Institutes, Institutions, and Institutionality

ALEX MAYMIND
University of Minnesota

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Before the events of 1968 as a cultural and historical hinge point unfolded, a slightly earlier moment in the mid-1960s was significant for the ways in which governmental institutions as well as philanthropic organizations and schools of architecture searched for new ways to define and live up to their social responsibility. In this moment in the middle of the decade, American knowledge production and institution-building rapidly evolved, and a significant number of architectural research institutes developed, multiplied, and flourished, at a time when societal institutions, from the armed forces to government, endured heavy scrutiny and attack. These concerns, including their wide-ranging interpretations, would form a crucial backdrop to the educational and pedagogical debates that would significantly mold the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) and a handful of other para-institutes at this moment. IAUS was conceived of at a moment in the late 1960s when the American context was replete with university laboratories, centers, and other such organized research units. Looking anew at IAUS through an examination of the organizational and administrative documents with a vast empirical basis, this essay tracks the influence of these debates on the formation of IAUS as an architectural nonprofit. This question of pedagogy at an architectural nonprofit operating in/ of/ for the city of New York would underpin the first decade of their research, production, and critical questioning, and would lead to several innovative but ultimately problematic efforts in linking together urban problems, institutional legitimation, and pedagogical innovations. As a counterhistory, this paper is part o as a series of diagonal slices through its institutional history to reveal problematics and intersections with other issues larger than architecture itself, particularly around relationships with municipal governance and administration, finance, and economic shifts in the moment of late capitalism.

An unfortunate but necessary result of democracy is that architects must learn to deal with institutions politically if their art is to flourish at all - so we have learned that institutions must be designed before the buildings.

– Jonathan Barnett

An intellectual weakness-and saving grace of American students has always been that they are unable to sit still for ideology and its tight Flemish-bonded logics and dialectics. They don't want it and they don't get it. Any possible connection that worker housing or anti-bourgeois ideals might have had with a political program, in Germany, Holland, or anywhere else, eluded them.

– Tom Wolfe

INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY AND INSTITUTIONAL REVOLT: "1968"

In discussing the effects of the events that unfolded during the fateful year of 1968 on architectural education with more than thirty years of hindsight, architect George Baird remarked that:

the spectacular reconsideration of the basic premises of architectural education, and the politicization that followed from it, have marked forever all who witnessed the 1968 events. I am continually surprised by the number of schemas one can construct retrospectively around that pivotal and eventful year and the consequences of the loss of moral confidence of modern architecture and practice that began to overtake events from that date onward.

Unpacking Baird's claim about "the 1968 events," as well as other architectural histories which have mapped the loss of faith in elite institutions, it is critical to avoid making a simplistic equation between the politicization of education and the changes and reforms which unfolded in the shadow of 1968 as a cataclysmic event. For Baird's generation, the loss of confidence in modern architecture was but one of many openings into a disciplinary and professional field that had lost its center in more ways than one. This time period is often historicized against the backdrop of a series of ideological shifts from the import of the military-industrial-academic research complex during the Eisenhower presidency in the 1950s to a critique of humanism and the myths which previously justified scientific research, producing what has been called the cultural turn during the Kennedy and Johnson administration in late 1960s and early 70s. One must look more broadly at the moment of 1968 and its attendant cultural and social histories which have elaborated the conflicting and contradictory ideological registers of the Sixties, a moment marked by the influence of a growing youth rebellion, civil rights riots,

and anti-institutional sentiment. In examining this moment, cultural historian Thomas Bender argued that:

> … the most important legacy of the 1960s has been a loss of faith in elite institutions, among which universities were included. The failure of the policies advocated by "the best and the brightest" in Vietnam and the "dirty tricks" and casual disregard of law and the Constitution by the Nixon White House produced a legitimation crisis, weakening both political and cultural authority in the United States. Academic experts, once identified with grand hopes, had become a part of the problem, not a part of the solution.

The events of this long decade of the Sixties underscored how the persistent critique of institutional authority, particularly in relationship to societal skepticism and critique of experts, expertise, institutions and their mandate, became a central preoccupation that would greatly affect the future of universities as a site of liberal education.

INSTITUTION-BUILDING

In this moment in the middle of the decade, American knowledge production and institution-building rapidly evolved, and a significant number of architectural research institutes developed, multiplied, and flourished, at a time when societal institutions, from the armed forces to government, endured heavy scrutiny and attack. In 1965, several universities reorganized the structure and curricula of their schools of architecture, testing new models of how to relate design, research and action in the field in coordination with governmental and philanthropic funding, and in doing so, created centers for urban research. These urban centers had differing agendas, some tending toward "urban extension" or providing design and planning services to underserved communities. Other organizations focused on "research" to advance knowledge of planning processes; often these organizations combined these two approaches. Many of these were intimately connected to and dependent upon host academic institutions as universities extended their reach further into the domain of scientific research, and architecture departments searched for scientific grounds on which to base architectural research in manifold ways. This focus on the realm of the "scientific" was one of the most critical determining ambitions of the decade as architecture departments sought to locate and position their work as "objective" in contrast to a disciplinary self-definition manifested through taste, intuition, aesthetics, or even scientism.

Taking a wide view of this period, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (hereafter identified by the acronym IAUS) was one of many such institutes and agencies. Because IAUS was conceived of at a moment in the late 1960s when the American context was replete with university laboratories, centers, and other such organized research units, it is useful to compare these academically oriented research groups and institutes such as IAUS to others that were comparable in scale and situation.

An examination of the institutional framework of IAUS through four distinct but interrelated threads — administration, configuration, wordcraft, and funding — reveals how it functioned as what could be described as a para-institute. In focusing attention on these bureaucratic and often overlooked aspects of its constitution, day-to-day work protocols, material and immaterial production, as well as specific projects that speak to unrealized intentions, failed works, conflicts, and false-starts, a different IAUS emerges from the one that is known currently in the historical record.

DOCUMENTS + FACTS

Following Bruno Latour's emphasis on documents and facts, or what could be described as a search for an understanding of actual practices which explain what happens between the relationships of daily practice and theory, an analysis of paperwork is relevant to connect the material culture of documents and the bureaucratic medium to the more intangible ambitions and stated goals of their contents. To this end, the IAUS archive at the Canadian Center for Architecture contains a vast array of documents and paperwork: internal memos, institutional frameworks, policies and procedures, by-laws, meeting minutes, project summaries, research notes, bills, grant solicitations and applications, fundraising letters, as well as bureaucratic and managerial documents such as timetables, salary adjustments, handwritten corrections, and other textual efforts. A counterhistory emerges from this focus on documents, which is not the narrative of a hegemonic power, or a fractured and fledgling institution that has lingering influence because of its charismatic personalities. One could rightfully expect the principal figure behind such a history to be architect Peter Eisenman, director and one of the initiators of the project. And yet, paradoxically, if one looks at the vast literature on Eisenman's work as an architect what is visibly missing is IAUS as both intellectual framework and literal setting for the work that unfolded under his authorship. In brief, IAUS provided not only a space from which to work on projects, but also willing interns, intellectual debate and feedback, and a forum in which to position his work as an architect relative to other ongoing concerns at the end of the difficult decade of the 1960s.

IAUS was arguably caught between several contradictions which lay hidden below the surface of its institutional identity during much of its existence. On the one hand, its focus moved away from and toward education in different guises, as it had declared in its initial conception and charter documents. This is to say that education served as a useful proxy for other modes of work and production that did not always serve the original function. Indeed, the first group of Cornell graduate students filed several grievances over the course of the academic year to the head of Cornell's department of architecture back in Ithaca and declared that "projects contracted primarily to finance the Institute or to provide a vehicle for a member of the faculty should not involve student help except on a voluntary basis. The administration must bear in mind at all times that students are at the Institute

for an education, not for labor purposes." This complaint was one of several rather difficult road bumps in the first handful of years of educational offerings at IAUS, which struggled to find a balance between the needs of the students and the opportunities provided by contact with municipal agencies and other contract work.

On the other hand, while education purportedly served as the foundation to the work which unfolded there, tracking how IAUS struggled to maintain a sustained research agenda explains one aspect of their later shift to the production of what has been identified as "architectural culture" through a litany of exhibitions, lectures, presentations, public events and gatherings, and publications.

Secondarily, the institutional identity, mission, and other documents are evidence of a language game that focused on describing and delimiting an institution as constituted by its self-made protocols, justifications, procedures, and organizational hierarchies. Jean-François Lyotard's influential book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* significantly outlined these undercurrents from a broader cultural and philosophical perspective, where he argued that knowledge acquisition was no longer about the shaping of the mind through selfhood, but instead was increasingly dedicated to a situation in which knowledge was no longer the subject, but in the service of the subject. In this vein, IAUS can be read an institutional structure that aimed to produce knowledge without any disciplinary boundaries per se.

PARA-INSTITUTIONALITY
Looking further at the question of identity, IAUS can be understood as a *para-institute*, that which can be defined as occupying an in-between or liminal condition, taking up a familiar form but also pushing it beyond definition. This relationship signals a manner in which IAUS straddled positions between an architectural practice, a university, and a non-profit government agency operating in the service of larger political aims or bodies. In this sense, IAUS was defined and self-regulated by this flow of documents in and out of the institute more so than by its definition of the sum of projects, tools, and individuals operating under the direction of these protocols. For example, connections to MoMA and Cornell University as well as those to public and private agencies "with their capacity for implementing and administering these solutions," translated to a constellation of social and professional networks that would form the core of activities at IAUS in its early years and also demonstrated a simplistic understanding of the fluidity between these different modes; this is to say that museum, agency, institute are each seen as internodal points between execution, publication, and dissemination.

The archival documents also pose indirect answers to how we might understand what constituted, organizationally and bureaucratically, an "institute" in the late 60s in the context of New York. This bureaucratic medium of documents is legible as an index of how a fledgling institute defined itself through *tacit wordcraft*, which can be defined as the manipulation of the *materiality* of language through a process of crafting rhetorical flexibility to simultaneously pursue clarity *and* ambiguity. Tacit wordcraft in these documents can be understood as a mode of technocratic mimicry of the language, modalities, and formats of documents found in governmental and state apparatuses can be read as an index of how IAUS aspired to engage funders such as The Ford Foundation.

INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORSHIP
This bureaucratic medium can also be analyzed to understand the nature of distributed authorship that was at stake under the rubric of an *institute*. Many of these similar institutes shared an ambiguity toward nomenclature, which is to say that the naming of organizations signaled a larger effort to shore up expertise in a moment of uncertainty about disciplinary boundaries, or what has been described as an epistemological and disciplinary crossroad. This diversity in nomenclature can also be read as an index of alternative institutional forms; terms such as "laboratory," "institute," "agency," "group," and "unit" further suggest a search for other institutional forms beyond those of a traditional architecture firm, office, or an architecture school.

The documents make evident the ways in which IAUS ambitiously attempted to work in a managerial mode to carefully curate how it was perceived, represented, branded, and understood by different publics "out there" in New York and beyond. IAUS was composed of a revolving cast of characters: architects, students, historians, teachers, researchers, fellows, visitors, lecturers, and other recurring roles were crucial to its liveliness and created an unpredictable exchange of ideas and conversations that was anything but static. The fellowship structure formed the core of these activities, both in the sense of initiating and conducting research, and soliciting funds. It afforded IAUS a highly variable and flexible definition. Initially voted to a period of three years, fellows and other related positions such as visiting fellows, Graham Foundation fellows and a shifting set of other temporary titles, were part of a larger shift toward the postwar emphasis on distributed authorship as a result of collectives, collaborative groups, partnerships, and networks. The social and intellectual intersections of these different groups of individuals was a crucial component of the milieu of IAUS.

FUNDING: ARCHITECTURE, NOT FOR PROFIT
Funding made IAUS possible, and more importantly what is critical to note is that funding always comes from "particular places, organizations and individuals with distinct ideologies, motivations, ethics, and morals." In his examination of the changes in think tanks over the past several decades, Kent Weaver has argued that organizations were in some sense a useful cover for individuals with research projects; he noted that "many of these small organizations would not exist formally at all were it not for the preference of foundations to fund non-profit organizations rather than individual researchers." It is in this sense too that

IAUS should be understood as an umbrella organization for a small cadre of architects, banning together under the rubric of a nonprofit organization in this moment, in effect sublimating their own practices for the benefit of better funding from a wider variety of "particular places, organizations and individuals."

A critical examination of the sources of funding and fundraising efforts at IAUS tellingly describes how the economic model for a nonprofit educational institute shifted multiple times during the fifteen-year time period, in large part as a reflection of the larger economic neoliberal trends that affected architectural production in a moment marked by dwindling of funds in the straitened American economy of the 1970s. In his essay "From Fiscal Triangle to Passing Through Rise of the Nonprofit Corporation," historian Jonathan Levy argued that nonprofits' pecuniary revenues, from such donations or from financial investments on their endowments, were not taxed because they carried out "public "purposes," codified in Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954." His essay traces how the definitions around state incorporation laws from the nineteenth century forward are ambiguous, allowing for a degree of contestations with regard to what counted as acting for and in the name of the public. I would argue that this ambiguity was a key facet of their mission statement and funding model, which must be understood in direct contrast to the nature of architecture as a commercial practice, or a for-profit enterprise. How exactly they acted for and in the name of the public was ultimately less than clear, however. While their charter claimed that IAUS would "provide continuing education to the public through seminars, lectures, publications, and exhibitions," the question of who constitutes the public for IAUS remains rather open-ended. While it is clear that many of these programs defined the public as anyone who was willing to pay and therefore participate, including groups of college students who otherwise lacked access to architecture courses, mid-career architects, or those with a casual interest in architecture, looking at how this money then re-circulated into IAUS coffers and what it was used for tells us that acting in the name of the public is different than acting "for the public."

Beyond the categorization of funding sources, the examination of fundraising efforts, and forms of corporate and private sponsorship poses several key questions: why were corporate architects and businessmen willing to contribute such large amounts of money? What did they hope to gain and what did they gain? And how did knowledge function as a commodity, and for whom and in what ways did it do so and continue to do so? Archival evidence demonstrates that Eisenman and others were continually aware of the pressures of how funding limited and constrained the types of work they hoped to pursue, and how limited their funds were in terms of constraints on time and effort. At the same time, they consistently sought funding that would enable a freedom of pursuits, and a sustained ability to cover overhead costs, which were pressing, and how to use monies for resources other than what they had been explicitly

given for. A draft of the prospectus from 1971 outlined the ambitions for funding in the following manner:

> It is already evident that in its applied research role, the Institute has to largely depend upon funding provided by commissioning clients: usually public agencies. *However, the Institute would be severely limited in its postulative and pure research activities if it were only to undertake projects which were capable of attracting public funds, as these projects would tend to be determined by the scope of sums already appropriated, thereby severely restricting the Institute's capacity to suggest new programs for public action.* To maintain its growth in a postulative, independent research capacity, the Institute requires a source of private funding and to this end, it should strive in the future to match more equally project funds with private foundation money.

What is notable is their admission that despite being a non-profit corporation, they can't rely solely on public funds because these funds are limited by nature, and "would tend to be determined by the scope of sums already appropriated." In other words, working for the public implied a process of seeking private funding that would then benefit the public at an unforeseen later date. By 1977, a year which marked the ten year anniversary of IAUS, in a memorandum organized in advance of a major capital funding campaign, Eisenman declared that it was no longer feasible to "continue with an ad hoc collection of programs based on fundraising which is swayed by the nature of the funds available," and it was necessary "to give the Institute both a definition, and a limitation for the first time."

Beyond the sources of funding, it is also crucial to understand the ways in which funding and funding sources were instrumental in the definition of knowledge and legitimation in the context of a non-profit corporation such as IAUS. As noted by Lyotard, a study of legitimation entails that knowledge statements are made within a circuitry of power, which is to say that "knowledge or expertise is not the sum of unidirectional pronouncements issued from some preordained priesthood, upon the processing of whose content listeners efficiently carry out the requisite command." Furthermore, he argued that:

The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending, and will increasingly tend, to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume - that is, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange. It ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its "use value."

The "explicitness" spoken of above, if anything, speaks to the architects' vulnerability within a technocratic field: knowledge as

understood in relationship to the construction of facts, impacted by the financial advantages of ever-increasing equipment and its associated costs. Despite this, IAUS ran counter to the notion that financial advantages would lead the way to a definition of success. Instead, they relied on a model of flexibility located between existing paradigms of research and commercial practice.

"BREATHTAKING ESCAPES," ENTERPRISE, AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

In 1982, after a period of turmoil over the directorship, a job posting for the new director position indicated that the role was principally about fundraising, and what was referred to as the "institutionalization of the Institute": "The Executive Committee of the Trustees have in their opinion concluded that the Institute is still not an institution." The conceptual divide between an institute and an institution represented a significant leap, citing the personal dependency on a single individual and noted that without that individual there is little likelihood that the Institute at present would survive.'

This document, written by Eisenman himself, outlined a five-year plan, during which time he would gradually phase out of his role as director and assist in the transition. Moreover, the plan included fundraising for an endowment of three to five million dollars, a goal of finding a permanent headquarters (without which "there is no such thing as an institution"), the establishment of a library, an archive, a slide library, and a study center which would come together to "institutionalize" IAUS. This five-year plan was not followed through upon, and instead IAUS cycled through several directors after Eisenman resigned from his role, before officially closing its doors in 1985 after going bankrupt.

Writing after the doors had officially shut, Michael Sorkin noted that "Eisenman had kept the IAUS going through a series of breathtaking escapes from financial disaster, purchased with withheld salaries, last minute grantsmanship, and other feats of financial legerdemain." This in itself is not surprising as a facet of their existence, tethered to the whims and vagaries of funding, funders, and foundations; however this is also not to contradict the entrepreneurialism of the endeavor. What the documents studied above make clear is how much of their time was spent on these matters. What is more surprising is the fact that this was structural to being a non-profit that was situated neither as a practice or as a school. Looking at how the notion of para-institutionality shifted over the course of its lifetime, as well as understanding the extent to which an institute was defined less so by activities and types of work and much more so by its development of its sense of "self," modes of self-preservation and articulation of an institutional identity through formats like letterhead and graphics, wordcraft, and other strategies of legitimation which attempted to simulate the operational and bureaucratic paradigm, which was then was mirrored back to them through their own efforts.

ENDNOTES

1. Jonathan Barnett et al., letter to Romaldo Giurgola, September 29, 1965, Box 2, "Lindsay, John V. mayoral campaign materials relating to urban design, 1966-1967" folder, as quoted in Mariana Mogilevich, "Designing the Urban: Space and Politics in Lindsay's New York," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2012).

2. Tom Wolfe, "From Bauhaus to Our House," *Harper's Magazine*, June 1981, p. 52.

3. George Baird, "1968 and its aftermath: The Loss of Moral Confidence in Architectural Practice and Education," in Peter G. Rowe, William S. Saunders, eds. *Reflections on Architectural Practices in the Nineties* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 64-70.

4. Ibid.

5. There is a substantial literature on this moment in American cultural history. See, for example: Andrew Jewett, "The Politics of Knowledge in 1960s America," *Social Science History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 2012), 551-581; Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s.* (New York: Twayne), 2006; Carl Davidson, "Toward institutional resistance," in Immanuel Wallerstein and Paul Starr (eds.) *The University Crisis Reader. Vol. 2, Confrontation and Counterattack* (New York: Vintage): 129-38; Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

6. For a concise history of the emergence and rationale behind urban research at schools of architecture, see Eugénie L. Birch, "Making Urban Research Intellectually Respectable: Martin Meyerson and the Joint Center for Urban Studies of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University 1959–1964," *Journal of Planning History*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2011): 219–238.

7. Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies fonds, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal: DR1999:0380. Memorandum from Jan 15, 1969 to Dean Burnham Kelly from Jack Dobson, Stephen Quick, Roswell Sanford, Terry Williams regarding Clarification of student concerns. (henceforth: CCA/IAUS).

8. Charles Rice & Barbara Penner, "Introduction: the foundations of architectural research," *The Journal of Architecture* (2019) 24:7, 887-897.

9. R. Kent Weaver, "The Changing World of Think Tanks," *Political Science and Politics* (Sept 1989): 563-578. Weaver defined a think tank by noting that "one recent press report suggested that a think tank might be defined as 'an arrangement by which millions of dollars are removed from the accounts of willing corporations, the government, and the eccentric wealthy and given to researchers who spend much of their time competing to get their names in print.'"

10. Jonathan Levy, "From Fiscal Triangle to Passing Through: Rise of the Nonprofit Corporation" in: *Corporations and American Democracy.* Naomi R. Lamoreaux, William J. Novak, editors. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2017), 213-244.

11. William J. Novak, "The Public Utility Idea and the Origins of Modern Business Regulation," in: *Corporations and American Democracy.* Naomi R. Lamoreaux, William J. Novak, editors. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2017), 139-176.

12. One of the key financial decisions was that 40% percent of all money received was put back into overhead.

13. CCA/IAUS/A2-2, IAUS prospectus draft, 1971. Italics my own.

14. CCA/IAUS, A2-9, memorandum, 1977.

15. Ibid.

16. Lyotard also writes that "legitimation primarily involves the question of audience: competence is staked as a territory where both sender and addressee of a message must come to some transactional import of whatever it is that is being said, as well as the manner in which it is said. The concept of legitimation rather entails that, in the context of knowledge production, all such subjective dynamics—whether person, faction or idea—in fact operate within a shared frame of competence: legitimation occurs when statements produced by a speaker receive agreement by its addressee not so much in its content as in terms of the protocol, code, or "phrase regimen" within which it is encrypted." Ibid.

17. CCA/IAUS/A1-12. Director's Report – Trustees Meeting, 19 January 1982.

18. Michael Sorkin, "Reforming the Institute," *Exquisite Corpse: writings on buildings, 1979-1989* (London/ New York: Verso, 1991), 110.