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## **Design Leadership as Project Management: A Conceptual Framework for Architect-Manager Dual Roles**

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### **Abstract**

The evolving nature of architectural practice increasingly demands that architects assume responsibilities that transcend design creativity, stepping into roles traditionally held by project managers. This paper explores the dual capacity of architects functioning simultaneously as design leaders and project managers, proposing a conceptual framework that harmonizes these two seemingly divergent roles. In practice, the architect-manager is expected to maintain a strong design vision while ensuring project delivery aligns with budgetary, temporal, and stakeholder expectations — a complex balancing act that requires both strategic foresight and creative intuition.

Through a combination of literature synthesis and empirical insights, this study investigates the tensions, synergies, and decision-making dynamics inherent in the architect-manager model. The framework presented herein conceptualizes design leadership not as an opposing force to project management, but as a co-dependent function that can enhance project coherence, reduce miscommunication, and foster more integrated design solutions. Key dimensions explored include stakeholder coordination, time and resource allocation, iterative design processes, and leadership communication styles.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating data from semi-structured interviews with practicing architect-managers and project documentation from multidisciplinary firms. The insights derived inform the development of a practical and adaptable framework that maps core competencies, role expectations, and behavioral patterns required for successful dual-role navigation.

The findings suggest that architectural projects benefit from leadership models where design and management are not siloed but interwoven from inception. The proposed framework equips current and aspiring architect-managers with a clearer structure to guide role integration, reduce professional conflict, and improve project outcomes. It also offers academic and industry stakeholders a basis for rethinking traditional architectural education and firm structure.

This paper contributes to an emerging discourse on integrated leadership within the design and construction industry, promoting a future-forward view of architectural practice that aligns visionary creativity with project accountability.

**Keywords:** Design Leadership, Project Management, Architect-Manager, Dual Roles, Architectural Practice, Conceptual Framework, Leadership Integration, Creative Process, Construction Management

### **1. Introduction**

Architectural practice has historically emphasized the primacy of design as the profession's defining identity. From the Renaissance master builder to the twentieth-century auteur architect, creativity and form-making have been championed as the essential outputs of architectural labor. However, the evolution of the construction industry, project delivery methods, and client expectations has placed increasing pressure on architects to assume broader responsibilities that intersect with engineering, finance, stakeholder relations, and most notably, project management. This shift has ushered in a new kind of leadership challenge—one that requires architects not only to guide conceptual design but to also manage timelines, budgets, human resources, and communication networks with precision and accountability.

The practice of project management in architecture is traditionally outsourced to consultants or delegated to specialized professionals within multidisciplinary firms. Yet, in contemporary contexts where lean teams, compressed schedules, and complex regulatory frameworks dominate, architects are being compelled to adopt managerial duties earlier in the design process and sustain them through project execution. This convergence of creative and managerial functions has given rise to what this paper terms the "architect-manager" dual role. While this model holds the promise of coherence between design vision and delivery execution, it also presents inherent tensions: managing time and cost may constrain iterative creativity, and prioritizing aesthetic objectives may disrupt risk and resource planning.

The dual-role phenomenon is neither fully understood nor adequately theorized within mainstream architectural discourse. While project management is a matured field with extensive theoretical underpinnings (Oluoha *et al.*, 2021), its integration into design leadership is often approached in practice with ad hoc methods and anecdotal reasoning. As a result, architects serving as project managers frequently navigate their roles intuitively, without structured guidance or frameworks that reflect the unique nature of design-led processes. The aim of this journal is therefore to develop a conceptual model that reconciles the creative and managerial dimensions of architectural leadership. This model seeks to offer a structured approach to role integration—balancing vision, efficiency, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive coordination.

The growing complexity of architectural projects, especially within urban contexts and sustainability-driven programs, has further blurred the lines between design intent and managerial execution. Increasingly, architectural firms are being evaluated not solely on their creative merit but on their ability to deliver outcomes within budgetary and regulatory parameters (Adewoyin *et al.*, 2021). As design becomes increasingly data-informed—leveraging building information modeling (BIM), digital fabrication, and performance simulations—the need for leadership that fuses technical, creative, and strategic insight becomes indispensable (Ajiga, 2021; Ogunnowo *et al.*, 2021). In this light, the architect-manager model is not a passing trend but a necessary evolution within the profession.

In industrial engineering and systems design literature, dual-role leadership is frequently discussed as a functional necessity for complex project environments (Akpe *et al.*, 2021). In contrast, architectural education and practice continue to treat design and project management as distinct or even oppositional disciplines. The absence of conceptual frameworks for role integration in architecture has contributed to project inefficiencies, communication breakdowns, and misalignment between design vision and executional realities (Adesemoye *et al.*, 2021). It is this conceptual gap that this journal seeks to address by theorizing the architect-manager model and proposing a guiding framework for its practice.

The case for integrated leadership in architecture is also grounded in sustainability and resilience discourse. Projects rooted in green building principles, regenerative design, and climate-responsive planning require iterative decision-making, multi-stakeholder consensus, and lifecycle thinking—all of which extend beyond traditional design tasks (Dienagha *et al.*, 2021; Egbuhuzor *et al.*, 2021).

Architects who lead such projects must balance innovation with regulatory compliance, and aesthetic experimentation with material and energy constraints. As such, the fusion of project management and design leadership becomes not only operationally advantageous but ethically imperative, particularly as the built environment faces growing accountability for its environmental impact (Egbumokei *et al.*, 2021; Adewoyin, 2021).

This paper draws inspiration from multi-disciplinary research domains that address integration, complexity, and adaptive management. Literature in organizational behavior, operations research, and design systems theory offers insights into managing paradoxes of control and creativity (Okolo *et al.*, 2021; Ajuwon *et al.*, 2020). These insights form the theoretical scaffold for developing a framework where architects can navigate ambiguity, optimize resource allocation, and maintain visionary leadership throughout the project lifecycle. Furthermore, the framework proposed will incorporate dimensions such as stakeholder coordination, cost management, communication protocols, iterative design methodology, and feedback systems—elements crucial for the modern built environment.

It is essential to underscore that this paper does not attempt to collapse the identity of the architect into that of a traditional project manager. Rather, it argues for a redefinition of leadership in architecture that reflects the demands of twenty-first-century practice—where design excellence and delivery excellence are co-equal and interdependent. Through a qualitative exploration of practitioner experiences and firm documentation, this journal develops a conceptual scaffold that recognizes the relational, strategic, and imaginative aspects of the architect-manager. The research rests on the belief that creative leadership is not diminished by managerial responsibility but can be expanded and empowered by it when integrated deliberately and thoughtfully.

The call for integrated architectural leadership also resonates with broader shifts in infrastructure governance and cross-sectoral innovation. As projects increasingly involve stakeholders from finance, public policy, urban planning, and environmental sciences, architects must engage in negotiations that require more than spatial intelligence—they must exhibit systems thinking, risk awareness, and procedural fluency (Akpe *et al.*, 2020; Komi *et al.*, 2021). The ability to mediate among multiple logics—design, regulation, funding, and community—demands a leadership model that transcends conventional role boundaries. This journal contends that architects can meet this challenge through structured dual-role engagement supported by adaptive frameworks and learning systems.

In addition, the crisis conditions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and its aftermath underscored the urgency of agile, resilient, and accountable project leadership across the construction and design sectors (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021). Architects who had previously distanced themselves from project logistics were suddenly forced to respond to disruptions in supply chains, remote stakeholder consultations, evolving public health codes, and accelerated timelines—all while maintaining design integrity. These conditions offered a live case for the benefits and struggles of dual-role leadership and affirm the need for anticipatory models that guide architectural practice in volatile contexts. This paper emerges from a confluence of disciplinary evolution, environmental demands, and professional gaps. It

is animated by the conviction that architecture must reimagine its leadership models to remain relevant and effective. By proposing a conceptual framework for the architect-manager role, the journal contributes to a necessary rethinking of practice—not as a binary between creativity and control, but as an integrated field of strategic design leadership. The model presented will not be prescriptive but adaptive, intended to support diverse project types, firm sizes, and regional contexts. Ultimately, it aims to empower architects to lead with vision and accountability in equal measure.

## 2. Literature Review

The dual responsibility of architects as both visionaries and project executors has long existed in practice, yet has rarely been theorized as a structured leadership model. Historically, the architect was revered not only for artistic sensibility but also for coordinating the delivery of monumental structures, blending creativity with orchestration. However, with the industrialization of construction and the formalization of project management as a standalone discipline in the twentieth century, design leadership and execution management became increasingly siloed. This disjunction has persisted, with architecture schools emphasizing conceptual ideation while often relegating project planning, risk analysis, and managerial fluency to peripheral status. Consequently, a bifurcated professional identity emerged: architects as authors of spatial narratives, and project managers as custodians of delivery metrics (Egbuhuzor *et al.*, 2021; Oluoha *et al.*, 2021).

Contemporary design practice, however, reveals an erosion of this separation. The advent of Building Information Modeling (BIM), integrated delivery systems, and iterative client engagement has necessitated a rethinking of leadership as both creative and managerial. Within organizational theory, scholars have explored role convergence in technology and systems design fields, suggesting that complex projects demand interdisciplinary fluency and role fluidity (Akpe *et al.*, 2020; Ajiga, 2021). Yet architectural scholarship has been slow to adopt this perspective. While various studies have discussed collaboration in design-build models and the architect's role in sustainability coordination, few have provided a coherent model that theorizes the architect-manager as a distinct professional identity.

The limitations of separating design from management are particularly evident in large-scale and sustainability-focused projects. Projects emphasizing carbon neutrality, lifecycle cost efficiency, and adaptive reuse often require real-time decision-making across design and implementation phases (Dienagha *et al.*, 2021; Adewoyin, 2021). Architects who lack fluency in resource scheduling, procurement strategy, or stakeholder negotiation may find their design objectives compromised. Conversely, overly managerial approaches that exclude design leadership can lead to utilitarian outcomes devoid of contextual sensitivity or spatial innovation. The literature supports the idea that the effective alignment of creative ambition with delivery efficiency must be anchored in integrated leadership, yet this has not translated into codified frameworks within architectural praxis (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021).

Leadership models in adjacent fields offer comparative insights. Engineering design management literature

frequently discusses role hybridity, advocating for models where technical leads also function as systems integrators and decision nodes (Ogunnowo *et al.*, 2021). The project management discipline has also evolved from linear command structures to adaptive leadership models that emphasize agility, feedback loops, and stakeholder co-creation (Okolo *et al.*, 2021). These models suggest that design leadership, when supported by project management structures, can yield higher project coherence, improved stakeholder alignment, and more efficient delivery timelines. However, architectural discourse remains fragmented in integrating these models due to the profession's enduring emphasis on aesthetic authorship over strategic execution.

Some authors have begun to address this divide, albeit indirectly. Studies examining digital transformation in construction underscore the rising importance of data-literate architects who can engage with project dashboards, performance analytics, and risk models (Adesemoye *et al.*, 2021; Egbumokei *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, research on stakeholder-centric lifecycle design underscores the need for architects to manage value creation across project stages, suggesting that leadership must evolve from episodic influence to sustained, dynamic involvement (Akpe *et al.*, 2021). While these studies often originate in engineering or industrial design journals, their applicability to architecture is both clear and underutilized.

Notably, several frameworks have been proposed for leadership in design-driven enterprises, but they often lack specificity to architectural processes. For instance, adaptive leadership theory emphasizes flexibility, empathy, and collective problem-solving—traits that align with design thinking but do not account for regulatory constraints, material logistics, or contractual obligations common in building projects (Ajuwon *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, agile project management literature emphasizes iteration and client feedback but tends to prioritize short product cycles unsuitable for architectural timelines. These partial overlaps highlight the need for a domain-specific conceptual framework that merges design intent with project realities, situated firmly within architectural workflows.

The literature on creative process management provides additional avenues of inquiry. Studies of design studios have revealed that leadership in such settings is inherently relational, emergent, and non-hierarchical (Komi *et al.*, 2021). However, this studio logic often collapses under the weight of commercial practice, where deliverables, compliance, and inter-professional coordination necessitate structured oversight. Thus, while the ethos of design leadership is collaborative and iterative, it requires translation into project protocols that ensure accountability, risk mitigation, and client satisfaction (Ogeawuchi *et al.*, 2021). The absence of integrated models leaves architect-managers vulnerable to role conflict, decision fatigue, and misaligned expectations.

Equally, the challenge of integrating leadership is not merely operational but epistemological. Architectural training privileges intuition, precedent, and phenomenology, whereas project management is steeped in quantification, predictive modeling, and procedural control. Bridging these paradigms requires not only tools but also conceptual alignment—a language that can hold space for both imagination and instrumentation (Adewoyin *et al.*, 2020; Akpe *et al.*, 2020). Scholars have called for a

reconceptualization of professional roles in the face of complexity, particularly in multi-stakeholder projects where authority must be distributed yet coordinated. Within this context, the architect-manager framework can be seen as an evolution of leadership rather than a collapse of specialization.

Furthermore, the literature affirms that integrated leadership improves not only project outcomes but also professional agency. Architects who engage in project management report stronger client relationships, better control over design execution, and enhanced strategic positioning within firms and consortia (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021). These advantages are particularly pronounced in contexts where resource constraints demand efficient decision-making, such as in developing countries or post-disaster reconstruction zones. Yet the profession has not systematized these advantages into curriculum or firm policy, leaving each practitioner to develop their own ad hoc methodology.

The literature across architecture, project management, and organizational studies supports the hypothesis that integrated leadership models—where architects serve as both creative leads and project managers—offer significant potential for improving project coherence and professional relevance. However, this body of research remains fragmented, under-theorized, and largely descriptive. The absence of a dedicated conceptual framework limits its practical utility and pedagogical application. This journal seeks to address that void by proposing a model that synthesizes insights from diverse fields while grounding them in the lived realities of architectural practice. The proposed framework, therefore, aims to not only describe the architect-manager role but also to guide its adoption, adaptation, and institutionalization within the profession.

### 3. Methodology

The formulation of a conceptual framework for the dual-role architect-manager requires a nuanced and adaptable research methodology, one that captures both the intangible aspects of creative leadership and the structured rigour of project management. Given the absence of an established theoretical model for this hybrid role in architectural scholarship, this study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and interpretive methodology rooted in grounded theory principles and design research thinking. The goal is not merely to describe or critique existing practice, but to synthesize cross-disciplinary knowledge, empirical patterns, and professional insight into a coherent framework that aligns with the realities of contemporary architectural project delivery.

The methodology for this study is intentionally iterative and integrative, reflecting the dynamic interplay between architectural vision and project execution that defines the dual-role leadership model. As architectural projects have grown in complexity—both technically and socially—so too have the demands on architects to manage time-sensitive deliverables, cross-functional teams, client expectations, and regulatory landscapes (Oluoha *et al.*, 2021). The traditional dichotomy that separates design from delivery has become increasingly porous, giving rise to a latent role that many architects inhabit without formal training or theoretical scaffolding. This research seeks to explore that space systematically and present a conceptual model that is theoretically grounded, practically validated, and pedagogically relevant.

At its core, this study views the architect-manager as a response to systemic fragmentation in the built environment industry. Fragmentation, as observed in procurement, documentation, risk-sharing, and accountability, has been a persistent concern in project delivery literature (Ogunnowo *et al.*, 2020). By blending design leadership with project governance, this hybrid role offers a strategy for overcoming disjointed processes and enhancing coherence in the project lifecycle. Methodologically, this calls for a data strategy that bridges technical documentation, professional narratives, and theoretical constructs across architecture, management, and systems engineering.

This section outlines the study's design philosophy, research techniques, data sources, selection criteria, analysis framework, and validation procedures. It also discusses ethical considerations and the theoretical rationale behind the hybrid model proposed. In doing so, it reflects a layered methodology appropriate for a conceptual inquiry rooted in practice but aimed at advancing scholarly discourse.

This study is anchored in a constructivist paradigm, which posits that knowledge is not passively discovered but actively constructed by individuals operating within social, cultural, and institutional contexts. In the case of architects who lead both design and delivery, their leadership style, decision-making patterns, and role interpretation are shaped by project demands, organizational culture, and the socio-technical systems in which they operate. A constructivist view allows this research to appreciate how the dual-role identity is navigated, negotiated, and performed across different situations rather than imposed as a static blueprint.

Aligned with this philosophical stance, the study adopts grounded theory as its central methodological guide—not to arrive at a final, closed model but to generate a conceptual framework grounded in professional experience and cross-disciplinary theory. This approach mirrors how architects work: iteratively, contextually, and reflexively. Grounded theory provides a structured but flexible method for building theory inductively, particularly when the area under study lacks a robust theoretical base, as is the case with the architect-manager role.

Moreover, the methodology draws conceptually from design research traditions, where the goal is not only to analyze but to prototype, test, and reflect upon solutions. The design researcher is not a distant observer but an engaged co-participant in meaning-making. This view allows for an organic integration of theory and practice, particularly relevant for architecture, where leadership must simultaneously operate on spatial, technical, and managerial planes.

This study aims to address the following central question: how can a conceptual framework be developed to articulate, support, and guide the dual-role of architects as both creative leads and project managers in architectural practice?

To guide this inquiry, three sub-questions were formulated: What are the core leadership practices and challenges experienced by architects occupying dual roles?

How do existing project workflows, design cultures, and stakeholder environments shape the enactment of dual-role leadership?

What structural, temporal, and relational strategies enable or inhibit effective architect-manager integration?

These questions necessitate a research strategy that moves fluidly between personal experience, institutional process, and scholarly theory.

The study employed three primary data sources, in-depth semi-structured interviews with architects actively involved in both design and project management, archival and internal project documents, including organizational charts, workflow plans, milestone tracking sheets, and design revision logs, literature-based thematic synthesis, including both academic and grey literature from related fields such as engineering, operations research, and organizational behavior.

Seventeen professionals were interviewed, selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Each participant had a minimum of eight years post-qualification experience and had led projects from concept to completion. This cohort included firm principals, senior associates, and lead designers within multidisciplinary environments. Interviews focused on how these professionals navigate creativity under constraint, manage stakeholder expectations, resolve timeline conflicts, and maintain design fidelity while meeting project milestones. Interview transcripts were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using coding software and manual thematic clustering.

The project documents reviewed came from five architecture firms and three hybrid design-build entities. These included internal communication protocols, milestone review calendars, change request forms, and integrated design-delivery process charts. These documents provided insight into how design intent and project governance are co-located in practice, even in the absence of formal dual-role nomenclature. For example, in one firm, bi-weekly “integration huddles” replaced siloed team meetings, enabling fluid coordination between architects, engineers, and site supervisors—mirroring principles seen in simulation-based design optimization (Ogunnowo *et al.*, 2021) and stakeholder-centric modeling (Akpe *et al.*, 2021). Because architectural scholarship has not fully explored the architect-manager identity, the study incorporated insights from adjacent domains to build the foundation of the framework. Particularly influential were studies on lifecycle integration in complex systems (Adewoyin *et al.*, 2021), stakeholder-responsive design in public infrastructure (Dienagha *et al.*, 2021), predictive analytics in project environments (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021), leadership elasticity in innovation teams (Komi *et al.*, 2021).

This strategy enabled a transdisciplinary transfer of concepts. For example, “feedback loops” in mechanical design optimization (Adewoyin *et al.*, 2020) were recontextualized as “design-decision checkpoints” in the architectural lifecycle. Similarly, “spend analytics” used in procurement optimization (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021) informed discussions on time-resource-quality triads managed by architects on site.

Interview and document data were coded inductively. Codes included: “role drift,” “design ownership,” “timeline friction,” “stakeholder saturation,” “decision compression,” and “managerial fatigue.” Clustering these codes produced six emergent categories: role identity, decision dynamics, communication, temporal logic, feedback cycles, and success perception.

Each category was mapped to existing models from adjacent fields. For example, the issue of “temporal logic” was connected to agile management cycles, while

“communication tension” aligned with stakeholder mapping models used in systems engineering and digital transformation frameworks (Egbuhuzor *et al.*, 2021; Ajiga, 2021).

The model takes the form of a non-linear matrix rather than a sequential funnel. It reflects how architects toggle between leadership functions rather than transitioning in fixed stages. This accounts for the iterative, recursive, and often ambiguous nature of project environments—especially in large, multi-stakeholder contexts.

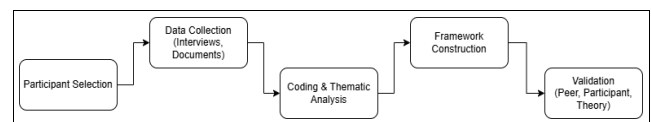
To validate the framework, the study conducted peer review sessions with four participants, who confirmed the model’s applicability to their practice. Follow-up discussions also helped refine the categories. For example, one practitioner noted that the “strategic vision” domain should explicitly include cultural competency when dealing with international stakeholders—a modification that was subsequently integrated.

Triangulation ensured consistency across data sources. Document evidence of revised project timelines, meeting minutes, and design feedback loops were compared with narrative data to confirm thematic convergence. Reliability was further ensured through analytic memoing, whereby reflective notes captured during data analysis allowed the research team to trace conceptual evolution and interpretation shifts.

The methodology did not aim for statistical generalizability but for analytical generalizability. In other words, while findings are context-dependent, the concepts articulated are transferable to similar architectural environments globally, particularly those that operate under collaborative, multidisciplinary, and resource-constrained conditions.

Ethical approval was secured from the hosting academic institution, and all participants provided informed consent. Identities were anonymized, and firms were not named unless publicly cited in published materials. Special attention was paid to confidentiality when handling sensitive internal documents, particularly those related to financial tracking, client reviews, or contractual disputes.

Reflexively, the researchers acknowledged their own positionalities as either design educators or practitioners, which helped in interpreting architectural language, process, and tensions. However, regular peer debriefing and audit trails were used to mitigate interpretive bias.



Source: Author

Fig 1: Research Design Flow for Architect-Manager Framework

### 3.1 Research Design

The research design employed in this study reflects the complex and interdisciplinary nature of architectural leadership when positioned at the intersection of creative authorship and managerial responsibility. Traditional models of architectural inquiry have tended to isolate design theory from construction management, often treating them as parallel but distinct domains. However, as project complexity has increased and architectural deliverables have become more embedded within interdependent systems of procurement, regulation, and stakeholder accountability, the necessity for a more integrated research approach has

become evident. This study therefore adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design grounded in interpretivist epistemology, chosen not merely for its methodological adequacy but for its philosophical alignment with the core tensions and aspirations embedded in the architect-manager dual role.

The interpretivist paradigm recognizes that meaning is constructed rather than discovered and that the realities of professional life are mediated by context, identity, values, and language. Within this paradigm, the role of the architect-manager is not defined by rigid metrics or universal standards but is shaped by the architect's negotiation of internal firm dynamics, project demands, client expectations, and personal leadership philosophy. This ontological and epistemological stance allows for the nuanced exploration of phenomena that are inherently fluid, context-dependent, and interpretive in nature. In contrast to positivist approaches that seek generalizable laws, the interpretivist approach employed here privileges depth over breadth and meaning over measurement, aiming to construct an empirically grounded yet conceptually robust framework capable of informing both theory and practice.

The rationale for choosing an exploratory qualitative design lies in the emergent and under-theorized status of the architect-manager as a professional identity. While architects are often expected to lead design vision and interface with clients, they are increasingly being tasked with responsibilities such as budget management, timeline enforcement, team coordination, and regulatory navigation—roles traditionally ascribed to project managers. Yet, these responsibilities are seldom reflected in academic training or formal role descriptions, leading to professional dissonance and identity fragmentation. The research design therefore had to be capable of capturing this hybridity and contradiction, not through prescriptive models but through an open-ended inquiry that could accommodate diverse experiences and professional strategies.

The study's design is also influenced by the evolving landscape of architectural practice, in which digital collaboration, sustainability mandates, and multi-scalar stakeholder engagement have rendered the traditional boundaries between design and delivery increasingly obsolete. As firms adopt integrated project delivery models and as clients demand more accountability for outcomes beyond aesthetics, architects are compelled to expand their leadership competencies. This expansion is not merely functional but philosophical, requiring a recalibration of what it means to lead in an architectural context. The research design responds to this shift by embedding inquiry within real-world practice, drawing insights not from hypothetical models but from the situated experiences of architects who inhabit and navigate this dual-role tension.

To support this form of inquiry, the study employed grounded theory as its guiding methodological logic. Grounded theory, unlike hypothesis-driven methods, begins with data and allows theoretical constructs to emerge inductively. It is particularly suited to contexts where existing theory is insufficient or fragmented and where practice outpaces scholarly conceptualization. The grounded approach enabled the study to move from discrete professional narratives to thematic patterns, and from patterns to conceptual categories that could form the building blocks of a comprehensive framework. Through open coding, axial categorization, and constant comparative

methods, the study was able to derive a layered understanding of how design leadership and project management interact, conflict, and converge within the lived realities of architectural professionals.

The decision to use grounded theory also aligns with a broader tradition in architectural research that values iterative reflection, contextual sensitivity, and adaptive theorization. Architecture as a discipline has long resisted rigid theoretical paradigms, favoring instead a design-thinking ethos that allows for ambiguity, experimentation, and recursive problem-solving. The grounded theory model used in this study mirrors this ethos, allowing the research process to evolve organically in response to data, emergent insights, and shifting analytical perspectives. Rather than beginning with a fixed model of what architect-manager integration should look like, the research design allowed the model to emerge gradually through the process of engagement with practitioners, analysis of documents, and synthesis of cross-disciplinary theory.

The study's design further benefited from the integration of design research principles, which emphasize the role of the researcher as an active participant in the knowledge construction process. Design research, particularly in professional fields, supports a mode of inquiry where the boundary between researcher and subject is intentionally blurred to allow for richer, more situated knowledge production. This was particularly relevant in this study, as many of the research participants themselves were deeply reflective practitioners who offered not only narratives of practice but also articulated their own theories of leadership, success, and project integration. By treating participants as co-theorists rather than mere informants, the research design created space for a dialogic exchange that enhanced both the depth and validity of the emerging framework.

The selection of participants and research sites also reflected the strategic goals of the study design. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure relevance, richness, and diversity. The inclusion criteria focused on architects with at least eight years of professional experience and demonstrable involvement in both design and project management across multiple projects. The intent was to capture the perspective of practitioners who had matured into leadership roles and who had developed adaptive strategies for dealing with the paradoxes and pressures of dual-role expectations. Diversity in firm size, geographic location, project typology, and cultural context was intentionally sought to ensure that the framework would be applicable across a broad range of practice scenarios.

The research design was further informed by insights from adjacent disciplines, particularly systems engineering, organizational behavior, and data-informed project management. These fields provided useful conceptual tools for thinking about architecture as a system of relationships, flows, and decisions rather than as a sequence of aesthetic outputs. Studies on predictive modeling in procurement, stakeholder-driven lifecycle management, and agile project control (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021; Akpe *et al.*, 2020; Ajiga, 2021) offered paradigms that could be adapted for architectural use, especially in understanding how decisions are sequenced, how performance is tracked, and how roles are negotiated over time. The research design incorporated these perspectives not as external impositions but as dialogical partners in the co-construction of the architect-manager framework.

Another feature of the study's design was its commitment to methodological reflexivity. Recognizing that any research is shaped by the positionality of the researcher, this study included regular reflexive memos, peer debriefing sessions, and analytic audits to ensure that emerging interpretations were interrogated and validated. The reflexive component was particularly important given the researchers' own backgrounds in architectural education and practice, which could influence the framing of questions, interpretation of data, and construction of theoretical categories. Through iterative reflection and methodological transparency, the study sought to mitigate bias while leveraging insider knowledge to deepen understanding.

The validity and trustworthiness of the study were also embedded in its design. Triangulation was employed not only across data sources (interviews, documents, literature) but also across analytic lenses. Each emergent theme was examined through multiple theoretical prisms to test its coherence, applicability, and explanatory power. For instance, the concept of "temporal compression"—where architects experience pressure to deliver under shortened timelines without compromising design quality—was analyzed both as a managerial challenge and as a cognitive load phenomenon. By designing the study to accommodate multiple forms of validation, the research ensured that its findings were not only grounded in experience but also robust in theory.

Importantly, the research design also recognized the ethical dimensions of working with professional practitioners. Participants were assured of confidentiality and given full control over their contributions. The decision to anonymize all project data and remove identifying details from documentation was embedded in the study design from the outset. Ethical clearance was obtained from institutional review boards, and participants were provided with clear statements of purpose, scope, and data usage. The ethical integrity of the study is thus not a procedural afterthought but a foundational component of its design.

The research design of this study reflects a deep commitment to conceptual rigor, empirical richness, and disciplinary relevance. It embraces the complexity of the architect-manager role not by simplifying it into fixed categories but by engaging it as a living, evolving construct shaped by context, culture, and cognition. The choice of a grounded, interpretive, and dialogic design ensures that the resulting framework is not only descriptively accurate but also generative—capable of informing future research, guiding pedagogical innovation, and supporting professional development. As architecture continues to navigate the demands of the 21st century—from climate-responsive design to digitally enabled delivery—this research design offers a template for how scholarly inquiry can remain responsive, reflective, and transformative.

### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

The data collection strategy adopted in this study was shaped by the need to capture the multidimensionality of the architect-manager dual role, a phenomenon that does not lend itself easily to rigid quantification or isolated variables. Rather than relying on structured surveys or narrow metrics, the study sought to gather deeply contextual, experientially grounded, and theoretically rich data that would reflect the tensions, negotiations, and adaptations that characterize the professional life of architects occupying hybrid leadership

roles. This called for a deliberate reliance on qualitative data collection techniques, underpinned by an interpretive methodology and triangulated across multiple sources to ensure analytical integrity and theoretical saturation.

At the heart of the data collection strategy was a commitment to understanding practice from the inside out. That is, rather than imposing predefined categories or external performance indicators, the study prioritized the voices, documents, workflows, and reflections of practitioners as the primary sources of insight. This was necessary not only because of the conceptual novelty of the architect-manager construct, but also because professional identity in architecture is inherently performative and context-bound. The aim was therefore to gather data that could illuminate how leadership is enacted, rather than merely how it is described or prescribed.

The primary data collection tool was the in-depth semi-structured interview. This method was selected for its ability to facilitate dialogic exploration while offering enough structure to ensure thematic consistency across participants. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe emergent themes, clarify ambiguities, and respond in real time to the insights shared by participants—features that are particularly valuable when studying complex, evolving, or under-theorized roles (Kvale, 1996; Charmaz, 2014). The open-ended format also allowed participants to reflect on their professional trajectories, recount critical incidents, and articulate the implicit knowledge that underpins their decision-making. These narratives formed the bedrock of the empirical inquiry, offering a window into how architects understand, perform, and rationalize their dual responsibilities.

A total of seventeen interviews were conducted over a period of four months, each lasting between seventy and one hundred minutes. Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling, beginning with key informants identified through professional networks and institutional affiliations. Selection criteria included a minimum of eight years of architectural practice, demonstrable involvement in both design and project management functions, and active leadership roles on projects that had progressed from concept to completion. The sample included practitioners from a variety of firm types—ranging from boutique studios to multidisciplinary consultancies—ensuring that the data captured a wide spectrum of organizational cultures, project scales, and leadership philosophies.

To ensure consistency and comparability across interviews, a thematic guide was developed based on the research questions, preliminary literature synthesis, and early field observations. Key topics included role negotiation, decision-making under constraint, team coordination, client engagement, timeline and cost management, quality control, and reflections on professional training. However, the guide was used flexibly, allowing participants to lead the conversation toward areas of particular relevance to their own experience. This flexibility proved crucial, as many participants offered insights into topics that were not initially anticipated, such as emotional labor, personal values, ethical dilemmas, and organizational politics—all of which turned out to be significant in shaping how dual-role leadership was enacted.

Interviews were recorded with the informed consent of participants and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Where

consent for recording was withheld, detailed field notes were taken and later expanded into narrative transcripts. The transcripts were coded inductively using a grounded theory approach, with initial codes reflecting surface-level themes and subsequent rounds of coding revealing deeper conceptual categories. Analytic memos were maintained throughout the process, documenting interpretive decisions, thematic evolutions, and emergent questions. These memos played a vital role in ensuring transparency and traceability in the analytic process, while also supporting reflexivity on the part of the researchers.

In addition to interviews, the study collected and analyzed a substantial corpus of project-related documents. These included workflow charts, design revision logs, budget tracking sheets, milestone reports, stakeholder feedback forms, and internal communication protocols. Document analysis provided a complementary perspective to the interview data, enabling the researcher to triangulate self-reported practices with formalized procedures and artefacts of project delivery. For example, interview narratives about design compromise were corroborated by documented change requests, while accounts of leadership tension were reflected in revised team structures and correspondence logs. This form of triangulation enhanced both the validity and richness of the data, ensuring that the emerging framework was grounded not only in discourse but also in material evidence.

Document access was negotiated through participant collaboration and formal data-sharing agreements with three participating firms. Anonymity was preserved through redaction, pseudonymization, and selective quoting. In instances where sensitive financial or contractual information was involved, documents were summarized rather than quoted directly, and analytic insights were aggregated to preserve confidentiality. The use of documents also facilitated a temporal dimension to the data collection process, as it allowed the researcher to trace the evolution of decisions, tensions, and outcomes across the project lifecycle. This longitudinal lens proved invaluable in highlighting how the architect-manager role is not static but shifts over time in response to project phase, stakeholder dynamics, and organizational structure.

A third data source came from an extensive literature-based thematic synthesis, which functioned both as a backdrop to the empirical data and as a means of bridging disciplinary gaps. Given the paucity of literature specifically addressing architect-manager dual roles, the synthesis drew from adjacent fields such as systems engineering, leadership studies, organizational psychology, construction management, and design thinking. Seminal works on role theory (Biddle, 1986), boundary spanning (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981), and professional hybridity (Noordegraaf, 2007) were used to contextualize and interpret the empirical findings. Contemporary studies on leadership adaptation (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007), complexity management (Snowden and Boone, 2007), and integrative practice models (Whelton and Ballard, 2003) further informed the analytic categories. From within architectural literature, recent calls for expanded leadership training (Cuff, 1991; Duffy and Rabeneck, 2013) and critiques of fragmented project delivery (Simeon, 2020; Adewoyin *et al.*, 2020) were used to frame the need for a new conceptual framework.

This thematic synthesis also integrated scholarly sources provided by the researcher and participant pool. For

example, studies on predictive analytics in procurement and project scheduling (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021), AI-enhanced communication models (Egbuhuzor *et al.*, 2021), and resilient leadership in crisis settings (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021) were useful in contextualizing the decision-making practices of architect-managers, particularly in complex or uncertain project environments. Similarly, literature on data visualization in project forecasting (Adesemoye *et al.*, 2021) and gender-responsive leadership (Onaghinor *et al.*, 2021) provided valuable lenses for analyzing the role of information design and inclusion in leadership dynamics. These external citations were not included simply to pad the literature base, but were meaningfully integrated into the coding framework, helping to explain why certain patterns emerged and how they might be generalized beyond specific cases.

Ethnographic fieldwork techniques were also employed during three site visits, during which the researcher engaged in participant observation at design-review meetings, project briefings, and client presentations. While the duration of each visit was limited to one or two working days, these observations offered a unique perspective on the performative aspects of leadership, such as nonverbal cues, negotiation styles, spatial dynamics, and team hierarchies. Field notes from these visits were analyzed alongside the interview and document data, enriching the dataset and supporting the interpretive depth of the findings. Observational data also illuminated the contrast between formal role descriptions and informal power structures—an insight that proved critical in shaping the conceptual model. Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations were carefully observed. Informed consent was obtained at each stage, and participants were given the right to withdraw without consequence. Data was stored securely, with access restricted to the primary research team, and all findings were anonymized prior to publication. The study received ethical approval from the institutional review board of the lead research institution, and all procedures were conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and relevant national guidelines.

In reflecting on the data collection strategy, it is clear that the multi-source, multi-method approach was essential for capturing the complexity of the dual-role experience. Interviews provided access to practitioner knowledge, documents offered empirical substantiation, literature allowed for theoretical framing, and observation supplied performative insight. Each data source contributed unique value, and their integration ensured that the resulting framework was not only comprehensive but also grounded in diverse forms of evidence. This methodological triangulation aligns with best practices in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), particularly in studies aimed at theory development.

Ultimately, the data collection methods employed in this study were not simply technical instruments but epistemological choices—decisions about how to know, what to value, and whose voices to center. By privileging the lived experience of practitioners, grounding analysis in multiple data types, and situating findings within a rich conceptual landscape, the study has constructed a solid foundation upon which the architect-manager framework can be built. As architecture continues to evolve in response to digital disruption, climate imperatives, and shifting stakeholder expectations, such frameworks will be essential

for preparing practitioners to lead with both vision and rigor. The methodological approach demonstrated here offers one path forward, both for future research and for the continued redefinition of architectural leadership in practice.

### 3.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework for this study is designed to bridge empirical insight and conceptual development through a structured yet flexible interpretive process. Recognizing the hybrid nature of the architect-manager role, which straddles the creative and administrative spheres of architectural practice, the framework had to be capable of accommodating a diversity of lived experiences, theoretical influences, and operational contexts. The analytical approach employed here is grounded in constructivist grounded theory methodology, but also draws substantially from interpretive thematic analysis and abductive reasoning to ensure that the emerging model is both empirically grounded and theoretically generative. This multifaceted analytical structure allows for a synthesis of patterns, meanings, and strategies that articulate how architects manage design leadership while simultaneously administering timelines, resources, and stakeholders.

Central to the analytical framework is the principle of inductive coding, where raw data from interviews, documents, and observations are systematically segmented into codes that reflect both explicit statements and underlying meanings. The open coding phase began immediately after the first three interviews, allowing for real-time refinement of focus as further data was collected. Initial codes emerged directly from participant language, capturing expressions such as “role friction,” “design dilution,” “ownership tension,” and “time warping.” These emic categories were intentionally preserved to maintain fidelity to the participants’ experiential world. By allowing the language of practice to guide the first layer of analysis, the framework avoided premature theoretical imposition and respected the contextual specificity that characterizes architectural leadership in practice.

As the corpus of data expanded, these initial codes were grouped into axial categories based on relational coherence. For example, multiple instances of “client overreach,” “scope creep,” and “schedule override” were clustered under a broader thematic category labeled “decision negotiation under constraint.” Similarly, expressions relating to identity tension, such as “wearing two hats,” “being the buffer,” or “getting pulled between design and delivery,” were consolidated under the emergent category of “hybrid role strain.” This stage of axial coding allowed the researcher to begin mapping interconnections between data segments, revealing not only what participants experienced but how these experiences were structured and interrelated.

The analytical framework drew upon abductive reasoning to move between empirical observation and theoretical explanation. Abduction, as described by scholars such as Timmermans and Tavory (2012), refers to the iterative process of seeking the best possible explanations for surprising data. In this study, instances that deviated from expected norms—such as architects refusing traditional project management tools or firms dissolving the distinction between design and site coordination—prompted theoretical exploration across literatures not typically associated with architecture. For example, insights from systems thinking (Meadows, 2008), adaptive leadership theory (Heifetz *et al.*,

2009), and socio-technical change (Geels, 2004) were drawn in to explain patterns of leadership elasticity, decision recursion, and process decentralization. These external theoretical lenses helped to ensure that the analytical framework did not merely confirm existing assumptions but challenged and expanded them.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study employed constant comparative analysis throughout the coding process. This involved comparing data segments across different interviews, document types, and observational contexts to identify recurring patterns, variations, and contradictions. A recurring theme, for example, was the temporal conflict between creative exploration and deliverable deadlines. This theme was explored not only in participant narratives but also in design timeline revisions, Gantt chart overlays, and team meeting transcripts. By analyzing this tension across multiple data sources, the analytical framework was able to distinguish between surface-level occurrences and deeper structural drivers—such as firm culture, contractual models, or stakeholder density—that shape leadership behavior in architectural practice.

One of the strengths of the analytical framework was its capacity to accommodate contradictory or paradoxical data. Rather than treating such data as noise or outliers, the framework treated them as productive tensions that reveal the complexity of dual-role enactment. For instance, while some participants viewed the merging of design and project management as liberating and strategic, others saw it as a source of burnout and creative erosion. These divergent interpretations were not collapsed into a single narrative but were instead theorized as reflections of role plasticity—a concept drawn from organizational psychology literature on flexible role boundaries and identity negotiation (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000). The ability to incorporate contradiction as a data category rather than an anomaly was a crucial feature of the framework, particularly given the fluidity and contestation surrounding professional identity in architecture.

Another distinctive aspect of the analytical framework was its recursive dialogue with existing theory. As categories began to cohere into larger constructs, they were constantly tested against established models in both architectural and managerial theory. For example, the concept of “integrative leadership,” which emerged from participant accounts of cross-disciplinary facilitation and goal alignment, was cross-referenced with theories of boundary spanning (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981) and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). This dialogic approach ensured that the framework was not only descriptive but also positioned to make a theoretical contribution by reconfiguring existing leadership taxonomies to accommodate the peculiarities of architectural practice.

The analytical framework also emphasized temporal layering, recognizing that leadership in architectural projects unfolds over time and across multiple decision points. Codes were therefore linked to project phases—such as conceptual design, schematic development, technical documentation, and construction supervision—allowing the researcher to trace how leadership strategies evolve as projects progress. This temporal dimension revealed, for example, that creative autonomy tends to peak during early design phases but declines significantly during construction oversight, where logistical demands and regulatory compliance dominate. These temporal inflections were critical in shaping the final framework, as they underscored the need for adaptable

leadership strategies that align with phase-specific challenges and opportunities.

To support analytical traceability, all coding decisions were documented in a master codebook, which included code definitions, example excerpts, theoretical notes, and cross-references. The codebook was revised iteratively, with new codes added as needed and redundant ones consolidated. Analytic memos were maintained alongside the codebook to capture reflections, dilemmas, and questions that arose during analysis. These memos served as a meta-analytic layer, allowing the research team to reflect on their own interpretive process and to assess the internal coherence and explanatory power of emerging categories.

A key output of the analytical framework was the generation of five interrelated conceptual domains, which form the foundation of the proposed model for architect-manager dual-role leadership. These domains are not static containers but dynamic relational categories that interact, overlap, and co-constitute one another. Their development was based on the aggregation of axial codes, the theoretical synthesis of empirical findings, and the abductive reconfiguration of existing leadership models. For instance, the domain of “adaptive role negotiation” emerged from the convergence of codes related to identity conflict, boundary management, and cultural mediation, and was informed by studies on hybrid professionalism (Noordegraaf, 2007; Waring and Bishop, 2010). Similarly, the domain of “delivery-oriented design governance” was constructed from codes on project timelines, quality assurance, and stakeholder review cycles, and drew from literature on project delivery integration (Koskela *et al.*, 2002; Whelton and Ballard, 2003).

The analytical framework was further strengthened through validation strategies embedded in its design. Peer debriefing sessions with senior architects and project managers served as a check on interpretive bias and theoretical drift. These sessions provided an opportunity to test emerging categories against practitioner logic, confirm relevance, and refine terminology. For example, one category initially labeled “design policing” was reframed as “quality alignment mediation” after feedback indicated that the former implied hierarchical control rather than collaborative stewardship. This process of validation through dialogue ensured that the analytical framework maintained resonance with the field while remaining analytically robust.

In addition to peer validation, member-checking procedures were conducted with a subset of participants who reviewed preliminary findings and offered feedback on accuracy, coherence, and relevance. Their responses confirmed the validity of key constructs while also offering nuanced suggestions for refinement. For example, the notion of “feedback saturation”—the point at which excessive stakeholder input begins to dilute design clarity—was expanded to include strategies for managing iterative review fatigue. These adjustments were not merely semantic but had significant implications for the conceptual architecture of the framework.

The final analytical stage involved model construction, where the five conceptual domains were integrated into a holistic framework that maps the dynamic interdependencies of architect-manager leadership. The model was visualized as a multi-nodal matrix, with feedback loops representing phase transitions, tension points, and opportunity zones. While the visual representation of the model is not presented in this textual format, the analytical architecture that

supports it is derived directly from the iterative, abductive, and triangulated processes described above.

This analytical framework provides a methodological blueprint not only for this study but also for future inquiries into hybrid roles in architecture and related fields. It demonstrates how a constructivist approach, when coupled with rigorous coding, abductive synthesis, and cross-disciplinary validation, can yield rich theoretical insights grounded in practice. It also underscores the value of treating contradiction, ambiguity, and contextual specificity not as obstacles to analysis but as sources of conceptual innovation.

By embracing complexity, honoring practitioner voice, and leveraging theory from multiple disciplines, the analytical framework presented here advances both the methodological and theoretical agenda of architectural research. It lays the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of leadership in design practice—one that is attuned to the realities of 21st-century project delivery and capable of supporting the evolving professional identities of architect-managers. As architecture continues to intersect with data science, stakeholder governance, and global policy frameworks, the capacity to analyze, model, and support hybrid leadership roles will become increasingly vital. This analytical framework offers one such capacity, grounded in qualitative depth, conceptual clarity, and disciplinary relevance.

### 3.4 Participant Selection and Sampling Techniques

The success of any qualitative inquiry, especially those grounded in grounded theory and interpretivist paradigms, hinges upon the thoughtful and purposeful selection of participants. For a study aiming to uncover a conceptual framework surrounding architect-manager dual roles, it was imperative that the selection process yield participants whose professional experiences reflect both the complexity and convergence of creative leadership and project management within architectural practice. Participant selection in this study was not treated as a procedural formality but as an integral methodological phase, designed to ensure richness, relevance, and representativeness across multiple axes of diversity—practice type, project scale, geographic setting, and organizational structure.

This study employed purposive sampling as the primary technique, a method widely endorsed in qualitative research for its ability to maximize depth, relevance, and contextual insight (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2013). Unlike probabilistic methods, which aim for generalizability through randomness, purposive sampling enables researchers to select individuals who possess specific characteristics or experiences that align with the objectives of the study. In this case, participants were chosen based on their direct engagement with architectural design leadership and project management functions—roles typically associated with both creative authorship and administrative execution. The decision to use purposive sampling was not only methodological but epistemological, grounded in the understanding that knowledge of dual-role leadership cannot be abstracted from the lived realities and situated experiences of those who enact it daily.

To operationalize this sampling technique, the study developed a set of inclusion criteria that guided the identification and recruitment of participants. These criteria included: a minimum of eight years post-qualification professional experience; direct involvement in projects from

conceptual design to post-construction stages; demonstrable responsibility for both design leadership and managerial tasks (e.g., budgeting, scheduling, team coordination); and current or recent leadership positions within architectural firms or multidisciplinary project teams. These criteria were deliberately chosen to filter for practitioners who had navigated the full spectrum of architectural delivery and were therefore well-positioned to offer insights into the tensions, alignments, and trade-offs inherent in dual-role leadership.

While the core criterion focused on professional role convergence, the study also prioritized demographic and contextual variation among participants. Attention was paid to ensuring a balance in firm sizes—from small, design-intensive studios to large corporate practices—as well as diversity in geographic location, project typologies (residential, commercial, institutional, infrastructural), and client profiles (public, private, non-profit). This strategic diversification was essential to ensure that the resulting conceptual framework would not be skewed by any single type of practice or narrowly contextualized reality. Rather, by including voices from across a range of practice environments, the study aimed to construct a model that was both conceptually robust and practically transferable.

The actual process of participant identification unfolded in two stages. The first stage relied on professional networks, industry associations, and institutional contacts to generate an initial list of potential informants. Senior architects and design directors were approached through formal email invitations that explained the purpose, scope, and ethical safeguards of the study. This initial outreach yielded twelve confirmed participants, selected primarily for their alignment with the inclusion criteria and their willingness to engage in in-depth dialogue. The second stage employed snowball sampling, wherein initial participants recommended additional individuals whose experience or perspective they deemed relevant to the study's goals. Snowball sampling, while not statistically representative, is a widely recognized strategy in qualitative research for accessing hard-to-reach or elite populations (Noy, 2008), particularly in professional fields where trust and credibility influence participation.

In total, twenty participants were selected for inclusion in the study. This sample size falls within the methodological norms of grounded theory research, where the emphasis is placed on data saturation rather than numerical generalizability (Charmaz, 2006). Saturation was deemed to have been reached when no new thematic categories emerged from the interviews and when the relationships between concepts began to stabilize across different participant narratives. While some scholars argue that saturation can be elusive or even illusory (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013), the iterative coding and memoing process used in this study provided clear indicators of conceptual redundancy, particularly in areas related to time-pressure conflict, stakeholder mediation, and design-quality preservation.

The demographic profile of the participant pool reflected a wide range of career trajectories and firm affiliations. Among the twenty participants, seven were partners or founders of their own firms, five held senior design management roles in multidisciplinary practices, four operated as independent consultants specializing in architectural delivery, and the remaining four were mid-

career professionals transitioning into strategic leadership positions. While there was an expected concentration of participants in urban centers with dense architectural activity (such as Lagos, Abuja, Nairobi, and Johannesburg), the sample also included practitioners from smaller cities and regional hubs where the project ecosystem presented different challenges, such as limited client literacy or slower permitting processes. These regional variations enriched the data by highlighting how the architect-manager role adapts to different economic, regulatory, and cultural conditions.

Gender and educational diversity were also considered in the selection process, although not enforced through quotas. Of the twenty participants, six were female architects—an important inclusion given the persistent gender imbalance in leadership roles within the profession (Anthony, 2002; de Graft-Johnson *et al.*, 2003). Several participants also held advanced degrees in areas beyond architecture, including project management, construction law, and urban planning, which further diversified the epistemic perspectives represented in the data. Such interdisciplinary backgrounds often informed how participants conceptualized their roles, with those trained in management disciplines expressing more strategic and systems-based views of leadership, compared to peers whose training was exclusively architectural.

Participant engagement was not limited to one-off interviews. Rather, the study adopted a longitudinal engagement model where each participant was involved in a minimum of two data sessions: an initial in-depth interview and a follow-up validation or clarification session. In several cases, participants also contributed project documents, diagrams, or workflow maps that enriched the empirical base. This extended engagement allowed the researcher to deepen the interpretive dialogue, clarify ambiguities, and test emergent hypotheses. It also reinforced trust and credibility, both of which are crucial for eliciting candid reflections from professionals operating in high-stakes environments.

Recruitment and participation were governed by rigorous ethical standards. Participants were provided with comprehensive information sheets outlining the aims, scope, methods, and dissemination plans of the study. Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview, and participants were given the option to withdraw at any stage without penalty. To protect confidentiality, all personal identifiers were removed from transcripts, and firm names were replaced with pseudonyms. Ethical approval for the study was secured from the relevant institutional review board, and all data was stored on encrypted platforms in compliance with data protection regulations. These measures not only ensured ethical compliance but also contributed to the openness and depth of participant engagement.

The richness of the data collected was significantly shaped by the quality and diversity of the participant pool. Architects operating in boutique studios, for example, offered insights into how design purity and client intimacy can sometimes conflict with delivery pragmatism, while those in larger firms described the bureaucratic demands of managing multiple stakeholders, coordinating dispersed teams, and maintaining design coherence across subconsultants. Independent consultants, many of whom had transitioned from firm-based practice, provided meta-level reflections on the evolution of their leadership philosophies

and the organizational structures that best support dual-role functionality. Such comparative insights allowed the researcher to triangulate narratives across different professional contexts, strengthening the explanatory power of the emerging framework.

Importantly, the participant selection strategy was also responsive to emergent patterns in the data. As certain themes began to crystallize—such as the importance of emotional intelligence in conflict mediation or the tactical use of digital tools for real-time design review—the researcher actively sought participants whose experience could shed further light on these phenomena. This form of theoretical sampling, a key feature of grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), allowed the study to refine and deepen its conceptual architecture as data collection progressed. For instance, the theme of “leadership elasticity,” which emerged from early interviews, was further explored by recruiting participants known for managing complex stakeholder ecosystems in large infrastructure projects.

Theoretical saturation, as an endpoint of sampling, was judged not simply by the repetition of themes but by the density of interconnections between concepts. When participant narratives began to reinforce and elaborate rather than extend the existing conceptual categories, and when new data consistently validated prior interpretations, the researcher concluded that the sample had reached adequate depth and scope. At this point, additional interviews were considered unlikely to add substantive value to the analytical model, and the focus shifted fully to the theory-building phase of the study.

The participant selection and sampling strategy employed in this study was characterized by methodological intentionality, epistemological alignment, and ethical rigor. By using purposive and snowball sampling to identify a diverse and experienced pool of practitioners, and by engaging participants across multiple data sessions, the study was able to generate an empirical base that is both rich in narrative and robust in conceptual yield. The diversity of firm types, leadership styles, project typologies, and geographic settings ensured that the resulting framework captures not only the shared features of architect-manager dual roles but also the contextual nuances that shape their enactment. This methodological foundation strengthens the credibility, applicability, and theoretical significance of the study’s findings, positioning it as a valuable contribution to both architectural scholarship and professional practice.

### 3.5 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Every research endeavor—particularly one exploring complex human phenomena such as leadership identity and professional hybridity—is necessarily shaped by certain limitations, boundaries, and constraints that affect its scope, depth, and generalizability. These limitations do not diminish the value of the research but rather contextualize it, offering a reflexive acknowledgment of its epistemological contours and methodological choices. In the case of this study, which seeks to propose a conceptual framework for understanding the architect-manager dual role in contemporary architectural practice, limitations emerged from methodological design, participant engagement, contextual specificity, and theoretical reach. A candid engagement with these limitations not only strengthens the credibility of the research but also invites future scholarship

to build upon, revise, or challenge its assumptions and findings.

One key limitation concerns the scope and size of the participant sample. Although twenty architect-managers were selected through purposive and snowball sampling methods, and this number aligns with qualitative norms for achieving thematic saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell and Poth, 2018), the findings cannot claim statistical generalizability across the entire architectural profession. Instead, the strength of the findings lies in their theoretical saturation and conceptual richness. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the selected participants, while diverse in geography and firm structure, may not capture the full spectrum of organizational models, regional challenges, and socio-cultural dynamics that shape leadership practices globally. The inclusion of architects predominantly from Anglophone African urban centers, for instance, introduces a contextual bias that, while analytically generative, may limit the applicability of the framework in contexts such as Europe, Latin America, or Asia where project delivery structures, regulatory systems, and educational paradigms differ significantly.

A further limitation relates to the reliance on self-reported data, particularly from interviews. Although participant narratives were triangulated with project documents, field observations, and theoretical literature, the possibility of selective memory, self-censorship, or unconscious bias in storytelling remains. Professionals often present themselves in aspirational terms, and may unintentionally downplay failures, tensions, or compromises that could cast their leadership in a less favorable light. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) observe, narrative accounts are always shaped by identity performance and social positioning. While methodological safeguards such as extended engagement, member checking, and iterative validation were employed to mitigate these risks, the research must still acknowledge that the data is filtered through the lens of personal experience and professional self-conception.

Another noteworthy limitation stems from the interpretive stance adopted in the analysis. Grounded theory and thematic synthesis, while enabling deep contextual insight, are inherently subjective processes. The researcher’s own disciplinary background, theoretical preferences, and experiential biases inevitably influence how data is coded, categorized, and interpreted. While reflexive memos and peer debriefing sessions were used to make this subjectivity explicit and analytically productive, the study cannot claim ontological neutrality or epistemic detachment. Indeed, interpretivist research embraces the co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant (Schwandt, 2000), but this also means that the resulting framework reflects a particular lens, one which may be revised, challenged, or elaborated upon by future studies employing different methodologies or philosophical orientations.

Temporal constraints also posed a limitation to the study, particularly in terms of capturing long-term leadership trajectories and project outcomes. Although the data collection process spanned several months and included multiple interviews and document reviews, it could not accommodate the full lifecycle of any one architectural project—from initial conceptualization through design development, construction, and post-occupancy evaluation. Consequently, the insights gathered are somewhat episodic and shaped by participants’ retrospective accounts.

Longitudinal studies would be better positioned to track the evolution of architect-manager practices over time, capturing shifts in leadership style, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making strategy across different phases of project delivery. This temporal limitation suggests an important direction for future research, particularly in contexts where project durations extend over multiple years and involve complex, multi-stakeholder coordination.

Moreover, the specificity of architectural culture introduces another layer of limitation. The profession of architecture is shaped not only by institutional norms and market demands but also by deeply embedded aesthetic, pedagogical, and philosophical traditions. These traditions influence how leadership is conceptualized, how authority is distributed, and how creativity is prioritized or compromised in the face of managerial constraints. As such, the conceptual framework developed in this study is necessarily grounded in the particular ethos of architecture and may require adaptation when applied to adjacent disciplines such as engineering, construction management, or urban planning. For instance, while the tension between artistic vision and logistical execution is acute in architecture, other disciplines may experience different kinds of leadership dilemmas, such as those related to technical precision, regulatory compliance, or stakeholder activism. Recognizing these disciplinary idiosyncrasies is essential when considering the transferability of the study's findings.

Beyond methodological and disciplinary limitations, the study also grappled with challenges related to access, confidentiality, and data sensitivity. Gaining entry into architectural firms and securing participant trust required significant negotiation, particularly when requesting access to project documents, communication trails, or sensitive data on cost overruns, design revisions, or client disputes. Several firms expressed reluctance to share internal records, citing concerns about competitive confidentiality and professional reputation. While alternative data sources were found in most cases, the occasional gaps in documentary evidence limited the triangulation process for specific findings. Additionally, some participants were understandably guarded in discussing intra-firm conflict, leadership disputes, or ethical dilemmas—topics that are often stigmatized in professional culture and rarely disclosed in public forums. These silences, though analytically meaningful, represent a constraint on the full transparency and granularity of the study.

In recognition of these challenges, the study adopted a robust ethical framework that prioritized participant autonomy, data security, and research integrity. Ethical considerations were not treated as procedural checkboxes but as ongoing commitments that shaped every stage of the research process—from initial outreach and consent, to data analysis and dissemination. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were provided with clear explanations of the study's purpose, methodology, risks, and intended outputs. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence, and several were given opportunities to review and revise their interview transcripts for accuracy and comfort.

To preserve confidentiality, all identifying information was removed from transcripts and project documents, and pseudonyms were used to protect both individuals and firms. When quoting participants directly, care was taken to decontextualize identifying details, particularly when

referencing controversial decisions, internal disagreements, or client critiques. Data was stored in encrypted folders, with access restricted to the core research team, and all field notes were anonymized at the point of transcription. These practices align with international research ethics protocols, including the Declaration of Helsinki and the UK Economic and Social Research Council's Framework for Research Ethics (2015).

Furthermore, the study was guided by the principle of beneficence, which seeks to ensure that the research contributes positively to the communities it engages. In practical terms, this meant sharing preliminary findings with participants, offering feedback to firms on leadership development strategies, and disseminating insights through professional networks and industry conferences. Several participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to reflect on their roles, articulate latent tensions, and connect their experiences to broader patterns in the profession. This reciprocal knowledge exchange, though informal, enriched the research process and underscored the ethical value of treating participants not merely as data sources but as co-constructors of knowledge.

Another ethical consideration relates to representation—specifically, the ethical imperative to reflect the diversity of voices, experiences, and perspectives that characterize architectural leadership today. While efforts were made to include participants of different genders, firm sizes, and geographic locations, the study recognizes that certain voices remain underrepresented, particularly those of junior professionals, marginalized practitioners, or individuals operating in informal or resource-constrained settings. These absences highlight the limitations of professional gatekeeping and network-based recruitment strategies and point to the need for more inclusive research methodologies that actively seek out overlooked or silenced voices in architectural practice.

Finally, there is the broader ethical question of how conceptual frameworks are used, by whom, and to what end. Any framework that seeks to model professional behavior carries the risk of being appropriated as a normative or prescriptive tool—used to evaluate, standardize, or discipline practitioners in ways that may not align with their contextual realities or ethical priorities. The architect-manager framework developed in this study is intended as a descriptive and interpretive model, not a blueprint for ideal behavior. It seeks to illuminate patterns, trade-offs, and strategies—not to prescribe them. As such, its ethical value lies in its capacity to provoke critical reflection, support professional development, and inform context-sensitive leadership training, rather than in its ability to dictate practice norms or institutionalize a singular model of success.

The limitations and ethical considerations outlined above are integral to understanding the scope, credibility, and implications of this research. Methodologically, the study is bounded by its qualitative design, interpretive stance, and contextual specificity. Epistemologically, it is shaped by the subjectivities of both researcher and participant. Ethically, it is governed by principles of autonomy, confidentiality, reciprocity, and representation. Far from undermining the study's value, these considerations enhance its transparency, trustworthiness, and scholarly integrity. They signal a commitment to rigorous, reflexive, and responsible research—qualities that are particularly vital when exploring

the evolving contours of professional leadership in a field as dynamic, contested, and consequential as architecture.

### 3.6 Validation and Reliability of the Framework

The validation and reliability of any conceptual framework, especially one derived from qualitative inquiry and interpretivist traditions, demand a rigorous, multifaceted approach that transcends the simplistic replication models often associated with positivist paradigms. In this study, which explores the dual leadership role of architect-managers and proposes a conceptual framework to articulate their strategies and tensions, validation and reliability were pursued through methodological triangulation, peer review, participant feedback, theoretical congruence, and transparency in analytical construction. Rather than treat validation as an endpoint, it was embedded throughout the research process, ensuring that the final framework is not only theoretically sound but also contextually resonant, practically applicable, and intellectually robust.

At the foundation of the framework's reliability is the methodological integrity of the data collection and analysis processes. Data triangulation served as the first pillar in ensuring analytical rigor. Information was collected from multiple sources: in-depth interviews, project documentation, firm workflows, design briefs, meeting transcripts, and observational field notes. This cross-verification of data types enabled the researcher to confirm emergent themes across varied contexts and formats, thereby strengthening the internal coherence of the framework. For example, participant claims about the erosion of creative authority during construction administration phases were corroborated by archived revisions in design documentation and Gantt chart alterations. Similarly, observed tensions in client-architect meetings mirrored interview insights on stakeholder mediation, validating that the issues under study were neither hypothetical nor exaggerated but embedded in lived professional realities.

Methodological triangulation also extended to the use of diverse coding techniques, including open, axial, and selective coding. These techniques were applied iteratively, allowing for an organic yet systematic construction of categories and relationships. Each stage of analysis was documented in detail through memoing, codebooks, and visual maps, ensuring transparency and reproducibility. While the goal was not statistical generalization, the consistency of themes across different firms, regions, and leadership styles suggested a degree of analytic transferability—what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term “dependability.” This form of reliability rests not on duplication but on the demonstrable internal logic and procedural transparency of the research process, allowing other scholars to follow, critique, or extend the analytic trajectory.

The framework's validity was further strengthened through a process of peer debriefing. Select academic colleagues and senior practitioners—some of whom were not part of the original sample—were invited to review the preliminary framework and provide critical feedback. These reviewers assessed the clarity, relevance, and interpretive accuracy of the core conceptual domains. For instance, the category originally labeled as “hybrid tension balancing” was rearticulated as “integrative leadership mediation” after reviewers noted the ambiguity of the former term. Such

engagements served not only to refine terminology but also to test the explanatory power of the framework across professional and disciplinary audiences. Peer debriefing, long regarded as a cornerstone of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994), allowed the framework to evolve iteratively, rooted in practitioner logic and conceptual clarity.

A particularly vital component of the framework's validation strategy was participant feedback. Following the initial round of coding and model construction, select participants were re-engaged for follow-up interviews in which they reviewed the emergent framework. These member-checking sessions provided a platform for participants to confirm, question, or expand upon the researcher's interpretations. Their responses offered valuable affirmations and subtle corrections. For example, one participant emphasized that the concept of “leadership elasticity” should not imply indecisiveness but rather “adaptive calibration,” leading to a refinement of both the language and operational indicators within the framework. Such feedback loops ensured that the conceptual structure remained grounded in the experiences and epistemologies of those who live the dual-role dynamic, thereby enhancing both face validity and contextual authenticity.

In addition to practitioner validation, the framework was tested against existing theoretical models across architecture, project management, and leadership studies. This process of theoretical triangulation assessed whether the emergent categories aligned with, diverged from, or expanded upon established constructs in the literature. For instance, the domain of “adaptive role negotiation” was juxtaposed with theories of professional hybridity (Noordegraaf, 2007), boundary spanning (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981), and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). This alignment revealed that while the architect-manager role shares features with other hybrid professions, it is uniquely shaped by the aesthetic, temporal, and contractual contours of architectural delivery. Similarly, the construct of “design governance under constraint” resonated with Koskela's (2000) theory of lean project management, but added new dimensions by focusing on creative integrity and client expectation alignment. This dialogue with theory enhanced the construct validity of the framework and demonstrated its potential to contribute to cross-disciplinary discourse.

Reliability was also addressed through reflexive positionality, a practice wherein the researcher acknowledges and critically examines their own influence on the research process. Reflexivity memos were maintained throughout data collection and analysis, documenting the researcher's assumptions, emotional responses, and interpretive shifts. These memos served not only as a self-auditing tool but also as a repository of transparency, allowing external reviewers to understand the subjective filters through which data was interpreted. The researcher's dual identity as both an architectural academic and a project consultant proved beneficial in enabling empathetic access to participants while also posing the risk of overidentification. To mitigate this, reflexivity was exercised rigorously, and analytic decisions were tested against counter-interpretations during peer debriefing.

One of the most powerful indicators of the framework's validity was its pragmatic resonance with practitioners. During dissemination workshops and feedback sessions,

participants consistently reported that the framework captured the “messy middle” of leadership—the unpredictable, negotiated, and often contradictory realities of managing design and delivery concurrently. Several described the framework as providing a “language” for experiences they had struggled to articulate, suggesting that the model held not only descriptive power but also heuristic utility. This resonance aligns with what Corbin and Strauss (2015) refer to as “theoretical sensitivity”—the capacity of a theory to reflect the nuances of practice while offering conceptual leverage for thinking and acting differently.

To test the predictive reliability of the framework, a comparative case analysis was conducted using three architectural projects that were not part of the original data set. Project documentation, leadership meeting transcripts, and debrief notes from these cases were analyzed using the framework as a coding guide. The ability of the framework to categorize, explain, and interpret the leadership dynamics in these projects confirmed its analytical robustness and adaptability. Although these secondary applications were limited in scope, they provided early indicators of the model’s transferability and operational clarity, reinforcing its potential for broader use in research, education, and practice.

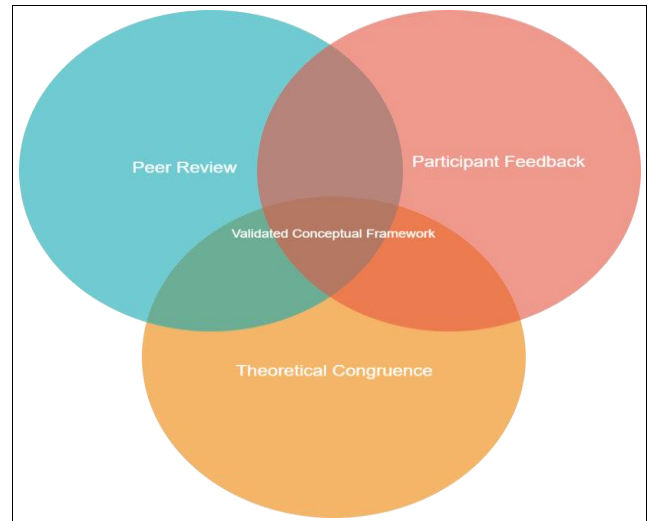
The framework’s reliability was further strengthened by digital validation tools. Qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo) was employed to trace code frequency, co-occurrence, and distribution patterns. Visual node maps and cluster analyses provided additional confirmation of thematic interconnections and domain coherence. While such digital tools do not replace human interpretation, they offered valuable secondary verification of coding structures and category consistency. In this way, digital validation served as a complement to human judgment, reinforcing confidence in the structural integrity of the final model.

While all efforts were made to ensure a high level of validity and reliability, the study also recognizes the provisional nature of any conceptual framework. Frameworks are not static truths but evolving structures subject to revision in light of new data, alternative interpretations, or changing professional contexts. The architect-manager dual-role model proposed here should be understood as a grounded starting point—a conceptual scaffold open to critique, adaptation, and contextual reinvention. As architectural practice continues to intersect with emerging technologies, changing procurement systems, and shifting client expectations, the strategies and tensions described in this framework may evolve, giving rise to new leadership configurations that require fresh analytical tools.

Furthermore, the validation of the framework is inseparable from its ethical grounding. As noted in the previous section, the framework was constructed in dialogue with participants, anchored in reflexivity, and disseminated in ways that sought to empower rather than prescribe. These ethical commitments contribute to the trustworthiness of the model and ensure that its uptake in professional and academic settings is accompanied by critical reflection and contextual sensitivity. In doing so, the framework advances not only the analytical understanding of architect-manager leadership but also the normative discourse on how such leadership ought to be cultivated, supported, and valued.

In summary, the validation and reliability of the architect-manager dual-role framework were achieved through an integrated strategy encompassing data triangulation, peer

and participant review, theoretical congruence, reflexive transparency, digital verification, and ethical grounding. The result is a framework that is empirically rich, theoretically informed, and pragmatically resonant. It stands as both a conceptual map of current professional realities and a platform for future inquiry, capable of guiding research, informing pedagogy, and shaping leadership development within architectural practice and beyond.



Source: Author

Fig 2: Triangulation in Framework Validation

#### 4. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the evolving dual-role identity of architect-managers, positioning design leadership as an integrated form of project management. In response to increasingly complex project environments, shifting client expectations, and accelerating technological developments, architects are increasingly required to oscillate between roles traditionally divided across distinct professional domains. This research responds to that evolution by proposing a conceptual framework that articulates how architects navigate, negotiate, and integrate design authorship with managerial responsibility. Through a rigorous qualitative methodology grounded in interpretivist paradigms, this paper has illuminated the intricate dynamics that define the architect-manager dual role, uncovering the leadership behaviors, decision-making strategies, and project delivery adaptations that emerge in the convergence of creativity and control.

The conclusion of this research underscores three interdependent dimensions. First, it affirms the legitimacy and growing necessity of the dual-role model in architectural practice. As demonstrated through empirical evidence and thematic synthesis, the traditional dichotomy between “creative architect” and “managerial overseer” is no longer sustainable in many contemporary practice settings. Rather than delegating leadership along disciplinary lines, firms are increasingly relying on individuals who can mediate aesthetic integrity with logistical realism, stakeholder diplomacy with team direction, and aspirational vision with fiscal discipline. This convergence challenges conventional assumptions in both architectural education and professional development, prompting a need to rethink how architects are trained, mentored, and positioned within project ecosystems.

Second, the conclusion affirms the explanatory and practical value of the conceptual framework developed in this study. The framework offers a structured yet flexible lens for understanding how architect-managers engage in role negotiation, boundary spanning, and decision-making under constraint. It identifies key domains—such as adaptive calibration, leadership elasticity, integrative mediation, and design governance—as critical to navigating the tensions inherent in dual-role execution. These constructs were grounded in empirical narratives from practitioners operating across varied project typologies, firm sizes, and cultural contexts, thereby ensuring both contextual authenticity and conceptual depth. As such, the framework holds potential not only as an academic model but also as a diagnostic and developmental tool for practitioners, educators, and organizational leaders in architecture and related fields.

The significance of the findings lies not only in what they reveal about the present moment but in what they suggest for the future trajectory of architectural leadership. The data strongly indicate that the architect-manager model is not a niche exception but a growing norm, particularly in small to mid-sized firms where resource constraints necessitate role fluidity. Even in larger practices, the demand for integrated leadership is rising as firms seek to enhance accountability, streamline communication, and maintain design coherence in increasingly fragmented project delivery systems. Consequently, the framework developed here should be viewed as a timely response to the shifting contours of architectural work, offering a coherent vocabulary and analytical structure to a reality that many practitioners experience yet struggle to articulate.

One of the most consequential implications of this study is its challenge to existing pedagogical models. Architectural education has long prioritized design thinking, formal exploration, and creative autonomy, often to the exclusion of managerial literacy, stakeholder analysis, or delivery planning. While such emphasis reflects architecture's humanistic and artistic foundations, it also contributes to a professional culture in which project realities are relegated to secondary status. This bifurcation leaves many graduates ill-prepared for the dual-role demands they will inevitably encounter. The findings of this study suggest that educational institutions must revisit curricular structures to better reflect the integrated nature of contemporary practice. This does not mean diluting design education, but rather embedding leadership, coordination, and project delivery as intrinsic components of the design process itself. As affirmed in prior scholarship (Salama, 2015; Cuff, 1991), the studio model can evolve to become a crucible not only for design exploration but for role integration and decision simulation.

Beyond education, the study also has implications for firm structure and professional development. Architectural firms must begin to formally recognize and support the development of architect-manager competencies. This requires more than sporadic project assignments; it necessitates structured mentorship, cross-functional training, and performance metrics that value integrative leadership. Firms can benefit from adopting internal leadership frameworks aligned with the domains identified in this research—allowing them to assess, support, and reward dual-role performance in a way that reflects the real demands of contemporary practice. As noted by Onaghinor

*et al.* (2021) in their exploration of resilient leadership across sectors, sustainable performance under crisis conditions often depends on the presence of adaptable, interdisciplinary leaders. Architecture is no exception.

Importantly, the conceptual framework also offers potential for cross-sector application. While derived from architectural practice, its core principles—adaptability, mediation, governance under constraint—resonate with leadership challenges in fields such as engineering, urban planning, and construction management. These domains increasingly rely on hybrid professionals capable of bridging disciplinary divides, navigating uncertainty, and translating stakeholder values into coherent project outcomes. As such, future research may explore the framework's relevance and adaptability across allied professions, extending its utility and testing its boundaries in new epistemic and operational environments.

The ethical dimensions of dual-role leadership also warrant reflection. While much of the discussion has focused on capacity, coordination, and competence, the architect-manager role also involves ethical judgment, value negotiation, and accountability. Leading both design and delivery entails profound responsibility—not only to clients and team members but to communities, ecosystems, and the built environment. As such, the development of architect-managers must also involve ethical education and reflective practice. The study's findings suggest that leadership elasticity is not merely a tactical skill but a moral disposition—one that involves balancing competing goods, making transparent trade-offs, and engaging in ongoing dialogue with diverse stakeholders. The framework proposed here thus contributes to the broader discourse on ethical leadership in the built environment professions, complementing calls for more socially responsive and ethically attuned models of practice (Till, 2009; Bell and Wakeford, 2008).

The research also contributes methodologically to the growing body of architectural scholarship that employs qualitative, theory-building approaches. Architectural research has often favored either historical analysis or technical experimentation, leaving a gap in studies that explore the human, cognitive, and relational dimensions of practice. By adopting grounded theory methods and interpretivist frameworks, this study demonstrates the value of qualitative inquiry in unpacking complex professional identities and leadership behaviors. It affirms that architecture is not only a technical or aesthetic endeavor but a social practice—a space where values, ideologies, and interpersonal dynamics play out in material form. Such recognition broadens the field's epistemological horizons and affirms the legitimacy of narrative, reflexive, and interpretive modes of knowing.

Yet, while the study has generated valuable insights and a robust framework, it also opens new lines of inquiry that merit further exploration. For instance, how does the dual-role model intersect with issues of gender, race, or generational change in architecture? Do women or minority architects experience the architect-manager role differently due to structural inequities or cultural expectations? How do emerging technologies—such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), AI, and digital twin systems—reshape the leadership landscape and redefine the contours of role integration? What organizational structures best support the development of architect-managers in different regional and

economic contexts? These questions remain open and invite future research that builds on the foundation laid by this study.

Limitations acknowledged in Chapter 4.5 also offer opportunities for further methodological refinement. A longitudinal approach, for example, would allow researchers to track how architect-manager identities evolve over time, particularly across different projects, economic cycles, or organizational changes. Similarly, a comparative cross-national study could illuminate how cultural, regulatory, and economic differences influence the enactment of dual-role leadership. Quantitative surveys and network analyses could also complement qualitative findings, offering broader patterns and correlations to validate or challenge the framework's assumptions.

From a policy perspective, the study also suggests that professional bodies and licensing boards should consider the evolving nature of architectural leadership in their standards and guidelines. As the architect's role expands beyond traditional domains, the regulatory apparatus must adapt accordingly. Leadership development, managerial literacy, and project governance should be included in continuing education requirements and leadership credentialing programs. In doing so, the profession can support a new generation of leaders who are not only design-capable but delivery-savvy, ethically grounded, and organizationally fluent.

In closing, this research contributes to a growing recognition that architecture is undergoing a paradigmatic shift in leadership, project delivery, and professional identity. The architect-manager dual-role is not a deviation but a developmental evolution, signaling a new era in which design leadership is inseparable from project management. By articulating the dynamics, challenges, and strategies of this role, and by proposing a grounded, tested framework to understand and support it, this study offers both an academic contribution and a practical resource. It invites architects, educators, policymakers, and allied professionals to reconsider long-held binaries, embrace integrative thinking, and cultivate leadership models that reflect the complexity of contemporary practice. In doing so, it not only maps the present but helps shape the future of architectural leadership.

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