTING CLIENTS

Reason for acquisition
- Study 18.9%
- Previous work 45.3%
- Competition 15.1%
- Social contact 7.5%
- Other 32.1%

First project
- Self initiated 29.2%
- Single-family house 27.1%
- Renovation 33.3%
- EUROPAN Competition 4.2%
- Other competition 31.3%
- Commission through previous office 2.1%

Connection to the first client
- Competition 22.7%
- Social contact 68.2%
- Family 22.7%
- Previous working relations 22.7%
- Other 22.7%

Clients now on the basis of ...
- Projects built 56.6%
- Competitions 49.1%
- Social contact 88.7%
- Other 28.3%

Paradox: to get your first project you actually need to have a previous project to show for. Getting clients and projects through competitions is possible: 22% of the practices go their first commission this way, and 49% name this as one way of getting clients now.

Source: Survey by SHARE architects

9,968 Euros is the average first-year investment as estimated by the practices surveyed.

The average start-up investment is lowest in Slovakia (approx: 3,000 Euros) and highest in the Netherlands (12,500 Euros).
What is it about the m-word? In intelligentsia circles, we often complain about the advertising overflow on television, in our virtual and real mailboxes and in our favorite lifestyle magazines. Are we now supposed to start doing it, too? Using manipulation? Using brainwashing? Offering bargains in the art of building?

The experience of young architects indicates the way that things are going: for most design and planning offices, it is not easy to get, or keep, a foothold in the market. The building sector is subject to its own economic cycles, which means that every crisis will come to an end – but also that no boom will not go on forever.

The fact is that there are many suppliers of planning services, but little demand for their work. This is probably the main reason why the interest in marketing is increasing among architects. Still, is there anything that we can learn from the world of marketing? Doesn’t architecture have a quite different pace than ordinary consumer-oriented businesses? After all, everyone knows clients who have not the slightest idea of what is really good...

Decades of research have hitherto not produced a uniform marketing doctrine. Theorists distinguish between marketing for consumer goods, marketing for investments and even marketing for services. The services...
that we as architects have to offer are located somewhere in the overlap zone of these three fields:

**In relation to market competition, we need the image of a ‘must have’ fashion label.**

**Considering the financial risk taken by our clients, we do clearly need the reliability of a mechanical engineer or building contractor.**

**And finally, the fact that client satisfaction is largely dependent on the extent of our compliance with their wishes would suggest the kind of service-mindedness you tend to find in a massage studio.**

That sounds like renouncing all our values and ideals in favor of reckless commercialization. And this cannot be the solution. What is more, we all know that personal values and ideals are precisely the factors that have made successful colleagues leap into the limelight.

**Thorough architectural marketing should begin with some basic strategic questions:**

What do I stand for? Where do I want to go? The answer is: positioning. Many Wonderland teams have a comprehensible philosophy or mission. We can learn from the marketing world that, once found, this positioning does not last forever, but rather is dynamic in character. For example, the image of a ‘young practice’ definitely has an expiry date.

Moreover, it is important that we present a uniform and coherent self-image to potential clients; with coherent referring to all interfaces of our practice – working material, the office itself, portfolios, visiting cards, lectures, web presence, articles in journals etc. To do so is less a matter of brainwashing than of acknowledging the fact that the brain cannot endlessly distinguish logos, names and colors. In creative professions in particular, people are always re-inventing themselves: “Have you seen our new logo?” Not a good idea! Only with one definite identity will we be adequately perceived. A so-called ‘corporate image’ is the basis to make sure that the character of our office – i.e. what we are – does not become blurred.

Once we have created such an identity, we can begin the marketing work. Here we can go by the classic tenets of marketing, those 4 P’s that are common knowledge in the business world: **Product, Price, Place and Promotion.**

We have to check whether our market positioning, our image, and the services that we offer (Product) form a comprehensible unity. In addition, our pricing policy (Price), distribution policy (Place), and our communication (Promotion) need to be harmonized and tailor-made for us.

What is the product that we are offering? Extending the range of activities is a trend currently found in many architectural practices. Teams such as blauraum Architekten (Germany) or fabrica (Slovakia), for example, run galleries or shops in the immediate vicinity of their offices. Changing to the service business should not be primarily interpreted as a second-best option or solely as a response to economic pressures. ‘Product innovation’ is the result of architects’ entrepreneurial and artistic creativity. Skills that have been acquired at university can also be productively applied outside the traditional field of building.
As a marketing instrument, the price is crucial for architects. On the one hand, planners in many countries are compulsorily organized in professional associations which specify service conditions and regulate prices, thus preventing price competition, through fee scales and codes of conduct. From the point of view of the suppliers, the architects, such regulation is attractive, since the necessity of competitive pricing tends to bring considerably lower fees, notably starting fees. However, better earning prospects entail that the market may be overrun by ever more would-be suppliers. You cannot turn one wheel at a time in the market system without having another wheel that is turning with it.

Another question is whether all this regulation business is worth the effort, since customers demanding planning services cannot really be called very ‘price sensitive’. As a commodity, planning services are comparable only with difficulty, and what is more, they are hardly substitutable. “Yes, fine design, but I can get the same for 120 Euros less on the Internet – I’m sorry. Goodbye!” is not a realistic scenario. Usually, it is other factors that influence the decision to buy, as long as we keep prices at the market level.

Web presence is important promotion. Studies show that buying decisions are often made on impulse, spontaneously and quickly. If access to an Internet page constitutes the first or second contact, then it may be here where a client relationship begins, or not.

Special attention should be given to the language we use in communicating with prospects. We should keep in mind that our (potential) clients have not studied architecture. Apart from the obvious need to make oneself understood, prospective clients should be addressed on an emotional level as well. Planning often is a kind of luxury article (e.g. an architect-built single family home), and luxury articles tend to be sold by soft skills rather than rational arguments.

Architects usually settle matters among themselves in their professional associations or institutions. As a rule, newspaper ads and other forms of classical advertising are prohibited as unfair competition. However, such forms of business communication are increasingly less effective anyway.

For this reason, it is other instruments that are more interesting – and not only for architects: public relations and sponsoring are currently gaining in significance in marketing as a whole. Here the issue is finding ever-new interfaces for company communication.

These new marketing strategies are decisive for distribution policy: place – how and where do we find our clients, or how and where do they find us?

One reason for the success of ‘networks’ (which, to some extent, people are still talking about) was the fact that various freelancers formed a kind of sales cooperative, and thus were able to address more potential customers. The more diversified the network, the more successful the distribution strategy. Since Wonderland is encompasses almost exclusively architects, it is not really a good example of a diversified network. Yet when freelance graphic artists, computer specialists, artists, urban planners and geographers join in to cooperate with architects, then a good sales network develops.

However, cooperatives are often unstable, and since there is still no wholesale trade for planning services, we need to offer our skills in competitions and through direct distribution. In the case of young practices, social contacts are usually top of the list, i.e. close relatives and their friends are often the first clients.

For marketing people, this is quite unsurprising and by no means trivial. After all, it is a matter of trust. Architectural services presuppose a high degree of trust. Why is trust so important and how is it developed?

Architecture is a trust commodity – our clients rely on us to service them to the best of our ability and with all due care and diligence. Just as the customers of biodynamic farmers, surgeons or hair stylists rely that the service that they pay for is good, healthy, safe, or cool.

People and brands earn our trust through credibility (being authentic). It is not only in marketing that credibility is a core topic. In private matters, too, e.g. when entering into
relationships with others, we check their credibility. Interestingly enough, in many cultures dancing is one of the most successful interpersonal rituals to get to know strangers and has been practiced for centuries. What can we do if we cannot go dancing or drinking with all of our potential customers? We become members of an association and draw up lists of reference projects. Is there anything else that we can do in order to be perceived as trustworthy?

From a marketing point of view, continuous social presence is of primary importance. Apart from factors of social influence, it is also important to activate others: building cultural, personal and psychological bridges. Civil engagement and a lively participation in social life are classical (marketing) activities used by successful entrepreneurs. Then, possibly, we will manage to take the step from an introverted to an extroverted practice. When we get into direct contact with potential clients, it will soon become clear whether we have done our marketing homework or not.😊

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www.complizen.de

FACTS

Product
78.6% of the surveyed practices say that they are ready to compromise between aspired quality and what is possible with a specific client. 30.4% pose no conditions: all budgets and clients are accepted. 12.5% exclusively go for high end design: if this is not possible, the project is canceled. 49.1% are ready to work unpaid extra time to achieve the best possible design. Only 24.5% limit effective working time to paid time.

Pricing
62% consider their pricing to be at market level, 21% below, 11% above. Nonetheless, only 17% strictly observe the fee scales of chambers or other professional organizations. 96% offers some work for free. At least 15.6% take on jobs even if they know that this means incurring a loss.

Place
38% work mainly in the local market, 42% do not distinguish between local, national and international. 11% mainly work on international projects.

Promotion
Only 3.6% hire professional marketing or public-relations assistance. 7.3% do not want to have anything to do with it, while 85.5% try to get published and do the marketing on their own.

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
**REVENUES**

‘Own’ architecture

- Time invested > revenues generated: 26% of the practices
- Time invested < revenues generated: 28% of the practices
- Time invested = revenues generated: 46% of the practices

46% of the practices estimated that the amount of working time necessary to provide ‘own’ architectural services is proportionate to revenues generated.

**PROJECT SURVIVAL**

- For 9% of the practices, between 50% and 70% survive
- For 14% of the practices, between 30% and 50% survive
- For 45% of the practices, less than 30% survive
- For 32% of the practices, more than 70% of the projects survive
- For 4% of the practices, between 50% and 70% survive

43.5% is the average survival rate of projects.

Source: Survey by SHARE architects
51 Hours/Week is the average working time for the architects surveyed.

50–60 hours/week: 28%
Less than 40 hours/week: 22%
Part time/hobby (approx. 20 hours/week): 4%
More than 60 hours/week: 13%
40–50 hours/week: 33%

Working hours/week/country:
- CZ: 63
- FR: 63
- NL: 57
- SI: 56
- SK: 56
- AT: 46
- IT: 46
- HR: 45
- DE: 40
- Average: 51

Average of realized projects/year:
- Year 1: 2 projects
- Year 2: 3 projects
- Year 3: 4 projects
- Year 4: 6 projects
Average: 3.7 projects

Projects per year:
- Year 1: 6 projects
- Year 2: projects
- Year 3: projects
- Year 4: projects

Budgets:
- Year 1: 211,000 EURO/project
- Year 2: 458,000 EURO/year
- Year 3: 341,000 EURO/project
- Year 4: 824,000 EURO/year
- Year 3: 281,000 EURO/project
- Year 4: 867,000 EURO/year
- Year 4: 596,000 EURO/project
- Year 4: 2,457,000 EURO/year

Source: Survey by SHARE architects

4 realized projects is the average number of projects per year per practice in the first 4 years.

390,577 EUROS is the average budget per project.
These were all start-ups of one kind or another. At the time, the people involved surely had little intimation of their later success, but as no-names they had nothing to lose and everything to win. And they did have something to say (without judging what they said). But above all they first expressed themselves in a medium which, in contrast to a built structure, had a different form of autonomy (artistic or scientific) and that was subject to different laws of economic feasibility: they scored their early successes in the world of discourse. Like all branches of cultural production, the discipline of architecture also exists in parallel spheres – in the sphere of the production of the work or event on the one hand, and on the other in the sphere of the construction, dissemination, and reception of meaning. Specialized journalism (and only later the mass media) has become a power that can transform the discourse of a small group into a global one, or a small building in a remote Swiss alpine valley into a potential classic. But this happens as the result of the interaction of clearly defined rules and historical accidents, which, while being reconstructable with hindsight, are not easily predictable in advance. When Malcolm McLaren, inspired by the Situationists, founded the Sex Pistols together with Johnny Rotten to pull off the *The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle* (and only shortly after, together
with Vivienne Westwood in her first shop with its always closed doors, experienced the calculated bankruptcy that reverberated throughout the media), the media echo of the destruction and inversion of all symbols by Punk was one possible but not the inevitable outcome. The winners of the game always tend to reforge the chain of causality.

However, the relationship between these two spheres in economic terms – expressed in its simplest form in the taboo question: “How did they make a livelihood?” – is a phenomenon that is rarely discussed. How does media success change the profession and the circumstances of production? What implications does the ‘economy of attention’ (Georg Franck) have for young teams? What were the changes caused in this respect by the pushing of the boundaries of the discipline?

1776, Adam Smith wrote in the Wealth of Nations that, whereas almost all craftsmen in the mechanic trades could make a living, in the so-called liberal professions only one in twenty would be in a position to live from his work. And yet, so it seemed to Smith more than 200 years ago, it was the professions that attracted the best and the brightest minds. The philosopher offered also a reason for this: the public success enjoyed by the few ‘winners’ and their extraordinary self-confidence and belief in their own abilities and in luck¹. Interestingly enough, uncertainties seem to have changed over the centuries, for when making a similar comparison in his book entitled Freakonomics, Steven D. Levitt uses the architect (with whom we are dealing here) as an example of a safe, albeit specialized profession with very slight (economic) chances of success in contrast to the prospects of a prostitute or crack dealer. Levitt was interested to find out why, in heaven’s name, there should be so many people in the United States who make a living from dealing in crack at an hourly wage of 3.30 dollars and with a 25 % likelihood of dying on the ‘job’. The answer to this question is the same that is given by Adam Smith (the fact that the public success of the crack dealer is clearly confined to a rather small segment of the public makes little difference here). In this area, the rules of the game follow those of the free market. When there are many potential providers of a service, the amount of money each of them can earn declines. But this amount is also dependent on the degree of specialization, the disadvantages involved in exercising this profession and the demand for this particular service.

For Levitt the main issue in all the professions he describes as ‘mythical’ is always the same: a persistent obsession with achieving recognition, money and power (the architects among my readers will rather quickly point out the unlikelihood of achieving at least two of these goals within their own profession …)

So much for the economist’s viewpoint. In the field of cultural production, the process seems a little more complex. In Die Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit (The Economy of Attention) as well as in his subsequent book Mentaler Kapitalismus (Mental Capitalism), Georg Franck has described the far more subtle phenomena and the new rules of the game according to which our society has worked ever since the emergence of the media. In a mediatized world, the accumulation of ‘attention’ leads to the development of a social capital that creates its own markets. It is “not the financial turnover but the attention income that has helped certain directions achieve world-wide importance.”² Architecture therefore uses two different kinds of markets: in one, “professional services are offered in exchange for payment”, while in the other “published opinion is exchanged for the attention of those interested in culture.”² But what Franck did not show was that, although following the victory of the ‘functionalism of attention’, architecture can be seen as a paradigmatic discipline in which the relationship between achieving recognition and exploiting it in economic terms (the star architect and the global company, the branding of cities etc.) is clearly evident, the so-called ‘win-win situation’ remains restricted to the sphere of discourse even for many prominent exponents.
of the profession. The economic disaster suffered by the offices of Jean Nouvel and Rem Koolhaas in the 1990s may serve as a first small example here.

In his recent lectures, Rem Koolhaas made a point of presenting diagrams which show the curious discrepancy between media success and its economic impact in the world of architecture and other professions involved in the production of culture. Conscious of his role as a global superstar in the current architectural scene, he raised the question (also with regard to himself) of the economic implications that fame can have in the world of the arts and the media or in the architectural world. Whereas in the case of Koolhaas’ artist colleagues (painters, sculptors, film-makers, actors, football players, etc.), the exponential increase in recognition was matched by a corresponding increase in economic value, things are different in the world of architecture. Even in the case of top stars such as Gehry or Foster, there is certainly a clear accumulation of attention but, most interestingly, this is not directly reflected in the financial rewards (which is partially due to the fee scale that regulates architects’ incomes, but even if fees were doubled, incomes would still remain ridiculously small in relation to the increase in value that results from fame in other branches). This striking discrepancy led Koolhaas to suggest that, following the completion of the Guggenheim Museum, Gehry should be given a percentage of the annual returns for Bilbao; after all, his building apparently is the reason for the media attention and the subsequent strengthening of the city’s economy. But, with regard to the Bilbao effect, Ernst Hubeli has pointed to the dangers of the media trap: “the inflation of (media) singularities has led to their self-destruction.” In other words: in the beginning, there is a lot of money in the game thanks to the Koolhaas markup, but it quickly runs low for good old Gehry and his successors...

The laws of the ‘economy of attention’ mean that, as a result of the architect’s accumulation of acclaim, the work increases in value “... we value that which we pay attention to and we pay attention to what we value ...”\(^2\), but for the architect this increase in value is largely expressible in terms of reputation only. “Reputation itself takes the form of capital. It is the capital that results from the accumulation of an income consisting in attention from experts.”\(^2\)

But Franck’s theory, which is based on the assumption of a general narcissism, tends to obscure the fact that even the greatest moments of reputation only very rarely have direct economic consequences for architects. When Haus-Rucker-Co rocketed to fame in the late 1960s, they participated twice in the documenta (in the art world the equivalent of being raised to knighthood), but behind the scenes, their professional life still was a constant search for survival strategies, for jobs here and there, with the final possibility of teaching (which also strengthened the possibility for the discourse). What was particularly striking in the case of Haus-Rucker-Co was the difficulty that the public had to place their work in precisely defined context (that of architecture or, alternatively, art) and the associated evaluation of these works. With the extension of the boundaries of the discipline, this phenomenon has increasingly gained ground in the works of various architects and groups of our generation. As it was, primarily, the art scene that took interest in working at the interface of the disciplines and, particularly, in the subject of public space, it generally is in the field of art that various works have found, and still find, a wide forum. Interestingly though, they have most often found little more than a forum, for it is not
always the case that these works are understood as belonging to the ‘field of art’ (whose mechanisms were precisely described by Pierre Bourdieu in his work *The Rules of Art*). The reverse situation also applies – merely because a work or event in the area of ‘art’ is perceived as pertaining to questions of (social) space does not automatically make it a work of ‘architecture’. Consequently, it is its positioning within a ‘field’ that defines the value of a work or event.

Unsurprisingly, there is no easy way out of this dilemma. From the experience of our own practice, we know about the interaction of perceptions within one discipline or another. Ephemeral urban interventions – which, above all, addressed notions of public space and were made with much individual initiative and idealism, but without any profit interest – found an echo in Austrian architectural discourse as well as at the interface to the world of art. This in turn earned us lectureships and invitations to exhibitions, biennales, while, on the other hand, works that were developed in parallel and, from the start, tended to be perceived as ‘architecture’ were seen in the context of these strategies (and vice versa) and were expanded in that direction. Publications and (art) awards led to invitations to put these means to test in a broader context, so that these experimental works, originally created with a great deal of personal effort or public subsidy, suddenly also saw an increase in economic value. As the ‘architecture’ was publicized in parallel, the question of what generates which conditions and chances increasingly becomes a kind of chicken-and-egg situation.

Since the emergence of the pop phenomenon in the architecture of the 1960s, much, and yet little, has changed. What has in fact changed is the heterogeneity of the diverse scenes, the simultaneous existence of contradictory discourses, and the fact that a many of the young generation discussed today fights a battle on several fronts. Theory and practice are seamlessly interwoven, with all opportunities and all inconsistencies that this involves. From the perspective of the start-up generation of the 1960s, anyone starting today seems immeasurably over-informed and clear-headed; they are aware of which directions the heroes of their youth have taken and what has become of them in the market. We all know the mechanisms of the media (although we remain their victims); we know that an examination of the spatial and social conditions in the favelas of South America – after making its way through all sorts of publications – can generate ‘favela chic’ for the apartments of London Dinkies promoted by, for example, Wallpaper. At the same time, we – the (perhaps unconscious) children of Umberto Eco’s call for a ‘semiological guerilla’ (1967) – were also born with an innate plan of action against these effects of the mass media.

We all know that media attention works like a gigantic telescope that can blow up a small phenomenon to a colossal, world-changing one, and somewhere in the back of our heads, we suspect that we could direct this telescope to the real spatial and social crises. Attention will most probably not fatten our wallets as architects, but the discourse it generates could possibly alter our view of the world. It’s a question of relevance.

P.S.: The Yale Art Gallery was opened in 1952. It was Louis I. Kahn’s first important recognized building. He was 51 years old at the time. Architecture is starting-up. Forever.

Notes:
First Houses...
Le Corbusier’s first house, the Schwab House, built 1916 in La-Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, received recognition only after the architect had found fame for other designs. One of the first houses that F. L. Wright designed as a self-employed architect, the Winslow House at River Forest (1894), is regarded as the beginning of his series of ‘Prairie Houses’.
The Schröder House in Utrecht, built 1924, Gerrit Rietveld’s first commission as a professional architect, and Robert Venturi’s Chestnut Hill House, designed 1962 for his mother in Pennsylvania, remain the best-known projects of these architects.
Toyo Ito’s Aluminum House, Kanagawa, of 1971 and Jean Nouvel’s Maison Delbigot of 1970 have remained more or less unrecognized. In 1942, while still a student, Philip Johnson built his ‘First House’, a small home for himself, known as the Ash Street House and accepted by the Dean as Johnson’s final academic project in 1943. The next project he designed for himself was built in 1946, the acclaimed ‘Glass House’ in New Canaan, Connecticut. This was the house that launched Philip Johnson to fame.

Whilst house design was important in the educational curriculum of modernist architects, it is less significant nowadays. At universities, single family houses are examined as historical case studies rather than assigned as design problems. The design of the house typology might have lost in significance in scholarly discourse, but when it comes to the traditional scope of architectural practice, the house will always remain a classical startup project. It will be a relatively simple project to oversee, and it can be a ‘test case’ for all stages of design and construction. A completed project is almost always the best reference to get follow-up commissions. Young architects take their chances and are often ready to invest more time and energy than they are paid for, if not advice for free.

A Case-Study
Among the many designs exhibited in the Wonderland traveling exhibition, the majority of the realized projects are designs for living spaces. One third of the teams have a single-family house among their first three realized projects, whereas every fourth team does not have a built project to show in their portfolio. It is an interesting if inconsistent phenomenon: while the architect’s purview appears to be expanding in general, it has remained very traditional in terms of building practice. Exploring the fundamental significance of a first completed project for startup practices is even more interesting in view of the geographical distribution of the Wonderland houses: by far the most houses were designed and realized in the Czech Republic, followed by Austria, Slovenia and Italy. The least number of houses built could be found among the teams of the Netherlands and France. This pattern brings us to our working hypothesis: practicing architecture in Eastern European countries is still more building-related, whereas architectural practice in Western Europe also encompasses the conducting of institutionally supported studies and the development of ideas. We were interested to find out whether architects from the Eastern and new EU member states need more projects to survive than their Western colleagues and whether there is something like a North-South and West–East differential in income among European architects.
Construction costs

In comparing these ‘economics of practice’, one has to acknowledge that there are substantial regional differences across Europe. Residential markets develop at different speeds, and location, specifications, accessibility and the level of finishes, fittings and furnishings all have a significant impact on construction costs. Technical standards vary throughout Europe depending on local tradition in practice, climate and building regulations. There is little statistical data available on construction costs for single family houses. We refer to market figures published in the European Focus on the Residential Market report by EC Harris (Spring 2005). The indicative benchmark cost for high-quality residential spaces is applied to identify average-size houses for the different European countries.

The houses built by the Wonderland teams confirm the general trend: the average cost per square meter is about 780 Euros for the Eastern European countries, but about 1,430 Euros in Western Europe.

Average size of hypothetical house for 300,000 Euros in m²
Compensation for architectural services

We used the fee scales applicable in different countries to calculate the pay for architectural services as a percentage of total construction costs. Criteria and calculation methods differ from country to country. Fee scales are compulsory only in Germany, Italy and Slovenia, whereas in Portugal, Greece, Luxembourg and Malta, they are binding for public commissions only and provide a guideline for the private sector. Fee scales are also recommended in most other countries, apart from those that have not such guideline at all, like Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Turkey, and Norway.

In Europe, we find the highest average recommended percentage in Switzerland and the lowest in Cyprus. When looking at fee components as allocable to design stages, it also becomes evident that the earlier phases, i.e. design and planning, are better paid in Spain, Cyprus, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, whereas fees for building supervision are relatively higher in Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Germany. The general assumption of a North-South and West-East differential is confirmed as long as the compensation for architectural services is expressed as a percentage of construction cost.

Macroeconomic hypothesis

The average total construction cost for a 120-square-meter house in each country is set in relation to the calculated fees and the (hypothetical) amount of work needed for an ideal average planning process. This comparison shows that the variance of 'practical economy' is less than expected. The average working time needed for the design of a house in Austria with a construction budget of 165,000 Euros is not so much different what is needed for similar-sized house in Spain with a budget of 96,000 Euros; still, the average recommended fees differ widely, amounting to 20,724 Euros in Austria and 9,578 Euros in Spain. Within the macroeconomic conditions of a given national economy, the is a given and calculable relationship between construction cost, fees, and expenses; when working...
outside the country where the practice is based, however, this could potentially be profitable or risky. The hypothetical planning process allows for 285 working hours in average per house, which seems very short, especially when compared to the actual working hours that the Wonderland teams invested in their first single-family houses. On an average, each team spent 898 hours on the project: the average time for design was 7 months, for construction 11 months. To invest time and money in order to get a first project done is calculated risk. On the other hand, in the case of single-family houses, the effort required to produce a good design does not seem to be quite in balance with the fee scale.

To sum up:
For a startup practice, single-family house design does not yield much of an economic benefit. However, it provides young architects with an experience in design and project management. Occasionally, it contributes to becoming recognized as a practice. History teaches us that a ‘first house’ can set the scene for future projects and potentially may boost an architect’s career. Herzog & de Meuron, for example, received international attention very early in their career with their Blue House, completed 1980 in Oberwil, Switzerland. On the other hand, every project is a ‘test case’ and what about all the ‘unknown first houses’? A built first house is an opportunity for every architect to give manifest expression to an individual vision which also reflects the time in which the project was realized.

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MACROECONOMIC HYPOTHESIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Fee in %</th>
<th>Working Hours</th>
<th>Total Costs (Euros)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>12.56%</td>
<td>344</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>336</td>
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<td>319</td>
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<td>9.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>11.00%</td>
<td>204</td>
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</table>

Compiled by Astrid Piber and Hannes Pfau

For a 120m² house, construction cost and average fees for full architectural services vary within Europe. A hypothetical planning schedule based on average hour rates indicates that a theoretical 204 working hours are spent in Great Britain and approximately 336 in Cyprus.

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Astrid Piber and Hannes Pfau, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Practicing architects, educated in Austria, Canada and the U.S., now based in Amsterdam. Their special interests are the socio-economic effects of a common European market on architectural practice.
There is an intriguing anecdote about a peculiar behavior of citizens of Bratislava which is recorded in one of the old European travelogues (Heinrich Pröhle, *Aus dem Kaiserstaat, Schilderungen aus dem Volksleben in Ungarn, Böhmen, Mähren, Oberösterreich, Tyrol und Wien*, Vienna 1849*): it says that the citizens ignored the ban on smoking in public even in the presence of police guards by playing a simple “identity game”. Taking advantage of the position of the city at cultural crossroads of Austrian, Hungarian, Slovak and many other influences, which always forced people to be able to speak different languages fluently, the game consisted in simply switching national identities whenever it was convenient. If the police guards warned them in German not to smoke, they replied in Slovak, to warning in Slovak they replied in Hungarian, etc. – always pretending to be innocuous foreigners to the city. Evasion by switching identities was the tool they used for elegant sabotage of the rules enforced by the government in Vienna. Their daily confrontation with many different identities provided them with the know-how needed to expand their individual freedom.

Network *wonderland* is an open-ended project, connecting young architectural teams from 9 countries (AT – the initiator, SL, CZ, DE, NL, FR, IT, HR, SI) in a touring exhibition shown between 2004 and 2006. It expands the individual space of young architects by connecting them in a growing cross-border network. *wonderland* is an exercise and a practice test of the creative intelligence of startup architects, and it is on its way to becoming a complex database of this architectural generation. However, it is an interactive database with a strong personal character, both in its origin and in the way it functions. With those big old-fashioned modernist projects that brought together architects from several countries (CIAM, TEAM 10, etc.), mostly assembling individuals already well established in the practice, or even famous architects, *wonderland* perhaps only shares a certain romantic tendency to travel, and a belief in the possible solidarity of an interest group of architects amidst the individualism that is so predominant today.

Behavior *wonderland* works with many possible contemporary identities of young architectural practices. Connecting them in a network is at the same time a large-scale field project and comparative study of the specific behavior of young professionals under different legal and professional regulations that determine their architectural practice today. Among other things, *wonderland* is a certain type of behavioral game. Startup architects are human beings of potentially undefined, evasive identity; their complex education and implied contemplativeness encourages them to speculative behavior wherever restrictions are imposed on their creative freedom. It is also a personal exercise in how far startup architects or groups are willing to go today in participating in greater projects and broader discussions about the profession, and of what they can make of, and how they are ready to share, the information obtained.

Territory *wonderland* is not one and the same exhibition traveling to different places; it is created on site through participation by the architects themselves, their personal confrontation and reflection. Cultural and language differences are not emphasized in *wonderland*, there is no traveling to distant realities, no need for too much theory that would deviate discussions from the common architectural concerns; on the contrary, all connections created by *wonderland* function to enhance proximity. This can be the territory of proximity for us – our space for group behavior under and towards the rules that define our professional freedom today.
Interested in giving your contribution to the wonderland magazine?

Making mistakes and the freedom to fail are the themes for the next issue. We are looking for real life stories, unexpected approaches and interdisciplinary examples in whatever format. If you have something to share, please contact us before June 15th.

ISSUE #2 will be out in November 2006.
Wonderland magazine is a cultural version of the NATO Cold War strategy of ‘flexible response’. The magazine, which will be published twice a year, marks Wonderland’s transition from one medium – a traveling exhibition – to another: A10 functions as a launching pad by enclosing a copy of Wonderland with every copy of A10.

Pursuing the military analogy, the magazine is a continuation by other means of what Wonderland has been doing for the past two years: accelerating the exchange of information among young architects in Europe.

Wonderland differs from other architecture magazines in that it contains not a single building: it is not about architecture but architects, not about the work that architects produce but how they produce that work. It is first and foremost a guide containing facts and figures, tips and experiences and as such can be seen as a handbook for European architects at the start of their careers.

Wonderland magazine reveals a remarkable commitment to sharing knowledge and experience without any self-interest. While such altruism may not be typical of the entire generation of young architects, it does characterize a considerable portion of it, and most certainly those young architects, it does characterize a considerable portion of it, and most certainly those young architects who have worked in front of and behind the scenes on this first issue. This young generation is the first to reach adulthood in a Europe without the Iron Curtain. It is also the generation which, despite all the political, economic and cultural complexities of this new Europe, was the first to reach adulthood in a Europe without the Iron Curtain. It is also the generation which, despite all the political, economic and cultural complexities of this new Europe, was the first to reach adulthood in a Europe without the Iron Curtain. It is also the generation which, despite all the political, economic and cultural complexities of this new Europe, was the first to reach adulthood in a Europe without the Iron Curtain. It is also the generation which, despite all the political, economic and cultural complexities of this new Europe, was the first to reach adulthood in a Europe without the Iron Curtain. It is also the generation which, despite all the political, economic and cultural complexities of this new Europe, was the first to reach adulthood in a Europe without the Iron Curtain.

Hans Ibelings (Publisher/Editor, A10 new European architecture)