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EVALUATING THE INFLUENCE OF WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY ON PRITZKER PRIZE OUTCOMES IN ARCHITECTURE (1979-2024)

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Abstract

Elitism in architecture manifests in multiple forms: architects are positioned as arbiters of built environment quality, recruitment predominantly favors individuals from elite backgrounds, commissions are largely sourced from elite patrons, and architectural practice often reflects the values and aesthetic preferences of privileged groups. This elitism is further reinforced by prestigious global architecture awards, which contribute to the emergence of starchitects—a select group of architects whose careers are propelled by such recognition. Among various evaluative frameworks, the Pritzker Prize (PP) stands as one of the most esteemed. Within this context, it is hypothesized that the PP disproportionately favors architects from nations classified as the 'Core' of the capitalist world economy (CWE) over those from the 'Semi-Periphery' or 'Periphery', as defined by the World Systems Theory (WST). WST provides a structural framework for analyzing global economic inequalities by incorporating perspectives on colonialism and imperialism, emphasizing their long-term impact on economic underdevelopment in certain world regions. This theory underscores the importance of historical structural analysis in understanding global disparities. Although WST has faced criticism for its Eurocentric bias—which often overgeneralizes economic structures and diminishes the agency of peripheral nations—it remains a valuable analytical tool for examining architectural prestige distribution. While its economic determinism has been challenged for neglecting cultural and ideological factors, WST offers a more nuanced alternative to the simplistic binaries of 'West vs. Non-West' or 'Global North vs. Global South'. By applying this framework, a more comprehensive understanding of how architectural elitism intersects with global economic divisions can be achieved.

Employing a qualitative research methodology with case studies as its primary strategy, this research utilizes data from the PP's official website (pritzkerprize.com) to identify trends and cycles of PP-winning starchitects across various nationalities worldwide. By tabulating these findings and triangulating data with other extant sources, the study applies the aforementioned theory to analyze these nationalities, situating each within its corresponding country, and thus, C/SP/P division.

Conducted in February 2025, this research analyzes 46 PP award cycles and identifies that starchitects from 21 different nationalities have received the prize over the years. Among these, ones representing the Core have overwhelmingly secured the prize 36 times, followed by counterparts from the Semi-Periphery with 9 wins, and Periphery with a single win. Consequently, the hypothesis is affirmed, demonstrating that the PP exhibits a preferential bias towards the Core.

Keywords

Pritzker Prize, Starchitects, Nationalities, countries, Core, Semi-Periphery, Periphery, Capitalist World Economy, World Systems Theory

Introduction

Elitism in architecture manifests in multiple ways. Ellin (1997) describes it as the industry's tendency to elevate architects as the ultimate arbiters of quality in the built environment. However, Wijetunge et al. (2024; 2025) argue that the profession systematically favors architects from elite backgrounds over those from lower social strata. Harwood, May, and Sherman (2011) further highlight the historical role of elite patrons in commissioning architects, reinforcing their influence in shaping architectural practice. Similarly, Thirupathi (n.d.) emphasizes how architectural design often caters to elite social classes, embedding their values and aesthetic preferences in the built environment. Despite criticisms, Betsky (1960) suggests that elitism sustains the architectural profession's vitality by driving progress and innovation. This exclusivity, according to Ellin (1997), led to the emergence of 'starchitects'—high-profile architects who dominate the industry. Parman (2018) observes that although starchitects make up only 0.1% of the profession, they attract significant attention, both admiration and critique, due to the elitist nature of their work. Slessor (2014) argues that this elitism is evident in starchitect-designed projects, characterized by aesthetic refinement, innovation, and grandiosity in scale and budget. The Pritzker Prize (PP) plays a crucial role in reinforcing this elite status. Dubbed the 'Nobel Prize in Architecture' (britannica.com, 2024), the Pritzker Prize, established in 1979, aims to enhance public appreciation of architecture while recognizing "the talent, vision, and dedication of exceptional architects worldwide" (pritzkerprize.com, 2025). Winning such an award significantly impacts architectural careers. Smith (2015) explores how accolades like the Pritzker Prize shape the trajectories of architects on a global scale. However, Parman (2018) notes that starchitects' fame and influence often overshadow emerging talents. Similarly, Slessor (2014) critiques the bias of prestigious awards, which tend to recognize grand architectural statements in affluent regions, often neglecting innovative work in less privileged contexts. Given the dominance of starchitects, the elitist nature of architectural practice, and the bias favoring elite architects in global recognition, it is crucial to establish a theoretical framework. This framework should categorize architects globally into affluent and privileged, non-affluent and non-privileged, and those positioned in between, providing a more nuanced understanding of socioeconomic dynamics in architectural prestige.

The World-Systems Theory (WST) propagated by Wallerstein (1974) emerged within a broader intellectual landscape shaped by critiques of capitalism. Incorporating insights from theories on colonialism and imperialism, he examined their lasting impact on economic underdevelopment in certain regions, while emphasizing the significance of long-term structural historical analysis. Expanding this perspective to a global scale, he argued that the CWE operates as an interconnected system of exploitation that transcends national borders. These intellectual foundations enabled the WST that divides the countries of the CWE into three major divisions – the 'Core' (C), 'semi-periphery' (SP) and 'periphery' (P).The analysis of PP laureates since the inception of the award reveals of a concentration of winners from the so-called C countries, particularly the United States, Europe and Japan. This pattern suggests a regional bias, overlooking architects from other parts of the world perceived to be SP and P, contrary to the prize's commitment to acknowledging great architects 'worldwide' (Wijetunge et al., 2025). For instance, as of 2018, only a handful of PP laureates hailed from non-Western countries conterminous with the global North, raising questions about the prize's inclusivity and global representation (ArchDaily, 2018).

The preceding introduction outlines the aims and objectives of this research. The first objective here is to ascertain cycles of PP-winning starchitects across various nationalities, thereby allowing for the quantification of laureates by country of origin. The second objective is to apply the three-fold divisions of the CWE outlined by the WST, in order to identify if the if the country of the laureates belong to the C, SP or P, substantiated by extant literature. The third objective is to quantify the cyclical wins and individual wins by architects from countries classified as C, SP and P, within the WST framework. The aim of this research is to demonstrate that the world's most prestigious architectural prizes, which elevate architects to elite 'starchitect' status, predominantly favor the economically-privileged countries of the world.

Theoretical Framework

World Systems Theory

A range of scholarly works that critically examine global divisions exist. Said (1978), Hall (1997), Fukuyama (1992), Bhabha (1994) and Appadurai (1994) all offer historical perspectives that challenge the simplistic binaries of 'West' versus 'non-West', or global 'North' versus the 'South'. Bhabha (1994) and Appadurai (1994) further emphasize the need to reconceptualize this dichotomy in light of contemporary global dynamics. In this context, the WST propagated by Wallerstein (1974) presents an alternative framework for analyzing global structures and power relations. It was developed within a broader intellectual context that combined historical materialism, dependency theory, and longue durée historiography. Influenced by Marx's critique of capitalism that Mandel (1982) narrates, Wallerstein (1974) extended the analysis to a global scale, arguing that the CWE functions as a single system of exploitation beyond national boundaries. His work was also shaped by dependency theorists such as Frank (1967) and Amin (1976), who contended that economic underdevelopment in the global South was not a

stage in development, but a consequence of historical exploitation by colonial and imperialist powers. Additionally, Wallerstein (1974) drew extensively from Braudel's (1984) concept of the longue durée, which emphasized the importance of long-term structural historical analysis. This intellectual foundation enabled the formation of the WST. Wallenstein's WST has been widely influential but has also faced both support and criticism. Proponents argue that it effectively explains global economic inequality, dependency, and postcolonial exploitation, highlighting how wealth remains concentrated in the core, while the periphery remains economically subjugated (Frank, 1978; Amin, 1989). However, critics argue that WST overgeneralizes economic structures and lacks agency for peripheral nations, ignoring cases where countries have transitioned from periphery to core (e.g., South Korea and Singapore) (Skocpol, 1977; Arrighi, 1990). Others critique its Eurocentrism, stating that it primarily frames global history from a Western perspective (Bhambra, 2020). Additionally, scholars argue that WST underestimates cultural and ideological factors, focusing too heavily on economic-determinism (Hall, 2000). Despite its limitations, WST remains a critical framework in understanding global inequalities and the historical evolution of capitalism.

Divisions within the Capitalist World Economy

The WST divides the countries of the capitalist world economy into C, SP and P, structuring the global economy into these three distinct but interconnected regions. These divisions are based on historical patterns of economic and political dominance, industrial development, and integration into the global capitalist system (Wallerstein, 1974; 2004).

C nations are economically and technologically advanced, dominating global trade, finance, and innovation. They maintain political and military power, controlling major international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Historically, C countries emerged in Western Europe and later expanded (Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1997; Babones, 2005). These nations sustain their dominance by extracting surplus value from the SP or P, and maintaining technological and financial superiority (Wallerstein, 2004). In contrast, P nations serve as sources of raw materials, cheap labor, and agricultural products for the C. They are characterized by weak industrial bases, dependency on foreign investment, and political instability. These countries encompass most of the world, including Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Latin America, and South Asia etc. The P nations remain economically marginalized and politically vulnerable due to exploitative global trade structures that perpetuate their dependency on core nations (Grosfoguel, 2013). On the other hand, SP nations occupy an intermediary position, possessing some industrial capacity, but lacking the full economic and political power of C nations (Arrighi, 1990; Chase-Dunn, 2014). SP nations act as buffers between the C and P. They benefit from limited economic growth, while still facing structural inequalities and reliance on the C for advanced technology and capital. They often experience both exploitation by C nations, and economic advantages over P regions. The hierarchical division of world economy under WST highlights the enduring economic disparities between nations and the mechanisms through which global capitalism maintains systemic inequality. Though global power shifts occur periodically, the fundamental 'Core-Periphery' (C-P) structure remains intact, shaping international relations and economic development (Wallerstein, 2004). Having established the theoretical foundation of WST and the divisions within the capitalist world economy, it is now essential to explore the framework that defines nationalities and their corresponding countries within these divisions.

Nationality, Nation, and Country

The terms Nationality, nation, and country are interrelated, yet distinct concepts that define political identity and territorial belonging within the global system. Nationality refers to an individual's legal or cultural affiliation with a nation-state, often granted through birth or naturalization (Gellner, 1983). A nation is a collective entity bound by shared cultural, historical, linguistic, or ethnic identity, which may or may not correspond to an internationally recognized state (Anderson, 2006). A country, on the other hand, is a defined territorial entity with sovereignty recognized under international law, possessing a government and political structure (Smith, 1991). While nationality, nation and country have distinct meanings, they are deeply interconnected in shaping political and cultural identities. A nation often forms the social and cultural basis for a country, as seen in nation-states where political boundaries align with a shared national identity (Hobsbawm, 1990). However, multi-national states, where multiple nations coexist within a single country, challenge this alignment, as seen in cases such as Canada or Belgium (Gellner, 1983). Nationality, as a legal status, can be both a consequence and a determinant of national identity, as it often dictates political rights and membership within a state (Brubaker, 1992). Thus, while nationality, nation, and country serve different roles, they collectively contribute to the broader framework of statehood and identity in the modern world. Thus, for the purpose of this study, only the concepts of nationality and country are considered, as the PP, like other prestigious architectural awards, recognizes recipients based on these classifications than the idea of nationhood. The notion of nationality is considered in conjunction with its corresponding country, recognizing the legal and territorial framework that links individuals to sovereign states. The discussed ideas form the foundation for assessing the divisions within the CWE, and the affiliations of PP winners – across diverse nationalities and their corresponding countries – to them.

Review of Literature

The manifestation of elitism in architecture is a well-explored subject. Ellin (1997) identifies architects as the ultimate arbiters of the built environment, while Wijetunge et al. (2024; 2025) highlight their traditionally elite backgrounds. Harwood, May, and Sherman (2011) on the other hand, discuss the historical role of elite patrons in shaping architectural practice. *Thirupathy (n.d.)* underscores architecture's tendency to cater to elite interests, while Betsky (1960) argues that it this very elitism that sustains the profession's rigor. In this context, Ellin (1997) and Wijetunge et al. (2024; 2025) examine how elitism in architecture fosters the rise of 'starchitects.' Parman (2018) describes them as a minority receiving undue attention, while Slessor (2014) analyzes how their designs perpetuate elitist aesthetics. Further, McGuigan (2014) explores the role of prestigious architecture prizes in maintaining this status quo. Given this, Britannica.com (2024) and Ingalls (2016) introduce the PP as architecture's most coveted award, with *pritzkerprize* (2024) detailing its criteria. Smith (2015) and Cheng (2017) highlight its positive impact on recipients, while Parman (2018) and Slessor (2014) critique its role in perpetuating marginalization. Despite its prominence, there is a scarcity of academic literature critically assessing its impact, selection process, and broader implications. *ArchDaily* (2018) is among the few sources questioning its inclusivity and Western bias. Madhdavinejad and Hosseini (2019) use data mining and content analysis to trace evolving jury criteria, while Sharma (2011) examines the politics of the PP using Google Trends. Basyazici and Uluoğlu (2017) analyze how the prize reinforces architectural conventions, and Hayen (2012) critiques its masculine dominance through discourse analysis. Notably, all these studies rely on PP jury citations. Beyond scholarly research, *ArchDaily* (2018) and Goldhagen (2011) criticize the PP as predictable, biased, and uninspired, often favoring established names over groundbreaking contributions. The reviewed literature reveals a clear research gap concerning the nationalities and corresponding countries of PP winners, and their respective economic positioning in the global setting. The theoretical foundation of this study is informed by a range of scholarly works that critically examine global divisions. Said (1978), Hall (1997), Fukuyama (1992), Bhabha (1994) and Appadurai (1994) offer historical perspectives that challenge the simplistic binary of 'West' versus 'non-West', or global 'North' versus the 'South'. Bhabha (1994) and Appadurai (1994) further emphasize the need to reconceptualize this dichotomy in light of contemporary global dynamics. In this context, the WST presents an alternative framework for analyzing global structures and power relations. Wallerstein (1974) introduces a new perspective to view that the CWE is structured as a single interconnected system of exploitation that transcends national borders. He delves on a broader intellectual context combining historical materialism, dependency theory, and longue durée historiography for his theory formulation. His *WST* conceptualizes the CWE as divided into three interdependent regions: C, SP and P. These divisions, as Wallerstein (2004) tells us, are based on historical patterns of economic dominance, industrial development, and integration into the global capitalist system. Although WST provides a compelling framework for analyzing global economic inequality, it has faced substantial critique. Skocpol (1977) and Arrighi (1990) discuss about the theory's overgeneralization of economic structures, and posit with examples that it has failed to address certain countries shifting within its divisions. Furthermore, while Bhambra (2020) critiques WST for its Eurocentric perspective, Hall (2000) points out that WST focuses too heavily on economic determinism**,** neglecting cultural and ideological factors that influence global development. Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997) as well as Babones (2005) reinforce Wallerstein's (2004) argument. They assert that despite periodic shifts in global power, the core-periphery structure persists, as global capitalism continuously adapts to maintain economic hierarchies and international inequalities, justifying its perpetuation as a valid theory.

The hierarchical structure of WST, as argued by Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997) and Babones (2005), ensures that wealth and resources remain concentrated in C nations, while SP and P nations serve subordinate roles within the global economy. Wallerstein (1974) also posits reasons for dominance of the C historically, supported by Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997) who also identify key world regions and countries belonging to it. Moreover, Wallerstein (2004) also delves on an economic perspective to state that C countries sustain their dominance by extracting surplus value from SP and P nations, ensuring that technological and financial power remains concentrated in the hands of a few. He also reveals how P nations are at the disposal of their C counterparts, by illustrating that they function primarily as sources of raw materials, cheap labor, and agricultural products. Further, the weaknesses of such countries characterized by weak industrial bases, dependency on foreign investment, and frequent political instability are also revealed. Given this, Grosfoguel (2013) demarcates the global regions consisting of these countries, while revealing that economic marginalization and political vulnerability of such states are exacerbated by exploitative global trade structures perpetuated by the C. In this light, Frank (1978) and Amin (1989) argue that the economic underdevelopment of the P is not a natural stage in development, but a historically entrenched consequence of colonial and imperialist exploitation**.** As Wallerstein (1974) explains, SP countries hold an intermediary position between C and P countries. They possess some industrial capacity and economic influence but lack the full economic and political power of C nations. Arrighi (1990) and Chase-Dunn (2014) describe SP nations as buffers, benefiting from moderate economic growth while still facing structural inequalities and economic dependence on C countries for technology and capital. Further, they also demarcate

global regions and countries that belong to the SP, while emphasizing on their liminal status within the global economy.

Having established the theoretical foundation of WST and its divisions within the CWE, it is now crucial to analyze how nationalities and their corresponding countries align within this framework, refining the understanding of global inequality and architectural recognition. According to Gellner (1983), Anderson (2006) and Smith (1991), nationality, nation, and country are interrelated, yet distinct concepts shaping political identity and territorial belonging. As Anderson (2006) tells us, nationality refers to an individual's legal or cultural affiliation with a state, while a nation is a collective entity defined by shared cultural, historical, linguistic, or ethnic identity, which may or may not align with recognized state boundaries. In smith's (1991) view, a country, on the other hand, is a sovereign territorial entity with a defined government and legal framework. As Hobsbawm (1990) explains, nations often form the social and cultural foundation of countries, particularly in nation-states, where political and national identities align. Gellner (1983) on the other hand, posits examples where multiple nations coexist within a single country, challenging the aforesaid alignment. Given this, Brubaker (1992) highlights that nationality, as a legal status, both shapes and is shaped by national identity, influencing political rights and state membership.

Methodology

The research was carried out in February 2025 (between the 1st and 10th), from the home institution in Oklahoma, USA. This study employs a qualitative methodology, using case studies as its central approach to investigate patterns within the PP laureates. Material data collection focuses on extracting detailed information from the official PP website (pritzkerprize.com), identifying cycles of winning architects from different nationalities and corresponding countries. This approach allows for a quantitative breakdown of awardees by nationality and thus country. This also enables the classification of these countries according to their alignment with the divisions in CWE as outlined by the WST, with substantiation drawn from extant literature.

Table 01 lists PP-winners over 46 cycles between 1979 to 2024, and then place them against their respective nationalities and thus, countries. By delving on extant literature, the placement of these countries within the divisions of CWE – either in the C, SP or P – are then determined theoretically. Hence, Table 01 becomes the basis on which, the case studies section delves on. The case studies examine the number of PP recipients by nationality and corresponding country across past award cycles, positioning them within the divisions of the CWE, outlined in Table 02**.** This tabulation provides deeper insights into the distribution of laureates. Table 03 then presents a summarized analysis of these findings, leading to broader conclusions. The study follows ethical guidelines, relying exclusively on secondary sources and avoiding the collection of sensitive firsthand information.

Case Studies

PP-winning Nationalities and Countries

The PP was started in 1979 and the last cycle it was awarded to be in 2024. Table 01 illustrates the year, name of laureate, their nationality, country corresponding to that nationality, and their position within the division of CWE. It also substantiates each nationality's placement within the relevant division, based on extant literature. Table 01 paves way for Table 02.

ID	Year	Laureate/s	Nationality	Country	Substantiation through extant literature	GED outlined by
01	1979	Philip Johnson	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
02	1980	Luis Barragán	Mexican (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Mexico	(Arrighi, 1990; Chase-Dunn, 2014)	SP
03	1981	James Sterling	British (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United Kingdom	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
04	1982	Kevin Roche	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
05	1983	I. M Pei	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
06	1984	Richard Meier	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C

07	1985	Hans Hollein	Austrian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Austria	(Wallerstein, 2004; Chase-Dunn & Hall,1997)	C
08	1986	Gottfried Böhm	German (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Germany	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
09	1987	Kenzo Tange	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
10	1988	Gordon Bunshaft	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
		Oscar Niemeyer	Brazilian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Brazil	(Arrighi, 1990)	SP
11	1989	Frank Gehry	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
12	1990	Aldo Rossi	Italian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Italy	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
13	1991	Robert Venturi	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
14	1992	Alvaro Siza Vieira	Portuguese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Portugal	(Wallerstein, 2004; Chase-Dunn & Hall,1997)	C
15	1993	Fumihiko maki	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
16	1994	Christian de Portzamparc	French (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	France	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
17	1995	Tadao Ando	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
18	1996	Rafael Moneo	Spanish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Spain	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
19	1997	Sverre Fehn	Norwegian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Norway	(Wallerstein, 2004; Chase-Dunn & Hall,1997)	C
20	1998	Renzo Piano	Italian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Italy	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
21	1999	Norman Foster	British (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United Kingdom	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
22	2000	Rem Koolhaas	Dutch (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Netherlands	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
23	2001	Jacques Herzog	Swiss (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Switzerland	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
		Pierre de Meuron	Swiss (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Switzerland	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
24	2002	Glen Murcutt	Australian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Australia	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
25	2003	Jørn Utzon	Danish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Denmark	(Wallerstein, 2004; Chase-Dunn & Hall,1997)	C
26	2004	Zaha Hadid	British (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United Kingdom	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
27	2005	Thom Mayne	American (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United States	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
28	2006	Paulo Mendes da Rocha	Brazilian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Brazil	(Arrighi, 1990; Chase-Dunn, 2014)	SP
29	2007	Richard Rogers	British (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United Kingdom	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
30	2008	Jean Nouvel	French (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	France	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
31	2009	Peter Zumthor	Swiss (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Switzerland	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
32	2010	Kazuyo Sejima	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
		Ryue Nishizawa	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	

33	2011	Eduardo Souto de Moura	Portuguese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Portugal	(Wallerstein, 2004; Chase-Dunn & Hall,1997)	C
34	2012	Wang Shu	Chinese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	China	(Arrighi, 1990; Chase-Dunn, 2014)	SP
35	2013	Toyo Ito	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
36	2014	Shaigeru Ban	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
37	2015	Frei Otto	German (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Germany	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
38	2016	Alejandro Alavena	Chilean (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Chile	(Arrighi, 1990; Chase-Dunn, 2014)	SP
39	2017	Rafael Aranda	Spanish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Spain	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
		Carme Pigem	Spanish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Spain	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	
		Ramon Vilalta	Spanish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Spain	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	
40	2018	Balakrishna Doshi	Indian (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	India	(Arrighi, 1990; Chase-Dunn, 2014)	SP
41	2019	Arata isozaki	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
42	2020	Yvonne Farrell	Irish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Ireland	(Wallerstein, 2004;Chase-Dunn & Hall, 1997)	C
		Shelly McNamara	Irish (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Ireland	(Wallerstein, 2004; Chase-Dunn & Hall,1997)	
43	2021	Anne Lacaton	French (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	France	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	C
		Jean-Phillipe Vassal	French (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	France	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	
44	2022	Diébédo Francis Kéré	Burkinabe (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Burkina Faso	(Frank, 1978; Amin, 1989; Grosfoguel, 2013)	P
45	2023	David Chipperfield	British (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	United Kingdom	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	P
46	2024	Riken Yamamoto	Japanese (Pritzkerprize.com, 2023)	Japan	(Wallerstein, 2004; Babone, 2005)	P

Table 01

Source: Author (2024)

Key: Core-C, Semi-Periphery-SP, Periphery-P, GED- Global Economic Division

Out of 46 winning cycles, 21 nationalities from their corresponding 21 countries are recorded. The 21 nationalities and countries show representation from all global economic divisions demarcated by WST proposed by Wallerstein (1974). Table 02 illustrates nationality/country, Year PP was awarded, PP Cycle, names of laureates in detail, along with year of award, number of recipients according to nationality (in descending order), number of PP cycles and finally, position within the global economic divisions demarcated by WST to which, each laureate belongs.

ID	Nationality/ Country	Year (Y) and cycle (C)	Laureates & year of Pritzker Prize				No. of individual Recipients According to	No. of Cycles According to Nationality	Global Economic Division outlined by
1	American United Stats	Y:(1979-2005) C: 1, 2	Philip Johnson (1979)	Kevin Roche (1982)	I.M. Pei (1983)	Richard Meier (1984)	08	08	C
			Gordon Bunshaft(1988)	Frank Gehry (1989)	Robert Venturi (1991)	Thom Mayne (2005)			
2	Japanese Japan	Y:(1987-2024) C:1, 2, 3	Kenzo Tange (1987)	Fumihiko Maki (1993)	Tadao Ando (1995)	Ryue Nishizawa, Kazuyo Sejima (2010)	09	08	C
			Toyo Ito (2013)	Shigeru Ban (2014)	Arata Isozaki (2019)	Riken Yamamoto (2024)			
3	British United Kingdom	Y:(1981-2023) C:1, 2, 3	James Stirling (1981)	Norman Foster (1999), Zaha Hadid (2004)	Richard Rogers (2007)	David Chipperfield (2023)	05	05	C
4	French France	Y:(1994-2021) C: 2, 3	Christian de Portzamparc (1994)		Jean Nouvel (2008)	Anne Lacaton, Jean-Philippe Vassal (2021)	04	03	C
5	Swizz Switzerland	Y:(2001-2009) C:2	Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron (2001)		Peter Zumthor (2009)		03	02	C
6	Portuguese Portugal	Y:(1992-2011) C: 2,3	Álvaro Siza (1992),		Souto de Moura (2011)		02	02	C
7	Spanish Spain	Y:(1996-2017) C: 2, 3	Rafael Moneo (1996)		Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem, Ramon Vilalta (2017)		04	02	C
8	Brazilian Brazil	Y:(1988-2006 C: 1, 2	Oscar Niemeyer (1988)		Paulo Mendes da Rocha (2006)		02	02	SP
9	German Germany	Y:(1986-2015) C: 1, 3	Gottfried Böhm (1986)		Frei Otto (2015)		02	02	C
10	Australian Australia	Y:(2002) C:2	Glenn Murcutt (2002)				01	01	C
11	Austrian Austria	Y:(1985) C:3	Hans Hollein (1985)				01	01	C
12	Burkinabé Burkina Faso	Y:(2022) C:3	Diébédo Francis Kéré (2022)				01	01	P
13	Chilean Chile	Y:(2016) C: 3	Alejandro Aravena (2016)				01	01	SP
14	Chinese China Norway	Y:(2012) C:3	Wang Shu (2012)				01	01	SP

15	Danish Denmark	Y:(2003) C:2	Jørn Utzon (2003)	01	01	C
16	Indian India	Y:(2018) C:3	Balkrishna Doshi (2018)	01	01	SP
17	Irish Republic of Ireland	Y:(2020) C:3	Yvonne Farrell, Shelley McNamara (2020)	02	01	C
18	Italian Italy	Y:(1990) C:1	Aldo Rossi (1990)	01	01	C
19	Mexican Mexico	Y:(1980) C:1	Luis Barragán (1980)	01	01	SP
20	Dutch Netherlands	Y:(2000) C:2	Rem Koolhaas (2000)	01	01	C
21	Norwegian	Y:(1997) C:2	Sverre Fehn (1997)	01	01	C

Table 02

Source: https://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates

Key: Core-C, Semi-Periphery-SP, Periphery-P

Summery

Table 03 and chart 01 summarize findings in Table 02.

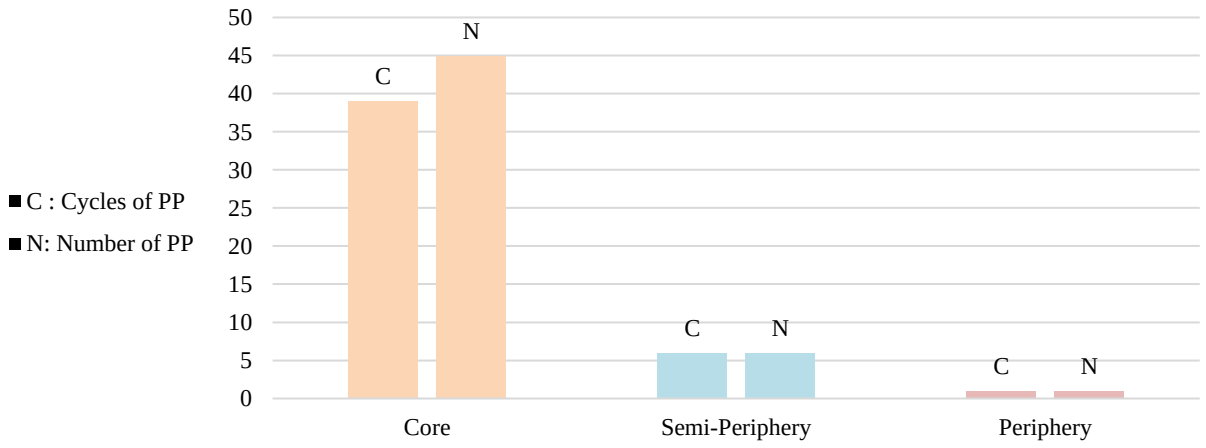
	Global Economic Divisions Outlined by WST	Cycles of PP Wins According to Global Economic Divisions Outlined by WST	Number of PP Winning Individual Architects	Corresponding Color for C, SP & P
1	Core	39	45	
2	Semi-Periphery	06	06	
3	Periphery	01	01	
	Total	**46**	**52**	

Table 03

Source: Author (2024)

Key: Core-C, Semi-Periphery-SP, Periphery-P

Chart 01:
Cycles of PP and Number of PP wining individual architects According to Global Economic Divisions Outlined by WST



Source: Author (2024)

Table 02 shows that out of the 46 cycles considered, winners of 5 cycle recorded were in partnership. Out of these partnerships, while 4 of them were partnerships with 2 architects (*i.e.* Gordon Bunshaft and Oscar Niemeyer; Kazuyo Sejimaa and Ryue Nishizawa; Yvonne Farrell and Shelly McNamara; Anne Lacaton and Jean-Phillipe Vassal), one occasion recorded 3 partners (*i.e.* Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramon Vilalta). From these partnerships, while 4 were partnerships of either 2 or 3 architects from the same nationality, one was from two different nationalities (*i.e.* Gordon Bunshaft from the USA and Oscar Niemeyer from Brazil). Table 02 further reveals that architects from 21 nationalities have received the award since its inception. In terms of cycle wins, American and Japanese architects have won 8 cycles, when British architects with 5 and French with 3. Further, when Swizz, Portuguese, Spanish, Brazilian and German nationalities have won 2 cycles each, Australian, Austrian, Burkinabé, Chilean, Chinese, Danish, Indian, Irish, Italian, Mexican, Dutch and Norwegian architects have each won a single cycle. In terms of individual wins, Japanese architects top the list with 9 wins, followed by Americans with 8. British architects have secured 5 wins, while French and Spanish architects have each won 4 times, the Swiss 3 times, and the Portuguese and Mexican 2 times each. Apart from the aforesaid, Australian, Austrian, Burkinabé, Chilean, Chinese, Danish, Indian, Irish, Italian, and Dutch nationalities have won one each. As the summery, Table 03 illustrates that 52 architects have taken part in the Pritzker altogether, over 46 cycles, between 1979 and 2024. Moreover, 39 nationalities belonging to their corresponding countries that is grouped under C, 6 belonging to the SP, and only one belonging to the P have won the PP. In terms of individual wins, 45 from C have won the prize, when 6 from SP and a single one from P have won it.

Conclusions

Architecture, much like other art forms, is deeply embedded in systems of elitism, where architects are positioned as the foremost arbiters of quality, often favoring those from privileged backgrounds. This elitism, which fosters both admiration and critique of 'starchitects', is reinforced by prestigious awards that elevate architecture's elite status. Among the many global mechanisms for recognizing distinguished architects, the Pritzker Prize (PP) holds particular significance as one of the most esteemed. Widely regarded as a key driver in shaping architectural prominence, the PP is often seen as reflecting systemic biases. One of the most significant of these biases aligns with the global economic divisions as marked by the World-Systems Theory (WST) by Wallerstein (1974), which conceptualizes global inequality through economic and historical hierarchies. This theory is particularly relevant, as it moves beyond simplistic Western vs. Non-Western distinctions, emphasizing the structural dominance of Core nations, the intermediary role of Semi-Periphery nations, and the economic subjugation of all Periphery nations within the CWE. Rooted in historical patterns of economic power, WST provides a lens through which global disparities in architectural recognition can be understood.

Nationality refers to an individual's legal and political membership within a state, determining their rights, obligations, and access to governance structures. A country, in contrast, is a defined territorial and political entity, characterized by sovereignty, governance, and internationally recognized borders. Each country exists within a specific geographical region, forming part of larger economic and political frameworks. However, economic and geopolitical power is not evenly distributed across these regions. The WST demonstrates that C countries, which dominate global trade, technology, and finance, wield greater influence in professional and cultural fields, including architecture. SP nations hold a more intermediate position, benefiting from some industrialization but still structurally dependent on the C, while P nations remain economically disadvantaged, reliant on C countries for investment and development. This distinction provides the foundation for this study's examination of the global economic division affiliations of Pritzker Prize laureates, as marked by the WST, analyzing how their national and economic classifications correlate with architectural recognition on a global scale. It was identified that architects belonging to 21 nationalities have won the PP. They belong to the nationalities of American, Japanese, British, French, Swiss, Portuguese, Spanish, Brazilian, German, Australian, Austrian, Burkinabé, Chilean, Chinese, Danish, Indian, Irish, Italian, Mexican, Dutch and Norwegian, belonging to their corresponding countries of the United States, Japan, United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Austria, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Denmark, India, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands and Norway. This fulfils the first objective of this study.

By applying the three-fold division in CWE as outlined by the WST, it was substantiated by extant literature that, out of the aforementioned countries, United States, Japan, United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Netherlands and Norway belong to the C. On the other hand, it was also established that Brazil, Chile, India and Mexico belong to the SP, while Burkina Faso fall within the P. This fulfils the second objective of this study. Country-wise, architects from Japan and the United States both lead in cycle wins, with eight each (17.4%), and in individual wins, with nine (17.6%) and eight (15.7%) respectively, followed by counterparts from the United Kingdom with five cycles (10.9%) and five individual laureates (9.8%). Architects from France and Spain have each secured three cycles (6.5%) and four individual wins (7.8%) respectively, while ones from Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Brazil, and Germany have won two cycles each (4.3%). Meanwhile, nations such as Australia, Austria, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Denmark,

India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Norway have recorded a single cycle win (2.2%), reflecting the limited geographic diversification of the award. Furthermore, out of the 46 cycles, five were awarded to partnerships (10.9%), with four involving architects from the same nationality, while one instance, the partnership of Gordon Bunshaft from the United States and Oscar Niemeyer from Brazil, featured a collaboration across different countries. Further, the analysis of 46 cycles of the Pritzker Prize from 1979 to 2024 reveals a significant imbalance in the distribution of laureates across national and economic divisions. The overwhelming dominance of C nations is evident, with architects from these countries winning 39 out of 46 cycles (approximately 84.8%) and accounting for 45 of the 51 individual laureates (about 88.2%). This trend highlights the structural advantage that economically and technologically advanced nations possess. In contrast, Semi-Periphery countries have won only six cycles (13.0%), with six individual laureates (11.8%), while Periphery countries remain vastly underrepresented, with only one to have produced a laureate (2.2%). This fulfils the third objective of this study. Further, given that World-Systems Theory (WST) is historically and economically grounded, the hierarchical distribution of economic power is reflected in the pattern of PP wins, with dominance descending from the C, through the SP, and into the P. Moreover, the overwhelming presence of C countries in PP cycles highlights the systemic economic and institutional advantages that reinforce their dominance in global architectural recognition. The underrepresentation of SP and P nations on the other hand, mirrors the structural barriers that prevent architects from these regions from gaining similar levels of recognition and influence. Through the aforesaid objectives, the aim of this research to demonstrate that the world's most prestigious architectural prizes, which elevate architects to elite 'starchitect' status, predominantly favor the most economically privileged countries, was thus met. The findings of this research show that the PP exhibits a preferential bias towards the Core, validating the study's hypothesis.

This research also carries a number of shortcomings. First, it does not delve into the underlying reasons for the dominance of C nations and the underrepresentation of the SP and P. Further research is needed to ascertain these factors. Moreover, future studies could explore the impact of institutional biases, economic barriers, and the influence of Western-centric architectural discourse on the selection of laureates. Additionally, research could extend into analyzing the role of architectural education systems, funding availability, and global professional networks in shaping recognition in the field. A comparative study examining architectural awards in different global contexts could also provide insights into whether similar trends exist beyond the Pritzker Prize. Expanding the scope of inquiry could help address the broader structural inequalities in architectural recognition and influence.

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