

# **Long Work Hours**

The Causes and Consequences of Long Work Hour Culture in the Architecture Practice

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## **Abstract**

In the field of architecture, there reigns a stigma of long working hours, in university, and practice. This paper sets out the causes of the long work hour culture that relate to the practice of architecture and the consequences and choices it may bring along. Based on existing research findings, seven major causes provoke long work hour culture, among which are primarily associated with the practice of architecture: joy and pleasure derived from work, striving for perfection, love for their job, and the function of hours of colleagues. Long work hour culture, which is working more than 49 hours a week, besides physical damage, reduces the well-being of its participants and thereby their productivity. Even though a long work hour culture sometimes feels imposed, it is ultimately the actor's choice. Out of interviews deducted from practitioners of two architecture practices, the seven causes are examined, but the proposed hierarchy in terms of relatability, varied between the two firms, showing the variation of applicability in the wide range of different firms. The addition of alternative proposed causes by actors in the field shows the complexity and extent of the long work hour culture in the practice of architecture, and the stringent work ethics it brings along in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Keywords: Work Ethic, Long Work Hour Culture, Practice of Architecture

## **Preface**

The motive for writing about this topic originates from my time as an intern at an architectural office in Copenhagen, Denmark (2021-2022). Excited as I was and am about the cultural creations of the company and my first experience working as an architect in a full-time position, I've always asked myself the question of whether the excessive (over-)time we spent on projects was a necessity.

Typically every design decision we made, had to go through the Design Lead, Partner in Charge, and the boss himself. Because of the sequence of having to enlighten and ask for the permission of two or three people above you stagnated the workflow. On regular days, Design Leads and their team would have to combine all their work in summarizing PDFs to substantiate their decisions and get approval for continuation. This took a lot of time and forced us to spend more time in the office than was initially anticipated. The work we did, the quality we tried to achieve, and the scale we were participating in undoubtedly require a lot of time. But if you would ask me if we were working in an optimal workflow my answer would be: no.

Interested as I was in the productivity and workflow of architects, I stumbled upon many other architects who faced the same issue. Working many hours was a common dilemma in architecture practices, which made me interested in the roots of this phenomenon.

Ever since I can remember in architecture education, there has been a stigma surrounding all-nighters. Students will have a peak in productivity in the weeks leading to the final presentation to put as much effort into their final deliverables. Architecture students would typically cling together from early morning to late in the evening doing nothing else than working on the design project like it was an ordinary ancillary. In both practice and education, long working hours feel it is sometimes normalized and 'part of the job', which made me question why this might be true and where it might find its foundation. By providing insight into the causes of the long work hour culture in architecture, I hope to put into perspective why architecture practices might provoke or attract its practitioners' long work hour culture. From there we can start to see what actors in the architectural practices can do to work around or not participate in this toxic environment.

The mandatory claim I needed to make before this paper's continuation is that I do not write negatively about any of the cultural contributions or work output of any of the firms discussed. This paper is purely focused on the working culture of architectural practices and not on their creations.

## Introduction

Architecture in every stage of the practice carries a stigma revolving around working long hours, ranging from the start of the education where students stay up late, never home, spend all their time in the studio, to practising architects dedicated to their work clocking more than regular 40-hour workweek as Dana Cuff (1992), a researcher of the architecture practice defines.

For many, the relationship between the practice of architecture and long work hour culture almost feels inevitable. This raises the question of whether that necessarily has to be true. This paper is set to find out how the practice of architecture relates to long work hour culture, in theory, and practice. In an attempt to explicate this relationship, by laying out its theoretical causes, consequences, and choices together with the varying positions of practitioners on the topic, the goal is to find out why the practice of architecture might provoke a culture of long working hours. From there can be seen what courses of action practices can choose from, to minimize participation in this toxic culture.

Ever since the rise of labour parties in the Industrial Revolution, more regulations have been introduced surrounding the working man. Before these parties existed, workweeks had taken a lot of different forms before getting to the current 40-hour structure, such as in the Industrial Revolution, where the 70 to 72-hour workweeks were common in many sectors working 6 days a week with just Sunday off (Grosse, 2018). As time passed more and more regulations were set to improve the working conditions both physically and organisationally for the sake of the employee's health.

But even currently, with a strong framework for a normal balanced work lifestyle in western societies, it is up to each individual in any practice to give form or get form created to their work ethic. In this paper, work ethic is interpreted as the personal will and drive to work hard, while viewing hard work as virtuous (Burke & Cooper, 2008). This means the stronger one's work ethic is, the stronger one's will and drive to work hard is. As the term work ethic relates to an individual's intrinsic motivation to work hard, it does not imply whether the hard work is a problem or not. That is where long work hour culture is introduced. Long work hour culture, or working excessive hours, is considered to be working 49 hours or more (Hedges, 1993) with all the negative effects that follow, as research shows the strong association between this culture and adverse health effects and increased safety risk (Harrington, 1994, 2001; Cooper 1996; Kirkcaldy, Trimpop & Cooper, 1997; Spurgeon, Harrington, & Cooper, 1997), but also poor psychological health, excessive fatigue and burnout (Barnett, Gareis & Brennan, 1999). Strong work ethics does not necessarily result in long work hour culture, because someone can work hard but not overwork, but long work hour culture is related to a person's degree of work ethic. But what exactly establishes someone's work ethic?

The cause for variation in every individual's work ethic is funded by a lot of different factors. Burchell (2001; 2002) suggests economic recession, job insecurity, and downsizing as economical pillars that solicit workers to work harder, together with having a flat income. But also job characteristics such as unpredictable workflow, profit responsibility, too large scope of responsibility for one job, fast-paced work under tight deadlines are some of the examples that stimulate workers' work ethic (Brett and Stroh, 2003). These examples show the complexity and variety of variables that fund a person's work ethic, making it difficult to generalize its causes. In this paper, there will be a further exploration of the fundamentals of the work ethic of architects that drives them to participate in the culture of long working hours. When spoken about people working in the practice of architecture, they will be called: *actors*.

To clearly define what an architectural practice withholds we will go a little deeper into the terminology of a practice. In the general sense of the term, a practice is an action or performance, as Cuff (1992) describes, but also implies a method of action, in the sense of a habitual, customary, or routine. Professional practice is a "customary performance of professional attitude". Therefore, to describe an architectural practice with a professional attitude, there needs to be defined what kind of *activities* take place and how they are *customarily performed*.

The practise of architecture is the emergence of documents for future buildings out of complex interactions between interested parties (*activities*) (Cuff, 1992). Added is that in practice, architects generally solve issues with the practitioners' everyday knowledge and less make use of references to procedure manuals or textbooks (*custom performance*). This is how the practice of architecture will be interpreted in this paper.

This paper will try to put into perspective how the main causes of a long work hour culture relate to the architecture practice, what consequences this might bring along and choices there are to be made. After these theoretical references, the second part of the paper is a practical examination of the practice of architecture and its active participants: *actors*. Due to the wide range of architectural practices a series of interviews are held with employees and employers in two practices located in Copenhagen, producing architecture on a similar scale, competing for similar work but with different work cultures in the office, to find possible dissimilar positions towards the topic.

With the theoretical foundation of long work hour culture in the practice of architecture together with the examination of these theories in practice, we follow the logic behind the position of long work hour culture in practices of architecture and possible alternations to circumvent participation in this harmful environment.

## Chapter 1: The Causes, Consequences and Choices of Long Work Hours in the Architecture Practice

The theoretical framework of this chapter is based on the book ‘The Long Work Hours Culture: Causes, Consequences and Choices’ by R.J. Burke and C.L. Cooper, published in 2008, which is a collection of articles that are divided into the chapters *Causes*, *Consequences*, and *Choices*, relating to long work hour culture in general. With this structure as a base, there will be an exploration of the position of long work hour culture in the practice of architecture, by finding the relationship between the main research findings that cause actors to participate in this culture and the architecture practice.

At first, the *causes* will be discussed by laying out the different motives that fund working many hours. The framework for overarching causes will be positioned according to their relationship to the practice of architecture. This is done to find out what fundamentals of the architecture practice might a cause long work hour culture. Secondly, the *consequences* will examine its possible positive or negative effects on an industry and its actors. At last, the *choices* chapter will illustrate the personal choices actors or their practices have in either contributing or counteracting to the topic.

### 1.1 Causes of Long Working Hours

This chapter will be an exploration of the causes relating to long work hour culture, working more than 49 hours in a week, and its perspective in the architecture practice. Divided into Motives (joy and pleasure, benefits, love, perfection, demanding supervisor, need, functioning hours) and Consequences (physical health, mental health, well-being and productivity) in order to identify the most relatable causes of the practice of architecture and what the consequences that they might bring.

#### 1.1.0 Motives

There can be found a wide range of reasons to clarify why actors would work long hours, as mentioned before in the introduction, such as cultural foundations, economic recessions, or work ethic. To find causes so we can relink them back to the practical examination part of this essay, which revolves around the actors of the practice, we will look from the practising actors’ point of view and the fundamentals of their work ethic. Much research has been done to find the causes of this culture among its participants, where the next part is a dedication to the main findings of these researches. According to Porter (2004), there are two motives for people to participate in long work hour culture: It can originate from the *joy* for the work someone practices and receive *pleasure* from succession, or it can come from a *perfectionistic* approach to meet a high-quality performance and to succeed. Added by Tucker and Rutherford (2005) are that workers may be eager to work harder because they *relish the benefits* associated with the job and want to create a *better life* for themselves, outside work. The motivation to work harder can also derive from a certain *need as fear of job insecurity* (Burke & Cooper, 2008). Outside of the direct hands of an actor, the motive can lie in the organisational characteristic of the practice an architect works at, Cuff (1991) found that especially the factor of a *demanding supervisor* was largely influencing people’s working hours. Eastman (1998) researched excessive over-hours and found that his research group’s hours at work were a *function of the hours worked by the colleagues*. At last, the motive for long work hour culture can be funded by *loving your job* (Hadley, 2008), not just liking your job, but similar to the three components from Sternberg’s *Triangular Theory of Love* (1986, 1987): passion, intimacy, and commitment.

To summarize, according to research long work hour culture is caused by a number of factors:

- Seeking joy and gaining pleasure from succeeding in the job they perform
- Striving for perfection in the labour of the job
- The relishing of benefits derived from the job, to create a better life outside work
- Have a need to work more, job insecurity
- Love for the job
- Organisational characteristics; Demanding supervisor
- Function the hours of colleagues

Following there will be an examination of the causes related to long working hours and their position in the practice of architecture.

### 1.1.1 Seeking Joy and Pleasure

When someone’s motive for working long hours is joy, it’s because they are highly devoted to achieving their responsibilities, and will receive pleasure from their accomplishments (Porter, 2004).

To relate the motive of joy and pleasure derived from work to the practice of architecture, a reference to the essay “On Becoming an Architect” by Mark Howland (1985:4), on the start of the education of architecture students seems fit. He describes that during his time in design studios in 1985, students among himself shared ‘the excitement of learning to see the world differently’. This excitement and joy in the built environment are amplified, as Cuff (1992) describes, through schools that learn students that besides knowledge and skills crucial qualities to become an architect are talent, passion and good aesthetic judgement. So different from maybe other fields of practice, just knowledge does not bring you all the way. From a young stage in the architects’ career, they learn to develop a passion for their pursuits, because otherwise, they will not succeed in the industry. Upon creating a passion, the performed work as an architect will result in joy from pursuing that passion, as Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) said, “the world will never be happy until all men have the souls of artists – I mean when they take pleasure in their work”. Similar to Karl Marx’s (1970) criticism of capitalism, and his theory of alienation that due to the specialisation of society we lose contact with the end product (Meszaros, 2005). This disconnection to the product leads to estrangement from the ‘self’, as Marx describes, in comparison to where artists remain to have artistic freedom. The pursuit of a passion, which is, in this case, creating the built environment, will therefore result in pleasure derived from accomplishments.

	General	Practice of Architecture
<i>Cause</i>		
Joy	Highly devoted to achieving their responsibilities.	As developing a passion from an early stage of education, pursuing that in practice can result in joy for the actors.
Pleasure	Receive pleasure from accomplishments in the executed work.	From accomplishments of work performed in line with the passion of an architect can result in pleasure for the actors.

### 1.1.2 The Perfectionist drive

When someone’s motive for long work hours comes from a perfectionist approach, the drive comes from the goal to achieve perfectionistic standards in the job, in a rather compulsive matter. When receiving criticism someone with a perfectionistic motivation for long work hours culture might respond with hostility and resentment, and so be frustrated with not meeting unachievable levels in their work, which can result in anger (Porter, 2004). Perfectionists see work as a competition with colleagues.

The practise of architecture has two responsibilities for its clients, the service it provides for designing a building and delivering the product of building drawings for the contractor. Stelling and Bucher (1973) state that during the time of professional practice the emphasis is on the process of the work, and so on the service, at the expense of the product. The major part of the activities of an actor in the practice of architecture is therefore delivering the service of creating a building. Architects are possibly sensitive to a perfectionistic approach in this part of the job: Exemplary precedents in the architects’ education system, in any institution, praise architectural heroes such as Louis Kahn, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, as the masters of architecture (Cuff, 1991). This fundamental part of education in architecture creates a base that strives for ‘greatness’, and with this strive come unrealistic standards. In the majority of the labour as architects, designing a building, architects are

educated to be precise and deliberate in the execution of their architecture, possibly making them perfectionistic in their approach.

	General	Practice of Architecture
<i>Cause</i>		
Perfectionism	The goal is to achieve perfectionistic standards in the operation of the job.	Being educated with prime examples of architecture, an architect might be precise and deliberate in the execution of his work of designing a building. Sometimes it can be forced upon architects to stand out and receive work.

### 1.1.3 Enjoying benefits for a better life outside work

The work performed by the actor may also be used as a tool to benefit the life outside the job. One may desire to work many hours to enjoy benefits from agreements in his labour contract or just log more hours for more salary.

The practice of architecture is a service delivered by architects. Most commonly, in projects in the built environment, a client will make a budget to spend on architects, to which architects will have to deliver their service. Meaning that you as an architect are limited to the amount that the budget provides, to deliver the requested service. For this reason, architects at architecture firms are not necessarily capable to earn more by working more, as simply no one is paying for it. Therefore this motive is less applicable to the practice of architecture.

	General	Practice of Architecture
<i>Cause</i>		
Create better life	If you work more hours you will earn more money	In architecture, you get paid per service you deliver, with a fixed budget. Generally, you cannot decide to work more hours than the budget permits, or it will result in earning less per hour for your service.
Benefits	Extra hours will result in more pay or other bonuses	Difficult to generalize practices. This varies per management system of architecture firms.

### 1.1.4 A Realistic Need

Working many hours can also originate from a certain necessity. Sometimes an actor has to work many hours to impress the supervisor or avoid negative sanctions, especially in competitive environments in times of job insecurity. Even though this need might be pushing actors to work longer it is ultimately their own choice.

In general, actors of architecture practices don't have to fear job insecurity as unemployment among architects is very low, at only 2% (Gutman, 1988), isolated from economic recessions. This does not necessarily imply a luxurious position for architects. Even though the employment rate is high (98%) there is still an abundant supply of architects. This results in employers having plenty of choices for new or substitute employees, which may solicit employers to work harder to keep the position they are in. Another consequence of this supply leads to competitive fees, having architects working for 4% or less of the construction fees (Coxe, 1984).

	General	Practice of Architecture
<i>Cause</i>		
Need: Fear of Job Insecurity	Fear of losing your job if you don't work more.	Outside of economic recessions architects don't necessarily have to worry about unemployment, but because of the abundant supply of architects, they could fear for their particular job if they don't meet employers' satisfaction, which may solicit them to work harder.

### 1.1.5 Love for the Job

About loving a job there is a distinction between the classic phrase of 'I love my job' or feeling passionate and intimate with the work you perform. As Hadley (2008) describes, people who love their job like Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love will experience excitement, intense fulfilment, and connection towards their job, similar to actual love. As alluring as this might seem, the downsides involve the suffering of devotion to anything outside work, that could affect other areas of life.

Relatable to the before-mentioned passion architects may have for the built environment, the next step would be to love the job. Some architects feel particularly involved with projects they work on, willing to put in extra time regardless of the fee for the sake of the outcome. Cuff (1991) calls this the 'charette ethos'. A widely held notion is that the best work (or architecture) comes from offices with a charette ethos (Cuff, 1991). This generally occurs when architects feel like they 'own' some part of the project, that it is independently theirs to justify, commonly when the client loses control of the project and architects can go their way. Whether you can call this love is difficult to estimate, especially in the broad spectrum of practices in general, and will depend on individual circumstances. What we can say is that this charette ethos exists and provokes a certain behaviour of an architect that drives him to work harder for a project, through a feeling of commitment and devotion, closely descriptive to that of love.

	General	Practice of Architecture
<i>Cause</i>		
Love	Feeling affectionate towards the job you perform.	Charette ethos occurs in practices of architecture and advocates actors to work harder beyond the issued fee through an internal feeling of commitment and devotion.

### 1.1.6 Having a Demanding Supervisor

A person can also be devoted to working many hours, not because of intrinsic motivation but because someone tells them to do so.

For this motive, there can be two interpretations of who the supervisor in architectural practice is. For one the team leads, team managers and partners from inside their architectural firm may be the demanding factor in the hours worked. It is possible that the supervisors of an architectural firm oppose long work hours for their employees, but hard to generalize as all firms are different. Something that can be generalized is the supervisor as the external client of the project.

Regularly clients don't demand high quality while being able and willing to pay for it, while at the same time architects don't want to do concessions on design quality (Cuff, 1991). This contradiction



rules the architecture–client interaction in the architecture industry. Besides qualitative and spatial outcomes architects can with their expertise also disagree with the buildings’ basic idea. As N. de Ru, head of Powerhouse Company said, ‘People are keen for a good design but don’t necessarily want to pay designers working longer to create one.’. Resulting in architects that are rather pushing clients to give more than the other way around. Though, the demanding architect is positioned in a grey area as clients are, as Cuff (1991) describes, an ‘intimidating lot’: being powerful, wealthy and having the freedom to go to one of the many competitors for architectural service.

Yet some clients have the approach to conceive excellent architecture. In this case, the client and the architect will keep each other in mutual high esteem (Cuff, 1991). The architect and client will then both strive for excellence in the project, making the interaction equally difficult. The reasoning for this is that a client chooses and judges the architect (firm) on their portfolio, and starts to strive for aesthetic and spatial results from the start, but not knowing about the functional foundation of a building and the practices’ functional foundation for their service. Hereby the client will understand the architects’ terms in his way, interfering with the design process and tend to be pushing and demanding for the final spatial result.

	<b>General</b>	<b>Practice of Architecture</b>
<i>Cause</i>		
Demanding Supervisor	A supervisor forces actors to work harder.	Supervisors might be demanding. Difficult to generalize all practices.
Demanding Client	A client or paying customer forces actors to work harder.	The client-to-architect interaction generally does not imply an over-demanding relationship. Except for when there is a strive for excellence from both parties.

### 1.1.7 Function of the Hours of Colleagues

Another motive for long work hours is being influenced by colleagues that tend to work harder, to which you, sometimes unconsciously, will level to.

One part of the answer to how architects may be extra valuable for functioning hours with their colleagues is their acquaintance with collaborative design in education. In architecture education, students tend to create a strong cohesion in the groups they are working in (Cuff, 1991). Being affiliated with the notion of affinity to their collaborators might be drawn further in architectural practice, being extra sensitive to functioning the hours of the colleagues.

Maybe more interesting to this motive is why the colleagues would potentially work longer in the first place. For practices of architecture, it may partly be rooted in the existence and phenomena of design charettes in the industry. Design charettes are design competitions between groups of students for the best design solutions in a certain timeframe. These charettes carry the stigma as Cuff (1991) describes as “all night endurance tests, hard work, and dedication”, where he eventually adds “students temporarily sacrificing everything for the sake of the project”. What these design charrettes consolidate is the point of view that good architecture requires a commitment beyond the allotted time. This widely accepted stigma potentially forces architects to work beyond the designated time.

	<b>General</b>	<b>Practice of Architecture</b>
<i>Cause</i>		
The function of hours of colleagues	When your colleagues or collaborators tend to work more, you tend to work more.	Architects might be extra vulnerable to functioning the hours of their colleagues due to their education in design

		studios, revolving around the strong social cohesion of the participants.
The function of hours of colleagues	When your colleagues or collaborators tend to work more, you tend to work more.	Due to the stigma revolving around design charettes that imply that good architecture requires a commitment beyond the allotted time, architects may tend to work harder for desired results, while influencing each other in the process.

### 1.1.8 Workaholism

There is also the issue of ‘workaholism’, which we interpret as an addiction to work, generally negatively portrayed, in both vernacular and literal definitions. Long work hour culture and workaholism have similarities but also some noticeable distinctions. Killinger (1991) states they share the positive similarities of dedication, commitment and organizational leadership towards work but also the negative effects of ill health and damaged family relationships.

Robinson (1998) defines workaholism as *“a progressive, potentially fatal disorder, characterized by self-imposed demands, compulsive overworking, inability to regulate work to the exclusion of most other life activities”*.

Long work hour culture is an aspect of workaholism, but it does not say anything about the psychological involvement in the performed work (McMillan, O’Driscoll, & Burke, 2003). Workaholism have long work hours as a product of the excessive need to work, to put in other words: workaholism is a condition that involuntarily has long work hour culture as a side effect.

This ‘addiction’ to work has according to Spence and Robbins (1992) three pattern concepts: work involvement, feeling driven to work according to inner pressures, and work enjoyment.

With these characteristics of workaholics we can define three types of workaholics:

- Work Addicts (WA): score high on work involvement and drive but low on work enjoyment
- Work Enthusiasts (WE): score high on work involvement but low on the drive and work enjoyment
- Enthusiastic Addicts (AE): score high on work involvement, drive and work enjoyment

Further research is required to find the presence of workaholism in the practice of architecture. What can be said is that the three characteristics of workaholism somewhat can find their foundation in the fundamentals of the practice of architecture, as referenced in the previous chapter. To sum up, ‘work involvement’ finds its way into the practice of architecture through the commitment of architects to their projects (*1.1.7 Function of the Hours of the Colleagues*). The ‘feeling of drive due to inner pressures’ through the charette ethos (*1.1.5 Love*) and ‘work enjoyment’ through the passion architects create for the built environment during their education and beyond (*1.1.1 Joy and Pleasure*). To what level these indicators are present more research is required, though through these references the possible presence of workaholism in the practice of architecture is not be diminished.

## 1.2 Perspective of the Practice of Architectures' causes on Long Work Hour Culture

Till now there has been looked at the motives for a person to participate in the culture of working long hours, its position in the practice of architecture, as well as the addiction to work, workaholism.

From the theoretical approach, the causes primarily associated with the practice of architecture are joy and pleasure derived from performing and succeeding in the job, love for the job (or the charette ethos), the function of the hours of colleagues and the strive for perfection. Partly relatable to the practice of architecture is a demanding supervisor, which can occur in certain circumstances. Less relatable to the practice of architecture are the causes of relishing the benefits and having a need or fear of job insecurity.

Causes of Long Work Hour To The Practice of of Architecture		
Less relatable	Partly relatable	Relatable
Relish the Benefits Have a Need	Demanding Supervisor	Joy and Pleasure Function hours of the colleagues Love for the Job Strive for Perfection

These causes are to identify which variables could potentially provoke actors in the practice of architecture to participate in long work hour culture. There has to be clarified that probably far from all practitioners or practices are exposed to this. This clarification is needed to not confuse these probable causes for main threads throughout the practice of architecture. They are rather possible explanations for the presence of long work hour culture in practices.

## 1.3 Consequences of Long Working Hour Culture

This chapter will be about the consequences that actors have to face when participating in the long work hour culture.

In the introduction, there has already been mentioned the strong association between long work hours culture and adverse health effects, increased safety risk, poor psychological health, excessive fatigue and burnout. These strongly substantiated research findings prove the physical damage excessive over-working may bring to its participants. Specific attention in this paper, though, is needed to the mental damage and loss of productivity from participating in the long work hour culture.

Warr (2007) describes that the correlation between effort and well-being, and working time and well-being are not linear. He describes that the well-being of employees may, under circumstances, be raised by putting in a certain amount of effort and working time, but this has a flipside. Once beyond a certain amount of effort and work hours, the curve of well-being becomes flat followed by negative. Many of Warr's (2007, pp. 165-170) reference research about this relationship in practice conclude that high job demands result in low job satisfaction and lower levels of well-being. Working above a certain amount of hours at work, therefore, advocates for a loss of mental well-being, especially with high job demands. As well-being is linked to higher levels of labour productivity ( ... ), the decrease in mental well-being would result in a decrease in productivity. Therefore working more hours would lead to much less productive hours with all its other consequences included.

Though on the other side of the curve, working fewer hours than the regular 40 hour-week would result in a significant increase in mental well-being. But according to Green (2008), other factors such as work hours matching to personal preferences and reductions in work-overload during existing workhours have even stronger effects.

### **1.3.1 Choices of Long Working Hour Culture**

On an unlikely occasion, an actor might be forced to participate in long work hour culture, without his saying or freedom to do otherwise. Though, this only rarely comes about. In the general sense, as there might be pressure on an actor to overwork, it is ultimately their own choice to participate (Cuff, 1991). Depending on the weight of the motives that create the pressure on the actor, it will result in his or her participation.

The theoretical framework of the previous chapter explicated the motives and consequences of the long work hour culture and gives the first insight into the relationship to architecture. This framework will be used in the next chapter to test these theories in practice, according to interviews of actors of two architecture firms.

## **Part 2: Positions on Long Work Hour Culture in Architecture**

### *Practices, Employees' and Employer's perspectives*

To discover how practitioners of architecture practices relate to long work hour culture, a series of interviews were conducted between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of March in Copenhagen, Denmark. The interviews were focused on Employees in design-related functions and Employers in management-related functions at two architectural offices in Copenhagen, which are going to be called Practice A and Practice B. The Employees are represented by architects, architectural designers or designers while The Employers are represented by employees in management-related functions such as team leads, project controllers and partners.

In the first part of this paper, the causes, consequences and choices of the culture in the practice of architecture have been discussed. Of the multiple general causes, some were found more, and some were less rooted in the practice of architecture. Even though this might theoretically be the case, not all practices of architecture can be lumped together. The industry ranges from corporate- to niche, local- to international and private- to commercial focussed firms. To find the positions of actors towards long work hour culture in practices, and see how opinions between different firms or roles might vary, interviews have been conducted with employees of two different firms, operating on similar scales and projects, but have different work cultures.

For the next part, three things were sought in the interviews with actors in the practice of architecture. The first is the position of the actors of the two case study firms towards the proposed theoretical fundamentals and their hierarchy that cause long work hours in the practice of architecture. The second is possible alternative causes the actors might towards the topic. The third and last objective is the comparative insight into how the positions on the topic between employees and employers might vary.

As some of the interviewees preferred to stay anonymous because of the sensitivity surrounding the topic relating to the firms they work at, therefore all identities will remain unidentified. The positions of actors related to the topic show the complexity, varying opinions and different proposed improvements.

## **2.0 General**

At the start of the interviews, all interviewees were asked whether they felt affiliated with the relationship of long work hour culture to the practice of architecture, to which almost all laughed. Most interviewees explained their reactions by acknowledging their acquaintance with that relationship, if not being exposed to it themselves. One called the research into this topic “very relevant”, and another mentioned that he thought it was “important to create insight into this unvoiced theme”.

When asked to describe their architecture firms' work culture, some fundamental differences came to earth. Employees of Practice A described their work culture at the office as “very laid back”, “promoted to leave on time” and “only very occasional over-time”. Whereas employees of Practice B described working long hours as “a daily routine”. The significant differences in work culture at these two offices, representative of the variety of different work culture approaches within the practice of architecture, allowed the case study to explore a broader view of the issued topic.

## **2.1 Proposed Causes**

To see whether the theoretical causes of long work hour culture in the practice of architecture can find their base in the positions of actors in the field, they are weighed according to the positions of the interviewees.

When asked the interviewees about their opinion on the theoretical motives for long work hour culture in the practice of architecture, as proposed in Part 1 of this thesis, many different reactions emerged. Actors from Practice A could find themselves in joy, pleasure, and somehow love for the job, but their main opinion on working many hours was the strive for perfection. Working many hours of overtime only occasionally occurred in this firm, but when it did it generally happened around deadlines for competition entries where the focus was on high-quality deliverables.

An interviewee said:

“the competition teams are important for obtaining new work for the office. To ensure the best quality of proposals in terms of content and visualizations, the employees might be exposed to over-hours”

In all other situations, they were stimulated to go home on time. Thereby the cause of the hours worked as the function of the hours of colleagues worked reversed in this firm, ensuring not working late, similar to a demanding supervisor, who stimulates people to go home. The actors of Practice A explained that the firm takes pride in its work culture and ensures that it stays like that. Also, they mention that they value and think highly of the joy, pleasure, and love for the job, but don't necessarily see it as a prime suspect in causing longer hours at their practice.

To reorganize the motives related to the long work hour culture according to Practice A, the distribution of causes would look more like the following.

Practice A

<b>Causes of Long Work Hour To The Practice of Architecture</b>		
Less relatable	Partly relatable	Relatable
Relish the Benefits Have a Need The function of Hours of Colleagues Demanding Supervisor	Joy and Pleasure Love for the Job	Strive for Perfection

Actors in Practice B, an office more associated with long hour culture by its employees, can find themselves in multiple proposed causes. The actors felt most affiliated with the joy and pleasure in the work, the function of the hours of the colleagues, love for the job as well as a strive for perfection.

In terms of joy and pleasure in work, one of the interviewees mentioned that he believed: “Everyone who works here (*Firm B*) has a passion for architecture and enjoys working on these kinds of projects”. Therefore because of actors’ passion for architecture, they receive joy and pleasure from practising their passion. He adds that “People enjoy through internal motivation to sacrifice their time to contribute more to projects there are working for.”, saying that people are willing to overwork because they enjoy their work so much, and receive pleasure for practising their passion. This is relatable to the charette ethos discussed before in the 1.1.5 Love for the Job chapter, where actors are willing to work beyond the fee through an internal feeling of commitment and devotion.

One of the main reasons people work longer in Firm B according to the interviewees is “because everyone is doing it”. When asked why people would work longer in the first place a few answers earthed. An interviewee describes that “everyone who comes here is talented, to level the talent in the office people could typically work harder to prove their worth”. With this attitude employees get the most out of each other, both in terms of work output as in hours spent at the office. This mutual input of extra effort results in colleagues stimulating each other to work harder, strengthening the effect of functioning the hours of other colleagues. A by-product of this drive to perform well in a group of talented individuals is the strive for perfection, according to one of the employees. He mentioned that as everyone around you is contributing to such a high standard of work, everyone wants to equally contribute to that standard. This results in a perfectionistic approach to the job which could cause extra effort and thus extra hours.

Also, according to the interviewees, a Demanding Supervisor is relatable but not necessarily true. Supervisors do demand certain work output and push their teams to work harder but in a rather undemanding matter. The hierarchy in Firm B has a rather imperceptible intent resulting in a communal responsibility to achieve great architecture. For that reason, it is not the demanding supervisor that imposes a long hour culture but rather a stimulus from the entire team. As the supervisor does carry the responsibility for the final results it does occur that the supervisor takes a demanding role, but not on regular bases, according to the interviewees.

The interviewees of Firm B could not necessarily find themselves in Need or the Relishing the benefits.

After the reorganisation of the motives related to the long work hour culture according to Practice B, the distribution of causes would look more like the following.

Practice B

<b>Causes of Long Work Hour To The Practice of Architecture</b>		
<b>Less relatable</b>	<b>Partly relatable</b>	<b>Relatable</b>
Relish the Benefits Have a Need	Demanding Supervisor	The function of Hours of the Colleagues Joy and Pleasure Love for the Job Strive for Perfection

What is seen in the redistributions of probable causes of two different firms is the variety of applications in practice. This gives the first insight into the distribution of relatable causes in different practices of architecture. For the sample of two firms, in both cases, a strive for perfection is most relatable to causing long work hour culture. To have a more plausible outcome for practices in general, or more specific niche’s in architecture, further research should be done by increasing the sample size of (certain) architecture firms and evaluating the results.

**2.2 Alternative causes**

Besides the positions of the interviewees on the proposed causes, the freedom of their interpretation of motives towards the topic gave interesting insights into their point of view.

When asked actors of the architectural firms what they saw as possible alternative causes of long hour culture in architectural practices a few things were stated. The first was that according to one of the interviewees investing many hours into a project is a necessity to get into the depths of a design. Understanding the extent of a design project most of the time takes longer than the client possibly accounts and anticipates for. This argument finds a disbalance, it raises the question of whether it implies that creating good architecture or design requires long hours or that the labour is underestimated by the client. This is an interesting dualism in the practice of architecture. As for many industries when there is little design involved, much progress can be made clear through rappings of progress, whereas the design process has proven to be rather immeasurable. Possibly because of the lack of insight into what the design process pertains the client is not able to acknowledge its worth. For that reason, he will not calculate that into the service proposition of the architect. Architects will still have to do that work, which is not accounted for, resulting in hours above ‘expected’.

The second was that according to an interviewee, actors that ‘get in’ to the firm, in this case, Practice B, generally are super excited with their achieved position. They feel like they are in the right place to develop and practice architecture which drives them to possibly work more, as well as possibly prove their worth. This can be formulated as the urge to prove, especially in competitive environments or sought after positions. Next to the urge to prove to other employees someone can also feel like they have to prove themselves to employers, for the sake of a promotion in the company.

The third argument that was suggested is that the contract structure allows for architects to work more or not. As in Practice B, many interns and employees have a contract with no paid over-hours and are barely compensated. This puts the company in a place to possibly make use of this contract form to receive more service from their employees than paid for. One of the interviewees had worked for Practice B in two different countries. Due to the nation's regulations, the locations had different management systems regarding paying their employees. While in one of the countries overtime was paid, the other received a minimalistic compensation. In the firm in the country that did pay overtime, you were sent home after your regular worked hours, otherwise, you would be too expensive, whereas in the country without regulations, people would linger around for a longer period. The difference he emphasized, is that knowing how much time you have left, so working within regular hours, ensures that you are way more productive because you know how much time you have left to finish your work. The blurred boundaries between work and life lower productivity according to the interviewee, resulting in the opposite of what working extra hours might attempt to achieve.

A fourth argument suggested that in many practices the work culture is a given fact as it is determined by the work ethic of the boss, or founding partner. The work culture in the office would be a representation of how the founding partner would work. As in many cases, it then would be interwoven in the veins of the company. The interviewee said: 'It is the mindset of the head that facilitates the mindset of the rest of the company. Our boss, used to work day and night when he was starting this firm. Whenever the company grew that mindset of work ethic towards projects never really changed'.

A fifth suggested argument is that the management system of an office is important for regulating the hours put into work. One of the interviewees had worked for Firm A and Firm B and mentioned that where Firm A had well-organized office management, Firm B barely had one at all. He said that when people give you a structure to work in, in comparison to paving your own, allowed him and many of his colleagues to be more productive. Firm B sometimes felt to him like an architectural playground which he enjoyed but the productivity decreased due to the many hours and the sometimes chaotic working atmosphere.

A sixth argument was that strategy of internal communication was of big importance. At Firm B they had a structure where for every few design decisions a presentation needed to be made for internal use to enlighten the partners-in-charge and boss, for approval. At Firm A they had no such thing and internal communication occurred verbally. An interviewee from Firm B said: 'A lot of time that I work late is not because I am continuing with my work, but it's because I have to summarize my work and propose design decisions to convince the partners and the boss. I don't think this is a good system as the company should lay more confidence in the decisions of the employees. That would result in a lot less workload.'. The amount of additional time Firm B spends on these internal presentations and updates in comparison to Firm A is pure because of strategic management and has little influence on the qualitative outcome of the projects.

A seventh argument was that it was due to failing project controllers that understaffed project teams for budget cuts. To save money, too few people were put on projects that required a higher workload than the project team could deliver, within the regular hours. Therefore they are all working over hours to compensate for the lack of employment. This worked reversed because the company still had to pay out the over-hours, which could easily be compensated by one or a few extra placed staff.

These alternative causes are an important addition to the examination of the practices, showing the size of the scope of possible causes of the long work hour culture. Even though some might be categorized under one of the seven main proposed causes, they give a clear insight into the wide interpretation of each one of them. This wide range of proposed alternative causes shows the complexity and extent of the origins of the long work hour culture in practices of architecture.



### 2.3 Employer's and Employee's Perspectives

The last part of the concern of the practical examination is about mapping the different perspectives on the position of long work hour culture in architecture practice. Therefore the interviews were held with 'the employee', an actor in architectural practice that can be considered as the labouring hand, and 'the employer', an actor in architectural practice with a managerial function, supervising and coordinating others. This different perspective might lead to interesting insights into the approach to the topic.

When asked the same question to both employees as employers at Firm A and Firm B about the reasoning behind the long work hour culture in architecture practices, an interesting contrast arose.

In daily practice, the employees are mainly concerned with the creative aspect of the job, and the employers are mainly concerned about the collaborative aspect. When asked employees whether their over-hours were caused by their creative work or their management one interviewee said "sometimes [team leads] (*employers*) set unfeasible deadlines, with work far beyond our scope of time. Everyone will still do it because it is our job, and we technically signed up for it when signing our contract, but this demand is just over-realistic."

An employer mentioned in the interview "to create the best architecture we should spend as much testing proposals as we can. If we haven't gone through all the options we cannot be certain the one we are elaborating on is the right one".

A noticeable diverging opinion is that employees rather sought the long work hours' foundation in the collaborative reason-giving or managerial supervision, and employers held the creative part accountable. This is possibly resulting from the dissimilarity of accountability of the employees and employers. Employees sought answers through "office management", "contract forms", "demanding supervisors" and "the willpower of the entire office, *or functioning ours of colleagues*". While at the same time the Employers rather blamed the "love and passion towards architecture", and a "strive for perfection in the work". This dissimilar reason-giving might be part of the issue, where actors involved try to blame something out of their scope.

The practical examination of the industry by interviewing actors showed another side to the story of cause. Where laying the theoretical foundation for the problem seemed coherent, you see in practice the wide range and variety of views. Where mainly all interviewees felt affiliated with the proposed topic, the interpretation between people from different firms and in different positions ran apart.

### Part 3: Comparative Analysis

In this paper, there has been brought to discussion on how long hour culture relates to the practice of architecture. In architecture, actors are exposed to long work hours from the start of their education in design studios or design charettes, as well as later on in the practice of architecture, through competitions or offices' work culture (Cuff, 1992).

To explicate this relationship, outcomes of research into long work hour culture gave insight into the main causes of peoples' participation. The seven main causes of participation in long work hour culture, working longer than 49 hours (Hedges, 1993), are because actors: (1) Enjoy their work and gain pleasure from succeeding in the job they perform (Porter, 2004). (2) Strive for perfection in the labour of their job (Porter, 2004). (3) Relish the benefits derived from their job to create a better life outside work (Tucker and Rutherford, 2005). (4) A Need to work more such as job insecurity (Burke & Cooper, 2008). (5) Love their job (Hadley, 2008). (6) Have a demanding supervisor (Cuff, 1991). (7) Function the long hours of their colleagues (Eastman, 1998). From these causes, the motives of Joy and Pleasure, Strive for Perfection, Love for the Job and The Function the Hours of their Colleagues are found to be the most probable to be related to the practice of architecture.

Joy and pleasure (1) in the work are associated with the passion for the practice, which architects establish early on in their education (Cuff, 1992). The work as a pursuit of a passion would therefore be seen as virtuous. Their strive for perfection (2) in architecture can be related to education in architecture that praises prime examples of architectural masterpieces, possibly making architects precise and deliberate in the execution of their work. Love for the job (5) comes from the prosecution of an architects' passion to the extent that architects would work hours beyond their fee, through an internal feeling of commitment and devotion to a project, as Cuff (1992) called the design charette. Architects might also be vulnerable to functioning during the hours of their colleagues (7) due to their acquaintance with social cohesion in design studios in architecture education, as well as their exposure to design charettes, which implies that good architecture is created beyond the allotted time. This combination might keep architects in mutual esteem for hard labour. These causes were found to mainly apply to the general fundamentals of the practice of architecture. The testing of these theories in practice resulted in interesting contradictions.

The consequences of long work hour culture, next to being physically harmful to its participants, may result in a decrease in well-being, resulting in a decline in productivity, accomplishing exactly the opposite of what these extra hours might want to achieve. To improve well-being, working less seems to benefit, but not as much as implementations as work hours to match personal preferences and reductions in work-overload during existing work hours (Warr, 2007). To a small degree, this culture is acceptable, if it remained to be occasionally, though, exclusion from participation in this culture is preferred. Even though the long work hours culture sometimes feels forced upon actors, it is ultimately their own choice to participate.

Where the actors of the practice confirmed most of the causes and their position in the practice of architecture, they also acknowledged many other motives that they held responsibly. With the redistribution of the relatable causes of long work hour culture to Firm A and Firm B, we can see the variation in the distribution of relatable causes. Most relatable to both firms was a strive for perfection, to which they both concluded that to some degree in architecture you have to be precise, deliberate and perfectionistic to stay ahead and differentiate from your competitors. More research needs to be done to further pinpoint the most applicable cause, but that does not necessarily need to be the pillar of this research. Foremost the observation that individual elements in a firm can, neglectingly and possibly unwittingly cause long work hour culture while not bringing many benefits, is a consciousness that firms themselves have to take to resolve the issue. Also due to the complexity and wide array of possible motives related to the topic, the confrontation with the problem might be a difficult one, as the causes cannot easily be generalized.

At the same time, the problem surrounding work hour culture can easily be discarded as a personal choice of the employees. Even though this may be true, we see a number of causes where actors don't necessarily fully realize or understand their exposure to this culture, therefore not being able to choose themselves, while still being exposed to its consequences. Therefore the awareness and voicing of this theme should enable the taboo for discussion and open debates about possible improvements. This also relates to the diverging opinions of the Employer and the Employee, as concluded from the interviews where the two interview groups modestly blamed the other party as the cause creator of the issue. This is not correct for both groups involved. Bringing this topic to the table should initiate communal resolutions to the issue stated.

What this paper can provide to architectural practices to resolve this issue, is a framework of proposed theoretical causes of long work hour culture, and their substantiated hierarchy in the practice of architecture, together with the alternatively proposed causes for architecture practices, to relate to and find their individual exposure and involvement to these causes. From there they can find their relatable causes and see how to minimize that exposure. Improvements in reducing participation in this toxic culture are of strong interest.

## Discussion

There are a few last things that I want to touch upon before finishing this paper.

First is the feeling of an occasional general acceptance of bad conditions and low pay in the architecture industry, like this panel of two architects of SCI-ARCH in Los Angeles that glorified the horrible working conditions architects may find themselves working in. In a live-streamed discussion two faculty members, Margareth Griffin and Dwayne Oyler 'advised students to accept low pay and poor work-life balance' (Schulman, 2022). Griffin recommended students take low-paying jobs in boutique "ateliers" rather than corporate firms where "you're just going to spend a year drawing bathrooms". This together with a surfaced scandal from that same school where a board of the undergraduate chair advised students to take a break from university to come and work at his office, eventually doing unpaid working days of 18 hours. This allegedly caused outrage among the architecture professionals. These are prime examples of what these 'bad conditions' might contain in the architectural practice, and unfortunately sometimes is the current state. Where we see many other disciplines have already started or won the debate for better working conditions, this is in many places not the case for the architectural industry.

The second is that, as discussed in this paper, we see that participating (excessively) in long work hour culture brings along many adverse health effects, as well as a reduction in wellbeing. Especially this reduction lowers productivity, therefore the hard work might not result in the desired results, expected from putting in more hours. Getting more work done does not have to be reached by putting in more hours but by being more effective with the hours you have. This realisation is important.

The third is, that occasional over-working is not a problem. Working overtime can be sometimes very useful to prevent stress in busier periods or differentiate and distinguish compared to your competitors. The problem is a systematic system of long work hours routed in the or a practice, with the idea is that to deliver the best work you systematically have to work more than regular hours. Good work outcomes are associated with the committed hours but are not dominated by them.

For further research, to more clearly get insight into the main causes of long work hour culture in architectural practices there can be an increase in the sample size of examined architecture firms to coherently find major causes in architecture practices. Or create specific samples of practices in architecture to gain more insight into the causes in specific fields of architecture practice.

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