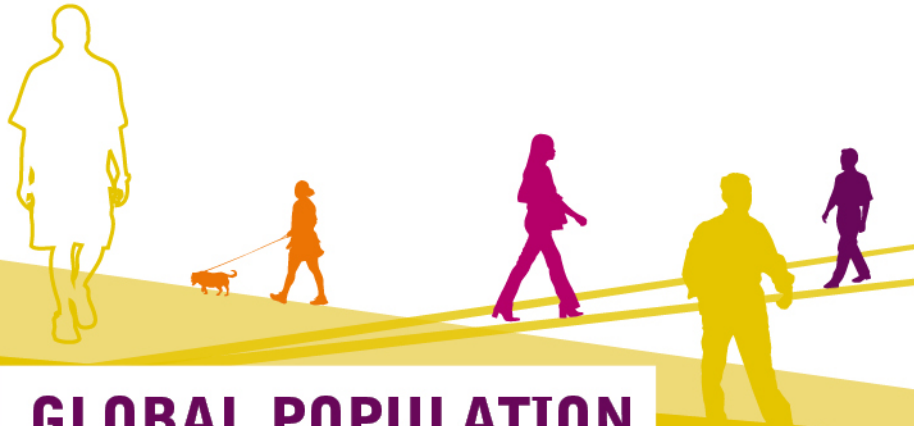


# THE FUTURE FOR ARCHITECTS?



RIBA



"IN 10 YEARS WE PROBABLY WILL NOT CALL OURSELVES AN ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE, IT WILL BE SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY."

ARCHITECT

Small metropolitan boutique practice

## GLOBAL POPULATION GROWTH 2000-2050



# 70%

WILL LIVE IN URBAN AREAS BY 2050

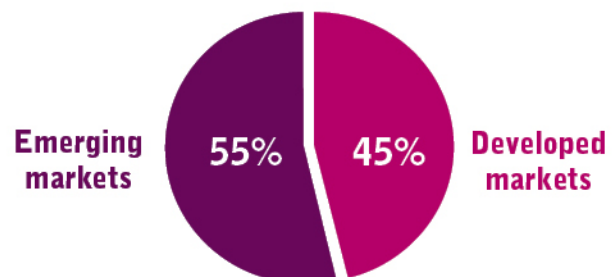


## INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION GROWTH



2010 - 2020

## SHARE OF GLOBAL CONSTRUCTION



BY 2020

MORE PEOPLE, BIGGER CITIES, MORE CONSTRUCTION...

**Wednesday 22nd June 2011**

## **RIBA Building Futures debate 'The Future for Architects?'**

**RIBA Hub, Portland Street, Manchester**

**Attendees: Dickon Robinson (Building Futures / Chair), Professor Tom Jefferies (Manchester School of Architecture), Gavin Elliott (BDP), Cristina Cerulli (Studio Polpo and Sheffield School of Architecture), Ben Davies (The Neighbourhood), Dele Adeyemo (Pidgin Perfect), Luke Butcher.**

**Dickon Robinson:** Thank you all for coming this evening, fantastic. I've been asked to first point out, in case anybody is not aware of it, this is the RIBA North West Hub and there is a full programme of events that goes on here, and do keep your eyes open, and do your best to support them. Can I also say that Building Futures is a group sponsored by the RIBA. We're relatively independent within the RIBA, and I think it's fair to say that this report, like various other ones we've produced, is very much the thinking of the Building Futures group and the Building Futures team. It doesn't necessarily represent RIBA policy and that's probably particularly relevant when one's dealing with something so potentially sensitive as the future for architects.

What we thought we would do is we have six panellists who are going to discuss the topic, and they're from Manchester and Sheffield and Glasgow, so you've got a very good mix, a cross section, and I'll introduce them all in a minute. But we thought the best thing to be was if I would very briefly take you through the report. We will then ask the panellists to respond to that, have a discussion amongst themselves and then open it up to anybody in the audience who has views or opinions or questions they want to ask.

So let's talk about the report we did. First of all it's important to put anything we do into context. Perhaps I should say, what's really difficult about this and what you have to remember is that we are trying to look 20, 25 years ahead. We are not actually debating the current problems the architectural profession and practice faces, or the ramifications of the recession and so on, we are trying to get well beyond that.

I've got two lovely quotes about the future. Neils Bohr, who was a very distinguished nuclear physicist, said "Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future". But actually William Gibson gave some cause for hope because he said "The future is already here – it just isn't evenly distributed yet". And I think that that is very perceptive because although we've tried to be quite disciplined, in looking ahead 25 years, no sooner had we finished it than already some of the things that we discussed we find have happened or are happening right now. That business about trying to keep our mind on the medium future, and not being distracted by the present, is extraordinarily difficult. I'm stressing it now because I'm asking all of you to try, when we get into discussion, to do the same thing.

Context – the context in which those of us who are concerned with the built environment work. Global population growth, massive, 46% growth in the next 50 years. Already 50% of the world's population lives in urban areas by 2050 70% will live in urban areas. And this is really interesting, the share of the global construction market, emerging markets will in fact have 55% of that by 2020, 2020 not 2050. And this massive increase in investment in infrastructure in emerging markets, 128%, massively exceeding what's happening in developed markets. Just the context for architects of course, the demand for architects services goes up and down like a yo-yo, at the moment we're in one of those periods

where the demand has declined enormously, those people who were around in the early 90s will find it enormously familiar, because exactly the same thing happened then. Between those two recessions there has been an extraordinary increase in demand for construction services, and professional services, and doubt we will see this completely uneven profile as we go into the future.

There are some interesting issues about how well prepared is the architectural profession to grasp whatever the futures going to throw at us, and the whole point about this piece of work is not to be optimistic or pessimistic. It's to get people thinking about how different the world will be in 25 years time, so that they can position themselves to manage any downsides that may be out there, and to ensure that the architectural profession can play the biggest possible role in solving what are massive global challenges. One of the problems is that at the present time only 50% of the practices have a business plan and there are all sorts of systemic problems within the profession like the amount of free work which architects do, mostly in order to try and get work. There's an interesting quote here "I main threat is not being paid for the work we do, particularly the brief making part, but we never turn down unpaid work because it might lead to paid work in the future". And that's a huge problem for the architectural profession, not one which most other professions face.

We came to the conclusion, we talked to as wide range of people from large practices to small practices, people who were in experimental practices, people in the creative end of architectural and built environment work. We talked to clients, developers, and others, people running large transport operations. We talked to other professionals, quantity surveyors and engineers and others in the profession. And what we have in this report is really what they told us, as much as anything. We asked them three questions really: who will design our buildings in 2025? What work will architects do in 2025? And what will be the shape of practice, in what organizations will architects work in 2025? And out of that we came to the conclusion that parts of the industry would continue much as they are at the moment, subject to continuing downwards pressure on fees, and that's one of the great impacts of the internet which is felt across all businesses and industries, the internet is eroding profit margins. So small, local, general practices, often in small market towns and other places, we think, that by and large, that they will continue to be there, to be working, that there will still be people who want to employ them, it's a largely domestic and very small scale commercial market, that will still exist. But as I said they will be particularly affected by this downward pressure on fees. There will still be a need for international star architects, this is all about branding, it's all about clients who want to brand their projects and use star architects to do so, they're on off buildings. There are far fewer of them than one might think, it's just that our media is obsessed with writing up those kinds of projects, to the exclusion of the bulk of the work which 95% of the profession engages in. Specialist niche practices, there'll be more and more of those, whether that's CDM, conservation work, specialist curtain wall design, there is a whole range of people out there doing that sort of work. And the traditional regional practices, very much part of the local economy, doing the vast bulk of commercial work in areas like Manchester.

The ones which we thought had the greatest potential for growth, well first thing is the emerging economies are producing many extremely competent firms of architects, and up to now there has been a tendency for UK firms to out source much of the CAD-monkey work, the working drawings and all that stuff, to people in cheaper and low cost economies. We think that increasingly those firms, the best of those firms, are going to be here competing with the best of the UK firms to do work in this country. And that is already beginning to happen. Global interdisciplinary consultancies, these are the big consultancies which bring together, often engineering driven, and many of the models for those are American but there are of course UK variations as well of those. The scale of some of our infrastructure work and some of the projects which are going on in other parts of the world is enormous by comparison to what we're used to here. And those in large interdisciplinary consultancies who've got a track record of those big projects are going to do particularly well. BOOT, which is PFI, the contractor-designer-operator, there seems to be no reason to suspect that the popularity of that form of procurement, for the risk

adverse client in the public sector, it will almost certainly continue. And actually the rest of the world is actually well behind the UK in adopting that form of procurement, and there was a view that, that will increase and become more and more common in other parts of the world. Subcontractors, specialist suppliers, I mean a great deal of design work is now done by specialist subcontractors, specialist suppliers, whether it's curtain walling systems or M&E systems. And as buildings become more and more sophisticated, building regulations place greater demand on designers that's likely to increase. And lastly design houses and creative agencies, this is where architecture blurs completely into advertising, public consultation, and begins to lose its identity in the world of general consultancy.

And those under the greatest pressure, well medium-sized, design-led practices; these are the bread and butter of the media, these are firms which we're all very familiar with. It's amazing how many of them are having their 40th birthday at the moment, or their 50th birthday, or their 30th birthday, lots of practices set up in the 70s and 80s. And it's worth remembering at this point, if you go back to the 60s 50% of all architects were employed in the public sector, not working on public sector work, employed by the public sector. But now I'm told that's below 9%, I can't believe it's even as much as 9%, it's a long time since I met anyone who was directly employed by local authority. However, those practices which have thrived in the latter period, we think they're going to be squeezed, they're going to be squeezed by those bigger operators and they're going to be under pressure from costs. And then the small metropolitan, boutique practices, this is the DNA of architects, it's the idea that everybody has to set up their own practice, and so we have very large numbers of small, boutique practices. This is the cottage-industry fixation of the architectural profession, is at marked variance with law, accountancy, engineering and most other profession. And we think that they're going to be under pressure, largely because public sector and others are increasingly keen to bundle small contracts into larger contracts, it's going to make it difficult for them to get access to those clients. And PI cover is going to be increasingly difficult. If you read the report there are some quite interesting comments about how that might be compensated for and we might touch on that in the discussion.

Other things which came out, very interesting discussion about the name architect. Some architects felt that the term architect was actually a bit of a problem because clients have a few about what an architect does and they'll pay for that, but they won't pay for an architect to do something which is outside of that definition. And that's really unhelpful in a world that is evolving and changing and moving fast; where architects want to and need to, take on other areas of work, and that's an interesting issue for the profession at large, This idea of architecture and architectural practice being redefined as something much broader, "In ten years we'll probably not call ourselves an architectural practice, it will be something else entirely". Is architecture, is the word architect a good brand, is it a strong brand, is it an increasingly weak brand? And the last comment "I feel a bit orphaned by the profession" I'd be interested to know how that feels from up here.

We got some really interesting feedback from clients and other senior people in the wider industry, what was interesting was how many people, trained as architects, occupy really senior positions in the wider construction industry. Wherever you looked, whether it's a construction company like Skanska, whether it's an engineering consultant like Atkins, whether it's a cost quantity surveyor, cost consultant like Turner and Townsend, you find architects at the very top of practices which you don't think of as architectural. So it's really interesting that there is view, out there, that actually an architectural training is actually a very valuable one, it gives people a really interesting way of thinking about problems and really good experience. And it's curious that seems to be somewhat at odds with profession seen as often rather low down the pecking order, compared to other professions.

Now it's very hard, this last point, and bearing in mind that this work started over 18 months ago, the whole climate has changed completely with the introduction of tuition fees. What we were aware of was that the number of students entering UK universities at Part 1 rose 70% between 2004 and 2009.



It's quite clear that up until quite recently far more people have been going into architectural education than there are jobs for doing traditional architecture during normal times. Now of course when you get boom times like we've just have experienced during some years in the last decade, and we're sucking in architects from Germany and all over the world and so on and so forth, it may seem as if there is no limit how many students we can take on board and turn into architects. But if you actually look at the mean employment level then you find that we've probably been over providing, Now that may not matter if those people go off and find other jobs, interesting jobs, well paid jobs, in other parts of the wider construction industry. But if all those people who have a view that what they want to do is become star architects or running their own boutique, metropolitan practice, then I think an awful lot of them are going to be sadly disappointed.

OK. This is the point about architects offering services which clients are reluctant to pay for, very much around brief writing, public consultation. And there are interesting examples of architectural practices who have set up sister companies with different names, specially branded, to enable them to capture those areas of work, and we're going to hear a bit more about this later I'm sure. That's an interesting trend and we're probably going to see more of that.

I'll finish off now. There's always a polarization really between what are seen as commercial-led practices and design-led practices and I'm not sure if the rest of the world quite sees it like that. But the professions tends to, seems to have a view that practices fall into one or other group. One of the things that which think is likely to be important is that architects are going to have to understand much more about the financial climate their clients operate in, and the regulatory environments in which they operate. Because in order to solve their problems, in order to design buildings and structures which work for them, the more familiarity that architects have with those issues, the more than can contribute to solving those problems. The more successfully they do that the more likely it is that those clients will have the resources to carry out the project.

I talked earlier about the problems facing small, metropolitan, boutique practices and issues around PI and so forth, establishing credibility, and it's a thought that we'll see more networked practices, groups of independent people working together, coming together, to do an individual project. Now that's of course how films are made, there's a whole industry there that works extremely well on that basis, every film has a separate team put together to make it and then off they go and make another film, in different combinations, elsewhere. And that's quite an attractive proposition, the issue is whether or not clients would be satisfied by that, in terms of insurance and also the long term liability, and all those kinds of issues.

Next, the culture of practice. So, one of the interesting points that came up is the value systems which differentiate one practice from another, and we had a sense that in the future this is going to become more and more important. Practices are going to need to be more objective about the culture, their values, the way they treat themselves, the way they work with their clients, what work they will do, what work they won't do. And they're going to have to try to find ways to project that, and to share that with clients, and to try and do that in a way which strengths their position and their ability to differentiate themselves in the market place.

So some thoughts which we thought were worth considering, and we wondered whether, the RIBA is an extraordinary organization in my view because actually its membership criteria is set by a completely different body, you can't become a member of the RIBA unless you are validated by ARB. I know of no other organization which outsources it's membership criteria in this way, however, that's the world which we're in. There is a question for both the RIBA and ARB, should we be moving towards a broader definition of what an architect is so that those people who come into the profession in the broadest sense, through our schools of architecture, have the widest opportunity, and the widest range of career

paths open to them when they leave. At the moment people who stray from that fairly narrow definition of an architect are lost largely to The Institute, they're not members of the RIBA, and there is a question as to whether that's a sensible state of affairs. So I suppose it follows on from that, should the RIBA do more to keep, to reach out to that diaspora of people who've done Part 1 and then done other things, or Part 2 and done other things, maybe we've got representatives of that on our panel this evening. And what would be the implications for education if that were to be so? So we've got a lot of people very close to education here this evening, so they're probably on the receiving end or dishing it out, so we can touch on that in the discussion.

And now that's more than enough from me. I'm going to stop there. I'm now going to ask our panel if they can come and take a seat at the front here please. We've got six seats here and we've got six of you.

**Dickon Robinson:** A great panel. A wide cross section of experience and attitudes and everything else so I'm going to ask if they would like to, briefly, comment on this topic and say if there is anything they want to support and if there is anything they disagree with, anything they think we've missed. We're going to have a little bit of a discussion and then I'll bring you in. So why don't we start there and work our way along.

**Gavin Elliott:** OK. Well I'm not sure I've got anything hugely profound to say which is probably a mistake to start that way. One of the things which is actually quite interesting, as was said earlier I've been at BDP for 20 plus years now, joined straight from university and have seen a number of cycles of the economy. I think I arrived in a recession, we had one about 10 years ago and we're in the middle of a particularly serious one at the moment. So you become slightly sanguine about the ups and downs of the UK economy and you can usually see a way through and you can see when things are going to come back and will return to business as usual. But I think my perception at the moment is business as usual isn't going to return and there has generally been a seismic shift in the world economy, which impacts massively on architects. And it's interesting actually, it's quite sobering as a director within a big company to suddenly discover that the work that you thought would always be there, come what may, actually isn't there anymore. And you realise at that point that you're not the starchitect, captain of the universe, deal-maker, game-changer, global superstar, you're actually just right at the bottom of the construction food chain, and you're sitting there waiting for the phone to ring. And then at that point you have to make a change, well if this is the new normal, we've got to go out there and make something happen, so what can we make happen? The truth is the world has changed, the economy's changed, for big practices such as us, we can't be this big and just be working in the UK, we've got to be working internationally. We've got to be in the Far East, got to be in China, got to be in Brazil, got to be in India. And I think a lot of the people sitting in this room as graduates won't be working in the UK in the future, or you certainly won't be working on projects where the project is in the UK, you'll be working on projects in China, in India, and in Brazil. And I think that's a massive change from what I expected which was graduating in Manchester, to live in Manchester, and work on jobs in Manchester, which I've managed to do for the most part but I just think it's not like that anymore. As it said in the report, there will always be a churn of smaller projects, medium sized practices and smaller practices, doing house extensions, doing bits and pieces, but at the top of the game the global economy has changed so massively that there is no business as usual, and practices will have to adapt and go where the work is.

**Dele Adeyemo:** Myself and Mark Cairns started out Pidgin Perfect about a year ago during our Masters, we did it by extension so we had three months to turn around a project which we called SASA, which is the Scottish version of EASA, if anyone knows about that – the Scottish Architecture Students Assembly. We gather students from all over Scotland to create a series of workshops and events around the issue of the city. But what we realised was we were particularly good at that and we thought well perhaps we could take this on into creating our own practice, a practice we're actually product to be

a part of, a practice that has ethical values, that is focused on the community, puts the community at the heart of the urban development. We'd both worked in really big firms before and we could see the frustration from the distance to the actual project. Marc was working in Libeskind's in New York on a project in Belgrade. I was working in Paris on a project in Sydney, and never once did I get to go to the site, to interact with the people or even to interact with the culture. So there is, what's coming out of this debate right now, it's slightly worrying to see this kind of polarising with massive practices at one end and very small practices at the other end. And we kind of hope that we're able to bridge that gap by providing a service which is local and is actually able to define the issues, and to help communities to define solid briefs, so even if it's a large project, that process of consultation will still be very rigorous and a document and a series of manifestos, that the community can refer back to, and hopefully get an authentic design and hopefully not just some star architect's vision.

**Luke Butcher:** Well I think the report itself in some ways it's quite timely but I think it's important to see in relation to a longer trend of architects not quite knowing what they should be doing or what they're going to be doing in the future. I think with the RIBA that stretches back to the 60s when the 'Architect in his Office' report was released and, I think, you see this trend that every 10 or 15 years the profession looks and goes "Are we doing things right?" Which in some ways is quite healthy to assess what you're doing, and how you can do it better, or if you're still needed, possibly. So in that respect I think the report is a really good thing. I think some of the questions it throws up, like you were saying, this polarisation between large and small practices are quite daunting but I don't think they are necessarily a dangerous or a bad position. In that I think the profession has always changed and has gone through these periods, if you look back to the role of the architect say 500 years ago or 600 years ago or even 50 years, it's completely different and it's still there in a different form. So I don't see this change as a bad thing, I think they're something to embrace, and act positively upon. If architects want to survive then I think they will survive.

**Tom Jefferies:** Large schools of architecture are quite interesting organisations really. I've had a number of conversations with people, including Gavin, about the fact that we have loads of time to work out the things that people in practice don't have time to work out. And the discussions that can be set up between the academy and the profession therefore can take on a particular flavour. I've also been complained to by architects, you know, that our graduates either are not what they require or they are bang on the money for what they require. And I think one of the things the report threw up is that there are numerous different iterations of what different types of architect view as the requisite qualifications for architects. But I'd like to say, as we are meeting the 11 directives for the EU criteria for architectural education, I can hold my hand on my heart and say that all our graduates meet the European standard. Now the question I guess is, another thing that came out through the report, is what counts as valid practice? My institution is interested whether graduates, and this applies, you know we are loaded down with statistical analysis now, is interested whether graduates from my school get jobs in their sector within six months from graduating. Now there's an interesting discussion for the institution, and fellow professionals, to actually what counts as the profession? There's nothing wrong with getting a job with a major contractor if you can bring your architectural knowledge and skill set to that role. And there is also that we are sitting, as Gavin alluded to, on a paradigm shift, things are going to be radically different. We are one of the key professions who can actually deliver the skills and the necessary approach to redefine our built and urban forms to meet all the kind of carbon and sustainability agendas that have been set by policy over the next 25 years. And I think that one of the interesting things, and I'll shut up in a minute, the interesting thing about the changing landscape of the school is that things that were seen too dry to even think about 10 years ago have now become the mainstay of creative design practice. Now I know personally students who love to get their heads into super dry policy as a starting point for their creative operations, and that's a positive thing in my view.

**Cristina Cerulli:** I just want to mention that in the introduction Dickon gave there wasn't a lot of

emphasis into what I do at the school of architecture. I've been running now for 7 years, amongst other things, the modules of practice and management, yawn, for March. And when I was given the task to sort of rescue these modules, I see some of my ex students here who might laugh, I sort of tried to think, to think how practice and management issues could be taught in a way that was more relevant and interesting for myself, and for our cohort of students which typically are very, very bright, very academic, not money driven at all, and not interested in, on average, venture capitals or money making things. So I started to look into the social economy and became a lot more familiar with the dynamics of the social economy. So, throughout the seven years the course has evolved quite a lot so I apologise for the students who finished a few years ago because they missed out on quite a lot, quite a lot, but now all our Sheffield graduates are familiar with not only standard ways of procuring buildings but also alternative, more creative, community led types of procurement, and ways of funding, creative ways of funding, a project. There is also an emphasis on initiating architecture, and I've got PhD student who is also looking at initiating architecture in particular. So this is partly where I'm coming from and in response to the report, there's just a couple of points and then I'm sure we can elaborate during the discussion. In terms of the methodology, and I know it was probably quite a mammoth task to put together the report, and there is a relatively limited number of practitioners interviewed but I just wanted to point out how of the 13 practicing architects there was only two women interviewed, out of the 13; and in the groups of students and graduates they don't mention the gender split but there was no interviewees from north of Nottingham and only one school of architecture was outside London, Nottingham. So that's also slightly skewing the perspective of the data coming out of the report. I also wanted to maybe raise a warning about the dangers looking at growth and talking about numbers of growth in the construction industry. Growth is a very crude instrument and it's, if you look at the construction industry, construction market, it does leave out quite a lot of soft, small scale stuff that doesn't really get picked up. So, if you do a small scale community project for which you raise the funds for it doesn't actually feed into the construction industry data. So I think that there's a lot of activity that doesn't get picked up by this type of data, so a smaller scale or different type of spatial practice, it's not reflected in this data. And also in response to the previous two panellists, there's also, by looking at the expanding and emerging markets there is a real danger that I think we need to avoid, and we need to be really critical about it, and it's to avoid the cultural imperialism, of, it's not just about colonising markets there is a whole baggage of ethical considerations, how do we intervene in a context, and it's not just about winning the job. I'll stop here.

**Ben Davies:** Well I'd like to pick up on one of the growth opportunities that was mentioned, which I guess has relevance to my journey since I studied architecture, which is the one about design houses and creative agencies, this idea of moving between disciplines and having vibrant, mixed-range of skills under one roof. That has always been something that interests me, right from the off, about architects not living in silos but having huge amounts of overlap by default with all areas of society and lots of other creative disciplines as well. And actually when I finished my Part 2 and I decided that I didn't want to be an architect, well I also thought I didn't really know an awful lot about building buildings after, you know, 5 or 6 years at college but I wouldn't change it for the world, I'd go back and do the same thing again, absolutely no doubt. But at that point the reason I decided I didn't want to be an architect was, the way I saw it, I either had to be hugely talented to do the kind of work I wanted to do, and I thought I was quite good but I didn't think I was like a massive talent, or I needed to be hugely lucky, to land a job in a great place. And I thought I don't fancy my chances at either of those so I need to find something else, otherwise, I actually saw a few friends who graduated a few years before me, grumbling about doing door schedules and things. You know being an architect and spending 95% of their time not designing but doing administration work. But I think what was interesting for me about the course, and as I say I'd go back and do it again, it was that whole idea about how it makes you look at the world, how it makes you see things, what I learned was about, well it was this unique skill set really, and I think that it's really undervalued by the term architect, it just kind of puts it in a box. Actually you're really you're just a professional multiple hat wearer, I think, you know, you're a great problem solver,



you develop work and answer a brief, you consider everything from structural mechanics, to sociology, to spiritualism, and any other 's's. But that kind of whole idea of taking into account all manner of influences to create a fully rounded response to something that you can apply to anything, not just, not just coming up with a building. But also that idea that you can have a brilliant idea but if you can't tell someone about it, if you can't get that idea across, then it's just a great idea, it's not going to, nothing is going to happen with it, so you also have to be brilliant communicators. So I think, you know, like you alluded to earlier, there's so many other facets to what architects do that either don't get paid for or don't get acknowledged and that's where, I think that's my immediate response to where I see there being a huge potential for growth. But we might have to tweak the name architect or find something else around that.

**Dickon Robinson:** Can we just stick with you for a minute, and it's very interesting, your experience. I'm interested to know whether you have any competitors and if you do have any competitors whether they have come from a similar route to you or whether they've come from very different backgrounds.

**Ben Davies:** I think we have lots of competitors but we're, because we do lots of different things we have lots of different competitors. I don't think we have many competitors, if any, that offer like a range of thinking and executions and approaches that we do; and that's where I think that, we sometimes call it 'architecting solutions' because the way we, you know it's actually a process of 'architecting' things. But it isn't architecture. Yeah like I say I think the whole notion of an architectural education can set you up for a whole lot more than just, I say just, than designing environments and buildings.

**Dickon Robinson:** Can I just pick up on your point about emerging markets and the dangers of imperialism and colonisation. Actually I think, I think actually one of our problems is that we don't, we probably don't have enough, quite the right vocabulary to walk about work which is abroad. Because there are emerging markets and there is the developing world. And then there is a large part of the world that's out there that has emerged and has developed, and in fact quite a bit of it is doing rather better than we are. So when one talks about working globally it covers all those different cases and I think the interesting thing about emerging markets is that one wouldn't want to take a view that one wouldn't ever work there because it might appear to be patronising and colonising. I wonder if you had any views about how one might pick ones way through that minefield.

**Cristina Cerulli:** It's a tricky one. I think, I think that I'm aware of many practices who haven't embarked on this working abroad in a very opportunistic, quite light-hearted and grabbing the opportunity, sort of way. And I'm aware of many projects where there is little consideration of what is being produced there, with a city in the desert or things like that. I guess, I guess an ethical way of operating in that context would be to try to engage with the local context but then the commissioning, paying clients, will probably, in many cases, rather you didn't. So I think it becomes the dilemma of whether you're serving the client or whether you're serving the society, becomes particularly poignant there.

**Dickon Robinson:** And when I open it up in a minute I'm hoping there might be somebody in the audience who will perhaps have had some direct experience with those dilemmas which they could share with us. I just wanted to get back to the point about, to stick with this global markets thing, and I've got an interesting statistic here. This is [worldarchitecture100.com](http://worldarchitecture100.com) which has got some information about the 10 top grossing fee income of architects in various parts of the world. And you'll be glad to know that the home team is ahead of the premier league in Europe, BDP fee income from Western Europe, 10th of December 2010, I make that's the previous year, £93.2 million. Congratulations. Pretty good I'd say. I just wanted to compare that with the Pacific Rim, which does include China. Fee income for Nikken Sekkei, from Japan, where the top grossing, they grossed £517.8 million, the second in that category was Samoo architects and engineers, from South Korea, on £230 million, and in fact there was another South Korean firm, Heerim architects on £152 million in the top 5. Whereas in Western

Europe, following on from BDP, the next is an Austrian firm, ATP Architects, from Austria. Now it's just a sense that it wouldn't be unnatural for us to get fairly Eurocentric but that sense of the world going on else where, and the size of some of the firms in other parts of the world, and the expertise they've got, seems to me to be something of a challenge of the sort that we haven't faced before, and I wondered whether you felt that?

**Gavin Elliott:** Well I think, I think there's two things. Well obviously, and I mean I do take the point about cultural imperialism and are we just being colonial in assuming that all these people really want us to work for them, but I think our experience is a lot of them do, because they're called emerging economies because they're emerging. They got, you know, often big manufacturing capabilities, resources, natural riches, but relatively unsophisticated economies, and not the sort of design-infrastructure, or even the infrastructure-infrastructure, that we just take for as common place in Western Europe and in the US. So actually I don't think it's a matter of us going over there and telling them how to do it, they're actually inviting us in to do it because they know we have an expertise that they don't have. The other thing is the whole sort of scaling factor which is, I mean just to give you, I mean I personally haven't been out to China yet but I went out to Brazil just before Christmas, a lot of my colleagues are in China at the moment. China has two cities with a population of over 20 million, sorry three cities with a population of over 20 million, and 135 cities with a population of around about 2 million, which is about the size of Greater Manchester, you know which is just staggering in terms of scale, it's almost unimaginable how big the place is. You know it's industrialising, it's urbanising, it doesn't have hugely sophisticated design capability at the moment and they're welcoming in western practices to help them build the infrastructure. But as they do that they are learning how to do that, to do it for themselves, and at some point no doubt they probably won't need us anymore. I was introduced to a guy from a Chinese practice who came round our office a couple of weeks ago, who set his practice up 10 years ago, I think they were called ADG, they're called the Design Institute, very nice chap, about my age, probably a bit younger actually, you know mid-40s, early 40s. And he went from having a practice of him to 850 people in a space of 10 years. And that, you know, that level of growth is just completely unimaginable in the UK, maybe it happened in the Victorian times, but it's never going to happen again is it, in our lifetimes. So there is just a huge area of opportunity there, you know, so if you're a practice of a certain scale and you need big projects to survive you have to be there. And I don't think it is being imperialistic about it, we are being welcomed in because we have got something to offer, The western design practices are very sophisticated, Western Europe and the US are very sophisticated, and these countries want to become more sophisticated. So I don't think we need to apologise about it.

**Dickon Robinson:** I've really got a question for both Dele and Luke which is about size. Do you think that there is a kind of suspicion about size? I think it's kind of, sort of endemic in the British architectural scene. Do you think it's well founded or do you think that's a real problem?

**Dele Adeyemo:** I think it's a reality as you just said. When you're a certain size in order to survive you need to keep becoming bigger and bigger but whether or not bigger is actually better is another question that I have. Because ultimately the scale and rate of development these countries are going through is going to have serious ramifications in the future, because to, to in order to build at that scale and that speed, it's very difficult to get it right first time around so whether or not it shouldn't be that big is another question though because it's a reality of how fast they want to move. But it's certainly, as someone who's trained in the UK, it's not something I feel that I would be able to devote anything meaningful towards because I don't know enough about other people's cultures.

**Dickon Robinson:** It does seem to me that this is almost the nub of the question really for the profession because if we are of a mindset that, you know, between 5 to 10 is pretty much perfect, 50 if you must but anything over that is incapable of producing the same quality of work then we are not going to be serious players in the rest of the world, I don't think. So it's just going to carry on. And it's a bit

like saying the BBC would be a fantastic organisation if it was a fiftieth of the size. Modern society has to grapple with the idea of how can you make scale pay, how can you have big and great quality at the same time, and it seems to me as if a lot of people in the architectural challenge are ducking that challenge.

**Gavin Elliott:** I'm not sure that's true actually, but then perhaps I would say that. I think you know we might get into certain situations where we have the opportunity to bid for certain projects because we are BDP and we are the size we are but I don't think we ever win the jobs because we are BDP and we're the size we are. I think we win the jobs because hopefully we've come up with a good idea, and ideally better ideas than our competitors, but you know we don't always have the best idea and other people often win. You know, so it's a level playing field, the playing fields exist at different strata, there's the small playing field and the big playing field but at the end of that day the best idea is the one that gets the job.

**Dele Adeyemo:** We're not ducking that challenge, we're just doing something which is manageable to us. I mean we've worked in big offices and there is an inherent frustration and inertia as well, in these big offices, it's kind of a reality that is there but you're not, the impact that you're going to have as an individual in a big organisation is minimal. So you're actually being naive if you think you're going to be able to help whole cities in China as an individual.

**Luke Butcher:** I think a little bit though about the size comes down to, I mean it talks about it in the report about the cult of the individual, and actually building is a collaborative process, involving not just architects but lots of other disciplines. And I think that the size issue is because sometimes you think, like you say, you think that you can sometimes do more in a smaller practice but without realising that you possibly you can actually do more, maybe, in a larger practice, but you are just a smaller part. But if you're a smaller practice you're just a small part of maybe a bigger process anyway. And I think maybe why students maybe don't aspire, I'm not saying they all do, not necessarily, but they do aspire in the small boutique practice or the medium sized, which are being squeezed out, because maybe in the press or this idea of celebrity and starchitecture, we're only ever exposed to the good examples of that sort of practice, and there's less exposure for the work of others, of possibly what you'd call as commercial, who are doing the good ordinary. And I think there are plenty of examples of that, and maybe if we were shown that this bigger way of working is able to produce and compete with the smaller practice or the bespoke practice, we might then see some perception change.

**Dickon Robinson:** Tom, you've got, you obviously run a big architecture school.

**Tom Jefferies:** I think big is really good. I mean we've got about a thousand students at our school and a thousand people can think a lot more things than one person, and that's the interesting thing, so it's about the kind of networked quality of the operation that I think is interesting. I mean there's a problem, I think there is a fundamental problem with architecture, in terms of hanging on to some idea of it being craft, actually; and a kind of romantic notion of refusing to engage with process and non-formal contextual issues. The idea that design is somehow separated off into practices that do that, and you know other practices don't do design they do something else, well every single architectural process involves some kind of design methodology applied to it pretty much. And what the school can do is have a look at how, as kind of emergent professionals, we can engage with the various processes that are involved in making our built environment, in it's widest possible sense. The interesting thing is that small practices can move faster on one level and that their impact is not necessarily as strong. One of the notions that was thrown up in the report, and this in a way is kind of how research works, is the idea of clusters of specialisms coming together to have a look at something in particular, that is quite an interesting model of practice, it reflects what we do in academia, and there's an interesting discourse, you know, that is happening between the profession and academia, that could beneficially be extended.

It was mentioned earlier that, you know, we're sending practices over to China and other places, to show or to develop things that aren't currently available in those countries, but they're learning from those and then taking those skills on board. This to me, coming from a university position, sends a clear message that where we need to be is at the front, we need to be leading the world in what we're thinking, we need to be leading the world in different modes of pulling together constructed possibilities, and we also need to be leading the world in the kind of questions we're asking, the fundamental questions. I mean it's great sitting here in the original industrial city but we could actually look back and see what was happening 150 years ago and happening now, you know it's a luxurious position in many ways.

**Dickon Robinson:** And now there's a challenge, I think we'll bring you in now. If there is anybody in the audience who wants to comment on anything that has been said. I'll have you first and then you.

**Audience Member 1:** The two things that I think that...

Dickon Robinson: Can you just say who you are?

**Audience Member 1:** I'm Rosemary Aikman, I'm an architect. One of the things has to do with me you see and one of your panellists has said it. I think there's a huge, huge misuse of women in architecture, virtually everyone that I trained with doesn't work in architecture, and didn't very quickly. I don't, I think there's an enormous resource, we're training masses of women who are not sitting on the panel and are not, are not yet doing things. I think there's a vast untapped resource there. The other thing is that I see is the school of architecture apparently have increased enormously in Britain we're training foreigners. And that seems to me that is something that we should be doing wonderfully and hugely and more than we do now because if the emerging markets are out there, then there is nothing like having them speaking English, understanding how we talk, how we talk architecture, how we talk buildings. I mean I have actually worked for an architect for about 10 months because I hit sex discrimination right from the beginning, and I never worked in that field, directly.

**Audience Member 2:** Hi, I've just finished my sixth year at Oxford Brookes and I'm doing an MA at the moment looking at the future of architectural education. Looking back over my five years, both at Newcastle and Oxford Brookes, it seemed to of followed the same prescription of giving a brief, a 5 minute tutorial every week, followed by a 20 minute crit and then that, that's it. I recognise that there is a lot of changes happening in the industry and I find that the education is quite old fashioned, we're not being taught how to, I feel at quite a disadvantage having only had one year of professional experience so far. And I don't have a developed financial, commercial, literacy to deal with these changes that are happening. Do you think that the RIBA has an obligation to intervene, to kind of change things up, to change things and also, especially with these massively increased fees coming in next year, that these new students who will be coming through deserve to have a better, a bit more rounded education? I don't know who that was directed at.

**Dickon Robinson:** Anybody else want to contribute at this point? Would anyone on the panel like to pick up on any of those?

**Tom Jefferies:** Well I'll pick up on a couple of those points. OK, it's interesting, at Manchester with a 50% male female split in the undergraduate years, and we've got 40% overseas or EU students, and our students are working globally. So I think there are, there have been shifts in the kind of educational landscape but certainly what, where I've been working, would reflect that. And in my previous school there was a massive number of ethnic minority students. So there is diversification certainly occurring at a, kind of, an entry level within the profession. The other question about the kind of nature of education and practice, I think is also very interesting, in terms of the transformations that have been occurring pedagogically within the last 10 years or so. The moving away from the, well certainly in the



schools that I've been involved with, the moving away from the idea of the tutorial plus adversarial crit, as the method of delivering education, which, you know, is the legacy of the 60s. Towards, towards forms of engagement at a far more critical, in terms of their operation, and bring in a wide diversity of players potentially. I mean there are obviously different skills taken and different approaches. There is, you know, a constant testing of what is affective, I guess.

**Luke Butcher:** I've got a few points about the education. I've spent the last two days talking about these issues with different students and RIBA Education, and different organisations, and I think what it comes down to in some ways is what we are training people to be. And I think it's difficult to define that then we don't really know, well architecture is so broad in its self, and you know, you can't start trying to train, you could have a course where you train someone to go work at say a BDP but then the sort of work you're doing is completely different, in some respects, it's how you then balance that within the education system. So, yeah I'd like to see more sort of management and business skills coming into the education system but I also understand that, in some ways, you're also being taught to be a creative thinker. Maybe it's being taught to apply that creative thinking not just to say a building but to say a business, or a business plan, or a. And realise that with creative thinking it's not just about architecture or traditional architectural forms, that there are other processes that you can then be creative with, or systems that you can create and change through the design skills that you have.

**Dele Adeyemo:** Yeah, that's something that I completely agree with. We recently had a meeting with architecture and place division within Scotland, the chief architect in Scotland and civil service department, and we were advocating exactly that. We were stunned to here that only 50% of architects out there had a business plan and that is something that we are doing right now. But that actual process, you know, of actually writing a business plan starts to tell you what sort of architecture you want to do because what client base you want, how are your fees, how much money are you going to make, so you start to define yourself as a person beyond school. At the moment in school you have a bit of business training about what company structures you're going to have but you don't have any as to how to do creative management.

**Cristina Cerulli:** Well that is exactly what we are trying to do in Sheffield and I guess that the underpinning strategy is to, is to try to equip our students to choose their own career path and their own ways of practicing, and enable them to do so. In order, for example, all our students now would design a sort of business model for a social enterprise, grasping particular problems and identify, and in the last three years in particular there's been a big improvement in the quality of the design proposals that come out of the school because the actual procurement of the final projects is informed by the thinking, the holistically thinking, about how the projects come together, who their serving, and the students critically position themselves. So I think our students well, maybe our students I think is still quite an exception within the schools of architecture, that this type of teaching but I think there's a need for more of that.

**Dickon Robinson:** We've got a couple more here. You and then you.

**Audience Member 3:** Well I went to Sheffield University in the 70s and we were taught building sciences, and about sound engineering and all the rest of it but my just, my point I wanted to make was, my training, I've just set up a practice myself and I've got a business plan. But my advisories tell me to be flexible and to not to define myself to tightly, and to be open to various other, other work because architecture isn't out there to be done, at the moment anyway. One has to, I did a project management course so I'm a project manager as well and at the present time I'm actually developing property. So I've diversified but there are other ways of diversifying and of offering advice to other professionals. And I think what was said not by, the speaker there, is that to do a business plan that you fully define yourself means that you're pigeoning yourself into a hole, and you'll never get out of that unless you sud-

denly realise it and work your self out of that. That was my point.

**Dickon Robinson:** Thank you, lady next door.

**Audience Member 4:** Yeah it's a point that's kind of been touched upon by everyone but I think one of the reasons maybe why we're asking ourselves this question, it would be interesting to know what the skills of an architect are, I think that's one thing that's really up in the air and we struggle to define really what the services we provide. It might differ, it might be different types, but it would just be interesting to see what the panels though the skills of an architect are.

**Dickon Robinson:** Well the question is not what are they now, this is about what will they need to be in 25 years time because we have not set out to solve today's problems for the architectural profession. We're trying to speculate how things will have changed over the next 25 years and what we need to do to make the most of that. Well tell me what you think would be the most important skills for an architect in 25 years time?

**Audience Member 4:** I don't know, I'm kind of searching for an answer because I'm currently going through the education system.

**Gavin Elliott:** Can I answer try and answer that one? It's interesting because someone asked me, a few weeks ago, how I thought of myself as an architect, how did I define an architect, and I said I didn't think of myself as an architect, I thought of myself as a creative problem solver. And it's interesting because I think that it's a phrase that you used in your presentation, you know, and it ties in with what Tom was saying, and some of these comments about architectural education, actually in practice, in our practice, they single most sought after skill that anyone can have is to be creative, and insightful, and be able to think about problems in a particular way. Now, you know an accountant, I assume there aren't any in the room, accounts fall into two counts, there's the guys who just count and they tell you how much you've spent, and there are the ones who are actually creative, who can look at it in an insightful way and tell you how you make more money, or you can anticipate trends, and all the rest of it. Similarly in business, you know, a creative businessmen is called an entrepreneur, aren't they, you know Alan Sugar is a creative businessman he doesn't just go to the factory and do the same old thing, he thinks in a creative and imaginative way about markets and the future. And you know it's the same in our practice, be they creative business people, creative designers, creative work winners, are the life blood of any business. So creativity is the single most valuable skill, absolutely, definitely.

**Audience Member 4:** But do you teach that?

**Gavin Elliott:** Yeah. I mean it's interesting actually, as we've got bigger we've now got layers and layers of sort of HR people and people who fill in forms and I always have these arguments with them because it seems that's what you do in a bank where you want everyone to get to a consistent 6 out of 10, because you can't afford for them to drop below that figure. Whereas I say I want people who are 13 on one day and I can tolerate 2 on the next day providing the 13 is really good. And you know that's, the life blood of a creative business is creative people.

**Dele Adeyemo:** I guess that comes back to the sort of question about is bigger better? Because my experience of working in big offices is it's a very select few who are the creative thinkers and so there is, there is a frustration for employees, a creative frustration. And if we're training people up to be architects and creative problem thinkers then that needs to be released.

**Gavin Elliott:** But that's the paradox of the starchitect, that lots of the most talented students go to work for starchitects, thinking that they'll be able to do amazing creative things and what they end up

discovering is actually they're not allowed to do them because that's what the starchitect does. And you know I think you can be a big practice but be organised in a slightly more democratic and collaborative way where you can potentially, and hopefully this is what we do but others will need to decide for themselves, where actually you can tap into the creativity of the whole of your team and it's not just one guy saying well that's my line so, you know, draw it my way.

**Cristina Cerulli:** I would disagree that the best students go to the star architects.

**Dickon Robinson:** OK, well we're going to come back there, we've got two more questions, one at the back here and then one down here.

**Audience Member 5:** I'd just like to make the point that we're all sort of discussing what an architect is and what does an architect do. I'm guessing that we've all been trained as architects and that we're talking to architects or architects and all that sort of stuff within the profession. But actually where the work is going to come from is outside the profession and I think it's really important about how we sell ourselves and actually I think maybe we need to define our skills and show people that we don't just draw buildings, you know we spent 7 years and everyone asks you why did it take 7 years to learn how to draw buildings? And you know that you've done all this other work but we need to, I think we need to know how to communicate to the public and how to change the perception of architects, so that they can then employ us and know what they're getting as well. And like, I think, from these kind of discussions it would be brilliant if half the audience was, were just people who were interested in the built environment but at the moment they're not but the Hub could be something that could be that. But I think that maybe we're shutting ourselves off and I just wanted to say that I guess.

**Dickon Robinson:** Well there is of course an enduring perception that architects are more interested in the approval of their peers than the approval of their clients. So let's have your question.

**Audience Member 6:** I guess my point was kind of similar. I wanted to ask if we thought we should be changing, kind of re-appropriating the word architect because it's seen, and in your report it comes through that it's seen as this restrictive term, that shuts us away from clients and the general public, should we be re-appropriating the term to cover the wide range of work that is done by everyone on the panel and I assume everyone in this room. Should we be working to bring architects back to actually what we do and the wide range of skills that we have. Well the point that we have more skills and trying to make architects celebrate that rather than just being one very narrow section.

**Dickon Robinson:** I mean the RIBA was set out to drive a wedge between the profession of architecture and the work of the builder, and of course until relatively recently you were expelled from membership of the RIBA if you got yourself entangled in commercial activity it seems, and that, that it seems to have left an extremely damaging legacy because the question here is.

**Audience Member 7:** Well it's not so much a question, the last two points, and we're trying to talk about the future rather than what is going on now, maybe the future would be getting rid of the title. And I know that's something that people get terribly over excited about but if the public think an architect's 'x' and the architect thinks it's 'y', and consultants and other sorts, maybe it's getting in the way?

**Dickon Robinson:** Title in terms of ARB and all the rest of it?

**Audience Member 7:** In terms of if someone says well I am an architect and this means 'x', 'y' and 'z' because people think about all sorts of differences.

**Dickon Robinson:** Coming thick and fast now. One over here, then one over here and then back to

the panel.

**Audience Member 8:** I think that's a really interesting point you raise, is that if you google architect now quite often the people you come up with now are not what we would term architects, as in people who design and work within the built environment, they're people who are designing systems within the virtual environment. It's quite interesting that people who class themselves as virtual architects are taking on that and that's a new breed of people, a new profession if you like, and perhaps if they feel that it's an appropriate word to use then why should we throw the baby out with the bath water. Maybe we need to redefine what that means and like you're saying actually sell that to clients. I mean I've just, within the last two years, set up my own practice, after having worked for both very large practices, Aedas, and much smaller practices, and medium, the whole range. And the thing that I find the most difficult is explaining to clients what services I provide and what, what they can get from me. And I remember spending an hour, over an hour, walking around an amazing house, in a very salubrious part of Cheshire, and the end of this sort of meeting, I said well I could design you a few different options and we could look at different things, and he said "oh, do you design as well?" I don't know what he got me there for but, you know, it's a very, very misunderstood term but that's our fault, that we are not, we're not even able to define ourselves what an architect means, so until we can define what that is ourselves, we're never going to be able to sell that as value, something that's got a value to other people.

**Dickon Robinson:** It's interesting that there is those ads which we have all seen for systems architects, they don't describe it as system engineering, they don't ask for a systems engineer. It's quite clear that people in the IT industry see a distinction between architecture, and an architect, and an engineer, which might be worth pursuing. But we've got another question, or comment, or observation, a contribution.

**Audience Member 9:** It was a question for the RIBA and maybe an observation, about how quickly the Part 3 process is going to respond to this, this great set of thinking, there's other great research being done like the spatial agency books, about the future of architects, and it's often that architects have gone through the leap holes, they've qualified, and then they subvert the title, go around saying they don't want to be called architects, but they're in it. What about people who want, who are unable to use the title architect and therefore are unable to advocate for architecture, you know it's illegal for them to call themselves architects, but they might be using these skills, they might be trained. I think it's very important that the Part 3 exam very quickly responds to this, and makes it possible for those different types of practice to use the title, otherwise they're lost to the profession, they're lost to the, you know, and people will only see architects as people who tick the Part 3 box.

**Cristina Cerulli:** I mean very quickly I totally agree with you. If we're thinking about this expanded field of architecture, we see ourselves as spatial agents, and we want to acknowledge different types of practices, there needs to be recognition from the RIBA, this type of work needs to count towards Part 3. I've talked to lots and lots of graduates, they just go and do a job that they describe as soulless, absolutely dreadful, just to get through the hoops of Part 3 because they've embarked on that path and they want to finish that, and I think there's a lot of, there's a huge waste of talent and energy.

**Dickon Robinson:** Anybody else like to pick up on that?

**Gavin Elliott:** Can I just respond to your comment? I think talking about defining an architect, I think by a way we've ended up being defined by default because what's happened is our sphere of influence has now been populated by lots of other people who are very good at defining what they do – like the project manager, and the urban designer and the sustainability consultant. And as they've all sort of gravitated to our sphere of influence we've been put into the box – we're the people that design buildings. Actually I'm not sure if anyone's ever asked me design a building. Most problems start with urban



issues, infrastructure, cities, you know and we've slowly been boxed in to a smaller and smaller box, and I think we need to break out of that and start getting our feet under the table of some of these other disciplines who have defined themselves quite clearly. Because otherwise what we do will get reduced to the point that's so reduced and minimal, it really is without influence and probably not very interesting at that point.

**Audience Member 8:** And you're at a much luckier position than I am at the moment, building a very tiny practice, as in just me. I get people phoning me and saying "Oh can you draw plans?" So it's not just, I'm competing against the building surveyor who thinks they can design.

**Gavin Elliott:** But it's interesting because even in our place, because we're multi-specialist, so I have an urban designer, there's a temptation for our young architects when they've got an urban problem, they don't address themselves with it because they get the urban designer to do it, because they're just responsible for the building, which you know I think is a big mistake, because as soon as you start doing that, your ability to influence that, actually shape. I mean if you think of the problems that are facing the planet, you know, climate change, urbanisation, if you're only going to design a building, you've got no influence over any of that, it's all going to be done by other people.

**Dele Adeyemo:** It's interesting that in the report in fact, it says that a lot of the services we do we struggle to actually charge for. And whereas I think the design world, other design fields have stolen a march on us, you know things like service design is really just feasibility and brief writing, but they're able to define it. And it's almost as if we do need to get rid of the name at times in order to get aid for the work that we do. And what's really interesting for us, as a young start up practice, that the report, shows that design agencies and creative consultancies are going to be the future, and they're, it's important for them to keep defining their identity as well, and for that to be recognised as well, so perhaps through RIBA and ARB accreditation that needs to be recognised, that although you might not be building, your series of design thinking and your processes are being acknowledged as well. So we have to find a way of being paid for it and also being recognised by our own body.

**Dickon Robinson:** OK, we've got two more, one right at the back and then just a bit in front.

**Audience Member 10:** Hello. I'll speak up but I can't actually see anyone's faces but I'm a post-Part 2 student and I'm one of the numerous Sheffield former students here today and I've been listening very, very intently, that's quite a skill actually that we haven't actually mentioned, to listen, and I've been writing lots of things down, so it's been very, very interesting. And one word that I wrote down is complicity, I think we have to be aware of how complicit are we to this situation, working for free, under bidding, ethical blindness, I think we've touched on a number of these but I have got a question, I've got more of a point that I'd like the panel to respond to and that's something that has lit up the twitter sphere, I think it's called, today and that's that there are too many architects, actually practicing in the UK, this was something I believe was announced by the Government or at least it was passed on to Ruth Reed, so I'd like the panel to react to the notion of there being too many of us, how do you work in that area?

**Dickon Robinson:** OK and then the question in front.

**Audience Member 11:** I rather feel that we're slightly navel gazing here whereas the future is about the future and if, as we say we are, we're such brilliant and creative problem solvers then we probably want to get away from looking at what architecture is or what it means to be an architect, and start to use our creative abilities to map this out and move forward and I'd offer that if we want to continue to build buildings and design buildings then it's a very capital hungry place to be and really it's where the money is, what we need to determine in the next 25 years, where is the money?

**Dickon Robinson:** Right, are there too many architects? And where's the money? Let's run along here, what do you think, too many architects?

**Ben Davies:** Clearly there must be if there's high unemployment amongst architects. Again I think it maybe comes down to them being, the notion of an architect just being too narrow, the skills that people come out with and the skills that people come out with are just so much broader than building a building, glorified builders, which I think the perception is. Where, particularly in a country where design is historically devalued, it's really kind of the last 10 years its become, there's been a lot more public engagement through design, through TV programmes, you know, Grand Designs, everyone's a property developer, everyone thinks they know to develop, how to design, what it's about. But there's actually a whole plethora of skills that are much more than that.

**Dickon Robinson:** What do you think? The view from academia.

**Tom Jefferies:** Of course they're aren't too many architects, what a ridiculous observation. I mean the point I was making earlier is that what is the problem with graduate architecture students working in a wide range of areas within the build environment? And I think there's a question for the institution in terms of being aggressive and defining what it is that is done. You know I look at other institutions in our kind of aligned professions and they've been much more on the ball. There has been a tendency to delimit what counts as design, which I think is a problem, and one of the interesting things about academia, you know one of the most successful parts of our school is the Manchester Architectural Research Centre, which doesn't do design, it just looks at design, it tries to understand the processes behind design, so that it can actually engage those in other areas of operation. The, the constant referring back to buildings, so I view buildings purely as a medium through which you do something, rather than an objective end, and if you see you know the kind of the long history of built production as an ongoing process that's actually quite liberating. So you don't fetishise the finished object, you see it is a means to try something out and then move onto something else, and it doesn't necessarily have to be a building to do that, it could be a city or it could be another form of operation.

**Cristina Cerulli:** I think in terms of are there too many architects, I trained, qualified, in Italy where there really are too many architects. But I think it's a really crude way of measuring the number of graduates and the number of jobs in architectural practice, I think we're probably quite far from needing to put a cap on architectural education. And I think we should encourage students to take a variety of career paths and they shouldn't see, there's still a quite a common perception of seeing those as a failure, opt out, I can, you know even you mentioned "I didn't think I was talented enough to be one of the fantastic ones" and I think there's still this slight stigma attached to it, which is very problematic. And I think we should be praising or like, yeah, embracing people who are doing different things.

**Tom Jefferies:** I mean just to follow that up. There's an interesting question we get, we have more than 10 times over subscription for people applying for our course, and you look at it as a kind of difficult creative course, and that's the case against many, many of the schools of architecture. You know the reason new schools are being established is there is this massive demand by people, who are coming out of our schools, or schools across the globe, who want to actually get into this area, because, I think, they are driven by a desire to improve the state of what we exist in, you know, a naive, you're entering as a first year and your naively trying to make the world a better place, through the medium of buildings you think. And the education process opens that up, that's the interesting thing.

**Luke Butcher:** The question about the Ruth Reed remarks it's quite odd that I was actually in the room last night when she made, quite off the cuff, thruway statement to the room of students. That particular comment, the unfortunate thing about that is it's taken attention away from a student confer-

ence, that was actually, where students were talking about they wanted to, how they could engage and change the profession. And also how, you now like what we're talking about tonight, they want to be doing these other things and how can the profession enable them, the institute say, enable them, for those to be allowed for Part 3. I've completely lost what I was going to say now.

**Tom Jefferies:** The Landscape Institute manage to bring in people from other disciplines.

**Dickon Robinson:** Can I just say that when we had this, a similar discussion with a same sort of panel, in Shoreditch, and we had an advertising executive and an artist on the panel, they were absolutely amazed that architects weren't more interested in building things, in being actually engaged in organising and managing, and physically in a sense in building things. But the interesting thing you asked about are there too many architects is, is there are too many architects if everybody wants to do exactly the same thing and all that results in is forcing down salaries, which I think is a big part of the problem with which women in architecture face, is that the salaries are too low for people to afford child care, but it's a real problem for the profession as a whole. Compared to other professions it's a low paid profession. Now if only we could get those architects or more people who are coming out of the schools of architecture to percolate out into other parts of the industry, why shouldn't contractors be building things, why shouldn't there be more people like David Partidge, joint chief executive of Arjent, you know big property company, but he is an architect.

**Gavin Elliott:** But doesn't that go back to the idea that an architectural training, rather than being a conveyor belt that you step off the end and you go and be an architect, it's you know like going to Oxford and doing Classics, it trains the brain and at the end of it you get recruited to be the top civil servant. You know, it's a mind training thing with the added benefit of the potential to do it as a vocation, but not the necessity to feel that's your only option.

**Dele Adeyemo:** There's a lack of education though into that, you know, because there's an expectation that you come out of the course and that you're going to get a job in architecture, and there needs to be an education about how your skills can be applied in other fields as well. And what's unique about your skills.

**Audience Member 12:** I'd like to go back to Tom's points actually about the idea of students wanting to taking part in an architectural education, to change the world and solve problems. I think there's an inherent issue of people entering into education under the endorsements of "I'd of loved to of been an architect" by people like Justin Bieber and Brad Pitt, you know, and all these people who go around glamorising the profession in a way that's not appropriate and isn't realistic. And this kind of societal trend of celebrity and star infesting cities, we were coming down from Glasgow, where Zaha Hadid's just opened her latest transport museum building in Glasgow, and it's been quite disturbing really actually to mark the increased interest in architecture just over the past month, that people just suddenly are taking interest in the field and are taking interest in, and think this is something I could do, I'd quite like to swan around in a nice dress and open museums and other stuff. And it's not realistic to profession, you're not being trained up to be a figure head, you're being trained up to be parts of a machine that operates in a large system. So we can't be having people from Mattel producing 2011, you know, architect Barbie, and it makes that's OK as a way to visualise the future and you then being to educate. And the reason I got into was to do something different and is why I started up this practice and why I do this. But I have been surrounded by many people on my course that have, over the past 6 years, who are not interested in that, that are just purely there to get through Part 1, get through Part 2, and have a degree and that apparently means something. It's not true.

**Cristina Cerulli:** Just as a response to Tom, I've been admission tutor for three years for our undergraduate course, and we get about 1400 applications for 75 places and there has not been a drop with

the recession. And through, I've been reading all the personal statements, and actually you mentioned about the naivety, very often very, very naïve, but often it's not the naivety about changing the world, it's the naivety of wanting to be like Foster or Zaha, very, very shallow statements actually we get. So I think there is that glamorous, perceived glamorous side of the architectural profession, there's certainly a driver in many applicants that we get to Sheffield. It's been quite revealing to read what students think or such, and actually in the open days I've always made a point of making clear that it's a very low paid profession, you know, to try to put them off. Because a lot of people have a completely distorted perception of what it is going to be like.

**Tom Jefferies:** It's a low paid profession if you choose to be low paid, you know, that would be my view. If you choose to do things that don't pay you very much money then yeah it's low paid.

**Luke Butcher:** I think that's a little bit though also about value, in the future of architects are going to survive they have to value themselves more. If they don't start valuing themselves more then how can we expect people to value them and what they do. I think they struggle sometimes to say what the value they do brings because some people say it's unquantifiable, and some people, that's a debate in itself, and I think that we need to be better at defining that value. Architects, or creative people maybe, need to be better at defining that value in the future.

**Dele Adeyemo:** But the design world has been very good at defining that value, that added value that they give, and marketing agencies have jumped on it as well and they say that they give added value, you know to community projects and promoting them. So, it's perhaps an institutional problem that we're not able to define that value and perhaps the term of architect is dead, perhaps its too far gone for the public to place value on the tough things that we do 'do'.

**Dickon Robinson:** Right, we've got lots of activity here. You're first, then you, then you, then you. So we've got four.

**Audience Member 3:** Just to say that you don't need to be an architect to do the job, anybody could do it. And in fact the best, the person that I, when I was first getting my Part 3, in the office, who was the most talented designer I've ever seen, was never qualified. Because he never had, but he could visualise things, and sketch in 3D, and talk to clients, and he was better than anybody I ever worked with since.

**Audience Member 5:** I just wanted to say that we're not choosing to be low paid, I'm the RIBA has just recently told all practices that we have to be paid minimum wage, and everyone's like "Yeah, we've done it!" It's so radical, two degrees, got to love it, it really hurts. And also, I don't think it's so bad to want to change the world, I don't know, I'm an architect but I'm also an activist and I do like protests and stuff, and they change the world, and I mean we build really, really big things and we have loads of influence, and surely, I'm not so such that's a bad thing. I want to make the world a better place and be proud of it.

**Dickon Robinson:** Thank you.

**Audience Member 1:** I wanted to say that for me being an architect was a wonderful title. And I didn't work for architects because they wouldn't employ me, possibly that was a good thing, because I certainly had a very well paid career. And I met Jane because we worked on the same project, I employed her, some years, many, many years ago now. But it does, some of that lateral thinking, is about you don't need to sit in a badly paid job doing, I mean your colleague over there, I'm afraid I've lost your name, you've gone and done something different. I did qualify as an architect and as a women absolutely essential because it instantly gives you a status, even though, well I didn't design buildings.



**Dickon Robinson:** Thank you.

**Audience Member 13:** I think that there's been lots of talk about, and the questions on there about reflect Part 3, but in terms of defining the value of what we do, a lot of it might just be linked to be a lot more creative about how we define the criteria for that. I mean before I studied architecture I became a chartered civil engineer and quite honestly after 10 years I've now got around to the Part 3 process and there is virtually no difference between the Part 3 criteria and the chartered civil engineer criteria – on paper I could be convinced I was gay if that. But actually if you look at it there's nothing in the Part 3 criteria that shows what's different about architecture and what's different about engineering. Although I know, because that's why I did it as a mature student, is that it's fundamentally different, the process, so how can we kind of link together the broadening out of the title with the recognition of people in practice, with just thinking about that kind of gateway to the profession. Because realistically that happens even if you do it first time around at about 28, 29, and after a first few years in practice you're often locked in to a CV and you know it's a really important gateway for all the professions, the chartership process, and you do it late in life and it takes a lot to redirect after that. You know if I'd of been one year later I wouldn't have been able to do this process. So I think maybe for the future, linking what value we're given, what criteria, and how we define an architect, is critical, and fast as well.

**Dickon Robinson:** Can I just ask you, it's a technical question really, about the European Directive that you, that you've so successfully achieved. Does that constrain the RIBA or ARB from broadening the Part 3 process or not?

**Tom Jefferies:** The European Directive define the benchmark for criteria that have to be met through the educational process, Part 2, including Part 3 I believe. So at one level yeah it kind of prescribes it but then what you choose to do beyond that benchmark is completely open. You know I view the benchmark as purely as a foundation, as a kind of limit. Now the interesting thing you know, I guess, is that we've entered the most regulated period of architectural education in history. Coinciding, you know, following, everything was brilliant three and a half years ago obviously, but now it's coincided with a very deep recession, there is a question about the point of regulation I suppose. But then there's also a point about how the institution defines the profession, you know, I think it's very damaging, obviously when members of the institution make ridiculous comments about wages for, you know, graduate students. And that implies a kind of assumption about a type of practice that may or may not be relevant, it implies a kind of dilettantism, which isn't necessarily the case. You know I'd say that virtually everyone in the room probably wants to make enough money doing this thing to be able, you know, to do the things you want to do, I mean you don't do it as a charitable exercise. Even if you're doing it as part of a kind of, part of campaigning thing, you know, there is a rationale for it at some level. And it always amazes me when we kind of give away the things, you know, if you go to an advertising creative, what you pay for is the idea, you know, they look at the issues, they come up with the idea, we kind of give them away. You know we can do this, we can give you five options, have a look at them, tell us what you think, we'll come back.

**Dele Adeyemo:** The difficulty is as well when people go to the architect and the architect gives the idea away, even when they ask for payment, there like, we're not doing a building yet so I'm not going to pay you. So there's, I mean, there's a cultural difficulty in getting paid for that work as well.

**Tom Jefferies:** We should be more parsimonious and stingy, you know, in terms of giving our ideas away.

**Luke Butcher:** I think part of that is that separation between design and construction. I think in the past possibly through stages of work and when architects were, were able to make back money from

what they lost in the beginning from giving away their ideas through doing the construction drawings, production drawings and construction side stuff. Now that's been taken away from them, there getting less and less at the beginning, the design part of the process, which before they used to undervalue and now they're left with that position from the past.

**Dickon Robinson:** I was looking quite closely at The Shard recently, and just sort of thinking about it and there was an interesting article in Building Magazine about it, about the logistics of getting materials in there; and I think that any lay person looking at that would think that the challenge of building it required a much greater level of skill than the challenge of designing it, it's just a sort of funny shaped box really, with a bit of concrete up the middle – no great design skills required for that. But to build it, in that location, on top of one of the busiest train stations in London, that's clever, that's clever stuff. And I think it's the way that architects have tended to separate themselves out from the extraordinary energy and delight that comes from the intimate management of construction processes, which is a shame really, and I think it's one of the reasons it's quite difficult to explain what architects do. Because actually people don't want a piece of design, they want a building. And you know, and actually, most people's first instinct, sort of domestic people, is to get a builder. You wanted to say something?

**Audience Member 8:** Yeah, I was just going back to the point about the future of architects. One thing that I've been trying to do is to form collaborations with other small practices and other, different, professions, and setting up a consortium of construction consultants, and making lots of links with different people. And the biggest challenge really has been the sort of legal and insurance aspect of that. I just thought, wanted to ask the panel what experience you've got of doing that and how you've overcome those sorts of challenges.

**Dickon Robinson:** While you're, who wants to answer that?

**Gavin Elliott:** I don't think I'm equipped to answer that one.

**Dickon Robinson:** And then actually I'm going to say it's the last opportunity for questions because I think we're getting towards the end.

**Gavin Elliott:** Can I make a point, just vis-à-vis nothing in particular. I mean it's all incredibly negative this evening isn't it. I mean everyone's so miserable and you know is it really that bad? I mean I know we're going through a difficult recession but I find it quite amusing that we sit here, there's lots of navel gazing, people may have made a comment, this is not about where we are now but the future. But fundamentally you know we are a group of creative people, we're taught to be creative at university, and you know as I said if you allied creativity to a bit of business acumen, or design skills, you have the opportunity to go anywhere you want to go, doing whatever you want to do. And to sort of, it seems quite defeatist to me to be sitting here being miserable, when actually we should be really energised, and be campaigning, and be out there fighting our corner, and kicking the urban designers into a corner, stepping on their toes, pushing the project managers out of the way, because if we don't do these things it will never get any better. And you know you can't be defeatist, you've got to be positive and you've got to actually fight back, and not just give up.

**Dickon Robinson:** Thanks for that. We've obviously touch a nerve there. Well done. Right one at the back.

**Audience Member 14:** I'll try and speak up. Right I'm an architect and just a couple of points. First of all on salaries, I think there is a misconception that we've kind of got into it, that as you progress through your work that you have to pay rises and to achieve high level of earnings, so for example for if you pass your Part 3 you're expected to have so much increase in your salary and so forth which might

not be needed. You know for example in my own personal experience I'm a fully qualified architect and my salary has always been on the low to mid 20s, and that has given me a really good, you know positive life, but at the same time I've been able to feel like I'm in control of the work that I wanted to do. So in terms of growth you know that could have an impact on that. And the second point that I just wanted to make is the fact that the conversations I've heard so far strike me, you know from a critical eye, if I could say that, that we feel like that we're just waiting for some sort of like oracle to tell us what an architect is.

**Gavin Elliott:** Exactly.

**Audience Member 14:** And something high above us to define our role. But in a way I think architect it could be an umbrella and we need to find our own role within it. I mean like Cristina I happen also to be Italian and I moved here when I was 16, although I've still got contacts there and everything, and thing that, you know with all the money problems we may have, you know, in Italy and stuff, but what I do appreciate, or the Italian way of looking at architects, is that there is a kind of a real value in terms of an architect being an excellent teacher or being an excellent illustrator or, you know, in doing other things. And not actually having to feel like we just have to tick a box, which is what, you know personally, having gone through the architectural education now a few years ago, but certainly I had felt that way when I came out of it. And it's only now, after about 4 or 5 years of being in practice, and actually taking a step back and doing a masters in something else, that I've actually realised that that's not the case, you don't have to tick a box, you can actually define your own roles. So, I just, I think touching upon Cristina's point in terms of saying that, you know if you don't go on to become an architect who just does buildings it's not a failure but actually it can be completely the opposite, you can be an architect and use your creativity, like the gentleman from BDP, the director, was saying, you know you actually do many other things and that's what defines you. And not waiting for some kind of RIBA or ARB to tell you what you do and what you are.

**Gavin Elliott:** I mean that's the thing isn't it, truly creative people reshape the, I mean metaphorically, reshape the landscape in their own image. Someone somewhere coming out of this recession will have a brilliant idea, and it might be someone in this room, probably won't be me because I'm not clever enough, but it might be someone in this room, and we'll all go "That's amazing, why didn't I think of that?" And that will be the new direction of the profession because it's genuinely clever, creative people, who make a difference. Not whinging.

**Audience Member 15:** I'd like to remark on the perception of an architecture field, as it is here. Because it happens that I'm a first year student from Poland and well I haven't chosen architecture field because I hope that I'd like to realise beautiful ideas but it is a widely known field that has certain subjects that you learn, that students learn, which would cover maths, technology, construction, materials, history of architecture, sculpture, painting, drawing of course, and those skills that the students develop are widely known also to the people, that work with architects. But coming here I didn't really know what I will do because I knew the subjects would be studio design, studio lecture, technology lecture and humanities lecture, which are not very specific for other people as well. And in Poland people from architecture work also in the other fields, because others know what the architect can do, because their field is known.

**Dickon Robinson:** Right, things are well organised in Poland. People know what architects do, fantastic.

**Gavin Elliott:** But that's a fallacy isn't, it's much better if you don't know what architects should do because you can do whatever you want to do and everyone will follow you. It's much more interesting that way.

**Dickon Robinson:** One more contribution and I think it's the last one at the back there.

**Audience Member 16:** The issue is branding, and I know this was covered, and I know I've come in late with my own touch upon this. I think you touched on it before, the chap on the end. It's breaking out from that we doing buildings or we do the sheet of paper, you turn up to the client and the client says well I'm not paying that amount for that, because they've not seen everything that goes behind it, the education, the knowledge, the various iterations on the project that you've done, and it's sort of breaking out of that. Two of my students are from Birmingham, they did their show last week, one all the prizes, got all the business cards from all the architects, you know the Glenn Howells, all the named architects, they didn't want to do it, because we'd set them up early on to look at things like rapid prototyping, things like permitted development laws, what they can do. They've created business that earn themselves more money using architectural thought, using creativity, thinking outside the box. So to them architecture and the Part 3 is something which is peripheral, and something that'll they'll do gradually as they concentrate on their other businesses. Now that is where we're going to go, potentially, but it's about branding, about communicating outside of this room, outside of journals, outside of the profession, to let people know what we do, and they don't. You talk to other members of the design team, you go to building consultancies, you sit with Savilles, Savilles at this moment are putting together a team, down in London, to do retail, right; that team is going to do feasibility studies, project management on site, new thinkings within retail, do they want any architects? No because of the perception of what we are. But we need to show them what value we can give, and that's how we did that, now that should come from the RIBA. I pay my subs but I don't see it.

**Dickon Robinson:** OK. Fine, I'm afraid there is nobody here from the RIBA this evening to respond to your points, it certainly isn't me. But what I'm going to do now is I'm just going to say to the panel, if any of you want to respond to those last two questions or summarise any particular point, here's your chance. We'll start here and go that way.

**Ben Davies:** I'm just glad there's been an optimistic peak towards the end because to echo what you were saying earlier I think there's so much self referential stuff that goes on when discussing architects and their world, you never really, quite often not looking out. And there's this general kind of down-trodden feel, it's not surprising when you see the number of architects who have been made redundant over the past few years, but that's the case, but its kind of burst out of that and change that, no one else is going to. I thought the, like historically I always used to see the architect as, you know, the leader, the absolute conductor of the orchestra but I think he's now become, he/she's now become just, you know, a player in the band, they're no longer, what's the right metaphor? An organists in the orchestra and you need to get back to being the conductor again. Because no one else, I don't think anyone else, through all this training, these wide influences that we encounter all the time, and no one else is better equipped to put that team together and to focus on everything, from the, what was it, right the way from the district to the door knob, you know, from the micro to the macro, no one else is better equipped to do that, and I think architects should just take the lead and recover that ground.

**Dickon Robinson:** And I must ask you whether you think that will be the base in 25 years time. Is there anything which you think that gives you confidence that in fact the change which you advocate will come about?

**Ben Davies:** I'd like to say yes.

**Dickon Robinson:** Ok, very good. One small word.

**Cristina Cerulli:** I too would like to end on a relatively positive note. I'm still quite excited by the



whole recession happening in the sense, maybe excited isn't quite the right word, but it has created a really useful moment of reflection and a lot of people just stopped to pause and realise that the system they were operating in was not sustainable, not just, lots of real deep problems with the system they were normally part of. The positive note is that I, in the last two or three years, all our very best graduates, from the top to the, yeah, they've decided not to enter into conventional practice and they've come up with a number of different creative things, projects that they've set up and they're making a living and they're very empowered by having done that. So I would just encourage anyone who is still thinking about how to position themselves to just go for it and try and to become an activist and just change things. And so in relation to the salary, that was touched upon, I think we also have to be, yes everybody needs to make a living but we can't be critical about the level of salary we want, there are practices that capped salary at the basic minimum level to allow other types of project to happen. And we just need to understand what we want and why we do it.

**Tom Jefferies:** The opportunity to actually shape the new paradigm I think is a phenomenally exciting, you know what will the world be like in 25 years. Well look at, my clue would be, look at graduate projects in about 10 years and you'll know, because academia always leads practice by around 10 years, if it's any good. Because it takes that long for the ideas to filter through everything and actually get delivered on the ground. The nature, I mean the nature of defining the practice, the thing about architectural practice is it's multi-faceted. There will be an ongoing discussion about do we widen the criteria for entry, you know so somebody who studied law can move in at some point, you know, and retrain, we've got something to learn there from the Landscape Institute perhaps. And I say, I truly believe that students who have got anything about them, enter this profession because they want to make a difference, they actually want to make things better, and it's concomitant upon us as kind of academics and educators to facilitate that, to give people the necessary skill sets that they will need to take out and do whatever needs to be done, now whether that's through conventional practice or through some other means. I'm amazingly optimistic; I think this is the point at which things will change.

**Luke Butcher:** I agree actually with a lot of what Tom has just said and everyone's been saying. This optimism about change and I think if anything the report highlights there are different ways of doing things. And in that respect I think it's not I 2025, I see a lot of that report happening now, in terms of collaborative practice, networked practice, this idea of even BOOT, this contractor-led design. And I think the one thing I take from it is that the profession is always going to be engaged I think in navel gazing, in some respects, but I don't necessarily think that's always a bad thing, well, because I think it's healthy to continuously reflect and actually ask yourself what are we doing and are we doing it right?

**Dele Adeyemo:** I think the future is incredibly exciting as a young start-up, up-start, company. I think we're being a part of sort of trying to define a new typology for graduates, is incredibly exciting, and the way in which we work, collaborating with artists, designers, writers, across a whole range of projects, and blurring the line of what architects do, not even calling ourselves architects anymore, we don't have it in a name at all. That's tremendously exciting to us because it's an opportunity to create something new and go to places that we've never been before. I just hope, you know, it can be something that can be taken on board across culture as well and understood through the RIBA as well and through the schools of architecture as well and something that can be promoted.

**Dickon Robinson:** And last.

**Gavin Elliott:** Well, I can't remember what I was going to say now, I suppose, we talked earlier about the changes in the economic landscape at the moment, you know the shift to the Far East, the BRIC countries, something Tom's mentioned, global warming, resource depletion, you know it all sounds catastrophic and dreadful doesn't it.

With thanks to the RIBA Hub

Written by Luke Butcher

