**Abstract**

In this essay, I examine the complex dynamics between digital and print media in architecture and urbanism, focusing on their distinct intentions, commercial models, and cultural roles. I critically analyze how architectural magazines and digital platforms present and curate architectural projects, investigating their aesthetic choices, narratives, collaborative efforts, and editorial practices. I raise questions about whether the curation of architectural content strikes a balance between cultural value and commercial interests, and how these tensions shape public perceptions of the built environment. Through expert interviews and case studies, I explored the evolving role of these media formats, delving into issues such as the digital versus print debate, the cultural responsibility of architectural media, the future of architectural criticism, and the representation of the Global South within these platforms.

My analysis begins with an exploration of the current landscape of architectural media, drawing on interviews with Francisco Brown, a Nicaraguan Senior Editor and Engagement Manager at Metropolis Magazine, and Mark Lamster, an American architecture critic for The Dallas Morning News. These conversations offer valuable insights into key factors such as media characteristics, content strategies, audience engagement, technological innovations, social responsibility, and the operational structures that underpin these outlets. Their perspectives help illuminate the intricate forces shaping the practice of architectural media today.

In the second part of the essay, I shift my focus to the representation of the Global South in architectural media, critically assessing whether these platforms manage to break away from the Western-centric paradigms critiqued by Edward Said in Orientalism (1978). I explore how architectural and design practices from the Global South challenge dominant narratives rooted in European and North American perspectives, investigating the ways in which these practices are represented in architectural media. Through a comparative analysis of case studies, I assess the successes and shortcomings of these representations, with an emphasis on achieving more equitable representation, accessibility, and the decolonization of architectural discourse.

In this essay, I aim to contribute to a broader understanding of the cultural, social, and intellectual forces shaping architectural media today, while highlighting the need for more inclusive and representative platforms that better reflect global diversity.

**Spaces for Cultural Relativism: Digital Shifts in Design Media**

There is a critical need for spaces in architecture and design where minorities can feel included and empowered. Mark Lamster highlights the ongoing crisis in architectural criticism, pointing to the decline of professional critics and publications. “Architectural criticism is perpetually in crisis. The state depends on the audience and type of criticism...” (Lamster, Annex 1). The shrinking media landscape underscores the importance of creating bridges through both digital and physical platforms to foster community engagement within architectural and design communities.

To fully grasp the crisis in architectural media criticism, it is crucial to understand its evolution. Media and communication in architecture have undergone drastic changes with the advent of the internet. Pancho Brown reflects on how platforms like Daily Design and Design Boom democratized architecture by enabling self-publication. This shift expanded access to a broader audience but also raised questions about the media’s role in maintaining credibility and authority. “People began self-publishing their projects...leading to a democratization of access to publication.” (Brown, Annex 2). However, this democratization has also challenged the legitimacy of traditional media and its legacy.

The digital era has disrupted conventional media outlets, prompting a reassessment of what constitutes legitimate criticism. This shift challenges the legacy of influential figures like Philip Johnson, whose controversial history demands critical engagement to understand architecture’s evolution. “Johnson shaped how architecture was viewed and discussed, but today there’s more scrutiny of his controversial legacy...” (Lamster, Annex 1).

Challenging traditional norms is vital for shifting architectural discourse toward cultural and social narratives rather than purely commercial interests. “I prefer to give space to newer voices...especially young architects who are doing incredible work, often with limited resources...” (Brown, Annex 2). Architectural media often fails to capture the deeper social and cultural contexts behind projects. There is a growing need to spotlight architects addressing sustainability and community-driven solutions in underrepresented regions like the Global South.

The result of this shift could be Amplifying Diverse Voices from the Global South. By focusing on these voices, architectural media can build more inclusive platforms that highlight practices prioritizing culture, sustainability, and social impact. “It’s important to give visibility to these projects because we can learn a lot from them.” (Brown, Annex 2). These contributions, often overlooked in mainstream media, provide essential insights into alternative architectural methodologies and values.

Redefining Architectural Practice requires moving beyond elite tastes and globalized trends. Architecture is not merely a reflection of exclusivity, but a complex, multi-layered discipline rooted in specific cultural, social, and environmental contexts. Platforms that elevate underrepresented voices and prioritize social responsibility can foster a more holistic and inclusive view of architecture.

Toward a More Inclusive Architectural Discourse: Inclusive platforms that spotlight voices from across the globe can catalyze a more diverse and comprehensive architectural dialogue. “By amplifying the work of architects from different parts of the world, we can create a more holistic view of the built environment” (Brown, Annex 2).

Through these practices, architectural media can contribute to Empowering Marginalized Groups through Architecture. Equitable access to publication and recognition helps dismantle barriers that have traditionally excluded marginalized communities. This transformation allows architecture to serve as a tool for empowerment, fostering positive social change.

**Critique in Architectural Media**

The role of media in architecture extends far beyond merely covering projects; it serves as a mediator between the design world and broader society. Media outlets, whether traditional publications or digital platforms, shape architectural discourse by deciding which voices and issues to amplify. This selection process significantly influences how projects are perceived and valued, especially when intersecting with cultural, social, and environmental concerns.

As Pancho Brown observes, “Media serves as the bridge between society and the world of design. For example, architectural critics from newspapers like The New York Times have been crucial in giving visibility to projects and architects. However, these projects and architects often come from established power structures. Media outlets, like magazines, can influence the selection of topics and prioritize relevant issues such as climate change, sustainability, equity, and social justice. As the conversation about architecture expands, more possibilities open to connect audiences with these topics” (Annex 2).

This dual role of media—elevating the visibility of established architects and projects while enabling broader discussions about critical issues like sustainability and social justice—underscores its power to shape the narrative. By focusing on such topics, communication platforms can steer conversations in ways that address pressing global concerns. However, this influence also raises questions about the power dynamics and institutional control that determine which voices and narratives receive visibility.

Moreover, the editorial selection process within magazines plays a pivotal role in shaping architectural discourse. Brown explains how, at Metropolis, this process is structured: “There isn’t just one method, but there is a structure. Each year, we have five issues, each with a theme. We research, travel, meet with architecture firms, and collaborate with PR offices to receive projects. Key criteria include impact, creativity, and, most importantly, relevance to issues like sustainability. We want to know if a project has a real initiative in this regard because we don’t want to promote projects that ignore environmental impact” (Annex 2). By prioritizing these criteria, the magazine strives to feature projects that are not only innovative and creative but also contribute meaningfully to addressing global challenges.

These insights illustrate the evolving role of architectural media. Through deliberate curation and critical engagement, media can serve as a powerful tool for amplifying important issues, shaping public understanding, and fostering a more inclusive and responsible architectural narrative. As industry continues to evolve, architectural media has the potential to drive meaningful conversations that embrace inclusivity, sustainability, and social responsibility in design.

**Architectural Media: Digital Platforms and Print Magazines**

The role of media in architecture extends beyond merely covering projects; it acts as a mediator between the world of design and society. Media outlets, whether traditional publications or digital platforms, shape architectural discourse by deciding which voices and issues to amplify. This selection process significantly influences how architecture is understood and valued, particularly when intersecting with cultural, social, and environmental concerns.

As Pancho Brown notes, “Media serves as the bridge between society and the world of design. For example, architectural critics from newspapers like The New York Times have been crucial in giving visibility to projects and architects. However, these projects and architects often come from established power structures. Magazines can influence the selection of topics and prioritize relevant issues such as climate change, sustainability, equity, and social justice. A good example was Mimar: Architecture in Development, first published in 1981, with a print run of 43 issues (Archnet 2024). It was the only international architecture magazine focusing on architecture in the Global South. It aimed at exchanging ideas and images between countries creating new directions for their environment.

“As the conversation about architecture expands, more possibilities open to connect audiences with these topics” (Brown, Annex 2). This dual role of media—elevating the visibility of established architects and projects while fostering broader discussions about critical issues like sustainability and social justice—underscores its power to shape architectural discourse. By focusing on these topics, media outlets can help direct conversations in ways that address pressing global concerns. However, this influence also raises important questions about power dynamics, as established institutions often control which voices and narratives are given visibility.

Furthermore, the editorial selection process within magazines plays a pivotal role in shaping architectural narratives. For instance, at Metropolis, Brown explains, “There isn’t just one method, but there is a structure. Each year, we have five issues, each with a theme. We research, travel, meet with architecture firms, and collaborate with PR offices to receive projects. Key criteria include impact, creativity, and, most importantly, relevance to issues like sustainability. We want to know if a project has a real initiative in this regard because we don’t want to promote projects that ignore environmental impact” (Annex 2). This approach illustrates how narratives can prioritize sustainability while evaluating the social and environmental impact of projects. By emphasizing these criteria, the featured projects are not only innovative and creative but also contribute meaningfully to addressing global challenges.

Through deliberate curation and critical engagement, media can serve as a powerful tool for amplifying important issues in architecture, shaping public understanding, and fostering a more inclusive and responsible architectural narrative.

**Balancing Innovation with Social Responsibility**

The responsibility of architectural media to address cultural and social issues while fostering design innovation lies primarily with editors and publishers. As Homi K. Bhabha states, “It is a sign of political maturity to accept that there are many forms of political writing whose different effects are obscured when they are divided between the 'theoretical' and the 'activist'” (Bhabha, 2010, p. 32). This sentiment highlights the multifaceted responsibilities of editors and publishers in setting the agenda for architectural discourse. As noted in a discussion: “Responsibility rests on editors and publishers, who set the agenda. While there’s progress in addressing social issues in mainstream media, professional press and image-driven platforms remain object-focused. Balancing academic interests with social issues is an ongoing challenge, shaped by individual editors, writers, and publications” (Lamster, Annex 1).

This shows the critical role of editors and publishers in balancing the academic, technical, and social aspects of architecture. While progress has been made in incorporating social issues into mainstream media, professional and image-driven platforms still tend to focus on the objects themselves—the buildings—often at the expense of addressing broader societal contexts and impacts. This tension continues to shape how architectural media fulfills its responsibilities.

Metropolis magazine exemplifies how architectural media can broaden the conversation around design. As explained: “At Metropolis, what we do is try to expand the conversation. When I arrived at the magazine, I found a publication with 40 years of history, recently acquired by a media group. In recent years, under the leadership of Avinash Rajagopal, it has focused on issues of sustainability, circularity, and materials, which are fundamental to us. However, we also give space to ancestral knowledge that connects with the territory, local materials, and communities” (Annex 2).

Metropolis demonstrates how the media can integrate sustainability, circularity, and cultural knowledge into architectural discourse. Under Rajagopal’s leadership, the magazine has worked to address critical issues while honoring the ancestral knowledge, local materials, and communities connected to architectural projects. This approach shows how architectural media can champion both design innovation and social responsibility, providing a more holistic view of the built environment.

Despite these efforts, integrating cultural and social responsibility into architectural media remains a complex challenge. Editors and publications must navigate the delicate balance between academic, technical, and societal concerns while ensuring their platforms reflect a broader, more inclusive conversation about architecture’s role in society. By doing so, architectural media can move closer to fulfilling its responsibility as a mediator between design innovation and societal progress.

**Barriers to Global South Representation in Architectural Media**

The challenge of representation in architectural media remains significant, particularly for voices from the Global South. Logistical and financial constraints create substantial barriers to equitable representation. As Mark Lamster explains: “Representation is hindered by logistical and financial challenges, such as limited budgets for travel and reporting. Western magazines often cater to local audiences, leaving the Global South underrepresented. Institutions like the Aga Khan Prize highlight some projects, but the real challenge lies in fostering local platforms and institutions to amplify voices from these regions” (Annex 1).

Structural barriers, including limited resources for travel and the Western-centric focus of many magazines, contribute to a significant gap in coverage. While institutions like the Aga Khan Prize provide some visibility to exceptional projects, the real challenge lies in cultivating local platforms and institutions to amplify voices from these underrepresented regions.

Despite these obstacles, certain platforms are leading the way in promoting inclusivity within architectural media. For example, Metropolis magazine demonstrates efforts to broaden conversation and promote global inclusivity. As described: “At Metropolis, what we do is try to expand the conversation. When I arrived at the magazine, I found a publication with 40 years of history, recently acquired by a media group. In recent years, under the leadership of Avinash Rajagopal, it has focused on issues of sustainability, circularity, and materials, which are fundamental to us. However, we also give space to ancestral knowledge that connects with the territory, local materials, and communities” (Brown, Annex 2).

This inclusive approach emphasizes the integration of critical issues such as sustainability and ancestral knowledge while highlighting projects that resonate with the values and challenges of diverse communities worldwide. By creating space for these narratives, Metropolis exemplifies how architectural media can address representation gaps and foster a more inclusive dialogue.

Fostering platforms that overcome logistical and financial barriers is essential to amplifying the voices of architects and communities from the Global South. By emphasizing the importance of local knowledge and engaging with projects rooted in sustainability and cultural contexts, architectural media can contribute to a more balanced and comprehensive narrative. Efforts like those at Metropolis underscore the importance of creating inclusive platforms to ensure that architectural media reflects the diversity of global design practices and challenges.

**Shaping the Future of Architectural Media**

As the architectural media landscape evolves, the next generation must take an active role in creating platforms that cater to diverse needs and engage new audiences. As highlighted: “The next generation needs to shape media to suit their needs, creating platforms and formats like podcasts, Instagram, or TikTok to reach new audiences. Examples like the New York Review of Architecture show how diverse approaches can thrive. The future lies in using varied mediums to create a multifaceted discourse” (Lamster, Annex 1).

This underscores the importance of embracing innovative platforms to reach broader and younger audiences. By utilizing social media, podcasts, and other dynamic formats, architectural criticism becomes more accessible, participatory, and engaging. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok exemplify this shift toward interactive and inclusive formats, opening up architectural discourse to a wider audience.

Fostering connections is integral to the success of architectural media. As Pancho Brown emphasized: “The key is connection. In our events, for example, we bring together young architects and create spaces where they can interact. At Metropolis, we’re focused on being a platform for young architects, especially those who don’t have many opportunities to be recognized. These types of events allow young architects to connect, learn from one another, and access resources that help them develop their careers” (Annex 2).

By creating spaces for interaction, collaboration, and mentorship, media platforms can help young architects build meaningful networks. These connections are essential for fostering a sense of community and providing opportunities for emerging talent and underrepresented groups.

Imagination plays a critical role in reshaping architectural criticism and embracing diversity. As Homi K. Bhabha suggests: “A space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics” (Bhabha, 2010, p. 37). This perspective links architecture to cultural and political shifts, emphasizing the need for imaginative approaches that transcend conventional boundaries. By doing so, architectural criticism can explore challenges and solutions while integrating historical perspectives.

On the other hand, historical examples demonstrate how media has merged social reform with architectural discourse. As noted: “Several scholars have commented on the connection between political and social reform in nineteenth-century Bengal and the rise of descriptive realism in Bengali prose. Srikumar Bandyopadhyay’s comprehensive and masterful survey of the history of the Bengali novel, Bangla Shabitye Upanyasher Dhara—first serialized in a Bengali magazine around 1923/24—made much the same connection between the realism of prose fiction and the coming of a new, modern politics of democratic sensibility” (Chakrabarty, 1999, p. 154). This reflection highlights how media and literature have historically driven social change—a principle that architectural media can apply today to connect criticism with broader societal movements.

One of the significant challenges in architectural media is overcoming binary thinking, which limits nuanced understanding of complex issues. A pluralistic approach offers an effective alternative: “Rather than instrumentalizing architecture to serve narrow agendas, media platforms should focus on translating observations of the built environment into the architectural matrix—finding spatial solutions to the problems we observe and creating spaces for alternative narratives to emerge” (Annex 2). Adopting pluralism enables a deeper exploration of architectural challenges and solutions, fostering multiple viewpoints. This approach allows alternative narratives, often overlooked in dominant discourse, to gain prominence.

The power of media extends beyond information dissemination; it has the potential to create communities and foster collaboration. As Pancho Brown noted: “Media has the power to do much more than just inform; it can also connect people. The key is to create spaces where people feel represented and can share ideas and collaborate. These events are essential because they allow young architects to connect, exchange experiences, and find mentors. Information alone isn’t enough; people need to establish real relationships that support their professional and personal development” (Annex 2). By prioritizing connection, diversity, and mentorship, architectural platforms can nurture an inclusive and collaborative environment that supports emerging professionals.

Architectural media must continue to evolve to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic audience. By leveraging innovative platforms, fostering connections, embracing pluralism, and adopting imaginative approaches, it can create a richer and more inclusive discourse. This evolution will allow architectural criticism to address societal needs while strengthening professional communities and promoting meaningful engagement with architecture.

**Sources**

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**Annex 1: Interview with Mark Lamster**

Mark Lamster, architecture critic for the Dallas Morning News and a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, is a leading voice in architectural criticism. Author of the acclaimed biography The Man in the Glass House on Philip Johnson, Lamster has earned numerous honors, including the Rabkin Prize for arts journalism. His work spans contributions to Architectural Review, Metropolis, and The New York Times, alongside a significant tenure as an editor at Princeton Architectural Press.

Q: How do you view the current state of critique in architectural journalism? Are platforms effectively fostering discourse, or are they constrained by pressures?

R: Architectural criticism is perpetually in crisis. The state depends on the audience and type of criticism. For broad public audiences, newspapers face financial pressures, leading to fewer professional architecture critics—only three full-time critics in major U.S. metropolitan dailies today. Professional media for architects has also retrenched, with fewer print magazines like Architectural Record and Progressive Architecture and fewer pages or contributors. The contraction affects both the scope of coverage and the resources to pay writers.

Q: How has the shift to digital media transformed the way architectural projects are presented and consumed?

R: Digital media allows for more experimentation depending on the platform, though much of the popular content, like ArchDaily or Dezeen, focuses on showcasing images rather than fostering critical discourse. Experimentation can occur in both writing and presentation, but the challenge lies in finding innovative mediums that balance depth with accessibility.

Q: How can architectural media ensure its curation champions cultural and social responsibility alongside design innovation?

R: Responsibility rests on editors and publishers, who set the agenda. While there’s progress in addressing social issues in mainstream media, professional press and image-driven platforms remain object-focused. Balancing academic interests with social issues is an ongoing challenge, shaped by individual editors, writers, and publications.

Q: Do you see growing recognition of voices from the Global South? How can critics ensure proportional representation?

R: Representation is hindered by logistical and financial challenges, such as limited budgets for travel and reporting. Western magazines often cater to local audiences, leaving the Global South underrepresented. Institutions like the Aga Khan Prize highlight some projects, but the real challenge lies in fostering local platforms and institutions to amplify voices from these regions.

Philip Johnson and Contemporary Relevance

Q: How have media narratives evolved in addressing the contradictions of prominent figures like Philip Johnson?

R: Johnson shaped how architecture was viewed and discussed, but today there’s more scrutiny of his controversial legacy—his ties to fascism, racism, and formalism. While canceling figures like Johnson risks erasing important history, critically engaging with their impact is essential for understanding architecture’s evolution.

Q: What does the future hold for architectural criticism, and how can it engage new generations while maintaining rigor?

R: The next generation needs to shape media to suit their needs, creating platforms and formats like podcasts, Instagram, or TikTok to reach new audiences. Examples like the New York Review of Architecture show how diverse approaches can thrive. The future lies in using varied mediums to create a multifaceted discourse.

Q: What experiences have most shaped your approach to criticism?

R: Growing up in New York City heightened my awareness of the urban environment and its history. My academic background in writing and architectural history, coupled with extensive reading of other critics and literature, shaped my perspective. Writing about architecture became a natural fit for my interests and qualifications.

**Annex 2** **Interview with Francisco Brown**

Francisco "Pancho" Brown is the Senior Editor and Engagement Manager at Metropolis Magazine, co-founder of Micropolitan Studio, a multidisciplinary art and design collective. He is also a correspondent for Mexico's Arquine magazine and is involved in the Steering Committee for US Architects Declare, as well as the Harvard Graduate School of Design Alumni Council.

This interview explores Brown’s perspectives on architectural media, its role in promoting sustainability and inclusivity, and the evolving communication strategies within the field.

Q: Thank you very much for accepting. My first question is about the role of media in architecture. In your experience, how do you see this role, and how do you think architectural discourse has evolved? Are there specific strategies to connect with different audiences?

R: Let's start with the first two questions because, in fact, all three are related. If you can repeat the last one, please, because I might forget it.

Q: Of course, the first is: How do you think architectural discourse in the media has evolved?

R: Ok, in what context? In the United States, globally, or in Latin America?

Q: That’s an excellent point. I’d say internationally, and specifically, your work in the United States.

R: Alright, from that... I’m not an expert in editorial or architectural reading. In fact, it’s worth noting that my experience is not extensive or academic. What I’m sharing is an opinion based on relatively short experience. Communication in architecture has undergone a radical evolution. If we look back, architecture has been told through magazines for almost 100 years, but with the arrival of the internet, platforms like Daily Design, Design Boom, and others started changing this landscape. They didn’t just change the way architecture is read; they also provided a new way to present it. People began self-publishing their projects, leading to a democratization of access to publication.

This democratization brought many opportunities but also questioned the structures of power. While many can publish their projects and gain attention, the role of media is still crucial. Today, we live in a context of distrust in the information we consume and associating with a serious and organized structure still serves as a form of validation.

Q: So, what role do the media play in this?

R: The role is still key. Media serves as the bridge between society and the world of design. For example, architectural critics from newspapers like The New York Times have been crucial in giving visibility to projects and architects. However, these projects and architects often come from established power structures. Media outlets, like magazines, can influence the selection of topics and prioritize relevant issues such as climate change, sustainability, equity, and social justice. As the conversation about architecture expands, more possibilities open to connect audiences with these topics.

Q: How can media involve more diverse narratives or perspectives?

R: At Metropolis, what we do is try to expand the conversation. When I arrived at the magazine, I found a publication with 40 years of history, recently acquired by a media group. In recent years, under the leadership of Avinash Raya Gopal, it has focused on issues of sustainability, circularity, and materials, which are fundamental to us. However, we also give space to ancestral knowledge that connects with the territory, local materials, and communities.

Q: This approach seems like an opportunity to open more spaces for underrepresented voices.

R: Exactly. Personally, I’m not interested in publishing projects from well-established architects like Foster or Calatrava, though their work can be excellent. I prefer to give space to newer voices, especially young architects who are doing incredible work, often with limited resources and facing difficult contexts. For example, in Latin America, we have projects from Loreta Consultoría or Región Austral that address issues like water management and large-scale sustainability. It’s important to give visibility to these projects because we can learn a lot from them.

Q: How is the selection of the projects that are published carried out?

R: There isn’t just one method, but there is a structure. Each year, we have five issues, each with a theme. We research, travel, meet with architecture firms, and collaborate with PR offices to receive projects. Key criteria include impact, creativity, and, most importantly, relevance to issues like sustainability. We want to know if a project has a real initiative in this regard, because we don’t want to promote projects that ignore environmental impact.

Q: And how does this connect with young architects and the audience?

R: The key is connection. In our events, for example, we bring together young architects and create spaces where they can interact. At Metropolis, we’re focused on being a platform for young architects, especially those who don’t have many opportunities to be recognized. These types of events allow young architects to connect, learn from one another, and access resources that help them develop their careers.

Q: Why is this approach to engagement so important?

R: Media has the power to do much more than just inform; it can also connect people. The key is to create spaces where people feel represented and can share ideas and collaborate. These events are essential because they allow young architects to connect, exchange experiences, and find mentors. Information alone isn’t enough; people need to establish real relationships that support their professional and personal development.

Q: How do you see the difference between traditional media, like magazines, and digital formats?

R: Both have their value. Prints have intrinsic value because of its limitation; a limited space gives it more significance. However, the digital format offers advantages in terms of space and accessibility, allowing us to include more visual content and details that can’t fit in the print magazine. What’s important is not to fall into purism of one over the other, but rather to leverage the best of both. Additionally, digital access allows us to reach a global audience, which increases opportunities for interaction and dissemination.