

Independent or Bureaucratic? The Early Career Choice of an Architect at the Turn of the Twentieth Century in Germany, France and England

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Introduction

The general move towards professionalisation, coupled with the dramatic social and economical transformations that followed the Industrial Revolution, had a severe impact on the architectural profession. Alongside the fervent debate regarding historical style, modernism and the rising importance of the role of engineers, architects had to secure new fields of occupation and find private clients, while also struggling with contractors and developers. At the same time, some of the largest employers of architects were state and local administrations.

A glance at the programmes of the several international congresses of architects that were held subsequent to the first congress in Paris, which was organised by the *Société Centrale des Architectes* in 1867 around the international exposition of the same year, reveals the issues and preoccupations that concerned architects at the time: the question of education (the introduction of a diploma); the question of open competitions; the rivalry with engineers; the official recognition of the profession (in particular the protection of the title 'architect'); and, crucially, the question of income.

Although the first conferences were strongly determined by the French context of the international expositions, subsequent conferences were also held in various other European cities. Already during the first conferences, many foreign architects participated in the debates, revealing the need

for discussion with colleagues from a variety of countries and highlighting the heterogeneity of the situation in Europe.

At the Seventh International Congress of Architects held in London in July 1906, similar topics were discussed as in previous congresses, among them 'Architectural Copyright and Ownership of Drawings', 'The Education of the Public Architecture', and 'A Statutory Qualification for Architects'. Interestingly, there was also a section dedicated to the nascent discipline of town planning – 'The Planning and Laying-out of Streets and Open Spaces' – and one surprising section devoted to the question of 'The Execution of Important Government and Municipal Architectural Work by Salaried Officials'. In this session, Austrian architect Otto Wagner (1841–1918), Belgian architect Oscar Simon, and French architect Gaston Trélat (1847–1930) were invited to speak. Wagner's presentation introduced the question of architects' education and included a vehement critique of administration and of the difficulty architects encountered when working under the 'saddle of the department' and under the direction of an incompetent supervisor. Clerks working for such administrations were seen as being 'artistically incompetent'.¹ In less crude language, Simon also expressed similar ideas in his speech. Trélat, on the contrary, avoided the question formulated in the section, focusing instead on the quality of public buildings, yet without asking whether these ought to be designed by independent architects or architects employed by the public

administration. In the ensuing public discussion, F.E.P. Edwards, city architect of Bradford, England, highlighted the fact that the panel's question was wrongly posed, since the real problem – from the perspective of an English architect – was that within the administrations 'important municipal and public work is being carried out by engineers and surveyors' and not by architects.² Later on in the discussion, the English architect A.B. Plummer relativised Edwards's criticism by agreeing with the general criticism of the panel, saying that he 'would still prefer a non-official with ability, to an official with ability'.³ After a long debate, the following final resolution was agreed: 'That in the future, in the interests of administrative bodies and the public, and in the higher interests of the art of architecture, public bodies, whether Government, provincial, or municipal, should entrust important architectural works only to professionally qualified architects, either by competition or otherwise.'⁴

This section with its arguments and strong final resolution can be seen as the provisional culmination point of the architect's struggle between independence and communal or state employment. Independent architects were asking for a share in designing the huge number of public buildings needed at the time – houses, schools, hospitals, offices for public administrations and city halls – which were under the auspices of the administrations. Furthermore, this section also reveals how tension of this kind between state employment and self-employment was not perceived in the same way in all European countries. Subsequently in this article, the situation for architects at the turn of the twentieth century in three countries – Germany, France and England – will be discussed, and the opposition between architects working in administrations and those working independently will be looked at in detail. This in turn will explain the differences that emerged in 1906 and continued throughout the period until the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The main focus of this paper is an analysis of the situation in Germany, where such conflicts were most pronounced. It should be stressed that although the history of the architect as a civil servant has been documented within the history of the profession, it has not as yet been adequately researched. Architects working in administrations still encounter the historical stigma of bureaucracy, a prejudice irreconcilable with the image of the architect as an artist-creator. This stigma goes back to the period we are speaking of, but has been cemented by modernist historiography. It is surprising that the historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1903–1987), one of the promoters of modern architecture and the quintessential figure of the 'genius-architect', contrasted this figure with the 'architect of bureaucracy', acknowledging in an essay written in 1947 that the former is a rare occurrence.⁵ Yet his critique of bureaucratic architecture was firm. Few people at the time acknowledged the importance of 'salaried architects' and the potential of administrations to achieve changes and improve the built environment, as John Summerson (1904–1992) proposed in his essay 'Bread and Butter and Architecture'.⁶ It is thus not surprising that in their respective essays, only Summerson acknowledged the importance of public administrations, while Hitchcock ignored their role, or gave them only a brief mention as 'public buildings'.⁷ Although we might acknowledge that specialist literature does exist on this particular aspect of history, it has not yet been integrated into mainstream architectural history for architects and architectural students.

Germany: between anonymity and freedom

Architecture has a long tradition of serving an administration. It suffices to mention how both Balthasar Neumann (1687–1753) and Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1851), the 'champions' of German baroque and classicism, were acting within a state administration in Germany, even though this affiliation is generally only mentioned marginally, if at all.

Following the reforms initiated by minister Karl von Stein (1757–1831), foreign minister Karl August von Hardenberg (1750–1822), and assistants such as Theodor von Schön (1773–1856), Germany went through a process of emancipating cities and their administrations after the loss of Prussia to France and the subsequent Treaties of Tilsit of 1807. Whereas traditionally architects were employed in state administration, the rise of cities with their great number of building programmes became a preferred employer for architects. Yet the relationship between administrations and architects in Germany goes further back and concerns the educational model introduced there, which soon became a point of contention in Prussia between the art academy and the state administration. Since the foundation of the first architectural teaching programme, the *École du Génie et d'Architecture* in 1776 – whose title reveals the influence of the French model – the state had been striving towards the education of architects in order to integrate them into its administration, the *Oberbaudepartement* (which in 1804 became the *Oberbaudeputation*). In the words of the school's founder, budget minister Von Zedlitz (1731–1793), the school should produce architects who not only designed 'castles in the air' but also streets, bridges and canals.⁸ Several architects opposed this concept and attempted to introduce alternative curricula. The debate concerned both the school's attachment to the administration and the separation between architecture as '*Zivilbaukunst*' (civil art), and '*Ästhetische Baukunst*' (fine art). Significantly, it was Karl-Friedrich Schinkel, a member of the *Oberbaudeputation* (Upper Building Deputation), who designed the new residence for the *Bauakademie* (Architecture Academy) and the *Oberbaudeputation* in 1832. Although the focus of the curriculum was increasingly directed towards a reduced understanding of architecture as *Zivilbaukunst*, ties to the administration remained well into the twentieth century. The degree course curriculum ended with a state exam, which qualified architects to become *Regierungsbauführer*

(government approved building managers), and, after three years of further practical experience (to begin with, only within an administration; later, experience in the office of an independent architect was approved), candidates could take a further exam to become *Regierungsbaumeister* (government approved master builders). Those who managed to pass the exams were integrated into the state or local administration. State functionaries were obviously far more prominent and tended to look down upon local functionaries. Architects had secure employment and were discharged from administrations only when there were no available positions. Architect Theodor Fischer (1862–1938) used to tease his fellow architects because of their '*Titelstreberei*', or their eagerness for titles.

The administrative hierarchy comprised five ascending levels with various titles; however, moving to a higher level did not necessarily mean a promotion but might simply represent a token of appreciation, or permit more political participation. Thus, a *Baumeister* or *Bau-Commissar* could become a *Kreis-Baumeister* or a *Land-Baumeister* (*Land* and *Kreis* were administrative entities of different hierarchies). A *Kreis* or *Land-Baumeister* could then advance to become a *Bauinspector*, and later an *Ober-Bauinspector*. A *Land* or *Kreisbaumeister* could also become an *Ober-Landbaumeister* or *Ober-Kreisbaumeister*. In the upper level of the hierarchy were the titles *Regierungsrath* and *Oberbaurath*, each of whom could become *Geheimer Baurath* or *vortragenden Räten* with the possibility of participating in higher administrative positions. The highest ranks were *Ministerialrat* and *Oberbaurat*, *Wirklicher Geheimer Regierungsrat*, *Baurat* and *Oberbaudirektoren*. Besides these titles there were five classes (*Klassen* or *Ränge*) referring to those functionaries working in the *Land*, *Kreis* and *Provincial* categories – levels were restricted to the first two classes; only state functionaries could advance to the three highest classes.

Positions in the administrations were much sought-after by architects, since they granted access to the great number of public projects in the cities and also gave architects the opportunity to earn a secure income. In 1953, Bernhard Gaber wrote in an essay on the history of the *Bund Deutscher Architekten* (Federation of German Architects), 'Ninety years ago, there were no independent architects in Germany.'⁹ Although an exaggeration, the statement nevertheless reveals the overall situation: administrations – communal administrations as well as state or city-owned railway or gas companies – were the largest employers of architects at the time. Independent architects existed, but they remained an exception. In Berlin and other parts of Germany there were offices such as Ende & Boeckmann, Kyllmann & Heyen von der Husde & Benda, Kayser & von Grossheim, Viehweger & Lossow, Lossow & Kühne, Eitel & Steigleder, Gropius & Schmieden, and Cremer & Wolffenstein, the last founded by Wilhelm Cremer (1845–1919) and Richard Wolffenstein (1846–1919) in 1882. The firm operated until the deaths of both architects in 1919. Cremer & Wolffenstein mainly designed office buildings, churches and synagogues, but also villas for entrepreneurs and private clients. Some self-employed architects did manage to establish independent offices, for example Julius Raschdorff (1823–1914) and August Orth (1828–1901); however, this was only possible with the security of a teaching position, as in Raschdorff's case, or with the financial support of a wealthy sponsor: Orth, for instance, was supported by the railway entrepreneur Henry Strousberg (1823–1884).

The main problem was that once architects left the administration, there was no way to return (unless they won a competition for an administrative building and could be re-employed for its planning and construction). Significantly, it was forbidden to have a private practice while also a member of the administration. Even though neither Cremer nor Raschdorff had any ties with state administrations,

they nevertheless both received the honorary titles of *Baurat*, and later, *Geheimer Baurat*. The history of the architect at that time is a history of exceptions rather than of strict adherence to rules, not least because of the persisting differences between titles and precise competencies, also inside the German states.

From this situation two divergent trends developed in the discipline of architecture. On the one hand there was the struggle to improve the working conditions of architects in administration; and on the other, the aim to give freedom to architects in private practice, thus putting pressure on government departments to assign architects prominent projects through competitions. The first issue united architects and engineers, who were both fighting to improve their status vis à vis lawyers, who traditionally occupied the highest ranks in the administration. The most important body in this regard was the *Verband deutscher Architekten und Ingenieur-Vereine* (Institute of Architects and Engineers), which united most architectural and engineering associations in Germany. On several occasions it debated the issue, and in 1901 and 1903 the institute published recommendations to allow academics – in this case architects and engineers – easier access to the highest positions in the administration. To enable this, reforms were required.¹⁰ [fig. 1]

In contrast to the first issue of status, the second issue of private practice freedom regarded only independent architects or *Privatarchitekten*, as they called themselves, who sought to free themselves entirely from any restrictive ties to the administrations. The first official *Privatarchitekt* is considered to be Eduard Knoblauch (1801–1865), who was born into a wealthy family of silk producers. As early as 1880, the *Vereinigung zur Vertretung baukünstlerischen Interessen aus Berlin*, an association of sixty independent architects (including Raschdorff and Orth), published a pamphlet in the magazine *Deutsche Bauzeitung* pleading for a radical reform

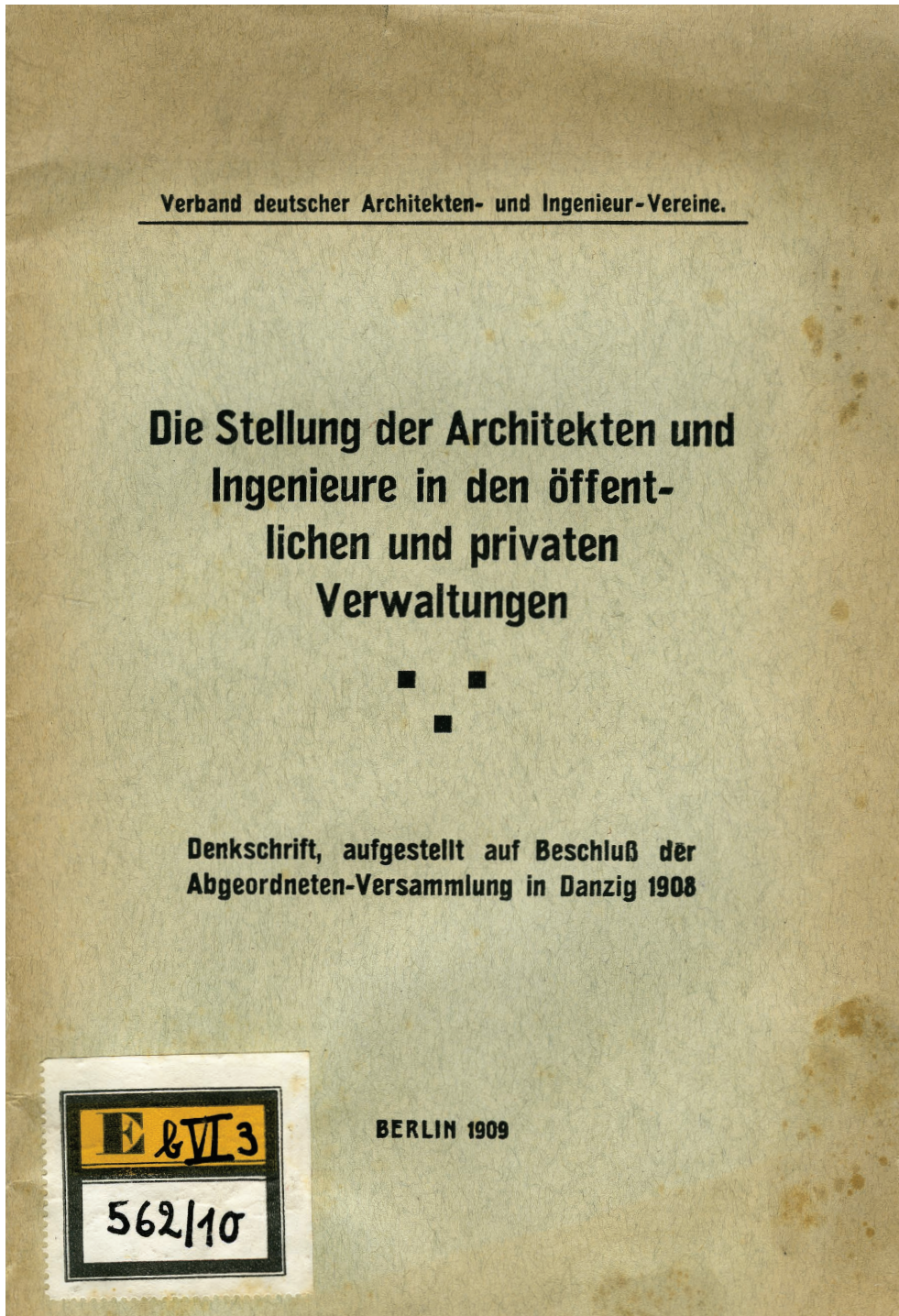


Fig. 1: Cover, Verband Deutscher Architekten und Ingenieur-Vereine, *Die Stellung der Architekten und Ingenieure in den öffentlichen und privaten Verwaltungen*. Denkschrift, aufgestellt auf Beschluss der Abgeordneten-Versammlung in Danzig 1908, Berlin, 1909.

of the administration to allow important public projects to be realised by independent architects.¹¹ In their eyes, architects working in the administration were incapable of producing creative work.¹² It is worth noting that the local Berlin architects' association (*Berliner Architekten-Verein*) felt the need to respond and highlight that the pamphlet reflected the position of only a minority of architects, and that although they acknowledged problems with architects in the administrations did exist, they felt that criticism of them was unjustifiable.¹³

One of the most virulent critics of bureaucratic architecture was Karl Scheffler (1869–1951). In his influential book *Die Architektur der Grossstadt*, published in 1913, he accused the administration of being incapable of producing 'high architecture' and the architects who worked there of only being concerned with the opinion of their superiors.¹⁴ Publications such as this, as well as other criticism by people like Cornelius Gurlitt (1850–1938) or Karl Henrici (1842–1927), had a profound influence on public opinion and contributed to the stigma attached to architects working in government administrations.¹⁵

The most important organisation in the process of *Privatarchitekten* emancipation was the *Bund Deutscher Architekten* (BDA), which was founded in 1903.¹⁶ Representing the *Privatarchitekt*, their declared adversaries were entrepreneurs and building administrations.¹⁷ In 1913, the BDA already had as many as 670 members, which is a clear indication of the degree to which architects identified with its aims.

In 1917, the BDA published the memorandum '*Verwaltungsreform auf dem Gebiete des Hochbauwesens*', or 'Administrative Reform for the Domain of Architecture', calling for all public projects to be given to independent architects. In 1918, the highly influential *Vereinigung der technischen Oberbeamten Deutscher Städte* (the Association

of Technical Chief-Public Servants of German Cities) replicated this pamphlet in a memorandum '*Denkschrift, die Mitwirkung von Privatarchitekten bei Planung und Ausführung öffentlicher Bauten betreffend*', or 'Memorandum on the Participation of Independent Architects in the Planning and Design of Public Buildings' in which they clearly refuted the arguments and claims of the BDA.¹⁸

Whereas most architects were employed in administrations, the minority of independent architects were calling for the distribution of projects through competitions. The coexistence of these two positions can best be illustrated by two architects who, despite their opposing ideals, managed to remain lifelong friends – namely, Ludwig Hoffmann (1852–1932) and Alfred Messel (1853–1909). Both men were educated at the *Bauakademie* in Berlin; afterwards, Hoffmann followed the career steps typical of a public servant, becoming *Stadtbaurat* at the building department in Berlin between 1896 and 1924, while Messel became one of the most prominent independent architects of his day, whose work is considered an important forerunner of modernism in Germany. Hoffmann headed eight departments, each employing around a dozen people, many of them architects. He oversaw the execution of a large number of public buildings in Berlin, the most prominent of which was the town hall, built between 1902 and 1911. At the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung* in 1901, an entire section was dedicated to the achievements of Hoffmann's department. With the aid of drawings and models of forty-six buildings: schools, hospitals, public baths, museums and fire stations, the exhibition demonstrated the extent to which Hoffmann had transformed Berlin. [fig. 2]

An image of Hoffmann taken on a public occasion reveals a proud public servant displaying all his numerous accolades. [fig. 3] In contrast, after leaving public administration Alfred Messel started his own practice. This was sustained by the Wertheim company, for whom he built department stores,

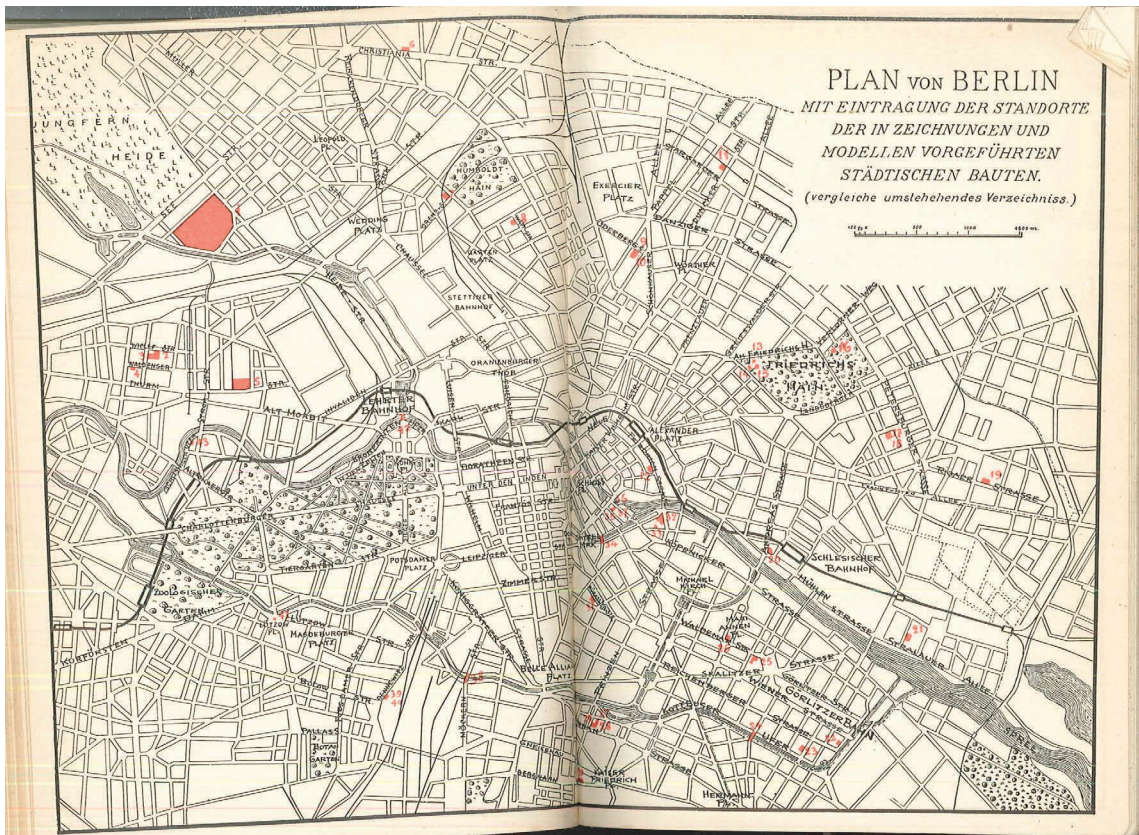


Fig. 2: Map displaying the projects by the Building Department of Berlin in red, in *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung 1901*, Berlin: Union, 1901.

and by his part-time employment as a teacher. The majority of his clients were private, among them banks, entrepreneurs and wealthy bourgeois families. Thus Hoffmann and Messel each focused on specific building typologies.

The example of German architect Fritz Schumacher (1869–1947) perhaps better illustrates the tension within the profession between the security and anonymity that the administration offered and the freedom of being an independent architect. Schumacher was a member of both the BDA and the *Vereinigung der technischen Oberbeamten Deutscher Städte*, thus he endorsed both positions, specifically the latter, since he was one of the seven contributors to the *Denkschrift*.

The figure of Schumacher reveals the problematic situation for German architects at the time, often torn between their ambition to be perceived as artists operating independently, and the advantages of being part of the administration. After working as an architect in Leipzig and teaching at the *Technische Hochschule* in Dresden, in 1909 Schumacher was employed as *Baudirektor* and director of the *Hochbauamt* in Hamburg, a city he would transform profoundly, both through his work in town planning and due to his many building projects. It is not surprising that Schumacher became a target for the independent architects, since he capitalised on his position by keeping as many projects as possible for himself. His acquisitiveness is depicted in an amusing caricature published in *Die Hamburger Woche* in 1912, in which Schumacher is shown as a child playing with a construction set while the other children – the *Privatarchitekten* – complain to ‘mother Hamburg’ that he does not share his toys. [fig. 4]

In the context of the *Städteausstellung* – held in Dresden in 1903 and organised by the mayors of German cities as the first forum for town planning in Germany – Schumacher drew attention to

how the city administration had taken the place once held by royals and bishops. By understanding this, Schumacher revealed his political realism and awareness. The city wielded power and also had an ‘aesthetic responsibility’.¹⁹ Being a member of an administration with all its difficulties appeared to him a small sacrifice to pay in comparison to all the advantages that such a position afforded him. Only in retrospect, after his dismissal in 1933, would he make critical comments about the path from the ‘freedom of an academic teacher’ to the ‘chains of the public servant’.²⁰ Yet we should not forget that for every Schumacher or Hoffmann there were hundreds of architects working anonymously in their departments or in small towns.

France: a smooth path

In comparison with Germany, France never achieved the same level of independence from state control, which remained strong, particularly in Paris. Although the revolution had attempted to weaken the central power base, Napoleon with his 1800 law (*Loi du 28 pluviôse an VII*) divided the country into separate departments, each headed by a prefect, thus restoring and strengthening the power of the state once again. Even though mayors received more powers, they nevertheless remained bound to the authority of the prefects. Even the *Loi Municipale* (municipal law) of 1884 and its *Charte Municipale*, which aimed to give greater powers to local authorities, still left a great deal of influence to the state, not least in matters of town planning. All alterations to streets and open spaces or the construction of public buildings first required the permission of the prefecture.²¹ Real decentralisation was only achieved a century later with the law of 1982. Due to this general structure and its durability, French administration became legendary. Louis de Bonald (1754–1840) in his *Theory of Power* (1796), wrote in reference to Vincent de Gournay that ‘France, according to a man of wit, was neither an aristocracy nor a democracy, but a bureaucracy.’²² The inexorable development of bureaucracy was



Fig. 3: Anonymous photograph of Ludwig Hoffmann, around 1913, Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB), E Rep. 200-50, Nr. 401/2.

accompanied by inevitable criticisms of nepotism, favouritism, inefficiency and also corruption, as in the infamous case of the '*affaire Hourdequin*', called after a corrupt official of the *Bureau de la Grande Voirie* who awarded building permits in exchange for bribes.²³

As for architecture, there was a long tradition of architects working for royal powers. The *Administration des bâtiments royaux*, dating back to Charles V (1364–1380), was further developed to introduce the highest ranking figure of the *architecte du roi*, as well as other positions, such as the *Architecte conseiller royal*, *Directeur des bâtiments*, or the *Maître maçon*. Further restructuring under Louis XIV, and later under Napoleon Bonaparte, created a more fragmented organisation with several changes, in particular the creation of the *Service des bâtiments civils* in 1791, which lasted until 1896. For architects there existed several possible roles associated with a particular building or building typology. There was the administration of the *Édifices diocésains*, the *Monuments historiques*, the *Travaux de Paris*, the *Palais royaux* and the *Inspecteur des beaux-arts*, in addition to the administration of the district and the city.

What is striking about the French model is the stark hierarchy and complexity of the administrative systems, which frequently changed titles and pay structures, and the strong relationship between the *École des Beaux-Arts* and the administrations. On their return from Rome, many winners of the Grand Prix de Rome were employed in successive administrations, although, *nota bene*, they started at a lower grade. David Van Zanten has retraced the history of this relationship, emphasising how 'positions in the *Service des Bâtiments Civils* were to be given, first and foremost, to Grand Prix winners, entering immediately upon their return from Rome',²⁴ and how often the programme of the Grand Prix competition was oriented towards public monument typologies such as '*Panthéon*'

(1837) or '*Mairie*' (1840). Van Zanten mentions architects like Charles Percier (1764–1838), Félix Duban (1797–1870), Henri Labrousse (1801–1875), Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) and Charles Garnier (1825–1898), who all became government employees. One could also list architects of the following generations who won the Grand Prix, among them Henri-Paul Nénot (1853–1934), Gaston Redon (1853–1921), Camille Lefèvre (1853–1933), Jacques Hermant (1855–1930), Michel Roux-Spitz (1888–1957), Eugène Beaudouin (1898–1983), and others who did not win the Grand Prix, such as Frantz Blondel (1843–1919), but still became members of one of the many administrations.

The administrations in turn developed various ways in which architects could advance their careers, either by rising in rank or receiving titles. The following positions existed in the *Service municipal d'architecture*, which in theory ascended successively: *Sous-inspecteur stagiaire*, *Sous-inspecteur de troisième classe*, *Sous-inspecteur de deuxième classe*, *Sous-inspecteur de première classe*, *Sous-inspecteur de classe exceptionnelle*, then *Inspecteur*, and finally *Architecte*. Furthermore, there were also the positions of *Vérificateur* and *Réviseur*, again subdivided into different classes. There were similar structures in all the other departments, with a greater or lesser degree of complexity and hierarchy. Thus the number of positions for advancement was enormous. However, it was possible in some instances to skip levels. Promotions were often only possible when the supervisor retired or was given a higher position in the hierarchy. In order to be given a position, an applicant had to pass entrance exams.

The career of Achille Hermant (1823–1903) is a good example of a French architect's path at the close of the nineteenth century. In 1860, Hermant entered as an *Inspecteur de deuxième classe* in the *Service d'architecture de la ville de Paris*, advancing to *Inspecteur de première classe* in

Aus Hammonias Kinderstube:

Mutter Hammonia und die Privatarchitekten.



Mutta, sag' doch mal dem Professor Schumacher, daß er uns mitspielen läßt.

Fig. 4: Caricature of Fritz Schumacher, in: Fred Hendriok, 'Aus Hammonias Kinderstube', in *Die Hamburger Woche* 7, 1912, Nr. 45: 7.

1865, and eventually to *Architecte* in 1870. In 1872, Hermant was promoted to *Architecte du IXe arrondissement*, the following year to the 10th section, and, in 1879, to the 7th section of the *Service d'architecture de la ville de Paris*. Subsequently, in 1881, Hermant advanced to the *Service départemental (1^{re} circonscription)*, eventually retiring in 1893 at the age of seventy. Hermant was eventually awarded the grand title: *Architecte honoraire et membre du conseil des travaux d'architecture de la ville de Paris*.²⁵ During his career he built various schools, prisons and barracks for the city.

Contrary to the situation in Germany, architects in France were accustomed to being part of an administration that secured them work and status but also allowed them to have a private practice at the same time. Despite their frequent grievances, French architects enjoyed a better reputation than their German counterparts.

The example of French architect Louis Bonnier (1856–1946) is illuminating. Bonnier studied architecture at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and thereafter began an illustrious career in the administration. He sat on several commissions that drew up new building regulations for Paris. Bonnier started as an *Architecte-voyer* for the city of Paris administration and had numerous parallel roles, among them *Architecte en chef de la section française de l'exposition universelle de Bruxelles*, *Architecte en-chef des installations générales, Exposition universelle*, *Conservateur* and *Architecte-en-chef du palais de l'Élysée*, *Architecte-en-chef-adjoint à l'Hôtel de Ville*, *Architecte-voyer-en-chef de la Ville de Paris*, and finally *Inspecteur général des Services techniques d'architecture et d'esthétique et de l'extension de Paris*. This was one of the highest possible ranks an architect could reach and was accordingly celebrated by his colleagues. At the same time, Bonnier worked on several housing projects and participated in the competition for the 1900 World Exposition in Paris, producing a couple

of noteworthy projects for the exposition: the *Pavillon Schneider* for a gun manufacturer, which was realised, and *Globe Elisée Reclus*, which comprised a huge sphere that could be circumnavigated via spiral ramps. This second project, however, was never built. [fig. 5]

These projects reveal how the 'humble public-officer', as Bonnier liked to call himself, was also a highly talented architect whose projects show the typical development from an Art Nouveau influenced style to unadorned modernist apartment buildings towards the close of his life.²⁶ Bonnier had no problem moving between two worlds: the world of an administrative functionary, where he tirelessly worked on norms and regulations, and that of an independent architect.

The case of Bonnier, together with the other above-mentioned architects who represent a larger group, shows how architects in France could be members of the administration and at the same time run a private practice. Commissions for public buildings – for example, the Opéra de Paris in 1860, but also the new Paris town hall in 1873 – were often won through competitions. If an architect won such a competition then he would work on the project within an administration, as was the case with Charles Garnier (1825–1898) for the Opéra, and Théodore Ballu (1817–1885) for the town hall.²⁷

Yet, when Bonnier rose to the highest rank as director of the *Service d'architecture*, it was made clear to him that any involvement in private projects would be viewed negatively by those outside the administration. Fellow members of the administration did not tend to see such involvement as problematic, thus architects were able to participate in both spheres of the profession. Here, as in Germany, commissions and titles were much sought after and allowed architects to be distinguished members of society. French architects strove to be assigned projects and at the same time worked to

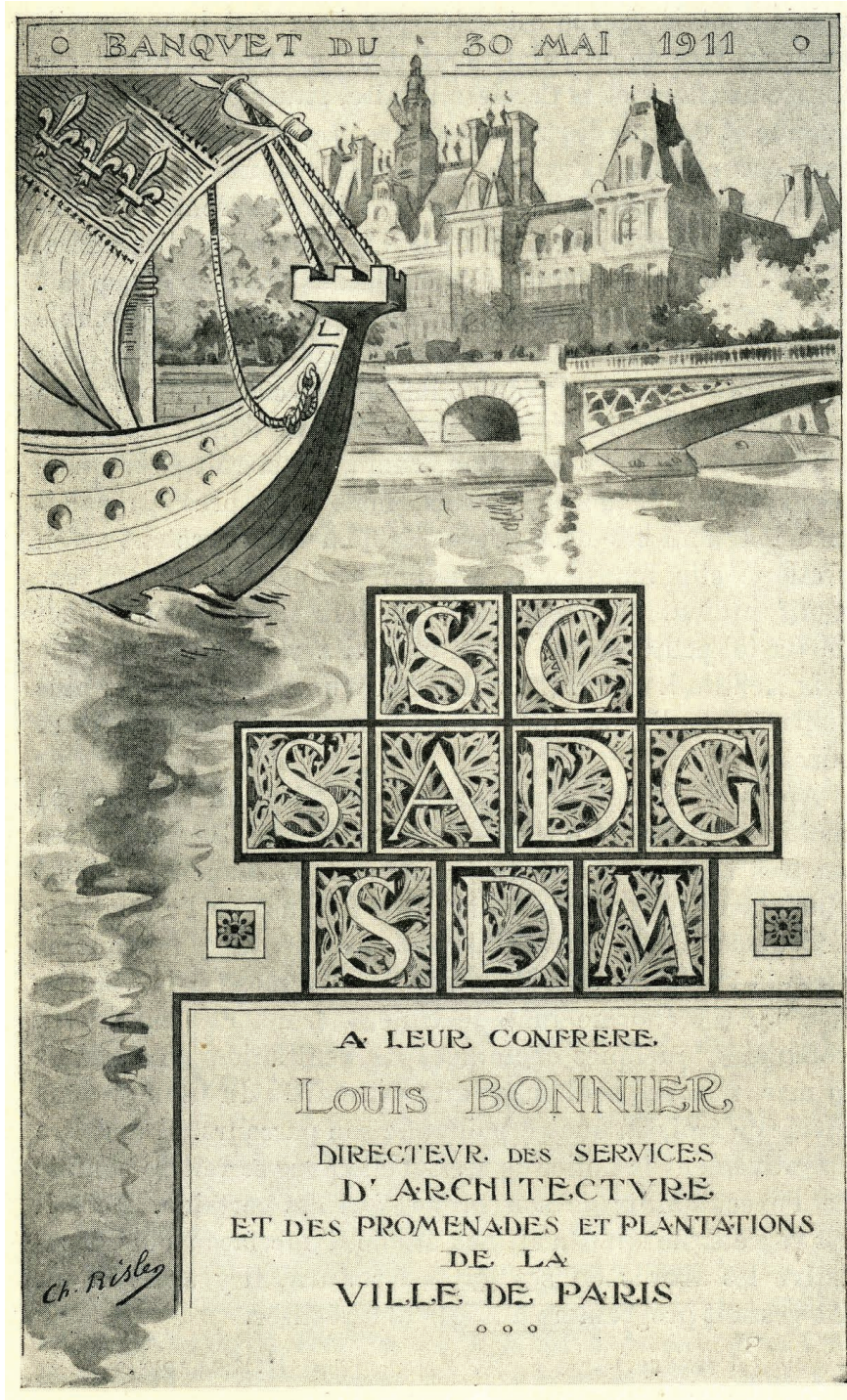


Fig. 5: Announcement of a banquet in honor of Bonnier's new position as Directeur des services d'architecture et des promenades et plantations de la ville de Paris, 1911.

gain titles, since titles still played an important role in the entrenched social structure of the French Third Republic.

In this context, it is not surprising that grievances against the administration were almost non-existent in France. Architects were well integrated into the structure of the administration and enjoyed too many advantages from this situation to question it.

England: early emancipation

The situation in England was very different from that of Germany and France. On the one hand, the revolution of 1688/89 and the introduction of the Bill of Rights had created a unique framework for architects. Liberalisation, in particular, enabled architects to access public and private demand through open competitions. On the other hand, the institutionalisation of the profession of architect was established rather late against the background of a tradition of apprenticeships, and opposition to the professionalisation of the discipline. These notions were expressed in the discourse 'Architecture: Art or Profession' propagated by artists and architects alike.²⁸ Architects in England traditionally understood themselves to be artists working for the upper classes. They relegated the bulk of the built environment to builders and entrepreneurs, yet did not reject the option of acting as speculators themselves. As T.J. Jackson expressed in 1892: 'For nine buildings in ten, if not ninety-nine in a hundred, no architect is – or perhaps ever will be – employed.'²⁹

In England there exists a long tradition of the royal administration employing architects, the foremost being the Office of Works, founded in 1378 to maintain royal buildings. It ceased to exist in 1832 when it was merged with the Wood and Forests Department to become the Office of Woods and Works. Although an architect of the calibre of Inigo Jones (1573–1652) was employed as Surveyor of the King's Work for many decades, exerting substantial power and gaining recognition,

in general, the status of architects was reduced. This situation was exacerbated under the leadership of architect James Wyatt (1746–1813), whose management of the office was a time 'of extravagance and confusion'.³⁰ Lord Liverpool recalled that although Wyatt was 'a man of the most considerable talents as an architect, he was certainly one of the worst Public Servants I recollect in any office, not I am persuaded from dishonesty, or want of zeal, but from carelessness and from his always choosing to engage in a great deal more business than he was capable of performing'.³¹ Wyatt was simultaneously Surveyor General and Controller at the Office of Works, Surveyor to Westminster Abbey, Architect to the Board of Ordnance, Deputy Surveyor of the Office of Woods and Forests, Surveyor at Somerset House, and at the same time he also ran a private practice.³² Three eminent architects worked under the guidance of Wyatt: John Soane (1753–1837), John Nash (1752–1835), and Robert Smirke (1780–1867). These men were employed as 'attached architects'.

Alongside the continuing perception of themselves as artists, architects' displacement from leading positions within the administration led to a loss of interest in such appointments. The culmination of this development is illuminated by the reconstruction of the Houses of Parliament after the fire of 1834. Initially, the commission was given directly to Smirke, a member of the administration, not least because of the influence of his friend, Prime Minister Robert Peel. However, due to vehement protests from various factions, this appointment was withdrawn and an open competition was organised which was won by Charles Barry (1795–1860). There was, however, a great deal of criticism about his design and the fact that he had won.³³ This could be seen as the breakup of the 'affair' between British architects and the administration.

Besides the Office of Works, there were many local authorities that employed architects, but these

were entangled in the battle between proponents of greater local power and those struggling for more centrality. The result was largely powerless entities with no clear sphere of influence. Such was the case with the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) founded in 1875, where a Superintending Architect worked with non-architects and his own staff. The architect Robert Kerr disdainfully described the MBW in 1888:

In all anxiety, in all sincerity, following the English principle, the Board is constituted of delegates from various quarters of London who come together with a good deal more intelligence than they have had credit for lately. But these gentlemen come together without professing architectural knowledge, and they do not refer architectural matters to architects. They possess a Superintending Architect in our dear old friend Vulliamy, but they could not allow him to be an authority on architectural matters; it was contrary to the genius of the English people to do it. Members of the Board must exercise authority, and although somebody shifts responsibility on Mr. Vulliamy, and says the Board was subordinate to its officers, we know better.³⁴

The first superintending architect of the MBW was Frederick Marrable (1819–1872), who resigned prematurely when he did not receive a rise in salary, and complained that he had built more streets than houses. After Marrable's resignation, the above-mentioned Georges Vulliamy won a competition for this position against twenty-three other candidates. In 1865, Vulliamy had twelve staff members working for him.³⁵ Under his successor Thomas Blashill (1831–1905), the number of employees was raised to seventy. The subdivision of the department reveals the rising importance of this position and its team: 'The Building Act branch, Improvements, Compensation and Estates branch (later Works and Improvements), Parks and Open Spaces, Fire Brigade, Dangerous Structures, Street Nomenclature and Theatre.'³⁶

In 1889, London County Council replaced the MBW with a particular division – namely, the Housing of the Working Classes Branch, where, within a short period, many graduates of the Architectural Association made a great impact on London's architecture.³⁷ The other important institution was the Local Government Board, established in 1871 and absorbed in 1919 by the Ministry of Health.

Although large cities had professional departments with ambitious architects, the reality was very different for the many corporations; county, borough, and town councils; and urban and rural districts. Frequently, surveyors or engineers were employed to do architectural work. The hierarchy of architects' positions within the various architectural or housing departments of these local administrations was far less complex than in France or Germany. This was despite the fact that often, architects also did the work of surveyors and vice versa. The various positions in these administrations included: chief architect, architect, architect's assistant (chief, temporary, first, second, or junior assistant), superintending architect, draughtsman and draughtsman's assistant. The example of one architect can be cited for interest. M. Williamson started his career as chief assistant to M. Ball, an architect and surveyor in Manchester, where he remained for eight years. Subsequently, he worked for five years as chief architectural assistant in the borough engineer's office in Salford. In 1900, Williamson started working as chief assistant for Bradford Corporation, and a decade later he advanced to the rank of chief architect. His role in these positions was 'designing and supervising the erection of all classes of buildings which come under the control of a large municipal authority, and in the multitudinous duties to be performed in a city's architect department, which (in addition to strictly municipal buildings) includes the erection and charge of all buildings under the City Council as education authority'.³⁸ The architects working in administration remained hidden anonymously

within the department offices.

The path to independency in England was easier than in Germany for many architects working for administrations. This was thanks to their entrepreneurship, the patronage of wealthy bourgeoisie, and the fact that commissioning public buildings was subject to competitions. Architects and architectural firms such as Lockwood & Mawson – founded in Bradford in 1849 by Henry Francis Lockwood (1811–1878) and William Mawson (1828–1889) – specialised in competitions, winning twenty of the thirty competitions they participated in.³⁹ The practice built hospitals, schools, town halls and churches. Their most well-known buildings are the Wool Exchange Building in Bradford (1867), the New Town Hall in Bradford (1873), and the Civil Service Supply Association in London (1877).

Beyond the influence of the LCC, the work within the administration was perceived rather negatively, not least because of the R.I.B.A.'s elitist attitude, described by John Summerson in his above-mentioned essay. Even surveyors criticised officials as being 'obsessed by administrative detail and ... lack[ing] the imaginative mind'.⁴⁰ Similar critiques were also disseminated in architectural magazines of the time. When compared with Germany, however, there was almost no tension between independent and employed architects. Therefore it is not surprising that the few examples that can be found were provoked by the R.I.B.A. Early grievances mostly regarded the aforementioned habit of employing engineers or surveyors to perform the function of architects, as expressed in the 1904 *Report of the Committee on Municipal Officials and Architectural Work* published by the R.I.B.A.⁴¹ In this context, architects in France and Germany were also asked to report on the situation in their respective countries. German architect Joseph Stübben was full of praise for the German model and the opportunities for architects in Germany to become influential.⁴²

Thus it is not surprising that English architects often looked to Germany and France in their desire to establish a strong state and/or local administration and a strong educational model such as the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Architects in Britain sought inspiration from the pioneering work of Thomas Coglan Horsfall (1841–1932), who enthusiastically emphasised the advantages of the German administrative model.⁴³ A particularly enlightening document is a book published in 1884 by English architect William Henry White (1862–1949), who had lived for a decade in Paris and confronted the administrations with his stark criticism of the English system:

Individuals may in one case offer an alternative to ugliness, in another formulate a remedy for abortion and anonymity which generally increases their chance of a successful hearing; but even if public opinion had the power of arriving at any decision in such questions, no organization sufficiently representative to collect its suffrages, or record the result, is at disposal in London. The authorities of Paris, on the contrary, have definite artistic views. They possess a standard of taste and a power of initiation, of which Londoners are wholly devoid; and throughout France there is an abundance of carefully prepared professional talent, at the service of the state, for the design and execution of national monuments and buildings.⁴⁴

Implications of mass housing programmes

In the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars, state and local administrations established huge mass housing programmes that gave architects the opportunity to participate in reconstruction efforts. Once again, the conditions in which architects were engaged in this context were very different and partly a consequence of previous developments.

In Germany, the *Siedlungen-Program* was established mainly by civil servants, such as Martin Wagner (1885–1957) in Berlin or Ernst May (1886–1970) in Frankfurt. Whereas the latter used

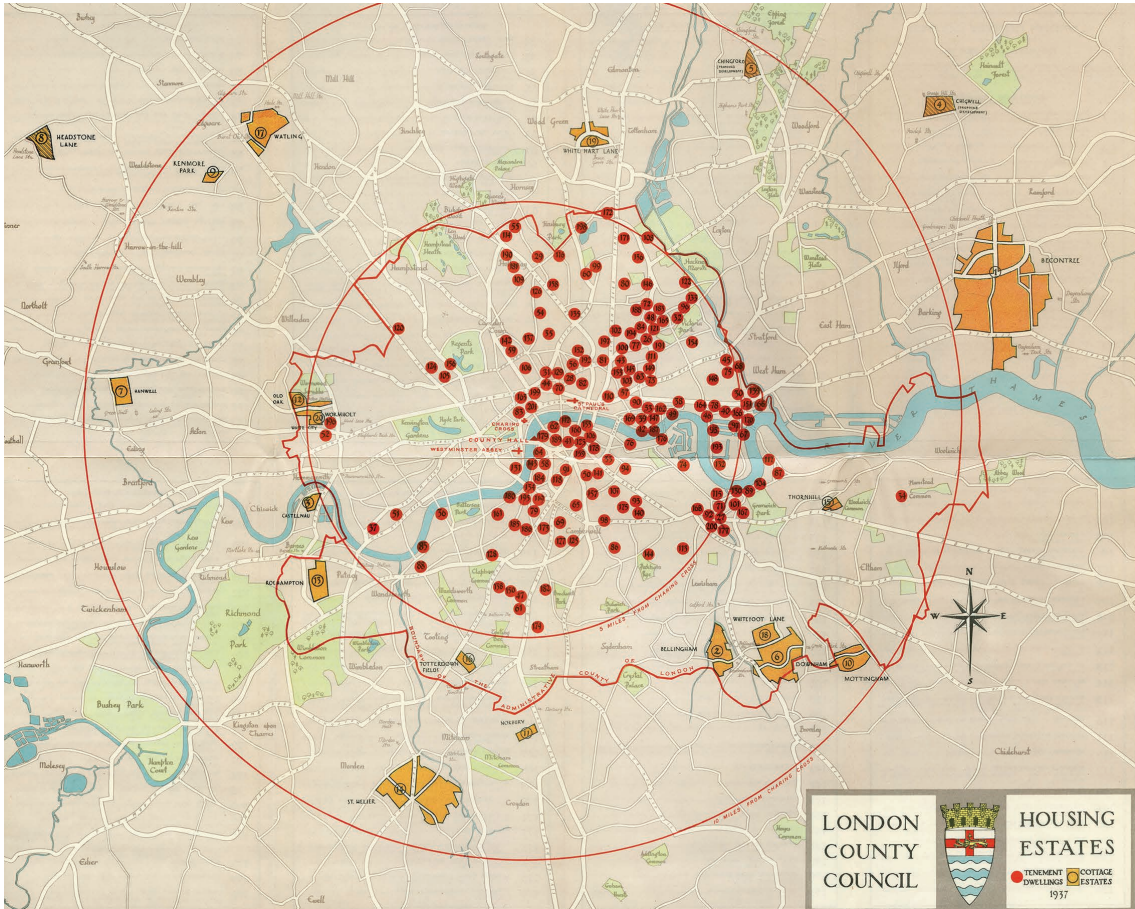


Fig. 6: Map of the London County Council, 1937, 'Housing Estates', in London County Council, *London Housing*, London: King, 1937 © London Metropolitan Archives.

his position to realise the bulk of the programme with the help of a team, Wagner called upon independent architects such as Bruno Taut (1880–1938) or Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) to collaborate in his ambitious programme. This is a paradox, since German architects fought so hard to gain access to the public building programme. On the other hand, Hellerau, an earlier example of *Siedlungen* that was developed in 1909 by entrepreneur Carl Schmidt, was directly commissioned to an independent architect, Richard Riemerschidt (1868–1957).

Compared to Germany, France lagged far behind with its subsidised housing programmes. Institutions such as the Rothschild Foundation financed the first projects. The foundation created its own design office via an open competition on a case study 'Ilot'. When the *Office Parisien d'habitations à bon marché* was finally founded in 1913/14, along with the already existing *Service d'architecture*, architects for its first eleven buildings were appointed through competitions. Thus a specific design office was created, dedicated to the realisation of these projects. Another key player in public housing in France was the politician Henri Sellier (1883–1943), who was head of the *Office départemental des habitations à bon marché de la Seine*. The architects for the *cité-jardins* that were planned for the *banlieue* of Paris were appointed without a competition process; instead, they were directly selected from among the participants of the above-mentioned Parisian competitions. Architects such as Maurice Payret-Dortail (1874–1929), Joseph Bassompierre-Sewrin (1871–1950), André Arfvidson (1870–1935), Paul de Rutté (1871–1943), Alexandre Maistrasse (1860–1951) and Félix Dumail (1883–1908) were commissioned, all of whom had previously studied at the *École des beaux Arts*. These architects were given a site and were supported by a *Commission d'architecture et d'esthétique*, (of which Bonnier was a member), which could assign individual building projects to their chosen architects.

In England, a series of laws were introduced to intervene in the dramatic situation in English cities concerning both slum clearance and the housing shortage, yet even after the First World War the bulk of dwellings were built by private enterprises. R. L. Reiss calculated that during the period between 1919 and 1940, 4,528,000 dwellings were built in Great Britain, of which local authorities built only 1,393,000, while the remainder were constructed by private enterprises.⁴⁵ [fig. 6]

The London County Council remained one of the key players, in particular via the Addison Act of 1919, which had announced the construction of '500,000 new council homes in five years, to be built on generous garden city lines'.⁴⁶ The architects working for the LCC remain rather anonymous. Even their managers, among them William Edward Riley (1852–1937) and George Topham Forrest (1872–1945), remain marginal in the history of English architects, not to mention their staff.

Conclusion

With the International Congress of Architects held in London in 1906, the general bias of architects towards employment in administrations was officially sanctioned. The different attitudes of architects from various countries can thus be explained by the different conditions in which architects worked in relation to such administrations, and whether they perceived them as a threat or a possible sphere of influence, both from outside and within. After WWII, the existing differences among countries were swept away, not least by the efforts of modernist historiography, eager to establish not only an 'international style' but also an 'international architect'. This image still affects our perception of the profession.

The history told here is in fact a grey zone between the history of administration, which consistently avoids discussing architects, given that they always had particular conditions, and the history of

architecture, which for too long has collaborated with architects to establish a professional myth. It is a history of exceptions, where no clear pattern seems to emerge, even inside one and the same administration, which makes the telling of it so challenging.

Despite the importance of administrations and their architects, also with regard to the mass housing programmes after the First World War, the professional figure of the architect as civil servant completely disappeared from official discourse after the Second World War. Clearly, many architects remained, and still remain, employed within state administrations. The architect as civil servant was indeed confronted with absurd hierarchies, painful and time-consuming procedures, and so forth, but at the same time he was involved in political processes and had much more influence in shaping society than any independent architect. The striving for freedom from administrative fetters also meant a loss of control and involvement that one cannot but regret.

Notes

1. Otto Wagner, 'Ausführung wichtiger Regierungs- und städtischer Bauten durch besoldete Beamten', in *International Congress of Architects. Seventh held in London 16–21 July 1906, Transaction* (London: The Royal Institute of British Architects, 1908), 111.
2. F. E. P. Edwards, 'Discussion on Subject I', in *International Congress of Architects. Seventh Session*, 119.
3. A. B. Plummer, 'Discussion on Subject I', in *International Congress of Architects. Seventh Session*, 120.
4. *Ibid.*, 125.
5. 'The world of the mid-twentieth century will need some buildings by architects of genius, for only thus can the necessary monotony and the low level of plastic interest of bureaucratic architecture be balanced and relieved.' Henry-Russell Hitchcock, 'The Architecture of Bureaucracy & the Architecture of Genius', *The Architectural Review* (January 1947): 6.
6. John Summerson, 'Bread & Butter and Architecture', *Horizon* (October 1942): 233–43.
7. For example, in his monumental work: Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958).
8. 'Meine vorläufige Vorschläge zu Errichtung einer dergleichen Pflanz Schule würden diese sein; Erstlich setze ich zum Voraus, dass diese Schule nicht für die sogenannte höhere Baukunst, sondern für solche Bau-Anstalten errichtet werde, die auf allgemeine Landes Verbesserung abzielen, dass es nemlich nicht nur Paläste und Luft Häuser, sondern um Brücken, Canäle, Schleusen, Dämme, Austrocknung der Moräste, Schiffbahrmachung der Ströhme und dgl. Mehr, zu thun sei.' Quoted in Georg Galland, 'Eine Technische Hoschschule Friedrich des Grossen', *Sonntagsbeilage N. 39 zur Vossischen Zeitung*, 449 (24 September 1899): 306.
9. Bernhard Gaber, 'Zur Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Architekten', *Der Architekt*, 6 (June 1953): 103.
10. '30. Abgeordneten-Versammlung des Verbandes deutscher Architekten- und Ingenieur-Vereine in Königsberg i. Pr.', *Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, XXI, Jahrgang 24, no. 67 (August 1901): 417.
11. Vereinigung zur Vertretung baukünstlerischen Interessen aus Berlin, 'Die Hochbau-Ausführungen des preussischen Staates', *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (14 January 1880): 20.
12. Cornelius Gurlitt, *Über den Stand des Städtebaues*, (Wien: Verlag für Fachliteratur Ges. M. B. H., 1914): 21.
13. 'Mittheilungen aus Vereinen', *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (7 February 1880): 63.
14. Karl Scheffler, *Die Architektur der Grossstadt* [1913] (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1998), 132.
15. Gurlitt, *Über den Stand des Städtebaues*, 493.
16. Bernhard Gaber, 'Zur Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Architekten', *Der Architekt*, 5, (May 1953): 81–2 and *Der Architekt*, 6, (June 1953): 101.
17. Gaber, 'Zur Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Architekten', 105.
18. Vereinigung der technischen Oberbeamten

- Deutscher Städte, 'Denkschrift, die Mitwirkung von Privatarchitekten bei Planung und Ausführung öffentlicher Bauten betreffend', *Technisches Gemeindeblatt*, Jahrgang XXI, no. 10 (Berlin, 20 August 1918): 111.
19. Fritz Schumacher, 'Architektonische Aufgaben der Städte', in *Die deutschen Städte, Geschildert nach den Ergebnissen der ersten deutschen Städteausstellung zu Dresden 1903*, ed. Robert Wuttke (Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Brandstetter, 1904), 47–8.
 20. Fritz Schumacher, quoted in Erwin Ockert, *Fritz Schumacher. Sein Schaffen als Städtebauer und Landesplaner* (Tübingen: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1950), 4.
 21. Albert Faivre, *La loi municipale du 5 avril 1884. Avec commentaires*, 7th ed. (Paris: Derveaux Éditeur, 1886).
 22. Quoted in Ben Kafka, *The Demon of Writing. Powers and Failures of Paperwork* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 84.
 23. *Revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics* 3, no. 8, (1842): 374–79.
 24. David Van Zanten, *Building Paris, Architectural Institutions and the Transformation of the French Capital, 1830–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 47.
 25. Charles Lucas, *Achille Hermant. Sa vie et ses œuvres. 1823 – Paris – 1903* (Paris: Imprimerie de J. Dumoulin, 1903), 9.
 26. 'Il n'appartient pas au modeste fonctionnaire que je suis ...', Louis Bonnier, *Conférence à l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* (1916), 1.
 27. As a reference: the new town hall in Berlin was built by Hoffmann and his administration.
 28. Norman Shaw, T. G. Jackson, *Architecture, A Profession or an Art. Thirteen short essays on the qualification and training of Architects* (London: John Murray, 1892).
 29. T. J. Jackson, 'Introduction', in *Architecture, A Profession or an Art*, xv.
 30. J. Mordaunt Crook, 'The Surveyorship of Sir James Wyatt, 1796–1813', in *The History of the King's Works, Volume VI 1782–1851*, ed. H.M. Colvin (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), 49.
 31. Quoted in Crook, 'The Surveyorship of Sir James Wyatt, 1796–1813', 52.
 32. *Ibid.*, 49.
 33. M. H. Port, 'The New House of Parliament', in *The History of the King's Works, Volume VI 1782–1851*, ed. H. M. Colvin, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), 576–7.
 34. [Robert] Kerrin, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (6 December 1888): 72.
 35. Susan Beattie, *A Revolution in London Housing. LCC Housing Architects & Their Work 1893–1914* (London: The Architectural Press, 1980), 9–10.
 36. *Ibid.*, 12.
 37. *Ibid.*, 9.
 38. 'Official & Personal', *The Municipal Journal*, XIX (14 October 1910): 815.
 39. Cees de Jong, Erik Mattie, *Architectural Competitions 1792–1949*, (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994), 10.
 40. R. H. Haynes, 'Town Planning Hints', *The Municipal Journal*, XIX, no. 20 (May 1910): 387.
 41. John Simpson, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (10 November 1906): 104–5.
 42. J. Stübben, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (10 November 1906): 107.
 43. In particular T.C. Horsfall, *The Improvement of the Dwellings and Surroundings of the People: The Example of Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1904).
 44. William Henry White, *Architecture and Public Buildings: Their Relation to School, Academy, and State, in Paris and London* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1884), 3.
 45. R. L. Reiss, *Municipal and Private Enterprise Housing* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1945), 68.
 46. *Ibid.*, 181.

Biography

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