Submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University (NTU) for the degree of Doctorate in Architecture:

THESIS

# PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY:

reconciling architectural practice development
with involvement in community engagement projects

**Christopher Heuvel**

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This research programme has been carried out in collaboration with 2hD Architecture Workshop, Nottingham

# ABSTRACT

This thesis considers how, within the UK context, architectural practitioners may reconcile community engagement ideals with commercial objectives related to business continuity. The problem is that, while professionalism obliges architects to achieve social value through their output, their clients are rarely prepared to sponsor such activity (community architecture being a time-consuming and therefore expensive process). There exists ample literature on business development, and other literature on effective community engagement techniques, but not on their practice-based combination. The thesis therefore aims to provide architectural practices with strategies for capacity-building that reflect sensitivity to the social impact of development proposals.

The wording of the research question – *how can architectural practices meet their business development objectives alongside engagement in community-led design projects?* – determined investigative approaches that combined speculative creativity (requiring minimisation of preconceptions) with an ethos of inclusivity (in terms of enabling participants' voices to be heard). The thesis therefore took the form of open-minded exploration rather than identification and defence of a particular viewpoint. The epistemological ideas of Bruno Latour were harnessed in this endeavour, demanding focus upon the material evidence associated with abstract concepts such as community or practice development prior to any 'assemblage' for the purposes of meaningful discussion.

The two parts of the research question were first addressed independently of one another. One primary research study investigated how certain practitioners have established a reputation for themselves in the field of community architecture, while a second explored the experience of participants through the course of a specific community

project. The first study used narrative analysis in relation to journalistic interviews with practitioners to identify points at which they made unprompted connections between landmarks in the development of their business and specific community-engagement experiences. The second study followed eight cycles of participative action-research (each comprising planning/action/evaluation/reflection) related to developing a viable future for a community centre that Nottingham City Council had earmarked for demolition.

'Education' emerged as a theme common to the two research studies: most of the practitioners interviewed were discovered to maintain parallel teaching roles within Schools of Architecture, while the experience of facilitating a community project was observed to resemble that of tutoring students in a design studio. The variety of ways in which practitioners can interact with academia was therefore explored in terms of business strategy, evaluating opportunities for ensuring that practice and community considerations reinforce one another rather than pulling in opposite directions. What emerged was the identification of community-engaged architectural practitioners as valuable 'internal collaborators' within Schools of Architecture, helping students achieve social value through their approach to the design process at the same time as providing opportunities for practice-oriented research.

Specifically, the involvement of such 'internal collaborators' was identified as critical to the success of the new degree apprenticeships that (in terms of affordability and therefore opportunity) currently represent the most promising form of architectural education for the future. The research concluded that the participation of community-engaged practitioners not only helps anchor a School of Architecture to its local economy (in fulfilment of an institutional strategic function), but also enables community-orientated objectives to begin re-energising architectural practices, helping the profession unlock the construction industry's ability to achieve social sustainability objectives alongside environmental and economic considerations.

# PREFACE

This document advances a thesis developed through Professional Doctorate research studies conducted over nearly seven years (DArch Docs 1-4) into **how architectural practices can meet their business development objectives alongside engagement in community-led design projects**. Having reviewed some of the more recently published literature related to this topic, I evaluate the approaches adopted in developing answers to the separate parts of the research question (giving this thesis its title), and locate the findings of earlier studies within a larger framework that suggests a new practice model for architects to consider. A separate Doc 6 ('Critical Reflection') accompanying this thesis discusses the overall research process in terms of what I have learnt from it, and the extent to which my research has generated new and useful insights for dissemination to fellow-practitioners.

Being engaged in the architectural profession myself, there has inevitably been an overlap in my studies between issues that fellow-architects are interested in addressing (parts of this thesis therefore reflect how 'practice' has developed since the start of my research activities) and my own increasing sensitisation and commitment to issues related to the 'community' side of the research question. To some extent, the latter has already begun to feed into the former:

- nationally, through my involvement as a consultant on the RIBA's 'Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission,' and subsequent ideas I advanced in the RIBA's 'Research Matters' conference in October 2019, I have contributed to a potential paradigm-shift in terms of professional values (prioritising social purpose above client satisfaction as a normal objective of architectural projects). In May 2021, I also organized and hosted a first 'Architecture Apprenticeships Forum' (which participants have vowed to develop into an annual event).
- regionally, through appointment as a member of the RIBA's East Midlands Regional Council and as chair of the Research and Innovation Group (attached to the RIBA's regional Education Committee), I have led discussion of how architects might begin to incorporate social sustainability more effectively into their practice.
- locally, through engagement as Senior Lecturer in the Nottingham Trent University (NTU) School of Architecture, where I have developed and run a new Architect Apprenticeship programme carrying postgraduates through to professional qualification, I have not only embedded values related to community engagement within the validated course documentation but have promoted them also in 'management,

practice and law' seminars for full-time Masters students. I contributed a paper on the difficulties of integrating social value into apprenticeship programmes to the Architecture Apprenticeships Forum (Heuvel 2021).

As this thesis demonstrates, the NTU Professional Doctorate research programme has enabled me to develop ideas about the reconciliation of 'practice and community' objectives both by growing them out of discourse within the profession and by reinforcing them through pedagogical practice. I must therefore express thanks firstly to my teaching colleagues at NTU for their cooperation in affording me some space and time in which to pursue my research activities.

For providing the patient encouragement and helpful advice that has enabled me to arrive at this point, I am chiefly indebted to my two research supervisors, Professor Tom Fisher and Dr Kevin Love. I must acknowledge in addition the active support of Dr Tom Hughes, a co-director of 2hD Ltd – the small architectural practice we run in Nottingham: it was discussion about the development of our own practice strategy that triggered the original research question, leading to the decision that I should embark upon the NTU's DArch programme in order to explore the topic in greater detail. Special thanks are due also to Dr Ana Souto, who (in her capacity as leader of the DArch programme) has taken continuous interest in my development as a researcher, effectively providing a sense of direction when required, facilitating progress whenever obstacles appeared, pointing out to colleagues the pedagogical value of my research activity, and keeping me constantly provided with opportunities to share my experience and findings.

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# INTRODUCTION: form and function

## *Document Organisation*

This thesis explores how architectural practices may engage effectively with local communities in respect of design projects without prejucing their business development aspirations. As 'Doc 5' of a larger DArch programme, the thesis builds sequentially upon ideas and insights developed through earlier studies:

**Doc 1** – PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND PLANNING (June 2015)
**Doc 2** – LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (April 2016)
**Doc 3** – Research Study 1: PRACTITIONER CASE STUDIES (November 2017)
**Doc 4** – Research Study 2: COMMUNITY PROJECT EXPERIENCE (April 2019).

As it stems from personal professional experience, and is intended to feed back into the activities of colleagues in the profession, discussion is confined to the UK situation, and the research underpinning it was developed between 2015 and 2021.

The study is divided into five main Chapters. The first frames the research question within the internal and external context of architectural practice. Chapter 1 begins with an examination of the question itself: researching the reluctance of practitioners to engage with the communities likely to be affected by their design proposals, despite their professional commitment to achieving 'social value' through their architecture, connotes potential impact in terms of both practice strategy and professional development. Internally, as members of a profession, most practitioners' activities are governed by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), whose guidance in respect of social value can therefore influence the behaviour and attitudes even of non-members. Externally, the main framework determining the extent to which

architects' work for their clients meets social objectives is provided by the UK planning system, which gives local government control over development of the built environment. The notion that responsibility for achieving social value may be assigned to local planning authorities has traditionally justified practitioners – with their institute's encouragement (RIBA Client Liaison Group 2015, 2016) – in concentrating upon client satisfaction almost to the exclusion of all other considerations. Under pressure from commercial developers, however, not only has the influence of architects over client decision-taking been increasingly narrowed to matters of aesthetics, but – with their power undermined by central government cuts to local authority funding – the ability of planning officers to influence development in the public interest has also been steadily eroded. A shift in priorities (from client satisfaction to social value) could therefore position the architectural profession to outperform local planning authorities in terms of responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of communities in respect of the built environments they inhabit.

In evidence of such a shift, the 'Project Identification and Planning' document that initiated this research programme noted signs of a revival of practitioners' interest in what may (for convenience) be labelled 'community architecture.' Between 2015 and 2021, the topic has become an increasingly prominent feature of professional discourse[01], reflected in growing discussion of community-related issues within the professional press (representing the main source from which architectural practitioners habitually draw their opinion). This thesis therefore extends existing debate about how the profession can enhance the community-orientated dimension of its mission.

The diversity of ways in which practitioners currently demonstrate commitment to community objectives risks entrapment in distinctions between alternative strands within 'community architecture.' To embed further discussion in appropriate secondary research, accordingly, Chapter 2 re-visits and updates the earlier 'Literature Review and Conceptual Framework' document. Further exploration of the theoretical term confirms 'community' as a rationale for architects seeking to engage with neighbourhood groups (rather than relying upon local authorities adequately to represent their interests). In the absence of client support for such activity, or of legislation mandating it, only practitioner axiology – underpinning strategy – enables the functional nature of a project (irrespective of funding source or client) to be regarded as secondary to the democratic quality of the design process. The profession's variety of approaches to stakeholder engagement may therefore be understood as evidence of divergence in terms of ideology rather than technique, confirming the validity of a focus upon strategy rather than tactics.

The third Chapter of this thesis reviews how the two primary research studies conducted as an earlier part of the DArch process both indicate 'education' as common ground where community-orientated activity can usefully intersect with business development considerations. Research Study 1 looked at architecture firms already well-known for their commitment to community engagement, and used narrative analysis to identify practitioners' (sometimes unconscious) connections between specific community-related actions and landmarks in terms of business development. Research Study 2 used action-research as a means of capturing the experience of community-based participants when engaged alongside architects in a design process. The architect's interaction with members of a community was observed to involve the same

kind of two-way educational process appropriate to engaging with students in a School of Architecture design studio – providing new ideas and insights for the practitioner also.

Having identified the realm of architectural education as a potential arena for reconciling practice and community objectives, the core of this thesis discusses the integration of community aspirations into the design process within Schools of Architecture, and the associated role of practitioners[02]. Chapter 4 therefore discusses both the benefits to a practice of interacting with academia and the educational experience of students (especially when interacting with practitioners within the School). As community-orientated design requires students to venture outside the comfortably self-reinforcing familiarity of working within university-based design studios, the use of 'live projects' to give students the experience of engaging with real rather than fictitious scenarios is evaluated. Although less controllable in terms of learning outcomes, the benefits of establishing a full-time 'project office' as a location for such activity (simulating a work-environment in which students' activities are supervised by practitioners) are considered, with exemplars cited as a basis for critical discussion. The location of architectural education mostly within universities is questioned, however, on the grounds that the consequent student debt not only causes significant mental stress and discontent but reduces access to (and diversity within) the profession. By involving themselves in the delivery of education through Schools of Architecture, practitioners therefore become part of the problem rather than part of a solution: an alternative paradigm is required.

Looking towards the future of architectural education accordingly, the thesis proceeds to discuss how community engagement can be integrated into the recently developed degree apprenticeships that

enable participants to 'earn while they learn'. As the associated study-pattern places a significant burden upon the 20% of an apprentice's work-time spent within an academic institution, its effectiveness relies heavily upon close collaboration between practitioners and academics, who therefore find themselves taking responsibility for helping firms achieve community-related objectives alongside their business-related concerns. Within their practices, apprentices can transmit skills and enthusiasm for social value acquired at college to their work-colleagues, challenging them to integrate associated activity into professional services. A broader context for success in this endeavour can be provided through the Higher Education Institution's own agenda for civic engagement, which local architectural practices may be enlisted to help implement and thereby develop.

Chapter 5 of this thesis proposes a four-part strategy for architectural practices (especially the smaller ones that make up most of the profession) seeking to improve community engagement without prejudice to their business development:

a) lobbying for modifications to legislation that will extend the obligation of clients to ascertain and respond to community views and interests when developing proposals for the built environment.
b) urging clients to extend their appointment to include definition of social value targets at the outset of a project for assessment following its completion.
c) inviting prospective clients to accept 'free' advice on the outcomes they should seek when commissioning a building, encouraging them to participate in the design process on a more richly informed and inclusive basis.
d) supporting employees on architectural degree apprenticeships, working closely with their academic institutions on the

provision of learning opportunities related to community engagement.

In encouraging architectural practices to welcome apprenticeships as a vehicle for helping them fulfil their social obligations more meaningfully and consistently (not through occasional projects, but as an underpinning operational principle), the thesis arrives at a re-conception of the architect's role – curating clients' contact with stakeholders in ways that enable proposals for the renewal of the built environment to meet an appropriately broadened range of needs and aspirations. While some of the discussion leading to this insight stems predictably from a conceptual framework inherent in the original research question, the reinforcement rather than erosion of this standpoint through subsequent studies testifies to the significance of the exercise. In retrospect, the concern is not simply with how architects may reconcile their community-orientated conscience with business objectives, but with their potential also to achieve socially progressive outcomes, yielding benefits in terms of empowerment that far exceed mere 'participation'. By drawing local communities into the design process and helping them influence the form and content of their environment, architects stimulate people to question the nature of the neighbourhoods they inhabit, and to appreciate their own power to shape them continuously in response to whatever issues they identify as relevant.

At the end of this document, a brief 'Conclusion' section draws attention to the main contributions to knowledge that have been provided by this thesis.

# 1. THE RESEARCH QUESTION: context

## *Scope*

Being a service industry located mostly in the private sector, architectural practice naturally prioritises the interests of the clients commissioning proposals related to the built environment. The research question addressed in this thesis relates, however, to another group of people – the neighbours and occupants of an architectural project, whose lives may be more directly affected by it, and over a longer period of time, but in ways that are rarely acknowledged within a client's brief. Architects seeking to incorporate these people's viewpoints into the design process therefore find themselves at odds with their clients' mandate, resulting in difficulties negotiating sufficient fees[03] to cover the costs of such notoriously time-consuming activity. Practitioners' limited scope for engaging with communities when undertaking design projects may therefore be related immediately to differences between clients and architects in terms of values.

While few companies now share Friedman's (1962) view of profitability as the principal indicator of business success, architectural projects are intended by most clients to serve largely as investment opportunities[04] – carrying significant risk due to the large sums and long time-periods involved. Architects define their role, accordingly, as helping clients match their budget to social and environmental constraints[05] (shaping technological options in accordance with cultural, political and legal factors). Addressing clients' relative unfamiliarity with the full scope of such considerations (their reason for appointing an architect) usually

entails convincing them to expand their brief in order to embrace a broader or longer-term view of the built environment than initially anticipated. Part of the architect's challenge therefore represents a delicate educational function: from a relatively subservient position, they must somehow persuade developers to reduce their expectations of profitability and yet to pay for such unwelcome advice. The corollary of this challenge, examined in this thesis, concerns how practices may themselves sustain a balance of financial prosperity and social value (in addition to environmental responsibility), facilitating their own 'development' in terms of skills enhanced through project experience. Being itself the product of a similar development process (formalized through interaction with an academic environment), this thesis observes that research-oriented listening skills are more effective than expertise-based persuasion skills in unlocking the dialogue required for reconciling a practice's commercial and societal objectives.

Historically, architects and clients alike have treated social and environmental impact as 'externalities' secondary to corporate financial performance. Reinforced by public sentiment, ensuing government policy and (progressively demanding) legislation, however, environmental considerations are now widely accepted and encouraged as a primary influence on architectural design. Acknowledgement of the social impact of architectural projects, by contrast, remains "*accompanied by considerable confusion*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:4) – attributable to a mixture of reluctance and dissent in terms of definition and assessment criteria. Latour (2005: 37) has suggested, furthermore, that 'the social' should be understood in terms of what is brought together ('associated') rather than as a reference to some kind of agency. Borrowing from the performative rather than ostensive interpretation offered by a global network established specifically "*to change the way society*

*accounts for value*" (SVI 2020a), however, the concept of 'social value' is temporally interpreted (for the purposes of launching discussion) as

"*the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives…from the perspective of those affected by an organisation's work*" (SVI 2020b).

This study, accordingly, examines the practicality of embedding concern for social value into architectural business management – expressed through the engagement of local communities in the design process[06]. In particular, the thesis considers how practices might make such activity not merely financially affordable, but sustainable in the longer-term interests of their business and the profession.

Commitment to professionalism impels architects to take responsibility for resolving the issues that arise when (active) developer-clients and (passive) communities affected by their proposals have differing expectations of a project. Not having initiated the development (but more commonly feeling either neglected or threatened – and, critically, disempowered – by it), a community group will have no incentive – and usually insufficient funding – to contribute to the costs of having an architect work with them on the identification of local needs and aspirations[07] to be taken into account in the design process. Architects keen to embed local benefit in their built environment proposals (for ethical/political reasons, and/or in the commercial interests of marketing and enhanced reputation) find it difficult to discourage profit-orientated developer-clients from regarding community engagement as an extraneous activity that should therefore be undertaken at negligible cost (signifying minimal investment of time and skills in the exercise, thereby reducing architects' opportunity for profit-taking and growth). This thesis therefore examines the skills and attitudes required by practitioners seeking

increased engagement with community groups as part of the design process may develop their business in the face of a divide between their own and their clients' values (representing a greater challenge than when values are aligned).

At the interstices between communities, practices, and their clients (see FIGURE 1 below), de Sousa (2020)[08] distinguishes three kinds of community engagement, collectively identified as 'empowering design processes' in recognition of how they provide participants with "*enhanced confidence, skills, and a greater sense of agency*":

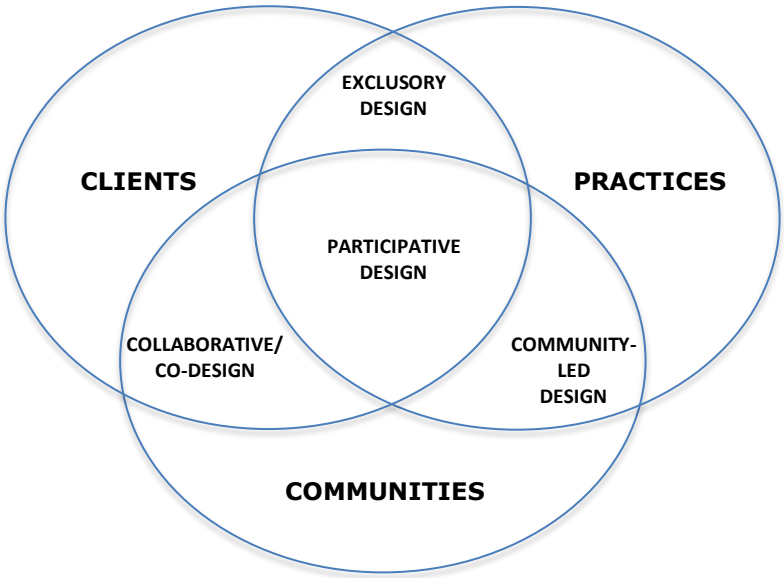



FIGURE 1 (based on de Sousa 2020):
**Design Processes featuring Community Engagement**
(at interactions between clients, practices and communities)

- 'community-led design' – projects "*commissioned by a community-based organization or group*".
- 'collaborative/co-design' – where "*various groups and interests come together (in) a design process that responds to their individual and collective needs and aspirations*."
- 'participatory design' – where "*local people are actively engaged in the design process being led by the commissioning client/project lead…*"

Implying no hierarchy, the focus of this study is upon participation as an ethos, and is therefore concerned less with tactics related to project management and more with the strategic development (in terms of underpinning skills and attitudes) of community-orientated practice generally – particularly in the face of client resistance to such inclusivity. 'Community-led design' is considered of interest only in terms of how architects can take the initiative in instigating participatory processes for enabling emergent design proposals to be informed by local people's knowledge of "*what already exists in an area and the gaps to be addressed*" (de Sousa 2019:151). And as they represent less of a commercial challenge, this thesis is not concerned with projects commissioned by developers who already recognise the value of 'collaborative co-design', or by public bodies seeking to fulfil their obligations under the Public Services (Social Value) Act (UK Parliament 2012 ch.3): such projects are always welcomed by community-oriented practitioners aspiring to help stakeholders learn from one another in their pursuit of shared objectives. The more familiar difficulty addressed in this study relates to practices' ability to engage in participative design processes <u>when not requested in the original brief</u> – displaying a more 'democratic' approach to professionalism than anticipated by their clients.

The founding assumption of this thesis is that combining agency with professional responsibility requires architects to draw different interest-groups together, to ascertain their diverse expectations and aspirations and develop design proposals as a joint project. For organizational consistency, such an approach must be grounded in practice management strategy (reflected in attitudes) rather than merely supported by access to a toolkit of tactics (demanding knowledge and skills) for application in respect of occasional projects. This thesis is therefore not concerned with

specific community engagement techniques or procedures[09], and adapting them to suit project-related circumstances. This study explores instead how effective engagement in community-oriented architecture ('capacity-building') can be integrated into business strategy[10], enabling firms to win further commissions of this type so that the associated income supports practice continuity or even growth.

Being concerned with the professional expression of practice policy rather than with gambits related to project implementation, this study privileges moral principle above the looser dynamics of gamesmanship[11] associated with competitive capitalism – the context usually associated with 'business development' (Chandler 1990). Its objective is to offer architects a model for ensuring that commercial and community considerations reinforce one another rather than pulling in opposite directions. In principle (Foxell 2019), architectural professionalism signifies social value: addressing the challenge of achieving social value alongside working with clients whose chief priorities are fulfilment of immediate function (within the constraints of budget and short-term programme) therefore demands integration rather than separation of 'practice and community' objectives.

### *Relevance*

Having justified the need for this research, the next step is to examine the context that leads many architects to regard practice and community interests as mutually oppositional. Remedy is not expected to flow from diagnosis (as if context were equivalent to cause), however, but the purpose is to propose a test-bed for intelligent action in the presence of "*the facile vice of bifurcation*"

(Whitehead, A. 1964 [1920]:ix) that commonly symptomises practice and community considerations. Central to this discussion is the question of who should lead the achievement of social value through the design of the built environment – local planning authorities (on behalf of elected council members), or chartered architects (out of professional concern for the social impact of their work)? Upon closer examination, both regulatory authorities and the professional body are found to be subject to evolving pressures that militate against their fulfilment of social objectives, destabilising the relationship between architects and planners.

The conflicting demands of professionalism and commerce upon architects are reviewed first in this Chapter. As 90% of UK architects are employed in the private sector (The Fees Bureau 2020a), their focus tends to be upon inward-facing goals associated with security in respect of work-flow and income. In the material workplace, almost by definition (Harrison 1973), community-orientated 'idealism' is quickly subordinated to commercial considerations associated with practice management and business development. Ethical/environmental concern for the effects of one's actions upon the lives of other people comes easily to be regarded as a secondary 'constraint' upon practice rather than a motivation for it. Commitment to loftier objectives arises, however, from notions of 'professionalism' that require practitioners to balance commercial and societal objectives, rather than acting predominantly out of self-interest. Such notions are enshrined in the Codes of Conduct that supposedly govern practitioners' activity (ARB 2017, RIBA 2019d), but grounded in their architectural education (or even in their original motivation to study architecture[12]). Before discussing either Codes of Conduct or professional education, however, the broader context of the client's perspective must be considered.

### *Professional Expectations*

Marketing and economic considerations require a practice to treat its client-base as a core asset. In terms of organisational management, the need for cash-flow is existentially self-evident: a private practice incapable of sustaining itself financially will quickly cease to attract architectural commissions (although, significantly for this thesis, its staff might derive an alternative or supplementary living from at least talking about their ideas – through teaching and/or writing in the interests of outward-facing 'capacity-building'). Fee-income from clients sponsors investment in the resources[13] required for the production of design projects (whether finally built or not):

- time for particular employees to develop and exercise their abilities (enabling the firm to reinforce its reputation for specialist knowledge and skills)
- materials and equipment and a motivational work environment associated with the development and communication of design ideas (both physically and digitally).

Clients engage with architectural practices in order to tap into the above resources – usually in expectation of returns on their own investment. Practice development is therefore entangled with client development, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Awareness of the significant risks – both private and public – attached to investment in built environment projects (arising from the potential social, environmental and/or economic impact of inappropriate decision-taking) leads clients – and the public – to value the concept of professionalism. In appointing architects, clients buy also into their professional standards – the full scope of

which it falls to the practitioner to explain (providing an important initial marketing opportunity, especially in relation to promoting community engagement). For many clients, appreciation of the social dimension of architecture involves a learning process which the architect is therefore required to facilitate alongside their provision of services to fulfil development objectives. The challenge, accordingly, is how such an 'extra' (appearing to extend a project brief) can be delivered in a way that combines affordability for the practice with acceptability to the client: qualification as a 'professional' serves to provide the required reassurance[14], indicating the need for a broader interpretation of 'business development' than finance-related considerations.

Being a membership organisation (self-funded and registered as a charity), architects are not obliged to join the RIBA. In the interests of public protection, the UK government has therefore legislated since 1931 (UK Parliament 1931 ch.33) to control architects' standards via statutory regulation[15] (unlike any other profession in the construction industry), which inevitably mirrors – without exactly duplicating – the mechanisms developed by the RIBA for ensuring professionalism. Exploring the subtle differences between the requirements of the RIBA and ARB reveals the extent to which architects' commitment to social considerations is built into their Codes of Conduct. As it serves a more protective function in relation to 'consumers' than the RIBA, the ARB's Code makes no explicit reference to professionals' social responsibilities: Standard 5, related to "*considering the wider impact of your work*" is interpreted to mean only "*where appropriate, you should advise your client how best to conserve and enhance the quality of the environment and its natural resources*" (ARB 2017:6). In the context of its charitable rather than statutory objectives, by contrast, the RIBA promotes a more community-orientated

definition of professionalism[16] – reflected in "*the most comprehensive and substantial update since 2005*" (Rowlands 2019) in respect of its Code of Conduct. Confirming the topicality of this thesis, 'Community and Society' has (since May 2019) been explicitly embraced within the scope of its 'competence' principle (the other two principles being concerned with 'integrity' and 'relationships'):

> "*Members shall have proper concern and due regard for the effect that their professional activities and completed projects may have on users, the local community and society…*
> *In performing professional services Members should promote stronger communities and improve equality, diversity and inclusion in the built environment*" (RIBA 2019d:16).

The former of these injunctions is accompanied by a (non-binding) 'guidance note' advising that

> "*this may involve conducting consultations with the local community before starting work on and during a development. It may also involve carrying out consultations with the local community after completion of the project so that lessons can be learnt and information shared to improve future projects*" (RIBA 2019d:16).

The scope of the social considerations which the RIBA currently encourages members to prioritise stem from the recommendations of a Task Group (Oborn 2014) originally appointed to advise on community engagement but subsequently concerned with the ethical development of the profession as an international whole[17]. The report proposed that the RIBA should commit itself more actively to social purpose, interpreted in terms of:

- cultivating socially responsible practice across the whole construction industry.
- aligning itself with international sustainability initiatives.
- supporting practitioners with advice on relevant standards and policies.
- participating in the associated dialogue.

These aspirations influenced the RIBA's 'Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission' (ESDC)[18], whose final report (RIBA Practice and Profession Committee 2018), unanimously endorsed by the RIBA Council, offered recommendations which – if taken to heart and embedded in practice – position the RIBA to become a significant agent of change. The Commission's transformative principles therefore frame discussion in part of the final Chapter of this document (see p.121-122 below), which proposes closer practitioner involvement in architectural education.

Within Schools of Architecture, students are taught that, alongside concerns for technological, functional and aesthetic performance – on time and within budget (Broadbent 1988), it is their role to design built environments that enhance 'social value' (a term initially defined on page 18 above). The deployment of such vague terminology is discussed further in Chapter 2 of this thesis, but practice-related education – especially in the context of a 'woke' Generation Z (Mkele 2018), with its defining concerns for social and racial justice – can clearly reduce the profession's hesitancy in respect of what constitutes socially responsible activity:

> "*to make the world a better place without challenging social, economic, or political powers, to be critical without questioning the status quo, to create spaces for 'the people' while people cannot participate in the process to think and make architecture, to argue for a sustainable architecture while building more… Architecture remains stuck in its ideological impasse*" (Garcia and Frankowski 2019).

In Schools of Architecture, 'the social dimension' is not easily delivered through reference to the canonical theorists whose writings have shaped the discipline's self-awareness[19]. It is therefore interesting to consider what happens at the interface between Architecture School and the workplace, and the extent to which students experience this as a transition from one set of

values to another (mirroring the transformation of Bauhaus socialist ideals to the debased 'international style' now unthinkingly associated with commercial development).

After leaving Architecture School, practitioners are required to attend not only to the quality of their design output but also to quantitative issues (such as time and cost) associated with the income required to sustain future productivity. As they become entrusted with greater responsibility for such materialistic factors as their firms' cash flow and financial targets, architects can quickly lose sight of 'immature' ideals associated with what their paymasters regard as secondary considerations (such as what the inhabitants of surrounding communities may feel about their design proposals). Sensitivity to the needs and 'subjective' aspirations of the neighbours to a development is easily displaced by the relentless but more easily measurable pressures of securing profitable work, and of completing it on time, within budget, and to prescribed design standards. It is therefore tempting (especially for inexperienced architects – and therefore sometimes for academics also) to accuse target-obsessed practice managers of disregarding the parts of their professional Codes of Conduct (ARB 2017, RIBA 2019d) that commit them to fulfil broader social obligations as a standard feature of their services. For reasons discussed above (p.16), most clients are concerned simply with having projects designed to meet particular functional requirements within the constraints of specified budgets and programmes, and will regard social impact as a secondary effect rather than as a primary objective. In responding to their clients' briefs, therefore, professional architects often find themselves torn between commercial objectives (satisfying their clients' requirements, making sufficient income to ensure business continuity, and reinforcing their practice's reputation for providing

an effective service), and their moral responsibilities in terms of social and environmental sustainability. Private-sector clients, by contrast, are constrained only by statutory processes and law.

### *Legislative Constraints*

By serving to balance private against public interests, legislation can be regarded by architects as a conveniently externalised channel for resolving conflicts between commercial and social values. Expansion of a brief in order to comply with law is never a 'secondary concern' requiring negotiation with the client. Over the last 50 years (since the fuel crisis of the 1970s), for example, the technical requirements of the Building Regulations (MHCLG 2018b) have incorporated ever stricter provisions on energy conservation, causing the environmental impact of architectural development to become increasingly prominent, and therefore generally accepted, as a constraint on design decisions. The social impact of architectural development, similarly, is constrained by the UK planning system – currently enshrined in the Town and Country Planning Act (UK Parliament 1990), which requires the award of local authority permission in respect of most kinds of built environment proposal. In consequence of the adversarial rituals associated with its operation (Fischer and Forester 1993, Fischer and Gottweis 2012), however, the planning system fails to mediate between 'practice and community' and incentivizes architects to focus upon 'material considerations' rather than upon outward-orientated (social, idealistic) aspirations.

As planning decisions are required to be related to policy rather than to technology, involving interpretation rather than application, developers' proposals usually involve negotiation with planning

officers (which can extend over many months in the case of major schemes), with outcomes expressed as packages of Conditions attached to the eventual notification of Planning Permission. The involvement of architects in such negotiations gives the profession a key opportunity to influence the extent to which (and the methods through which) local people's needs and desires are incorporated into the design process. As the developers represent their paymasters, however, architects find themselves severely restricted in their ability to determine the scope of community engagement in the projects they undertake.

The effect of planning legislation is therefore to generate something of a contest between developers (represented by their architects) and the planning officers – traditionally associated with a 'development control' department – with whom they are obliged to negotiate. Understood in these terms, the planning system casts architects as entrepreneurial agents of capital (helping developers maximise financial return on their investment proposals), pitted against planners with responsibility for securing benefits (as envisaged in policy) for the communities they serve. Architects perceiving the development of their business to depend upon a reputation for satisfying their clients' objectives therefore regard it as the local authority's role (rather than their own) to wrest what social amenity they can out of entrepreneurs' proposals for development in their area – at which point the interests of 'practice' and 'community' begin to clash with one another.

From both parties' point of view, accordingly, negotiating a planning consent can resemble a struggle between the competing aims of developers (seeking to maximise profits) and of planning officers (seeking to uphold local planning policy). In the UK's political context for the last half-century, however, the struggle

between the interests of capital and community has been notoriously uneven, with local authorities struggling to ensure that new development is consistently and coherently beneficial in terms of social impact. This imbalance is commonly attributed to constraints in council funding (determined by central government), which reduces the availability of skilled planning officers and increases the incentive to award permission to almost any development that promises to boost the local economy. In times of recession especially, local authorities come under political pressure to permit even schemes with undesirable social or environmental impact, simply on the grounds that they represent positive investment proposals[20]. The main frustration of local planning authorities, however, stems from their obligation to depend primarily upon private sector development proposals as the main vehicles for implementing policy, having (until recently) been restricted both legally and financially from initiating or engaging in development themselves.

As planning negotiations are invariably obscured by nervous reference to the need for commercial confidentiality, development management processes are only partially open and democratic – being conducted only as "*informal discussion*" (Planning Portal 2021b) under the umbrella of 'pre-application advice.' In politically contentious situations furthermore, the officers entrusted to lead discussions in respect of potential community benefits associated with development proposals are required simply to report on the proposed terms of planning agreements, leaving the elected councillors to take final decisions in respect of Conditions to be attached to a consent. Members of the public are able to exercise only indirect influence in respect of advertised planning applications (or developers' appeals against refusal of permission) – primarily through making representations to the local authority, which "*are*

*kept on file with the application and form part of the public record*" (Planning Portal 2021a). Under current legislation, direct 'public consultation' exercises are mandatory only at various stages of the policy formulation process (supposedly providing the grounds for decision-taking in relation to future developers' applications). Being related to policy rather than to actual proposals, however, it is difficult to attract public interest in such 'consultation' – with the consequence that planning officers draft large parts of the associated documentation in isolation – both culturally and technically – from the communities likely to be affected by its implications (assuming the emergence of developers prepared to implement the policies). In consequence, it is argued (Allmendinger and Haughton 2014), the UK planning system is impaired by a 'democratic deficit', causing local defeatism and resentment in opposition to developers' apparent control over the quality and content of people's built environments. This situation creates a demand for architects who embrace the convergence of social, environmental and financial objectives:

- by planning officers – welcoming the opportunity to negotiate with professionals who share their values, which are reflected in the UK planning system's explicit bias in favour of granting planning permission: "*at the heart of the (National Planning Policy) Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development*" (MHCLG 2019, para.10), which is defined in terms of simultaneously meeting economic, social and environmental objectives.
- by developers – seeking to entrust planning applications to practitioners with a reputation for maintaining good relationships with local authorities (believing this to lead more efficiently to positive outcomes).

- by community groups – hoping for recognition as stakeholders, perhaps leading to empowerment through inclusion in the design process.

### *Barriers to Community Engagement*

The weaker position of a local authority officer relative to a private-sector developer in negotiations for planning consent places the burden of responsibility upon the architect in terms of the social impact of development proposals. A key opportunity to exercise this responsibility (in accordance with their Codes of Conduct) arises in an architect's production of the 'Design and Access Statement' accompanying a planning application and asserting the proposed scheme's social, economic and environmental desirability. In order to win local authority acknowledgement of the proposal's social value, it is helpful to be able to refer to 'public consultation' confirming this – especially if it has taken the form of discussion with local stakeholders, followed by design modification in response to feedback. Being reflective of a more 'democratic' process than they can muster, planning officers will usually look favourably on design schemes in which there has been significant local participation. Planners' specific requests for community consultation in respect of development proposals normally represent the maximum extent of community engagement that architects succeed in persuading their clients to sponsor. The thesis therefore seeks strategies to support the involvement of local people in the shaping of design proposals without risk to a firm's business interests.

Developers remain the architects' paymasters, however, and because of the significant uplift in land values (and in the

associated profits) once planning permission is granted, there is always greater potential for distrust when architects seek to discuss design proposals with members of the public than when negotiating with planning officers (who may be expected to respect normal standards of professional behaviour). The interests of commercial 'success', accordingly (measured by the financial profitability of the schemes for which architects manage to secure planning consent on behalf of their clients), determine that there is normally little incentive for practitioners to engage directly with those who live in the neighbourhood of a proposed development. Although face-to-face community engagement offers the most direct way for architects to demonstrate how they have taken the social dimension into account, practitioners may identify a variety of reasons for only rarely involving local communities in the design process:

- Because the clients sponsoring the development are usually motivated by very different agenda (as discussed in the opening paragraph of this thesis on p.16 above, regarding buildings as a vehicle for other, profit-related ends – suggesting minimal investment in the initial design and construction processes).
- Because people living in the vicinity of potential new development are notoriously resistant to change[21], regarding the familiar physical appearance of their neighbourhood as a core feature of its (and therefore also of their own) identity.
- Because architects themselves find it more productive to affect a submissively respectful attitude to planning officers' opinion (in the interests of attracting further work), while privately asserting the superior quality of their own design ideas (having developed their specialist expertise over the minimum seven years it takes to qualify as an architect in the UK).

The strategies proposed in the final Chapter of this thesis must therefore enable practitioners to overcome the above challenges, and to produce built environments more capable of playing a usefully long-term civic role (independently of initial constraints of cost and function) – reflecting how they embed a 'social dimension' in their everyday practice.

Architects' efforts to remove barriers to the participation of local people in determining the form and content of the environment they inhabit can be characterized generally as an education process (public 'capacity-building'). By treating community engagement as an opportunity to stimulate open-ended public discussion of local priorities in terms of the built environment, rather than simply as a means of facilitating immediate development objectives, architects can ensure that their output will be judged to contain 'social purpose' (giving local people a long-lasting sense of control over their surroundings). The process requires integration of an expanded educational function (in relation to clients, communities, and architecture students alike) as an inherent feature of day-to-day architectural practice, and therefore of practice development also. This thesis is itself the product of protracted academic activity, undertaken in response to a practice-related question and with the objective of enlarging the understanding of fellow-professionals. The next Chapter of this document therefore explores its epistemological foundations.

# 2. APPROACHING AN ANSWER: epistemology and methodologies

## *Origins*

Having discussed the need to ask the research question addressed in this thesis, and observing the direction ('capacity-building') in which it implicitly points, this section of the document relates the enquiry to two separate (but necessarily inter-related) critical frameworks:

a) the author's personal standpoint and its evolution through the research process
b) current discourse about social value affecting the architectural profession and its development from ideas about 'community architecture'.

In extending and updating the 'Literature Review and Conceptual Framework' document prepared in April 2016 as a foundation for research, this Chapter examines the extent to which earlier philosophical positions have been modified or reinforced by subsequently encountered literature, requiring the adoption of revised critical perspectives.

The motivation for this thesis may be understood by reference to its practice-related beginnings. The research exercise was originally stimulated by a strategic issue that (in January 2015) faced the author's own architectural practice, when the three directors found themselves discussing whether the firm's continuing prioritisation of community-oriented objectives was constraining viability in terms of business development. The outcome was the author's decision to undertake NTU's DArch

programme in order to investigate a question initially framed (in the 'Project Identification and Planning' document) as '*how may involvement in community engagement projects affect the development of architectural practices?*' In refining the issue through subsequent studies, this question evolved (in Doc 2) into '*how may architectural practices develop in conjunction with involvement in community engagement projects?*,' and was then (in Docs 3 and 4) simplified as '*how may architectural practices develop through involvement in community engagement projects?*'

In short, the research sought to expand architects' understanding of practice development, by exploring strategies for enabling architectural projects to serve as vehicles not merely for generating business income but (in the interests of sustainability) for broad-based capacity-building.

### *Conceptual Framework*

The evolution of the research question's wording reflects determination to avoid what were initially perceived as two potential dangers:

a) 'over-connecting' – marked by premature identification of causal relationships (particularly between community engagement and practice development), conscious of potential bias arising from how the thinking mind is predisposed to construct such connections, especially when disregarding values implicit in their definition.
b) 'under-connecting' – marked by descent into the vacuous dualism associated with casting abstract concepts such as 'practice' and 'community' as polarised opposites (analogous to capitalism versus democracy, individualistic profit-making versus social accountability, or technocratic professionalism

versus public sentiment), suggesting the impossibility of establishing any relationship between two apparently competing extremes.

The desire to contain research discussion within defined boundaries is not related entirely to a concern for validity, however, as it links also to ideas about the discipline of architecture and how it constitutes a form of research in itself.

The researcher's endeavour (seeking a contribution to knowledge) is consistent with the architect's "*obligation toward the difficult whole*" – to quote Venturi's inspirational demand that design should simultaneously represent "*a whole at one level and a fragment of a greater whole at another*" (Venturi 1977:104). As buildings have both form and function, their physical shape reflects (past), expresses (present) and determines (future) social impact – momentarily overlooking the imprecision of the latter concept. Bringing form and function together to generate 'socially rich' design proposals requires architects to allow a broad range of 'stakeholders' to influence the design process. The interests of democratic inclusivity demand that practitioners engage in activity additional to the interpretation of client requirements in terms of abstract geometry (relatively simple, although often justified by reference to sophisticated financial and technical calculations). The larger and more challenging task involves engaging in pragmatic ('live') exploration of an uncertain terrain in which conflicting interests are positively welcomed and permitted to intersect, rather than ignored or erased. In the densely populated UK, with its well documented history of slowly evolving and overlapping land-use, there is a long tradition of architects responding to what they deliberately identify as 'messy' situations (Rowe and Koetter 1978, Till 2009), deploying skills and knowledge to develop a broader understanding of context.

If the research-based task of this thesis is to be 'informed' by the same ethos, it is appropriate for its content to invoke reference to precepts associated with the discipline of architecture and to its underpinning academic tradition. It would be premature to suggest, however, that by identifying and bridging a divide between practice and academia – exemplified in the familiar complaint of UK practitioners (Cuff 1991:162) about Schools of Architecture failing to prepare students adequately for employment (academia being associated with theory, practice with the 'reality' of earning a living from design projects), the profession can begin also to close the 'practice and community' gap[22]. Financial considerations cannot therefore represent the main focus of this thesis: strategic development requires a broader platform of understanding, combining practice with theoretical reflection. While "*engaging with and building for their local communities*" has recently been identified by Tait (2021) as a common thread marking successful architects' transition from student to professional, its displacement by a focus upon commercial factors once established in mainstream practice may be attributed in part to a critical disjuncture within the history of architectural education.

UK-trained architects' preference for the physically observable rather than the formally abstract, for material tectonics rather than theory, may be traced to their schooling on early Bauhaus principles (rooted in a fascination for the arts and crafts) – reflected in the praxis of the Art Schools whose tradition of speculative creativity is now followed in most Schools of Architecture (Žychowska 2019). The later (post-1928) Bauhaus ideas associated with 'modernism' and the 'international style' (and now with corporate capitalism, following adoption of the 'form follows function' dictum by reductionistic developers with

profitability as a driving objective), have never been promoted enthusiastically within architectural academies "*committed to pushing the boundaries of current thinking*" (Cuff 1991:162). Indeed, it was in the field of architecture – particularly through the work of Jencks (1977) – that the notion of 'post-modernism' was first articulated in terms of visual form. Post-modernist preferences for inclusive multiplicity (rather than minimalist functionalism) offered a promising departure point, and Doc 2 anticipated research taking the form of open-minded exploration (grounded in uncertainty) rather than confirmation of a hypothesis.

Believing its encouragement of creative (and therefore destabilizing) assumptions to be more conducive to change, a stance rooted in the 'continental' strand of post-modernism is therefore adopted in this study. The research would lack impact if its purpose were confined to answering a simplistic business-related question about making 'community architecture' profitable, thereby suggesting acceptance (or even reinforcement) of the status quo in terms of how the profession relates to the public. The ideas of Bruno Latour (2013 in particular) prove highly pertinent to a study related to the 'social dimension' of architectural practice. Carefully avoiding reference to non-material causality, Latour (2005)[22] is interested in what connects participants, human and non-human alike, into an 'assemblage'. Throughout numerous shifts of context for his observations (2018), Latour consistently warns against treating notions such as 'practice' or 'community' as independent objects for discussion, on the grounds that any conclusions will be merely self-referential. Abstract concepts need to be explained rather than used as explanations, he advises, requiring focus upon material evidence of interconnections rather than ideas working independently of one another. Concepts such as 'practice' or 'community' must be

brought into view, accordingly, as arenas of performative action by combinations of what Latour describes as unstable 'mediators,' and fixed, intermediary 'objects.' Such a standpoint has been previously advocated in relation to architectural practice:

> "*in Bruno Latour's term, critical attention is shifted from architecture as a matter of fact to architecture as a matter of concern. As matters of fact, buildings … can be treated as things on their own terms. As matters of concern, they enter into socially embedded networks, in which the consequences of architecture are of much more significance than the objects of architecture*" (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011:32-33).

The 'objects of architecture' are always socially constructed achievements that can be legitimised through close study of how they inherit their taken-for-grantedness. Closure in respect of objectivity requires reference to the impact of architectural projects upon the lives of those who live or work in or around them.

In this thesis, accordingly, the aim is not so much to shift attention from the commercial to the social dimension of architecture (as if they were polarized opposites) as to identify practice strategies for combining 'matters of concern' (Latour 2008) with 'matters of fact', signifying (at least temporary) congruity between business-related and community-oriented objectives. When he identifies facts/values, matter/spirit, or nature/culture as "*key problematic dualisms of Modern thought… Latour has sought only to challenge the terms in which those partitions have been drawn, not their existence as such*" (Herrnstein Smith 2020:369). 'Practice' and 'community' are legitimised as objects for discussion through their interconnection.

Latour observes that the 'assemblage' of evidence in order to bestow meaningful identity upon social phenomena requires a clearly articulated axiology (extending to the incorporation of one's

own political values). Further to the commitment to democratic inclusivity (see p.37 above), the stance adopted in this research thesis is that, unless it actively respects the feelings of the people who find themselves living in the vicinity (materialised through embedding their ideas and opinions into design decisions), architecture becomes an elitist luxury, representing an instrument of oppression so long as it embodies and expresses values shared only by a relatively wealthy minority of the population. Money is socially constructed just as much as ethical considerations are, but the context of current architectural practice demands commitment to the latter. The provision of social value (in terms of empowering the relatively disadvantaged members of a community) therefore requires practitioners to deliver responses that exceed the agenda and expectations of their (typically cost-obsessed) paymasters.

A standpoint that suggests an additional dimension to architects' services provides an immediate sense of direction in respect of the research question. If the objective is to enhance the social benefits of their output (a judgement that must be delivered from outside the profession, and confirmed from outside the client-base), an effective strategy is for architects to behave more like 'responsive' educationalists than as preachers, advocates or marketing executives. The significance of the term 'responsive' (Molteno, et al. 2000) will be discussed further within the main thesis (see p.88 below), but the associated pedagogical model was identified at the outset of the whole research programme with the ideas of Paolo Freire (2010 [1970]): if social empowerment is espoused as a politically desirable alternative to authority-dependence, its development must involve awakening the critical awareness of all stakeholders rather than the authoritative imposition of unreflected knowledge and ideas. Community-oriented design, accordingly (and client development, it is suggested on p.128 below), requires

architects to deploy listening skills as a means of helping people see and understand for themselves (by reference to their own cultural values), rather than persuasion skills within the context of materialistic considerations (such as cost-benefit analysis, profit-margins or break-even points in relation to investment). A strategy for practice development will not be found through focus upon techniques enabling architects to convince clients of the importance of sponsoring their engagement with local communities in order to enhance social purpose. Instead, it is proposed, 'increasing professional effectiveness' requires implementation of the classic 'theory in practice' model:

> "*the strategy would be to find practitioners who want to become more skilled at being reflective about their actions and to increase their competence in creating their own theories of effective practice*" (Argyris and Schon 1974:192).

Community development, client development, and practice development likewise, need to interact with one another in a continuum labelled as 'capacity-building.' The task for this thesis is to reinforce such normative observations with descriptions of practice-based action.

### *Professional Discourse*

Having applied the 'theory in practice' model in first articulating the personal standpoint and conceptual framework underpinning this thesis, the remainder of this Chapter discusses additional secondary research that has provided a deeper understanding[23] of key terms associated with this study. 'Actor-network-theory' principles require the interpretation of expressions such as 'community engagement' to "*follow the actors*" (Latour 2005:237): insights may accordingly be teased out from examination of publications designed to serve (if not directly produced by) the

architectural profession, rather than seeking support for preconceived ideas in the related discourse. The identification and processing of such evidence inevitably reflects development of the author's own viewpoint, in addition to indicating potential channels for implementing thesis recommendations. The main kind of literature considered is generic material related to community engagement in the design process as a means of enhancing social impact (largely taking the form of books and academic journal articles, and therefore of interest mainly to practitioners and academics already committed to integrating social purpose into design projects). In the background, however, practice-related material published in the professional press and online news-feeds (particularly Building Design and the Architects Journal) has been raising practitioners' awareness of social purpose as an architectural objective. Short, journalistic articles on unfamiliar ideas and new projects (enabling trends over time to be identified) constitute the preferred reading of 'mainstream' practitioners (in the interests of market awareness, often doubling as fulfilment of professional obligations in terms of Continuing Professional Development). In the ensuing discussion, reference to articles in the professional press is largely avoided in the interests of maintaining a certain distance from the restless churning of fashion and chatter (although it has been reassuring to observe steadily increasing interest in social value as part of the architect's agenda – see p.11 above). An important exception is identified, however, in relation to the argument for linking architectural and planning practice objectives.

Understandably (for reasons discussed in the previous Chapter), much of the practice-based discussion in texts concerning community engagement in the development process relates to the planning profession rather than to architecture. Setting a context

for this thesis, however, the Farrell Review (Farrells 2015) seeks to bring the professions together through emphasis upon 'place-making' – building upon discourse long cultivated by human and cultural geographers within international publications such as the Community Development Journal. One of the five themes unifying the Review is a call for "*a new level of public engagement through education and outreach…*" (Farrells 2015:9), corresponding to the recommendation that practices should 'champion the civic' through "*volunteering, collaboration and enabling*" and "*an increased focus on … the character and needs of existing communities*" (Farrells 2015:15). In a preliminary definition of terms, accordingly, community engagement is interpreted for the purposes of this thesis as the manifestation of a practice's strategy for adopting a 'responsive' approach to the civic, prompting reciprocation from stakeholders.

Although literature specifically concerned with the practice/community relationship demands levels of sustained intellectual attention likely to be associated only with practitioners already engaged in the field, the amount of material related to community-oriented architecture that has been published since 2015 (when this research project began) testifies to a revival of interest in the topic. In the background, for the purposes of clarity[24] in respect of the "*bewildering variety of meanings associated with the term 'community'*" (Crow and Allan 1994:1), Baumann (2001) and Delanty (2018) provide two usefully distinct starting-points for discussion. In the foreground, the thesis is underpinned by the more recent work of Innes and Booher (2018), Fisher and Gamman (2019) and Raiden et al (2019). Each of these viewpoints is successively examined over the paragraphs that follow.

Adopting a social anthropologist's stance firstly, Baumann regards 'community' as an unachievable but desperately desired illusion associated with nostalgic "*seeking safety in an insecure world*" (2001). His view is a development of previous identification of "*the search for community*" (Baumann 1991:246) as a refuge from the toxic combination of politically unconstrained globalisation and morally irresponsible individualisation that he – alongside Harvey (1989) – associates with late modernity. "*Gaining community, if it happens, would soon mean missing freedom,*" Baumann asserts (2001:4): both autonomy and potentialities are sacrificed in people's allegiance to other members of a community. To reduce this tension between group security and individual freedom, Baumann therefore advocates "*a postmodern ethics where the identity of the self is not constituted on grounds of belonging to a community that excludes the other*" (Millei and Sumsion 2011:82). Reassuringly, Baumann clearly calls for the same "*working relationship between research and practice*" as that demanded by Argyris and Schön (1974:4), and points community-oriented architects in the direction of capacity-building based upon ethical responsibility for inclusivity[25] – suggesting the focus upon 'participative learning' (Fuller 2003) that occupies much of Chapter 4 of this document.

Baumann's open-ended insistence upon the adoption of a mutually supportive standpoint in relation to community development contrasts strongly with approaches taken by more technocratic authors who, perpetuating Cohen's (1985) focus upon the creation of notional boundaries, stress the socially constructed nature of community and argue that its meanings "*are negotiated, contested and altered*" (Howarth 2001:227) as people make it significant in their individual lives. The effect of such combative pluralism is to risk generating zero-sum situations which involve the

marginalisation of certain social groups in proportion to the empowerment of others: "*security for some may be achieved only by the exclusion of others*" (Shaw 2007:28). Seeking to avoid tension and conflict, Innes and Booher (2018:195) observe, "*citizens channel their participation through association with those who agree with them.*" Baumann takes a contrastingly transcendent view, recalling Pirsig's attribution of moral superiority to 'dynamic quality' over "*static patterns of value*" (Pirsig 2006:165): reconciliation of 'practice and community' both demands and is driven by interplaying ethical considerations. The role of the community-engaged architect, accordingly, is to help people demonstrate through creative activity how they value the differing views held by neighbours: professional 'capacity-building' requires attitude development to drive demand for increased knowledge and skills.

Because the design process consists in general of reconciling seemingly divergent parameters, it is arguable that architects' training equips them well for involvement in helping members of a community come to terms with each other's separate viewpoints – a listening-based activity that represents an essentially educational endeavour in itself. In relation to planning practice, Forester (1980) was first to observe the relevance of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, who argued that education can be emancipatory if it explores how power relationships are constantly sustained by socially constructed understandings, assumptions and language. Healey (1992) subsequently identified 'planning through debate' as evidence of a 'communicative turn in planning theory,' and has proceeded to suggest that collaborative interaction of this kind is vital to place-making (Healey 2006). In more general terms, Etzioni (1997) prefers the term 'liberal communitarianism' for ethical definition of what communities consider desirable: being

constructed largely upon the values espoused by a community's members, people's preferences should not be regarded merely as expressions of individualism, he argues, but as attitudes continuously susceptible to change (through educational processes, for example, when they present opportunities for comparative evaluation of divergent viewpoints). Building also upon Dryzek's critique (1990) of instrumental rationality (on the grounds that technocratic approaches to development reflect anti-democratic and joyless social engineering), Innes and Booher advocate 'collaborative rationality' as a basis for formulating public policy responsively:

> "*the purpose of participation is to engage the public in joint learning and to build public capacity for problem solving and adaptation. It is about listening and deliberating rather than announcing and defending… The assumption is that many problems will require the public to at least support, if not play a part in, implementing solutions, and therefore that social learning is a crucial part of planning and public policy*" (Innes and Booher 2018:185).

Architects' management of deliberation between stakeholders in proposals for the built environment, similarly (enabling participants to challenge each other's assumptions and to force self-reflection), should help them "*grasp the many-sidedness of (development proposals) and get a sense of the whole, while being aware of contradictions*" (Innes and Booher 2018:24). A deliberative approach ensures that dialectical processes (in conjunction with praxis) generate emancipatory knowledge for relatively disempowered citizens, but can also serve appropriately as a means of reinforcing the commitment to integration taught by design studio tutors within an Architecture School: complex problems cannot be resolved effectively by modernistic disaggregation into separate parts, but require "*reciprocal understanding of the accepted legitimate (if different) opinions and*

*conceptual frameworks of other actors*" (Dryzek 1990:17). Through reproducing studio-based deliberation in respect of design ideas (involving as many tutors, colleagues and visitors as possible), practitioners can develop and demonstrate the skills required also for generating and sustaining creative dialogue with community groups: 'capacity-building' comes in this way to serve the purposes of business development also.

In contrast to Baumann, whose ideas about community stimulate theoretical reflections on architectural practice, Delanty offers insights related more directly to the experience of community engagement. Delanty links both social fragmentation and counteracting manifestations of people's sense of 'belonging' and 'sharing' to new contexts generated by rapidly changing modes of communication[26]. Building upon the optimistic vision of 'the information age' developed by Castells (1996 / 1997 / 1998) – although without sharing his enthusiasm for a transnationally connected 'network society', Delanty identifies 'communication communities' as outcomes of "*the current social and political situation, which appears to have produced a worldwide search for roots, identity and aspirations for belonging*" (Delanty 2018:1) – with collaborative deliberation reinforcing their effectiveness as voices for political change.

Drawing upon personal experience of 'rebuilding' communities in the aftermath of natural disasters, Mulligan (2015:341) criticises Delanty for falling into "*the trap of thinking that constructed communities have necessarily become disconnected from place*." Practice-based focus upon physical considerations such as site and construction (as recommended in the Farrell Review – see p.44 above), especially in times of heightened consciousness of ecological impact, reflects architects' preference for a materially

'grounded' understanding of community in preference to any non-localised 'virtual' variety associated with globalised networking. As the design process involves the development of an (initially) imaginary or 'projected' habitat, however, it is significant that Delanty also values Nancy's postmodernist understanding of 'incompletion' as an attribute of community – "*in an active sense… designating not an insufficiency or lack, but the activity of sharing*" (Nancy 1991:35). In the context of "*the networked self*" (Papacharan 2010), *communitas* – adopting the term advocated by Esposito (2010) for social groupings that feel obliged to oppose the rationalising structures or strictures of the state – is generated through dynamic participation in the construction of shared knowledge rather than as a product of passively acquired learning. Refining definitions for the purposes of this thesis, accordingly (further to pp.26, 37 and 44 above), 'community architecture' is interpreted in terms of design-related activity by the occupants of a spatially bounded neighbourhood (usefully termed 'locality' in relation to control over what physical form it is to take) – design being accomplished through interactively negotiated 'discovery' rather than delivered as the output of 'creative sector' specialists.

Fisher and Gamman (2019) update the discourse in relation to socially responsive design by identifying a dark side to both practice and product as 'tricky design.' Dilnot[27] accordingly promotes a shift from perceiving design as an aspect of professional 'competence' to a "*mode of acting in the world*" (Dilnot 2014:68), which demands recognising and coming to terms with problematic ecologies and their political causes and consequences – just as it is the purpose of this thesis to suggest. Fisher and Gamman (2019:2) argue that designers should focus upon "*both the material practices of design and their immaterial, social, effects*" because of "*the degree to which design actions are*

*ever entangled with their setting*". Architects, accordingly, have an ethical obligation to entangle their responses to a client's brief with 'external' conditions that frame its formulation. This suggests a standpoint, foreshadowed on p.15 above, that unseats architects' traditional socio-cultural/commercial position (based upon proud exercise of defined professional competencies) – for example, by sharing their knowledge and skills (rather than putting them at the service of capitalist interests), and encouraging the public to engage in the design process (in the interests of democracy).

The motive for architects' adoption of such a different business model, in which they perform as 'facilitators' rather than leaders relates to stronger connectedness to site and setting ('place') through response to a broader range of issues than addressed via the reductionist economics of international modernism – giving small practices, rooted in their local communities, an initial advantage over larger ones. Post-modernism, with its rejection of grand narratives, encourages a certain humility in terms of architects' practice growth, which is then offset by claims to moral or philosophical superiority[28] – reinforcing the appeal to academia for justification. Fisher and Gamman argue that "*the risk of hubris in practitioners who are necessarily in a subaltern position but take a high-minded view of the ethics of their work*" (2019:5) may be mitigated by reference to social multiplicity[29] – the adjustment of practice to contemporary global uncertainties and the political tensions enshrined in the UN's 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs - UN 2015). Latour's injunction that systems and situations should be accorded multi-vocal meaning invokes the discourse of 'the second empiricism' (Witmore 2015) – an approach that promises special relevance in the contexts of both design and research, the common purpose of which is to "*handle uncertainty in constructive ways*" (Light, Shklovski and Powell 2017:725). The

practice of increasing rather than avoiding uncertainty is familiar to architectural practitioners as a technique for effective risk-management (Grote 2015). Almost by definition (since classical times), the discipline of Architecture has always involved constructive meaning-making, but the post-modernist standpoint demands that "*design needs to be critically scrutinised in its role of securing hegemonic futures: which worlds are fostered, and, more importantly, which worlds are negated by design*" (de Oliveira and Prado 2019:105). The achievement of such inclusivity (in further clarification of the terminology involved) reinforces motivation for a focus upon community engagement in the design process, and upon the associated role of architects as the enablers of such activity.

### *Social Value*

In recognition of architects' need to avoid an instrumental approach to design 'users' (or participants in their associated research endeavours), the term 'social value' has been invoked earlier in this thesis (see p. 18 above) as short-hand for extending the scope of a design brief to bring about ethical consequences – reflecting architects' move from designing buildings as objects to designing them as 'socio-material assemblies' (Björgvissen, Ehn and Hillgren 2012:102). Retrospectively, the practice of engaging users in the design process has also been interpreted in terms of 'decolonising' architecture, in that it challenges "*the conventional lack of power of those at the bottom of the economic heap*" (Fisher and Gamman 2019:6). The idea of generating social change through participative pedagogy has been previously (see p.41 above) traced to Freire (2010 [1970]), whose non-positivistic, action-based approach laid the foundations for numerous democratic initiatives, including what became known in the 1970s

as 'community architecture.' In the interests of inclusivity, however, practitioners need to be aware also of what their built environment colleagues understand by the term 'social value' – a concept explored by Raiden et al (2019) in the context of the construction industry generally.

Overall, it is acknowledged that "*one of the limitations of the current debate on social value in the built environment is that it is too heavily focused on the construction stage of projects*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:20) whereas the nature of architects' expertise determines that their strongest opportunity to influence social value occurs in the earliest stages of a project. Within the design process, Raiden et al identify 'specification' as a good opportunity[30] for generating social value:

> "*the materials specified…can be sourced from responsible suppliers which create social value in their production and the construction technologies implied…can create or destroy employment opportunities*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:17).

Echoing a more general point advanced by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE 2002), the authors also observe that architectural quality *per se* (implying the efforts of gifted professionals and the absence of community engagement) can enhance the social value of a development:

> "*well-designed buildings and infrastructure projects can regenerate disadvantaged communities by creating a new sense of identity, place and pride*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:20).

Arguably, such outcomes reflect a merely short-term 'Hawthorne' or observer effect (Mayo 2003 [1933]), whereby people's behaviour and attitudes are modified only so long as they are conscious of being the objects of attention (or investment). Social value does not behave in the same way as economic value, however: "*while many economists would assume that value depreciates over time…, social value often increases over time due*

*to multiplier effects into wider communities and future generations*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:28). How social value might be quantified (and thereby possibly monetised) remains a paradoxical challenge that has yet to be addressed.

The application of any quantitative metrics at a specific point in time is initially questionable: "*social value is in constant flux as stakeholders create and improvise narratives of what they consider to be important*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:194). Raiden et al discuss alternative methodologies and principles for assessing (deliberately avoiding the word 'measuring') social impact, and conclude that "*opportunities to create social value change over time in response to the social, political, economic and cultural environment in which a judgement about value is being made*" (Raiden, et al. 2019:208). In the absence of agreed criteria for the measurement and communication of social value, Raiden et al observe (2019:209), "*the idea of involving the private sector in tackling social problems is inherently political and highly controversial (*as)… *arguments for and against involving private firms in the creation of social value can easily be manipulated one way or the other*." This profession-related thesis is concerned less with issues of reliability in reporting (retrospectively) on the effectiveness of community-engagement exercises, however, than with the business impact of constant design adjustments associated with piecemeal 'continuous assessment' of social effects (via community engagement).

The argument of this thesis is that discussion of 'social value' – even without appointing specialists to assess it in accordance with certain criteria (yet to be uniformly agreed, even within the construction sector) – does not require the involvement of professionals: greater value (if judged in terms of ethical

accountability rather than technocratic rationalism) will always be derived from actively engaging stakeholders in the process. de Sousa (2019) therefore recommends that architects adopt a complementary approach and engage specialists (like The Glass House charity[31] that she leads) as consultants to help ensure that the design process yields long-term social value for participants. The more integrated approach advocated in this thesis, by contrast, requires practitioners to learn from such specialists, in preparation for developing "*empowering design practices*" (de Sousa 2019:148) as the mainstream of their professional activity.

For mainstream practice development, the critical factor is ensuring that the costs of community engagement (in terms of employees' time spent on this kind of activity) must be adequately covered by the income generated from fees. If clients cannot be persuaded to pay what they will undoubtedly regard as an 'extra' (as community engagement does not – yet – form part of the standard services offered by practitioners), either practice itself must change, or the nature of community engagement must be reviewed. The next section of this thesis therefore looks at two research studies undertaken to investigate these options – the first being concerned with practice, the second with community experience.

# 3. RESEARCH STUDIES: exploring Practice and Community

## *Objectives*

Having considered an appropriate standpoint to adopt in discussing 'practice and community' as an issue currently facing the architectural profession, this Chapter reviews the two primary Research Studies (DArch Docs 3–4) that were undertaken accordingly, using contrasting methodologies in relation first to 'practice' and then to 'community'. Addressing each side of the research question separately was deemed an efficient means of revealing areas of commonality pertinent to an appropriate model for future professional practice. For consistency with the axiological basis of the whole project, focussed upon the democratisation of decision-taking in respect of the built environment, both Studies sought to give maximum opportunity for research participants to express unprompted views – the aim being to minimise bias due to authorial preconceptions. The outcome was to confirm the identification of 'education' as a common thread in both community-engaged practices and to effective community-based design exercises, indicating project-based capacity-building as a central theme for the main thesis.

## *Practice-based Research Study*

Research Study 1 (completed in November 2017) aimed to discover common factors shared by practices with a national reputation for involvement in community-oriented architecture: the

study was therefore based largely upon open-ended dialogue with a range of selected practitioners. Adopting an 'emergent' research design approach (Cavallo 2004), the exercise involved three separate phases of activity:

a) identifying suitable practices to examine, and securing their agreement to participate in the study.
b) meeting the key practitioners involved and obtaining information from them about the relationship between their success as a firm and their involvement in community-oriented architecture.
c) processing the information obtained in order to identify similarities and differences in respect of how the different practices operate.

The three phases of research were kept entirely separate of one another in order to minimise risk of the outcomes of one process influencing input into another (for example, adapting interaction with one firm as a product of experience with a previous one, which could have resulted in the research being affected by the sequence in which the practices were approached).

The initial choice of which practices to approach (Doc 3 section 1) was casually based upon names that appeared to be repeatedly connected to community engagement within the professional press. While this approach might be criticized as random, it was grounded – like many references within other DArch documents – in a long-cultivated habit of reading, cover-to-cover, every issue of three particular architectural periodicals, the Architects Journal, the RIBA Journal and Architecture Today (supplemented by less systematic reference to other magazines and on-line journals, such as Building Design, the Architectural Review, Architect Newswire and Architizer). While lacking academic rigour, the selection method is arguably appropriate in the context of a professional

doctorate, as it corresponds to how conscientious practitioners operate.

In contacting practices (by email) identified for involvement in the Research Study, the focus of interest was described as "*the commercial and project management mechanics of how architectural practices such as yours manage so successfully to combine design projects characterized by community engagement with the achievement of business development objectives*." It was suggested that the researcher would spend "*no more than an hour asking questions*," and would then send the participant a draft report on what was said, with an invitation to edit the text wherever it felt appropriate in advance of its inclusion as a 'case study' in an Appendix to the document. In due course, it was promised, a draft of the completed Study would also be sent to the participant, inviting further comment and hoping they might find its conclusions interesting or even useful. As discussed in Doc 3 section 2, the intention in adopting such a 'light touch' approach (mixing courteous flattery with mild enticement) was to appear professional rather than academic, simulating familiar journalism rather than high-level 'discourse'. The researcher's own 'insider' position (possessing some understanding of colleagues' interests and priorities – and cognizant especially of the value practitioners place upon their time) was regarded as a means of encouraging productively relaxed face-to-face meetings.

Seven out of the ten architectural practices contacted accordingly finally consented to be 'interviewed':

- Assemble (Bermondsey)
- Rod Hackney Associates (Macclesfield)
- RCKa Ltd (Shoreditch)
- White Design Associates (Bristol)

- Stride Treglown plc (Clifton)
- muf architecture|art (Hackney)
- JCA – Jo Cowen Architects Ltd (Parsons Green).

Such a mixture of metropolitan/provincial, old/young and large/small practices provided a broad understanding of the potential range of business approaches, but obstructed the identification of common themes related to practice (assuming they existed). On the other hand, the limited number of participants (dictated primarily by the constraints of the doctorate programme) ensured useful depth in terms of capturing detail and personal attitude:

> "*if one considers the unit of attention as the phenomenon under investigation, rather than the number of individuals, then the sample is often much larger than first appears*" (Darlington and Scott 2002:18).

While representative sampling cannot be claimed, the chosen approach met objectives such as authenticity and absence of bias.

Research participants were invited to suggest convenient times and locations for their meetings, and verbal description of the selected contexts was treated as part of the research. Before meeting practitioners, in the interests of both courtesy and efficiency (to keep discussion focused upon process rather than product), some background research was conducted (via internet) in respect of projects undertaken and people's comments about them. Afterwards, opportunities were taken to visit some of the selected firms' projects when they arose (not systematically, but useful as a means of confirming ideas encountered in conversation with their architects). Limitations of time did not permit reference to project-related documentation (such as drawings), however, nor 'live' observation of workplace-based activity. Quantitative information was not even requested – partly on the grounds that (even – or especially – if readily available and not commercially

sensitive) veracity could not be assured, but mainly because comparative analysis would have been meaningless in the context of so few and such disparate research participants.

To give maximum opportunity for research participants to volunteer information without being prompted for it (which is why the use of written questionnaires of any kind had been dismissed at the outset), meetings with them took the form of 'responsive interviewing' (Rubin and Rubin 2012:xv) – semi-structured interviews conducted in ways that resemble 'natural conversation' so far as possible. Being aware (from the original request for a meeting) of the research topic, participants required only a few open-ended questions to initiate dialogue, and then to sustain it through unplanned supplementary questions – causing the encounter to resemble an easy-going exchange of opinions rather than a data-gathering process linked to a specific research agenda.

For several affiliated reasons, audio-recording of interviews was avoided:

a) to put the interviewee at ease, reducing the risk of guarded responses constrained by concern for image or commercial confidentiality.
b) anticipating that the exact wording used would be considered less important than the sentiments expressed.
c) to eliminate the need for careful (tricky and time-consuming) transcription.

Instead, the content of each discussion was captured in the form of metaphrastic notes, which were overtly typed 'live' (in the course of the conversation itself). The researcher's more frenetic scribbling – manifesting "*interested silence*" (Gillham 2008:11) – always enabled interviewees to recognise which responses were

being found the most relevant, encouraging them to continue speaking without the researcher disrupting the flow of their ideas.

The deliberately self-effacing relationship between researcher and interview respondent was not merely a device for obtaining a maximum of authentic information (reflecting whatever the participant regarded as pertinent to the relationship between practice development and community engagement, having been informed this was the object of the inquiry). It stemmed also from the democratic ethos driving the whole research exercise – reflecting anxiety to avoid the "*tendency to dominate or 'colonise' the research*" (Banks and Manners 2012) that might have been understandable in the context of both parties' time limitations. The drawback of such an unconstrained approach to information-gathering, however, is that it makes coordination and analysis of responses more of a challenge (albeit of a kind that architects are well trained to handle).

Before any attempts were made to process the material obtained in this way, the seven participating practices were individually sent first drafts of loosely parallel accounts of their operation, based upon the notes taken in meetings with them. As discussed in Doc 3 section 3, these reports were presented as 'case studies' that (in terms of style and format) resembled the professional journal articles already familiar to practitioners. The intention was to avoid both *"theory development prior to the conduct of any data collection"* (Yin 2003:28) – on the grounds that the adoption of pre-conceived criteria would have been inappropriate in a Study intended to be more exploratory than illustrative in nature, and the instrumental quality of case studies developed for use within a business or medical school (requiring packages carefully constructed to contain sufficient information to enable coherent

strategies to be formulated or lessons learnt). The 'case study' texts were not intended for subjection to careful deconstruction, but were designed to serve merely as one step in the process of identifying a critical position in relation to the research topic. The fact that only two practices requested minor amendments to description of their operation testifies to the validity of this approach.

In the interests of further minimising researcher interference with the 'voice' of case study participants (for example, through literary decisions in respect of form and content), no particular methodology for analysing the information provided by them was planned in advance. Because the interviews had been allowed to flow organically from one topic to the next, it was found relatively easy to convert notes into the text with a distinctly 'narrative' structure (with the researcher's questions omitted)[32]: the material followed approximately the same sequence as the original discussion, with creativity deployed primarily in its division into topic-related paragraphs (leaving traces of the questions originally posed by the researcher).

The strategy of maximising the opportunity for research participants' control over first the interview process and then the content of the 'case study' based upon it was extended (notionally) even to the researcher's interpretation of the material generated. Simplistic identification of 'themes' within the case study texts was avoided, to reduce the risk of undue reference to the original research question and preconceptions about its ramifications. While participants in the Study had been made aware of its general focus, it was never the ambition of interview questions to expose practice recipes for the successful integration of practice and community objectives – merely to observe the variety of ways in

which practitioners (indirectly prompted, and therefore almost unconsciously) suggested links between them. Having taken advantage of the research participants' instinctive 'narrative bias' – "*people's tendency to interpret information as being part of a larger story or pattern, regardless of whether the facts actually support the full narrative*" (Whitenton 2017), the researcher's analysis process – described in Doc 3 section 4 – consisted of first identifying instances where practitioners mentioned business-related objectives in the same paragraph as community engagement activities, and then characterising the nature of such interaction. By treating the practitioners' own approved narratives as interlocking material entities, the analysis process represented synthesis rather than fragmentation of data – consistent with Latourian 'assemblage' of evidence.

Coupled appropriately with an architect's predisposition towards integration (reflecting the same desire to form connections that motivated the research as a whole), Latourian principles provided a basis for drawing conclusions from the unanticipated contexts in which practice and community objectives were found to coincide:

| | Promotion of creative self-help via making things | Entrepren-eurial leadership of moral crusade | Part-time involve-ment in architect'l education | Deep immersion in social & cultural context | Develop-ment of robust managem't systems | Community projects as a means of wining plg permission | Community projects based upon developm't appraisal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assemble | (main) | | (2ndary) | | | | |
| Hackney | (2ndary) | (main) | (2ndary) | | | | |
| RCKa | | | | | | | (main) |
| White | | | (2ndary) | | | | (main) |
| Stride | | | | | (main) | | |
| muf | | | (2ndary) | (main) | | | |
| Jo Cowen | | | | | | (main) | (2ndary) |

**TABLE 1**: Summary of Research Study 1 interviewees' approaches to community-oriented architecture (from Doc 3 section 5)

Having anticipated that the selected practices would have widely varying methods of ensuring adequate income from community engagement, interviews had not involved direct questioning about this aspect of their operation. Narrative analysis enabled many connections between practice- and community-related topics to be identified within individual practices' case studies, but – considered in conjunction with one another – more antitheses than similarities were identified in respect of the selected practices' operation. A few unexpected personal connections between the firms were discovered, but the more surprising observation was that their approaches to community engagement contained no comprehensively coordinating *leitmotif*. TABLE 1 (above) summarises the separate emphasis characterising each practice's approach to community engagement, suggesting that the firms' success in business terms may be attributed partly to differentiation in terms of 'Unique Selling Proposition' (USP). The validity of such a conclusion is weakened, however, by its predictability as a consequence of the 'random' basis upon which the firms had originally been selected for interview.

More significantly (especially in the context of the secondary research previously conducted – see p.42 above), one characteristic that the selected firms were found to share is the keen involvement of their leading practitioners in architectural education. This activity is undertaken not so much as a supplementary source of income, but further to an overall attitude to creativity (unrelated to specific projects) – its overflow into enthusiasm to inspire and collaborate with others expressing the practitioners' sensitivity and inclusiveness. Just as 'the social dimension' is identified earlier in this document (p.18) as an aspect of development that private sector clients tend to ignore (placing

responsibility upon architects to extend the brief accordingly), so expansion into academia may be regarded as indicative of practitioners' commitment to going beyond the authorship of individual projects and to the articulation of "*more open-ended notions of collective identity and co-authorship within enclaves of urban space*" (Wilson 2013:46).

Performing an educational role can be identified as a natural extension of the 'reflective practice' that always accompanies architectural thinking in the interests of the practitioner's self-development. Having to explain the development of design ideas to others (students, clients, or other stakeholders in a project) demands an ability to match description or explanation to an audience's understanding – a skill associated not merely with 'responsive' teaching but with communicating effectively in any context (especially when blurred by complexity, indeterminacy or value-conflict). Practitioner involvement in Architecture School design studios can therefore be described as a valuably reciprocated form of CPD, an investment essential to any business strategy. In specific relation to the design process, Schön defines the relevant skill in terms of dialogue in which "*reflection, in one's own interventions or on the other's, punctuates the process of experimentation and contributes to the search for reliable convergence of meaning*" (Schön 1985:76): through engagement with architecture students, practitioners become "*co-researchers into their own practice – an activity that can and should be combined with continuing education*" (Schön 1985:92). Fortified by this insight, the next step was to ascertain whether the same principles of collaborative research could be usefully applied in relation to community engagement.

### *Community-based Research Study*

Having explored the 'practice' side of the research question, where it was found that both project development and design teaching require communicative collaboration involving continuously probing dialogue, the second Research Study (DArch Doc 4) sought to sample the experience of a local community in taking design decisions related to their own built environment. The objective was to learn, through actual engagement with a community group, how architects can work in a way that enables members of the public to take a genuinely leading role in relation to the design process (on the grounds that this is an effectively reliable means of enhancing social value). Because the exercise would involve participants in the development of design ideas (a forward-looking and transformative activity), it was clear from the outset that it would constitute a learning process both for the researcher and for the community group. Being "*directed at the future and at changing reality rather than merely interpreting it*" (Bleicher 1980:223), the Study needed to consist of research not 'about' but 'through' community engagement. In advance of making contact with any community group, accordingly, participatory action-research (PAR) – defined as inquiry conducted "*by, with and for people*" (Reason and Bradbury 2001:2) – was determined (Doc 4 section A) as the methodology to be adopted for the Study. PAR promised to give the researcher a valuable opportunity to act as the same kind of 'reflective practitioner' as commended in relation to architectural practice: the practitioner-researcher learns to change their practice by developing their understanding both of practice itself and the conditions under which it is undertaken (Pearson 2017).

Before reviewing the conduct and outcomes of Research Study 2, some cautionary remarks about the validity and legitimacy of PAR as a methodology are appropriate, as it has been said to lack validity and rigour due to its unrepeatability. Pearson identifies PAR as a risky practice due to its inward focus: "*we cannot separate ourselves from the knowledge that we produce about … practice as we are intertwined with that practice*" (2017:4); Pearson concludes, however, that the reflexivity locating practice in a broader context, combined with the exercise of agency as a means of challenging context, avoids "*the effect of commodifying not only our labour but our very sense of selves*" (Pearson 2017:7), giving the methodology its emancipatory power and potential. Furlong and Oancea (2005) observe that the approach serves well enough as a form of CPD (making it reassuringly pertinent in relation to the research question addressed in this thesis), but lacks criteria by which to judge its validity in terms of knowledge creation. In response, Whitehead and McNiff (2006) assert that the standards applied should replicate the values which had originally generated the inquiry: a personal "*sense of the socially-legitimated rightness about what I am doing*" (McNiff 2009b:1) must drive action-in-the-world alongside critical feedback from those affected by it (betokening an ideal practice/community relationship). McNiff argues, furthermore, that personal 'living theories of practice' based upon "*our moral obligations to truth and justice*" (McNiff 2009a: n.p.) enable knowledge gained through PAR to be legitimated by transformative rather than normative epistemologies. It is through embedded reflexive critique – problematising assumptions rather than taking them for granted (Winter 1989) – that PAR acquires its academic credibility.

Problematisation in the form of a community's identification of a built environment issue facing them (and so, in a sense, defining them) needed to provide a starting point for Research Study 2. Because the ambition was "*to move beyond the potentially disempowering critical tradition*" (Pearson 2017:5) of "*pedagogies of despair and pessimism*" (Morgan 2009:89) to a position where people begin to exercise some control over the shape of their locality, it would have been inappropriate for the researcher to initiate the exercise by proposing an issue for an as yet undefined group to address. The first task, accordingly, was for the researcher to identify a suitably contentious situation, and then to secure an invitation to become involved with the people seeking to deal with it.

In Research Study 2 (Doc 4 section B), identifying a community-related issue in which to become involved formed 'cycle 2' of eight sequences of plan/action/observation/re-framing – cycle 1 having reviewed the academic context for proceeding in this manner[33]. Having used the researcher's own architectural practice blog to advertise availability for NTU-sponsored engagement with a local group requiring architectural advice, an invitation was received in September 2016 from Sneinton Neighbourhood Forum (SNF) to join a working-party looking at alternative options for the future of their Old School Hall (OSH) community centre. To the community's dismay, the building had recently been closed and scheduled for demolition by Nottingham City Council on the grounds of its dangerous condition.

Sneinton is a suburb of the city where the researcher's own architectural practice (2hD Ltd) has been established since 2003. His appointment to the SNF team (identified as 'dOSH' in order to reflect its purpose, being to find a way to 'develop Old School Hall')

was brokered by a fellow-director of the practice (and a teaching-colleague at NTU), Dr Tom Hughes, who had been an active member of SNF since its foundation in 2013. Tom was therefore able to act as the 'critical friend' recommended by McNiff (2017) as a means of ensuring that the researcher's continuous feedback to the dOSH group (summarising their deliberations in a way that would help them progress towards recommendations for the building's future) corresponded with the discussions from which it had emerged without excessive 'spin' due to selective reporting in order to suit the researcher's own ideas about a trajectory for the project[34].

Cycle 3 of Research Study 2 (Doc 4 section C) involved negotiating the researcher's role in relation to the dOSH working party. Initially, the plan was simply to maintain a 'watching brief' in relation to the group's fortnightly meetings, providing advice as and when requested but following McIntyre's injunction to "*remember that the participants are the key decision makers*" (2008:26). Other members of the group took responsibility for taking Minutes and for operating social media accounts in relation to ideas and activities. It was observed immediately that the effect of getting 'out of the way' of discussion, allowing for discontinuities in terms of individuals' engagement, differences of opinion and understanding, and enthusiasms for divergent ideas, led – as anticipated – to considerably longer time-spans arriving at decisions than encountered in traditional professional practice (where participants in meetings usually share interests in efficiency, logic, and communicative clarity). While the process was a frustrating experience for the practitioner-researcher, especially after years spent 'leading' design teams by chairing meetings with specific pre-planned objectives, it was nevertheless recognised that a relatively 'leisurely' pace is exactly what

'participative' endeavours require, as a group can only move at the speed of its slowest members.

Cycle 4 of the OSH community engagement study (Doc 4 section D) centred around technical work led by the practitioner-researcher in response to a request by the group: detailed surveys of the building were required in order to provide a sound basis for recommendations in respect of its repair and refurbishment (including an estimate of potential costs). In terms of gaining insight into the community's experience of collaboration on an architectural project, it was disappointing to reflect that the researcher had been required to step out of his role as a member of the group (jointly engaged with them in the co-construction of knowledge), and back into a familiar position as 'consultant' (hired in order for the group to benefit from specialist expertise). The researcher's action was clearly of value to the community group – not merely in financially measurable terms related to notional fees for the work, but in providing a sense of achievement: the dOSH working party had succeeded in commissioning a professionally authoritative study, and were able (in March 2017) to report publicly upon progress towards a future for the building which involved its re-use rather demolition. For the next phase of the Research Study, however, the researcher resolved to seek closer integration with the group so that they could contribute more effectively as an 'author' of the building's destiny[35].

The fifth cycle of Research Study 2 (Doc 4 section E) was launched, accordingly, with an offer to assume responsibility for note-taking at dOSH meetings – ostensibly in order to make it easier to assimilate the material into the PAR exercise (which was found to be the case), but privately in the hope of keeping the group moving towards a specific outcome, the production of a

Business Plan to accompany both applications for funding and a bid to purchase the building from Nottingham City Council. In the new spirit of proactive resolve rather than passive quiescence (adopting a secretarial role even in advance of formal consent), the researcher began to use participants' agreement to his records of dOSH meetings as a means of confirming decisions and implications, deliberately minimising discussion of 'matters arising' from previous minutes. It was noted that involvement in the preparation of business plans represents a standard service potentially performed by architects, representing 'Stage 0' of the Plan of Work (RIBA Practice Department 2017), although rarely requested by clients – partly on the grounds that few architects possess the appropriate skills, but coupled with the claims of other consultants to be better qualified to produce such documents. Evidently, architecture students should be taught not merely how to develop business plans, but to regard them as a key output of the design process.

Cycle 6 of the second Research Study (Doc 4 section F) began with decisions to re-name dOSH as the 'Old School Hall Community Association' (OSHCA) in the proposed bid to purchase the building, in order to demonstrate continuity in local support for its function as a community asset, and to credit development of the associated business plan to the 'Sneinton Alchemy' community-interest company – the local 'neighbourhood forum' established under the Localism Act (UK Parliament 2011), already recognised by the City Council and with a track-record of success in raising funds and managing community-related projects effectively. While such adjustments represented little more than window-dressing (as it was mostly the same individuals involved in these groups), giving the project the appearance of a sounder administrative footing enabled the researcher to present it to NTU as a providential

opportunity to extend the university's educational outreach by investing in the building's refurbishment as a 'project office' (from which students – architectural students in particular – could engage on a more regular basis with the local community). NTU acknowledged the value of this proposal (attached as **Appendix A**) in terms of its strategic commitment to 'Enriching Society', but advised that its estate-related budget could not accommodate such an investment for the foreseeable future. In terms of PAR outcomes, however, not only had the community group begun to recognise their potential role as a significant player in terms of Nottingham's civic future, but the researcher had been provided with an insight into how architectural practice and community engagement might be brought together in business terms. For the building itself, the group had finally determined that its future use should be related to a renewed educational function.

In Cycle 7 of the PAR exercise (Doc 4 section G), a potential 'anchor tenant' for OSH was identified and therefore drawn into the group – a local bakery with special interest in promoting agricultural urbanism (de la Salle and Holland 2010), which involves more convivial ways of obtaining, preparing and eating food. This made it possible to centre the emerging Business Plan around a distinctive community-based vision for a new kind of food-hub, with strong evidence of local support for the initiative and powerfully fortified by the presence of an active (flour-grinding) windmill immediately adjacent. The researcher's own contribution at this stage was the compilation of a database of potential funding sources for the enterprise, demonstrating the financial feasibility of the Business Plan proposals. Supported by this document, the community's bid to purchase OSH was finally submitted to Nottingham City Council in September 2018 – some two years after embarking upon the PAR exercise. It was

recognised that the bid submission represented only a landmark within a potentially larger programme, the lesson being that community-oriented architecture (and associated research) requires the ongoing involvement of practitioner-researchers (from roots in the area before commencing a project, to continuing interest in it following 'completion') – not as an ethical consideration (related to avoiding treatment of participants as research-subjects) but inherent in the nature of all work in this sector. As the architect's time represents costs to their practice, which need to be recouped via fee-income, the earlier observation (p.33) that practitioners tend to avoid community-oriented design projects on the grounds of unaffordability becomes understandable. The onus therefore falls upon practices to identify more cost-efficient ways of engaging in such projects (in conjunction with skills in identifying additional funding sources to support their involvement).

The final PAR cycle in Research Study 2 (Doc 4 section H) reviewed the exercise as a whole, acknowledging its incompleteness but identifying its benefits in terms both of personal development (which could be translated as business development in relation to the researchers' own architectural practice) and of relevance to other architects. The researcher's immersion alongside members of a community in a joint dialogue concerning a building's future revealed the importance of a demonstrating particular kind of responsiveness. In the context of creativity, the process of ascertaining other people's priorities and incorporating them into one's personal agenda requires 'active listening'[36] – an observation re-visited on p.97 below.

One of the key insights derived from Research Study 2 is the value of adopting PAR as a methodology for community engagement

(perhaps irrespective of the issue to be addressed). Firstly, it mirrors and projects concern for an ethical approach, as it represents "*standing back for a moment and considering what effect your actions might have on others as the result can be quite damaging to yourself*" (Haack 1997:37). Kemmis and Smith (2008) describe PAR as an essentially democratic medium through which participants and researchers explore their understandings of a localised situation through three 'mediating conditions' at once:

a) the cultural/discursive – shaping thought.
b) the material/economic – shaping behaviour (action).
c) the socio-political – shaping power-relationships between people.

Secondly, in terms of effectiveness, as Mertler (2006) and Walter (2009) also observe, PAR serves well as a learning vehicle for practitioners, as it fosters self-development through project-based activity – recalling not only the way architecture students are taught, but also the author's own motives for embarking upon the whole DArch enterprise (anticipating enhancements in terms of both professionalism and business acuity). Most importantly, however, PAR empowers participants by enabling them to appreciate the value of their own knowledge, which they learn to construct and use for their own ends. The constant aftermath of the PAR cyclical process is to reach beyond immediate closure points, always indicating options for further action to take in the expectation of generating new outcomes.

Viewed objectively, the outcome of the PAR exercise was a mixture of success and failure: success in that dOSH secured the Council's designation of the building as a 'community asset' (thereby protecting its social function and saving it from demolition); but failure in that the group proved unable to persuade the Council to sell it to them, despite a robust Business Plan demonstrating the

viability of establishing a community bakery within the premises. In the event, the Council sold the building to a nursery school business based in Derby (appropriately restoring the premises to something resembling its original function, albeit no longer community-owned). The material outcomes of the project may be judged less significant, however, than the effects of the process in terms of impact upon those involved. Research Study 2 identified benefits for the participants not only in terms of reinforcing their sense of identity as a community, but also in terms of educational development (discovering that their knowledge and skills gives them power in the form of political voice, public-facing confidence, and the imagination to set and achieve future objectives).

### *Research Study Conclusions*

Considered together, Research Studies 1 and 2 both identify education as a common factor – first, as a distinctive activity of practitioners who have developed a reputation for successful community engagement; and second, in characterising community participants' experience of engagement with an architect in relation to the future of their built environment (in addition to the learning experience of the practitioner involved). In response to this insight, the ensuing thesis focusses upon architectural education as a potential arena in which community-orientated activity may serve to reinforce practice development objectives.

# 4. THESIS: integration through education

### *Architectural Education and Research*

At numerous points in the preceding discussion (pp.34, 41, 46, 63, 73), 'education' has been indicated as an arena where the business-related demands of architectural practice are found to coincide beneficially with consideration for the community within the design process. Chapter 1 attributed the disjunction between practice and community interests to the commercial pressures of the marketplace in which architects operate, but exposing the roots of such divergence (anticipating they lie in architectural education) will require deeper probing. Schools of Architecture ('the academy') serve as a facility not only for preparing students for practice, however, but also for supporting and endorsing research activities – architecture being "*a form of knowledge that can and should be developed through research*" (Till 2007:1). The observation that community engagement can be effective if treated as a PAR exercise suggests that a future supply of community-orientated practitioners will require Schools to set an example by ensuring social value is embedded in practice-based research activity. The relationship of academically validated architectural research to the development of the profession in general ('professionalisation') is therefore considered first in this main thesis Chapter.

Frayling (1993) distinguishes between three kinds of design-related research, associated with different degrees of interaction between practitioner and the academy:

a) research '<u>into</u>' (traditionally undertaken entirely within the academy, exploring the history or performance of buildings – or of practices, as in the case of Research Study 1) – involving Architecture School staff and/or groups of students (in the interests of 'research-informed teaching'), but rarely practitioners (the exception being those who, like the author of this thesis, choose to participate in programmes such as a Professional Doctorate).

b) research '<u>through</u>' (using involvement in building design and production as opportunities for investigation, therefore typically practice-based but similar to that implemented in Research Study 2) – contributing primarily to a practice's own knowledge-base, and possibly funded largely out of the fees charged for performing the associated architectural services. Till explicitly rejects the notion that "*designing a building is a form of research in its own right*" (Till 2007), on the grounds that it is not the function of finished buildings to communicate architectural knowledge. The PAR process described in Research Study 2 suggests, on the other hand, that process-related documentation can sometimes serve a simultaneously educational function for relatively untrained collaborators (such as community group members and/or students).

c) research '<u>for</u>' (often driven by the profession's future-looking needs for new technologies or typologies) – located by Till (2007:3) "*somewhere in the middle*" (see FIGURE 2 overleaf), reinforcing identification of the academy as critical to more socially responsive (and responsible) modes of practice in the future.

In a seminal paper prepared originally for the RIBA Research Committee, Till asserts that research demands interaction between practitioners and the academy: "*practice has the raw data on which architectural knowledge is founded; academia can release this*

*potential through research*" (Till 2007:4). The development of new knowledge as a product of practice, Till argues, requires research into processes, products and performance to inform one another in an iterative loop, rather than being undertaken in isolated fragments. As noted in relation to Research Study 2 (p.66 above), using PAR as a technique for community-orientated design derives academic credibility from being both rigorous in terms of methodology and continuously verifiable through further iterations of open-ended planning/testing/evaluating – confirming the proposition that, as authoritative seat for the development and dissemination of verifiable knowledge, the academy provides an effective context for mediating a practice's endeavours in respect of community engagement:

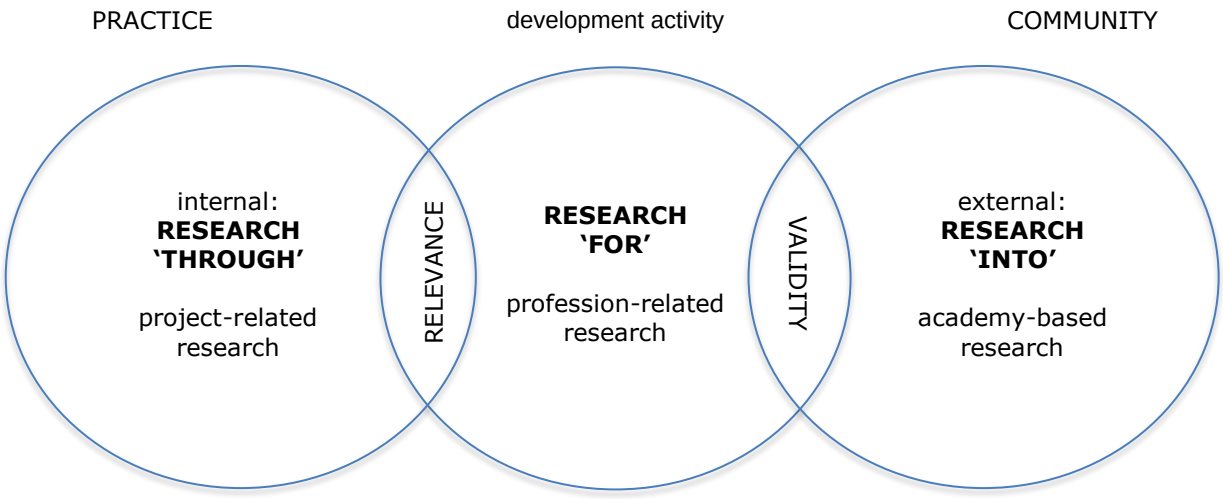



FIGURE 2 (based on Frayling 1993): **academic validity and relevance to practice as conditions for generating profession-related research**

Being confined to the relationship between practice and academia, Frayling's transcendent overview needs expansion in order to embrace the commercial and social dimensions of business activity (the binary at the heart of thesis). On the one hand, practitioners must depend largely upon their clients to sponsor profession-related research (typically as a by-product of design projects); and

on the other (in recognition, for example, of the social benefits of research-informed architecture), the academy relies heavily upon public funding for research – provided mostly through state and charitable sources (with expectations of accountability in respect of outputs). FIGURE 3 therefore locates practice at the centre (as appropriate in a Professional Doctorate) and indicates the private and public constituencies with which it interacts in terms of motive agency ('resourcing'):

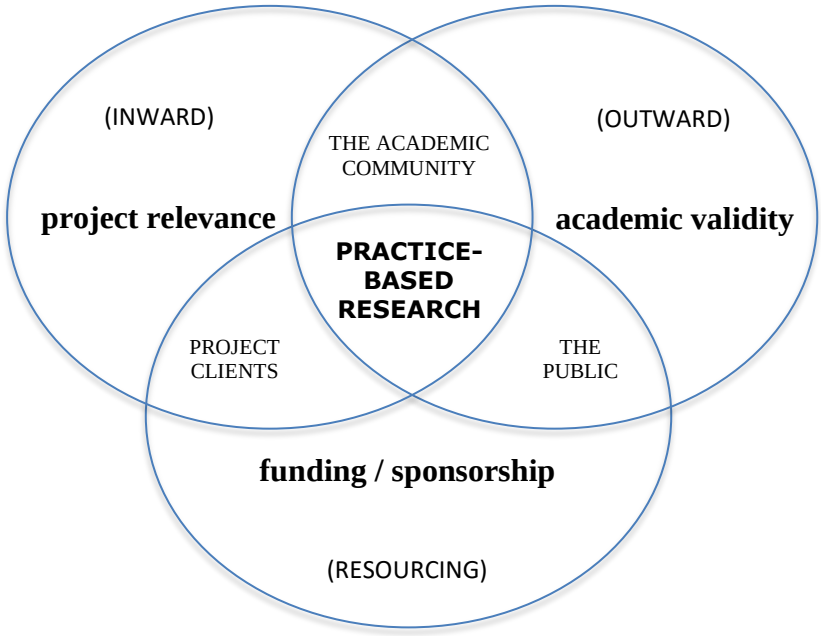



FIGURE 3: **The Generation of Professional Knowledge**
(commercial motivation and product orientation)

For professionals detached from the academy, the RIBA identifies itself as the primary hub for practice-based research[37]: the upper left-hand circle in FIGURE 3 above indicates how clients are regarded as funding agents for the profession's research (expecting thereby to enhance the utility of their projects). The generation of architectural knowledge through practice correlates with the RIBA's foundational charter, which describes the institute's mission as "*the general advancement of Civil Architecture … promoting and facilitating the acquirement of the knowledge of the various arts*

*and sciences connected therewith*" (RIBA 2019b). In addition to publishing a monthly journal since 1893[38], the RIBA "*continues to support and celebrate research in numerous other ways*" (Fraser 2014:2) such as research symposia, research funding, awards for research, public programmes, and a variety of social media platforms. The location of research within the RIBA's organizational structure is unclear however: academic and practice-based research is split between the 'Education Committee' and the 'Practice and Profession Committee' (both under review following constitutional changes in March 2020, but the latter formerly supported by a 'Research and Innovation Expert Advisory Group' chaired in 2016 by Flora Samuel). The RIBA website (Morris 2019) subsequently identified Samuel as 'Vice-President for Research' (a position that no longer exists), but not as a member of either the Education or Practice Committee. Samuel's affinity to practice interests is irrefutable: "*she urges architects to take advantage of the available research funding. 'The profession is missing out,' she insists"* (Morris 2019). Being a school of architecture Professor herself, however, she also advises that "*a good strategy for practitioners to win research funding is to find an academic to work with*" (Morris 2019). Accordingly, the upper right-hand circle in FIGURE 3 above refers to the role of the academy in endorsing the credibility of practice-based research (on behalf of 'the public realm' - implying support through state or charitable funding).

Although framed somewhat vaguely and incoherently then, the RIBA at least recognizes the role of agency in relation to research:

a) practitioners can seek external funding for activity unrelated to a particular design project, or commoditise it retrospectively (for example, through publication).

b) practitioners can seek client funding for project-related research – although this will usually be difficult in the absence of immediate, measurable benefits to the project itself (the exception being clients committed to adding social value by, for example, investing in community engagement processes).
c) (in combination with either of the above options) practitioners can engage with Schools of Architecture in order to boost the credibility of their findings (and perhaps – either for added value or for reduced costs – involving students in the learning exercise).

The RIBA's current strategy nevertheless centres around the accumulation of an evidence-base capable of persuading clients to place a higher value on architects' expertise – in the interests both of a research-informed (and therefore socially responsible, if not sensitive) built environment, and of justification for higher fees for services incorporating this knowledge. The 'research funding for architects' page of the RIBA website, accordingly, promotes Samuel's most recent publication (2018) on how practices can use research to demonstrate how design can add value to architecture in terms of "*areas such as wellbeing, sustainability and innovation*" (Morris 2019).

The firms best positioned to undertake practice-based 'Research Projects' as a distinct income-generating activity (independent of specific architectural, urban design or masterplanning projects) are the larger multi-disciplinary organisations with specialist departments. The significant scale of investment typically associated with them helps attract sponsorship from other players in the construction industry, from major developers, or from the public or charitable sectors. By comparison, it is more difficult for the small- to medium-size practice that makes up "*the majority of architectural offices in the UK … to take advantage of the business*

*benefits that research can bring*" (Dye and Samuel 2015:x)[39]. Winning Research Project commissions requires smaller practices to rely upon their prior establishment of a reputation for such activity – usually stemming from (and then consisting of) collaboration with other practices or consultants with the relevant experience, and/or with research-teams within Schools of Architecture[40]. Key to the development of such a reputation, as Research Study 1 found, is the communication (to audiences beyond a specific project's stakeholders) of the research outcomes: it is through dissemination and exposure for verification by others, rather than through narrowly client-focussed production, that knowledge expands[41]. Irrespective of its size, practice development may occur as an outcome of reputation for innovative research conclusions, but – unless fortified by persuasive credibility or ethical merit (or both) – such a profile is likely to deter clients seeking conventional design proposals. The cultivation and application of innovative ideas is more readily affordable – and insurable – within the context of larger design projects (demanding the involvement of larger practices, and typically associated with greater community impact). While small practices are better positioned to develop close relationships with their neighbouring communities, prompting invitations to become engaged in projects based upon local need, they are likely to be deterred by the lack of funding for such activity (often combined with desire to avoid political disputes with other neighbours taking contrary views). Community engagement therefore requires small practices to adopt a more circuitous approach – such as involving the academy as a 'neutral' (but nevertheless authoritative) intermediary.

Having identified research as a fundamental characteristic of community engagement, the question about funding knowledge-generation relates to the concern in this thesis with developing the

commercial success of a practice (in addition to contributing to the educational development of the practitioners involved). In relation to the possibility of securing external funding for research outputs, for example, the RIBA sets an example for practitioners by deriving part of its own institutional income from knowledge dissemination. The operation of RIBA Publishing as a commercial enterprise (alongside ownership of the www.architecture.com domain[42]) reinforces the institute's role as a 'learned society' (Hay, Shasore and Samuel 2017). Promoting the conjunction of 'architects and research-based knowledge' specifically (Fraser 2014), the RIBA's Research and Innovation Group has produced four monographs:

- one reviewing university-based research (Coucill, Egglestone and Samuel 2013);
- two providing guidance and encouragement in respect of practice-based research (BOP Consulting 2014, Martindale 2016);
- two reporting on a project led by the University of Sheffield (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council) looking at research conducted by eight different practices into what makes good housing (Samuel, et al. 2013a, 2013b).

As the latter studies revealed conflicting understandings of research and of its relationship to practice, a core 'Research in Practice Guide' was "*developed to support Research and Development in the RIBA Plan of Work 2013*" (RIBA 2013:2). This document distinguishes 'Design Research' commonly undertaken within the standard Plan of Work stages associated with a design project from a 'Research Project' "*dealing with a particular subject matter undertaken outside of a live project to progress the field of knowledge in a specific area*" (RIBA 2013:3). Overriding Frayling's identification of research 'through' and research 'into' (see pp.75-77 above) as separate endeavours, the RIBA document maintains that the two kinds of research intersect and inform one another directly – without exploring commercialisation of the former as a means of generating additional income for a firm alongside

"*strengthening relationships with the wider research community*" (RIBA 2013:3). It is therefore appropriate to discuss briefly how research projects unrelated to specific design commissions – like this Professional Doctorate, indeed – may yet "*yield significant and long-lived advantages to a practice*" (Dye and Samuel 2015:122).

For practices of all sizes, but smaller ones especially, engaging with the academy enables them to invest project-related research – including community engagement exercises – with both credibility and viability (especially if students' time is harnessed as a resource). While architectural practice is frequently associated with originality (even repeat-designs require variation in response to site conditions), knowledge-development associated with the design process requires both methodological rigour and dissemination in order to qualify as 'research'. There is no explicit reference to research activities, however, within the Plan of Work (Carmichael 2020:144) that describes the standard construction-related services that architects perform in return for fees. 'Core tasks' associated with its eight work-stages are related only to the immediate project, although some of them could be expanded to provide a broader understanding of social context (possibly for the benefit of people outside the project team):

| **Plan of Work Stages** | **Core Tasks involving knowledge-generation** |
|---|---|
| **0** – Strategic Definition | Site-related research (appraisals to identify project risks) |
| **1** – Preparation & Briefing | Site history research (for conservation and H&S purposes) |
| **2** – Concept Design | Design reviews with project stakeholders |
| **3** – Spatial Coordination | Design studies (to test coordination with architect'l concept) |
| **4** – Technical Design | Integration of specialist subcontractor information |
| **5** – Manufacturing & Construction | Monitoring progress and quality of construction |
| **6** – Handover | Project performance review and initial (light-touch) POE |
| **7** – Use | POE (bdg performance, project outcomes, sustainability) |

TABLE 2: The RIBA **'PLAN OF WORK'** stages (RIBA Practice Department 2017) related to potential **RESEARCH** activities

Because of its respectable academic credentials, the PAR process that Research Study 2 associated with community engagement represents a form of 'Design Research' applicable to any Plan of Work stages. The exercise conducted with dOSH for Research Study 2, for example, was identified (on p.70 above) with RIBA Plan of Work stage 0 – 'strategic definition' through the development of an initial business case for a project. In practice, architects rarely seek involvement such preliminary exercises, regarding such deliberations as extraneous to the design process (stage 0 was introduced as a standard 'Plan of Work' service only in 2013). In the interests of commercial sustainability, however, Research Study 2 (Doc 4 page 77) demonstrated that stage 0 can provide an important opportunity to identify funding sources or partners[43] to support architectural research activities at subsequent work-stages (which can be especially relevant in the context of cash-strapped community groups). The benefit of appointing an architect to perform such a research function was identified by one of the practitioners interviewed for Research Study 1 (Doc 3 page 58), who attributed part of his business success to continuous awareness of funding opportunities available through national policy initiatives and legislation – enabling him not merely to influence the direction a design project takes, but to participate in the conditions of its very inception. Again, it is reference to influences and effects external to a project that bestows value on research: in Till's words, "*we need to make architecture speak*" (2007:2).

As the RIBA's 'Plan of Work' envisages design as a circular rather than linear process, stage 0 ('strategic definition') supposedly builds upon knowledge derived from studies of previous projects at stage 7 ('post-occupancy evaluation' – POE, also introduced as a

'standard' architectural service only in 2013). POE research is promoted by the RIBA (Hay, et al. 2017, RIBA 2019c) as the best evidence-base for the profession – with the twin objectives of reinforcing its status as a discipline, and helping convince clients of the benefits[44] of appointing research-informed architects to coordinate the development of their proposals (as noted on p.80 above). While such considerations are insufficient to motivate developers to fund POE studies (especially if they regard their buildings as 'one-off' products unlikely to be repeated), however, architects need not rely entirely upon an ability to 'educate' clients about the value of POE by reference to longer-term (sustainability-related) considerations in order to win a commission to undertake stage 7 research:

- the POE study might be undertaken in collaboration with an academic institution – providing a case-study to serve educational purposes. Furthermore, if the architect is actively involved in teaching (as observed on p.80 above), parts of the POE can be organized as a students' coursework exercise.
- the POE study might be subsidised (at least partially) from external sources – possibly as an outcome of having been identified at Plan of Work stage 0 (as discussed on p.84). Not only have numerous charitable funds been established in order to support community-orientated activity (assuming social impact is included amongst the factors to be evaluated in the POE), but research grants are readily available to the Higher Education sector for such purposes.

Despite the RIBA's promotion of POE as research providing a knowledge-base for the profession, in the "*expectation that evaluation information will be shared – at least with the client of the next project – and ideally made public so the rest of the industry can learn from these experiences*" (Williams, Humphries

and Tait 2016:2), few architectural practices have experience of stage 7. In the absence of associated fee income, practitioners can afford to undertake only superficial reviews of completed projects (typically, further to their firms' quality assurance procedures, in the internal interests of continuous improvement). It is at least clear, however, that the scope of a POE study may specifically incorporate evaluation of community impact (prompting some level of community engagement in the preceding stages of a project). Lack of consensus about 'measuring' a project's social value generically (see p.53 above) suggests relating review of community impact to intended outcomes specified at earlier stages of the development process[45] – not through clients' or architects' aspirational statements but embedded in the project Brief as specific expectations of the completed building (typically at Plan of Work stage 1 alongside environmental performance targets, building upon the stage 0 research processes identifying also how such studies might be funded). In this way, social purpose need not be distinguished as a 'higher' priority than client satisfaction (which could drive some developers to seek design advice from less community-orientated professionals), but may begin to help clients consider their motivation in commissioning a built environment project. Appointment to perform correlated services at RIBA Plan of Work stages 0 and 7, accordingly, enables practices to secure client support (and funding) for project-related research, thereby beginning to make community engagement compatible with financial development objectives in the context of mainstream practice:

> "*there is a growing body of practices that are using research to give clients evidence… about why design makes a difference, and of how the practice is continually improving what they do. They are using research to define their brand, offer new services and improve how they work. At the same*

> *time, they reap the rewards in terms of new or strengthened revenue streams*" (Dye and Samuel 2015:ix).

Community-related research exercises may enhance the success of a practice not merely by generating 'additional' fee income but perhaps also by producing outputs capable of representing longer-term marketing investment – typically through publication serving promotional and/or educational purposes on social media, and even more effectively if also offered in hard copy for sale in bookshops[46]. While the incorporation of research findings and insights into day-to-day practice (and their subsequent development) can improve business efficiency, wider dissemination of these ideas contributes to the profession's ability to promote the value of architectural research to other practitioners, students and potential clients. Having established that ensuring the quality of such research demands interaction between practices and the academic community, it is appropriate to turn next to deeper exploration of the relationships indicated within the upper right-hand circle in FIGURE 3 (p.78).

### *Architectural Practice and the Academy*

Almost by definition (Fischer 2015:13), universities provide a sufficiently broadened context to invest research activities with credibility. Tasks involving knowledge-generation acquire epistemological significance beyond the parameters of specific projects through self-critical reference to academic standards such as validity and objectivity in the methods deployed, ethical constraints, and reliability and generalizability in relation to conclusions drawn. 'Design-research' by practitioners therefore derives its public-facing value as process rather than product.

Community engagement, accordingly, needs to involve participant empowerment rather than mere delivery of services, giving practice development an educational rather than a commercial quality. The knowledge and ideas of community groups represent not opportunities for appropriation or exploitation, but material for collaborative exchange. For practice development to occur in true conjunction with community engagement, the architect must adopt a role as 'participative practitioner-teacher' (a specific concept to be developed further in this thesis) – not 'selling' expertise but demonstrating an interest in probing and sharing understanding. Drawing community-orientated practitioners into the work of Schools of Architecture, it is observed, allows a consistent approach (characterised as PAR) to be deployed in relation equally to community engagement and student education:

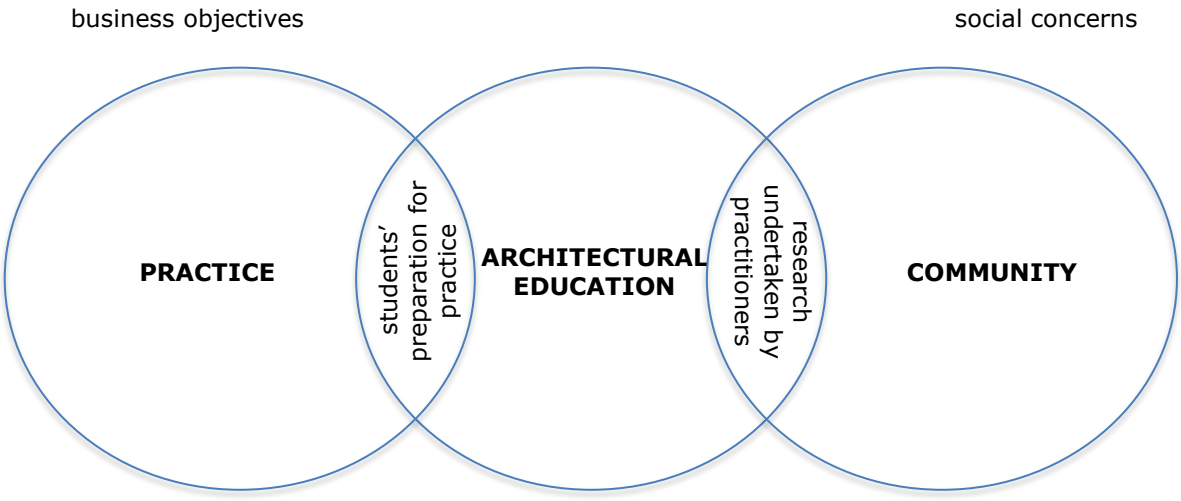



FIGURE 4: **Architectural Education as an interface between Practice and Community**

These two kinds of academy-based activity are initially considered separately in the ensuing text, but it is through combining them, this thesis proceeds to demonstrate, that practice and community interests can begin to merge and support one another.

At the intersection of practice and community, accordingly, Schools of Architecture offer a pivotal context for balancing 'hard' business-related interests against 'soft' social considerations[47]. Architects' privileging of materialistic considerations is marked generally by habits of regarding buildings primarily as objects:

> "*architectural culture – expressed through reviews, awards and publications – tends to prioritise aspects associated with the static properties of objects: the visual, the technical, and the atemporal. Hence the dominance of aesthetics, style, form and technique in the usual discussion of architecture, and with this the suppression of the more volatile aspects of buildings: the processes of their production, their occupation, their temporality, and their relations to society and nature*" (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011:27).

In Latour's terminology (see p.40 above), these "more volatile aspects" correspond to 'matters of concern' in relation to the research question addressed here, deserving attention as an extension of 'matters of fact.' Skills and confidence in handling contingent and less controllable factors such as consideration for the local community need to be exercised alongside professional 'knowledge' if an architectural project is to achieve social value. Respect for community considerations in relation to design projects therefore requires initial development as an attribute associated with learning to become a practitioner, suggesting a focus upon some of the processes of acculturation within Schools of Architecture (especially in students' impressionable undergraduate years).

The research question evolves at this point into how the academic environment may best function as a testing-ground for socially conscious practice – anticipating that deeper consideration of the students' experience will suggest new courses of action by their prospective employers. The proposed destination involves reversing the interfaces suggested in FIGURE 4 (p.88), achieved as

an outcome of embedding community-orientated practitioners within Schools of Architecture:

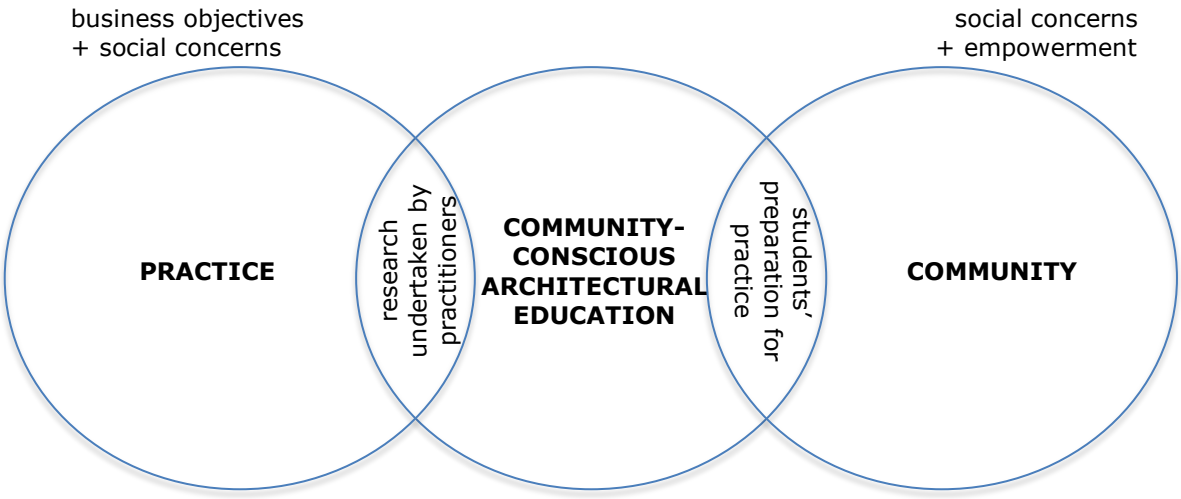



FIGURE 5: **the Interfaces of Community-Conscious Architectural Education with Practice and Community**

Temporarily re-framing the relationship between practice and community in terms of that between the profession and academia suggests further analogies. Arguing the pedagogical value of engaging students with the world outside their academic institution, Sara identifies binaries such as student/professional, designing/making, university/community, theory/practice, and observes that the in-between zone permits a creatively different perspective, enabling critique and re-energisation of "*the usual boundaries*" (Sara 2011:9). At the product-orientated end of the spectrum, for example, the grades awarded to students based on prescribed learning 'criteria' (in a context where market pressures[48] drive both staff and students to seek high rankings) correspond to the income earned by practitioners undertaking design projects. Pragmatic fixation on such 'matters of fact' (adopting the reductionist approach associated with late modernism) allows students and practitioners alike to derive materialistic advantages from disregarding considerations extraneous to the objectified

demands of a project brief. Architecture Schools can resist this by promoting social value as an ethos integral to designing rather than treating it as a merely theoretical concept or gimmick (Ngai 2020) – capable of being demonstrated only mimetically, and therefore encouraging misrepresentation or exaggeration for the transactional purposes of achieving 'good grades'. When subsequently involved in practice, students will quickly discard values they have been encouraged to regard as superficial (unless the opposite view is actively supported by employers or demanded by clients). The key is therefore to identify mechanisms for ensuring that 'matters of concern' (requiring action related to the broader impact of design ideas) become so deeply embedded in architectural education that they persist as commitments within professional practice.

### *Education for Practice*

The influence of Schools of Architecture over students' values and attitudes has been contested over a sixty-year history of friction between academia and practice. On the one hand, the location of most UK architectural education within a university context since 1958 (Roaf and Bairstow 2008) encourages notions of architecture as a distinctive humanistic discipline ennobled by a history of theoretical ideas and language – stemming from the Beaux Arts tradition. By contrast, international modernist respect for scientific methods and universal principles has, since the early twentieth century, determined a "*functional, rationalist approach to architecture*" (Dye and Samuel 2015:82) modulated by the contingencies of sites, budgets, law and construction technology. Differences in terms of interests and priorities – and therefore of methods also – arouse mutual suspicion (if not distrust) and

disrespect (if not contemptuousness): practitioners commonly complain that Schools of Architecture fail to prepare students adequately for employment, while Schools regard practices as excessively fixated on short-term objectives (driven largely by commercial considerations) rather than on the advancement of enduring architectural qualities. While such discord might appear merely to reflect confusion between disciplinary knowledge and practice-related skills, Till regrets how such antipathy diminishes the value of architectural development in general:

> "*it is vital that neither academic or practice-based is privileged over the other as a superior form of research, and equally vital that neither is dismissed by the other for being irrelevant*" (Till 2007:3).

In relation to the proposition that Schools should teach students to regard community considerations as a 'normal' part of the design process, accordingly, a specific obstacle is raised if practices dismiss such aspirations as 'idealistic' and disconnected from the everyday cut and thrust of business. A first move towards ending the association of academia with some kind of moral high ground (lifted 'above' market forces and prescribed vocational training outcomes), this Chapter argues, could be the closer involvement of socially committed practitioners in architectural pedagogy, promoting the cultivation of two-way interaction between students and local people.

Whether mainstream or community-orientated, it is not practitioners alone who urge Schools of Architecture to prepare students for the 'real worlds' of work: most students, and many teaching staff[49], share similar views. Lave and Wenger observe that, as all pedagogy is 'situated' in some kind of context (therefore containing potent seeds for experiential learning), "*mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move*

*toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community*" (Lave and Wenger 1991:29). In architectural education, where the development of design proposals has long been established as the appropriate focus of learning (RIBA 2003), the 'live project' is now the favoured term for work "*that is distinct from a typical studio project in its engagement of real clients and users, in real-time settings*" (Sara 2004). Interaction with people outside the academy, especially if unaccustomed to being included in decisions about their built environment, helps architecture students appreciate the meaning and relevance[50] of their own work, including at project stages other than the design phase.

The exposure of architecture students to 'the realities' of practice has been underpinned since 2013 by continuous development of the 'Live Projects Network' website. This is an online database containing descriptions of all kinds of actual (rather than simulated) architectural education projects[51] – categorized under a variety of headings for easy cross-reference and serving to "*share best practice, encourage dialogue and also contribute to the establishment of a theoretical basis for the study of live projects*" (Anderson and Priest 2021). Being community-orientated, this discussion must disregard live projects with a primarily technological focus (typically involving full-scale construction activity further to design ideas in response to an in-house brief, and therefore with minimal external impact): in the UK (probably for reasons related to resource limitations), the more frequently encountered type of live project has been found to be the type that "*engages students with clients outside the academy, and for whom the students produce work of value*" (Brown, Morrow and McAllister 2012:27).

Outward-facing interaction with local people familiarises students with some of those less controllable 'matters of concern' (see p.89 above) that will prepare them for effectively community-conscious practice. This is not to argue that reconciliation of practice interests and community considerations must await the 'arrival' of a new generation of architecture graduates, but to indicate a deliberately non-radical context in which the required shift may begin to occur – without transgressing 'the British tradition' of "*compliance-driven tropes of credentialism that maintain the status quo*" (Froud and Harriss 2018:xii). The innovation (or tweak) proposed here is for the learning relationship not to be based upon a normative student/teacher combination – not even if extended into a three-way conversation involving community-based clients, but to be developed in collaboration with community-orientated practitioners and with agency ceded to the students. In this context, the role of the full-time academic is as facilitator and mediator rather than director of operations or gate-keeper of learning, through helping students perceive both clients – defined by Anderson and Priest (2014:11) as "*external collaborators*" – and practitioners ('internal collaborators' – to introduce a new category) as prime sources of project-related information and ideas.

Countering the risk that a stronger focus upon social value within architectural education might exacerbate notions of "*the academy's divergence from the world of practice*" (Schön 1985:96), the appointment of community-orientated practitioners to work within Schools of Architecture should begin to allay other practitioners' complaints about students graduating with 'unrealistic' expectations or 'inappropriate' values. For community-orientated designing to be regarded no longer as a 'merely academic' nicety, unrelated to the 'factual' concerns of a business-focussed practitioner, concern for social value needs to be taught alongside

business-related skills and attitudes – justifying the deeper involvement of practitioners in pedagogy. At the same time, from the practitioner's viewpoint, the act of teaching how to develop business success in conjunction with effective community engagement will demand careful reflection and speculation, sometimes tested through experimentation, and sometimes resulting in insights – all of which may be encouraged and endorsed as scholarly 'research' due to its generation from within a School of Architecture.

If closer collaboration between community-orientated practitioners and Schools of Architecture can help bridge the gap between a practice's business development objectives (framed as aspirational 'matters of fact') and the interests of a community affected by their work (ethical 'matters of concern'), a range of alternatives is available in terms of depth of immersion in the academy:

a) **the professional practice teacher**: full-time teaching staff within Schools of Architecture offering their students a practice-orientated diet of coursework, devising 'realistic' projects' as an alternative to the artificiality of design briefs in the tradition of "*a monastery on a rocky promontory*" (quoting Andrew Derbyshire, in Roaf and Bairstow 2008:7). In this scenario, the practitioner is engaged only in the valorisation of outcomes – promoting avoidance of the infamous 'crit' on the grounds that it can "*bring more traditional power relationships back into the review*" (Chiles and Till 2007:5).

b) **the sessional practitioner-teacher**: appointing practitioners (on a regular or occasional basis) to assist academic staff, further to a School's aspiration to incorporate professional values and methods into its teaching even if in conjunction with simulated rather than actual projects. Universities favour

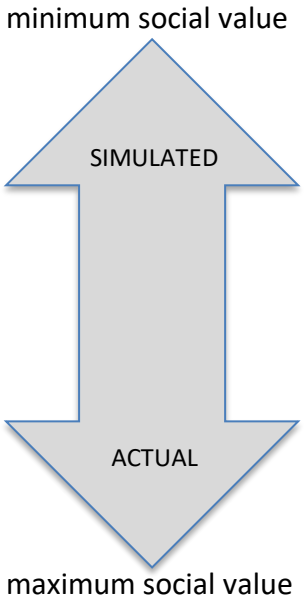
appointing practitioners to assist in the design studio on a sessional basis only, as flexibility in faculty resourcing enables a School to respond efficiently to fluctuations in student recruitment and cash flow (amongst other considerations). Regrettably, this means the 'sessional practitioner-teacher' is usually drawn into the studio team only after most of the students' activities for the year have been planned and agreed by a School's full-time staff (who are required to complete internal moderation processes before any of the teaching commences) – reducing the opportunity for design projects to respond flexibly to unanticipated local issues.

c) **the participative practitioner-teacher**: involving the practitioner more deeply in developing the form and content of architecture students' projects – initially helping identify the context for a 'live project' (possibly building on relationships already established with a community) and then working with students on their responses to it. Having witnessed the effectiveness of PAR[52] as a technique for developing ideas incrementally, students learn how to combine practice with an educational function – not merely enabling them to become practitioner-teachers themselves, but serving them also as a highly effective marketing technique in relation to potential clients in the future (Bobrow and Petrie 2019).

d) **the practitioner-researcher**: building cognitively upon the notion of learning from teaching – practitioners develop, discuss and disseminate reflections upon a project (evaluating its benefits for students, for community participants, for themselves in preparation for future work, and for fellow-professionals). Turning their experience into research gives practitioners a vantage-point for reviewing the affinity between engaging with architecture students in a design

studio and interacting with members of the public in respect of actual design projects – both exercises requiring deployment of the same attitudes in terms of active listening (Rogers and Farson 2021 [1957]) and reflective learning (Schön 1983), with similarly transformational objectives.

Exemplifying the practitioner-researcher's overview embodied in this thesis, the three levels of engagement described as options **a**, **b** and **c** above have been represented in terms of scope for "*integrating social value into architectural education*" (Heuvel 2021):




The social dimension is taught as a theoretical 'nice to have' design consideration (demonstrable only mimetically – encouraging students to misrepresent or exaggerate it, eg simply by including 'people' in visualisations, section-drawings or even models).

The social dimension is taught as an area of the Brief requiring investigation (alongside other site considerations) – requiring location of design projects in real contexts, urban ones therefore involving local communities with whom students may be able to interact (subject to health and safety concerns, ethical clearance, Safeguarding assessment etc).

The social dimension is the context from which the 'live project' originates – rather than a fictitious Brief (even if on a real site), starting at a community with a need, ideally mediated via a local practitioner or 'project office' in the interests of professionalism.

FIGURE 6: **Integrating social value into architectural education** (the spectrum of design projects, viewed by a practitioner-researcher)

If Schools of Architecture and community groups are both regarded as 'learning communities' (a conclusion drawn in Research Study 2 – Doc 4 p.68), some instructive parallels may be drawn between the different levels of practitioner engagement with the academy and with the community (shown in TABLE 3 overleaf).

a) Situations in which students learn about the professional context only from full-time Architecture School staff (with minimal practitioner involvement) are analogous to **informed**

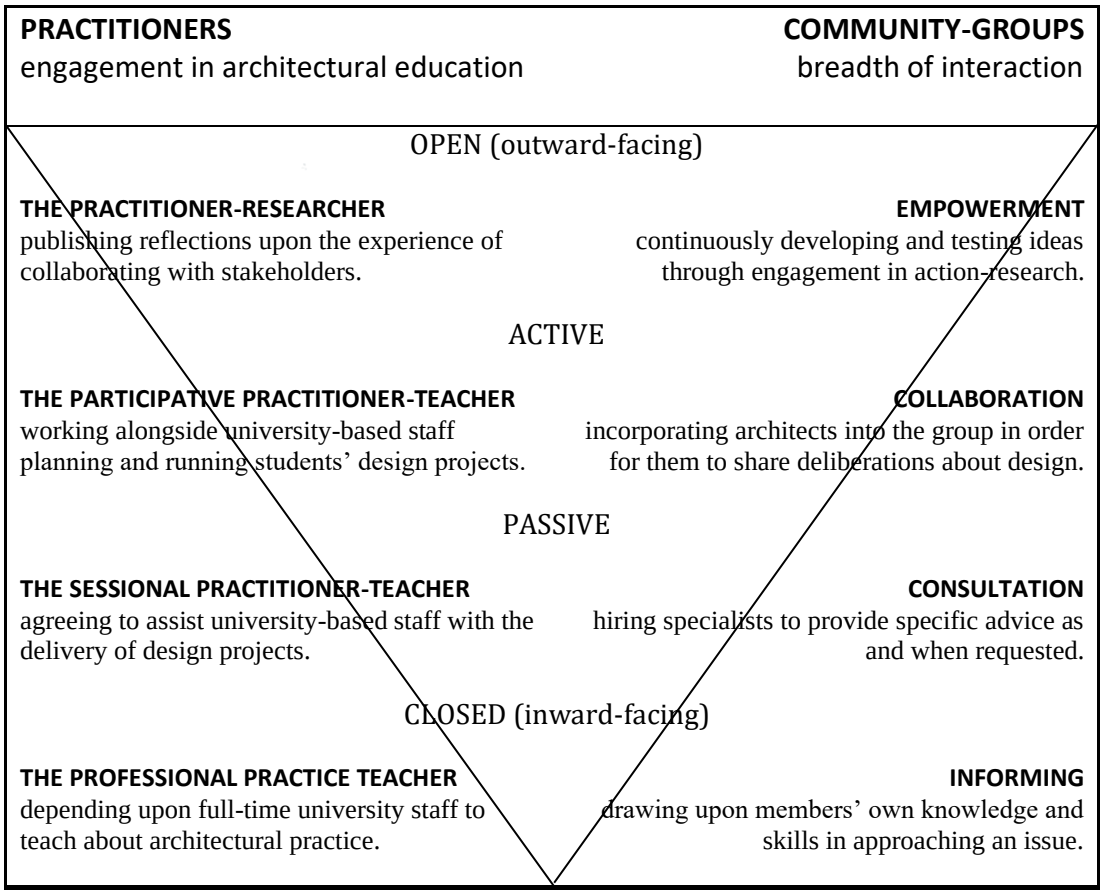



TABLE 3: **Comparative Spectrum of Participation**
(practitioners with Schools of Architecture / community groups with modes of knowledge-development)

community groups drawing upon their own knowledge, skills and enthusiasm in order to develop design ideas independently of external consultants. With appropriate expertise and prior experience, either kind of 'learning community' may potentially thrive in such a context, but usually upon the basis of deploying whatever resources are immediately available to define and thereby solve problems rather than developing longer-term resilience through an expanded perspective.

b) Situations in which practitioners are appointed to interact with architecture students on a sessional basis (typically as 'hourly-paid lecturers') resemble projects where a community group

invites an architect – or any other **consultant**[09] – to advise on matters considered to require specialist opinion or guidance. Research Study 2 (Doc 4 p.52) encountered this option in relation to the dOSH project, when the 'Locality' network (Wallis 2020) provided advice on potential funding streams: the community group's ability to commission the advice it needed gave its members an enhanced sense of control over their context and stronger self-confidence in respect of determining future direction. Within Schools of Architecture similarly, even where no community engagement is involved, the students' encounter with an active practitioner (or any kind of exposure to real clients and/or real sites – especially if combined with real time-frames and perhaps real costs associated with implementation) helps them develop profession-related interests and attitudes.

c) One of the key insights derived from Research Study 2 (Doc 4 p.37) was that the provision of specialist advice or opinion as a service purchased from outside the community group is less effective (in terms of enhancing political self-confidence) than proactive **collaboration**, working alongside – rather than merely on behalf of – the group's members. By engaging as a participant, rather than as an advisor, either in a community's decision-taking processes about their built environment or in an architecture student's design decisions in response to a project brief, it is the operational example set by the 'participative practitioner-teacher', rather than any material outcomes of such an approach, that represents the longer-term transformational legacy for collaborators in the process. In preparation for building upon the parallel observed in Research Study 2 (Doc 3 p.19) between the skills required for effective studio-teaching and those for helping members of a

community explore ideas about their built environment, the processes through which students typically learn their craft as designers 'in preparation for practice' are therefore briefly reviewed (on p.101 below) before returning (on p.103) to discussion of 'research undertaken by practitioners' in order to meet their own learning needs.

d) The whole notion of correspondence between studio-based architectural education and community-based interaction in relation to a design challenge emerges from adopting the simultaneously reflective and reflexive standpoint (Bolton 2012) demanded of the 'practitioner-researcher.' PAR was earlier identified (on p.73) as an effective vehicle both for personal self-development and for a community-group's **empowerment** – Lewin's original development of action-research (1946) having been intended to enhance sensitivity to human relations and group dynamics within training situations (those "more volatile aspects" again – see p.89 above). Just as research may form part of a professional's practice as an architect (see especially TABLE 2 above – p.83), it can be related even more easily to their experience as a teacher further to their establishment of links with the academy[53].

Without seeking to sidestep the research question by interpreting 'business development' in terms of individualized practitioner learning rather than commercial prosperity, the academic environment has nevertheless been identified as an appropriate context for combining a practice's interests with meaningful consideration for the local communities affected by their work. Research Study 2 (Doc 4 p.85) observed a parallel, in terms of the approach required of practitioners, between interacting with

members of a community group in respect of an architectural design issue and engaging with students of architecture in the context of a design studio. Whether its teachers are based in practice or in the academy, the design studio is central to the special form of education required of UK Schools of Architecture[54]. In his analysis of the design studio as architectural learning environment, Schön characterizes the required teacher/student interaction as a "*joint search for convergence of meaning*" characterized by "*reciprocal reflection-in-action*" (Schön 1985:82). Design learning in the studio, like design development in an architectural practice (and therefore no different from design undertaken in conjunction with community groups) occurs as an outcome of continuous dialogue between people 'thinking aloud' through depicting and sharing their evolving ideas[55]. The role of the studio-based teacher, accordingly, is to encourage their students to engage in and maintain this dialogue, interacting with the material used for expressing design ideas, listening sensitively when they 'talk back' about this encounter, and voicing the internalised processes of interpretation and framing in such a way that the student becomes more aware of the potential implications of their decision-taking. Although focussed upon outcomes, students are encouraged to demonstrate their learning by reference to the processes they followed in arriving at their proposals. It is principally through their dialogic techniques, accordingly, that full-time 'professional practice teachers' (as defined on p.95 above) provide guidance related to students' work-in-progress, setting an example for junior architects' participation in practice-based design discussion, and influencing their approach when involved with community groups in respect of design issues.

Even on pedagogical grounds, however, this model of engagement is questioned by Brown, on the grounds that it amounts to "*little*

*more than a kind of osmosis, in which the student is expected to watch, repeat, and understand how a more experienced tutor handles a design problem*" (Brown 2014:20). More seriously, as Webster (2008) has observed, Schön's reflective learning approach is questionable in terms of the "*unstated values, attitudes and norms*" (Dutton 1991:167) embedded in the social relationship it tacitly reinforces. The traditionally individualistic teacher/student relationship, resembling that of the potentially exploitative bond linking master to apprentice, encourages professionalisation in the form of expertise deployed for personal gain rather than community benefit. Higher social value outcomes will be achieved through appointing community-orientated practitioners as teachers within a School of Architecture, exposing both staff and students to the more collaborative approaches associated with commitment to engage with local people when developing design ideas.

For practitioners committed to community engagement, involvement in Schools of Architecture represents a natural extension to preferred forms of (paid) activity – permitting them to give expression to their personal or professional ethics (involving, for example, a sense of obligation to share, rather than to profit from, specialist knowledge and skills) through productive collaboration in respect of design issues. Again using the terminology introduced on pp.95-96 above, whether appointed as 'sessional' or 'participative' teachers (hired for projects already devised or actively engaged in developing initial design briefs), the opportunity to practice and develop their interaction techniques with architecture students will be regarded as a useful rehearsal for deploying similar skills with community groups. The benefits of operating part-time in an academic environment extend beyond Seneca's classical observation that 'teaching is learning' – which applies especially in the context of Higher Education, as Duran

(2017) has observed: not only does the pedagogical role demand clarification of one's own thinking in order to communicate it more effectively to students, but practitioners can also benefit from ideas generated by the students themselves (often naively unaware of their originality or of their interesting implications). A review by the RIBA of 'how new practices emerge and arrive' (O'Donovan 2020:98) quotes one firm reporting a strategy of engagement in teaching "*to keep ourselves sharp, experimental, and critical*." Practitioners can achieve greater social impact, however, by taking advantage of the opportunities that an academic institution affords for developing and framing a broader viewpoint in relation to their pedagogical function.

When 'practitioner-teachers' (either sessional or participative) begin to reflect systematically upon their pedagogy, and perhaps to develop it through PAR further to their reflections, they become 'practitioner-researchers' capable also of disseminating their conclusions for the benefit both of their practices and of the academy. As previously noted, furthermore (on p.87 above), publication of research – through either academic or commercial channels – will enhance a practice's reputation and so position it to win further research commissions. From the academic perspective, however, the prospect of co-produced knowledge raises issues related to the protection of university-based research from colonisation due to "*the increasing emphasis upon commercialization and market forces*" noted by Moriarty (2008:60), giving Schools of Architecture a motive for preferring to interact with community-orientated practitioners than mainstream ones: it enables them to expand their transformative effectiveness beyond their students' experience and into the activity of local communities. Consolidating the ground for arguing the double-benefit of engaging with community groups and architecture

students at the same time (through deliberately conflating the role of teacher and community-orientated architect), it is appropriate briefly to recall earlier observations (see pp.75-87 above) about the role of research (independently of teaching) as a strand of architectural practice, observing how reflections on such collaboration can represent a learning opportunity even for people not involved in it. Chapter 3 (pp.65-74 above) demonstrated that PAR can serve as a vehicle for developing design decisions out of reflections shared with community participants, who are thereby empowered by the experience. Whereas the routines of 'voicing' a practitioner-teacher's own thought-processes during interaction with student-designers bestow a hierarchical nature on the learning environment, the application of PAR as a pedagogical technique enables "*form, content and context to have a kind of consistency*" (Weisman, Cerulli and Kossak 2009:10) that allows it to operate as a simultaneous teaching and learning mechanism. Encompassing architecture students and community groups simultaneously within practitioners' reflective engagement permits development in terms of both of practice (related to business strategy) and praxis (in applying professional skills). Schools of Architecture therefore require mechanisms for ensuring that community-based live projects provide a continuous stream of appropriate learning opportunities for their students also.

### *Off-Campus Education*

Involving architecture students in community-engaged practitioners' actual projects means relocating their learning outside the traditional design-studio context – at the same time as potentially providing practices with additional resources. In itself, such a move can perform a valuable educational function. The

university campus is, by definition, a distinctive geographical and social environment – conceptualised via metaphors as 'hot house,' 'ivory tower,' and (without prejudice to the argument of this thesis) 'community'[56]. Such metaphors both indicate and perpetuate people's attitudes to 'the academy', causing the student experience to become regarded as a 'rite of passage' (especially in the context of Blair's commitment to providing this for half the UK's young people). Universities see themselves as performing a transformational process, providing a transition between the protected environment of school and the 'real world' of work.

The output of architecture students (as of practitioners prior to the construction stage of their projects) revolves largely around simulation: the production of explanatory diagrams, illustrative drawings and physical models – increasingly relying upon digital technology (with the unfortunate side-effect of distancing designers from their handiwork). Students therefore welcome opportunities to learn from dialogue with anyone from outside the academic environment expressing an interest in the design of a project, or from involvement in transforming their design ideas into full-size physical objects – bringing them closer to the physical 'realities' of construction. An architecture student will describe involvement in a live project, for example, as "*a definite highlight of my university experience*" (Stott and Warren 2014:32). Chiles and Till (2007:3) and Sara (2011:13) observe how the gratification afforded by working alongside, rather than in competition with, colleagues is highly motivating in terms of individual students' commitment to making a success of their course. This effect is particularly relevant in relation to current concerns to reduce levels of anxiety associated with university-based education (contributing to the notorious prevalence of mental health problems amongst

architecture students[57]). Relocating the context for architectural education therefore merits further discussion.

A well-established model for practitioner-led teaching adopted in many Schools of Architecture is the establishment of elective 'units' curated by practitioners seeking to maintain or develop particular approaches to practice. Units are usually run as mini-design studios, enabling smaller groups of students to benefit from closer interaction with practitioners whose work they find interesting. The risk in this arrangement is the perpetuation of a self-reinforcing personality cult – running counter to the community-orientated values explored in this thesis. Especially when led by internationally famed and respected practitioners ('starchitects') or by opinionated (and therefore widely published) critics of architecture – possibly appointed in the interests of a school's prestige or research-credentials rather than by virtue of any pedagogical skills, students tend to learn through imitating exemplars rather than through original creative thinking of their own. Such one-directional learning reduces the scope for critical reflection and perpetuates Romantic notions of individualistic genius[58] rather than promoting open-ended collaborative teamwork. Occasionally, however, when community-orientated practitioners are invited to lead School-based design units (as in the case of one of those interviewed for the purposes of Research Study 1), the learning no longer involves the binary teacher/student norm[59] but a tri-partite arrangement in which a third party (the community group) is drawn into the relationship – in the same way as communities can be drawn into conventional architect/client relationships. Such isolated precedents for activity outside the studio environment, suggest the need for a more appropriately long-term context for architecture student engagement with local communities – managed, for example, via a

School-based 'project office' (as previously discussed in Research Study 2 – see p.71 above).

Research Study 2 confirmed that integrating local ideas and opinions into architectural design development is a hugely time-consuming exercise (demanding a special blend of listening skills, patience and humility on the part of project-leaders) – making it expensive if conducted entirely by qualified practitioners. As the programme for such projects will rarely coincide with the academic year, the deployment of student-architects working under the direction of community-orientated practitioners requires an underpinning mechanism for longer-term commitment. Research Study 2 identified Old School Hall, Sneinton, as the potential location for a community-based 'Project Office,' to be run year-round by one or more practitioners, providing an off-site learning-context for local architecture students[60] as and when facilitated by their timetables (see **Appendix A**). Significantly, this proposal was warmly welcomed by local residents, who took the view that locating an outpost of the university in their midst would enhance the character of their neighbourhood. The 'Project Office' concept therefore merits detailed discussion, as it appears to represent an ideal mechanism for amalgamating the interests of 'practice and community' – its public educational function providing the essential bond, but offering rich opportunities also for research-based learning of topical relevance to the profession.

The concept of associating a 'Project Office' with a UK School of Architecture is not at all new[61], but is surprisingly rare: **Appendix B** (possibly deficient because developed largely on the basis of an internet-based desk-top review and associated email exchanges with the staff involved) identifies only six examples currently operating in the UK – taking a variety of forms ranging from

inward-facing academic protocol (associated with Oxford Brookes University) to outward-facing commercial practice (in the long-established 'Design Office' associated with the University of Newcastle upon Tyne). The Oxford Brookes model, 'OB1 Live,' represents little more than the consolidation of a strong tradition of engaging year one undergraduates (since 2007) in "*an innovative programme of design projects commissioned by community-based clients*" (Anderson 2016). The programme is led by the co-founder of the Live Projects Network (see p.93 above) who promotes the "*different types of research stimulated by Live Project Practice*" on the grounds that live projects "*deploy research-led, trans-disciplinary, co-design, not-for-profit methodologies that are alternative to those used by commercial architectural practice and that respond in innovative ways to urgent issues such as sustainability, ethics, wellbeing and vulnerability*" (Anderson 2019). By contrast, the Newcastle 'Design Office' has operated since the 1970s as a conventional architectural and urban design practice (often in partnership with other practices), but specializing in "*design projects that contain research challenges*" and producing "*new knowledge through a wide range of architectural outputs including built projects, and books, academic papers, comics, collages and social media*" (McCartney 2021). Unless hired as employees, students do not interact with the Design Office except to benefit from occasional site visits or from research-informed teaching. Between the two extremes represented by Oxford Brookes and Newcastle, other Schools of Architecture have developed models which achieve varying degrees of balance between practice-related learning and community-related student activity – two closely related to curricular objectives, and two others offering a distinctively profession-orientated experience.

In its current incarnation as 'The Projects Office', London Metropolitan University provides "*professional and project management support for students of our School of Art, Architecture and Design to engage in live projects and work-related learning experience. Work can be carried out either by students as part of their coursework, as a consultancy commission, or through research projects*" (Ng 2021). Although always seen as "*an enabling vehicle to deliver this support*" (Markey 2012:75), the university no longer publicises the origins of this initiative in 2004 as a RIBA Chartered Practice in its own right[62], employing architects to supply services to external clients and engaging students to support them in generating research and third stream income for the Faculty. Favouring "*projects with a clear social purpose*", the unit continues to offer access for clients to a network of university-based expertise, but now defines its main function simply as the provision of "*professional support for the delivery of live projects through the curriculum*" (Ng 2021).

The closer relationship to academia than to professional practice is found also in Birmingham City University's 'Co.LAB' (Collaborative Laboratory), which evolved in 2011 from being a live project learning-module into an in-house administrative unit. In response to requests for ideas from external clients or groups, Co.LAB offers to "*co-create and co-produce creative transdisciplinary projects with a unique teaching process combining undergraduate and postgraduate students working collaboratively with our staff*" (Columbano 2021). The unit has identified itself with over 100 projects, comprising "*student live-project electives, design research studies and consultancy*" (Birmingham Co.LAB Staff 2020) within the following categories:

a) product development.
b) installation & intervention.

c) pedagogy & research in practice.
d) community engagement.
e) creative transdisciplinary collaboration.

The University of Portsmouth website claims to have been running another 'Architecture Project Office' since 2008, with students given responsibility for leadership of "*an optional extra-curricular activity designed to enhance your architecture skills, boost your CV and help you build a network of contacts*" (University of Portsmouth 2018). This is a misleading claim, however, attributed to an imaginative marketing team (Andrews 2021): the Portsmouth office ceased operating in 2018 – having taken a number of forms[63] (including identification as a RIBA 'registered practice') since its foundation in 2006, taking credit for over 150 different projects and gaining an international reputation as an exemplar (Davis n.d.).

The common feature of the London Metropolitan and Birmingham (and, formerly, Portsmouth) 'project offices' is that they present themselves primarily as bases for connecting potential clients (usually third sector organisations facing some kind of challenge) to local architecture students, staff and researchers, serving to give students experience of authentic work situations without competing with local practices. The project offices associated with Sheffield and Leeds Beckett, by contrast, present themselves more clearly as architectural practices linked to Schools of Architecture but capable of operating independently of them.

The Sheffield School of Architecture Project Office is one of three facets of their 'Live Works' initiative – an off-site campus operated as:

- Urban Room (for teaching, community events and exhibitions).
- Project Office (providing architectural/urban design services for community, third sector and public sector clients)
- 'Research base' (categorizing its activities as design research, creative community engagement, co-production of research, and evaluation of impact).

Live Works was established in 2014 as a vehicle for extending collaboration with clients initially involved in the Live Projects programme – the socially engaged postgraduate teaching methodology that has given Sheffield its distinctive ethos since 1999:

> "*if a client has obtained funding as a result of a Live Project then they can commission Live Works to develop their project with them. Live Works integrates community engaged design, research, teaching and outreach. We offer community clients, researchers and students access to SSoA's internationally recognised skills and knowledge, at a local level*" (Butterworth 2016a).

For ease of public access and visibility, the activity of Live Works is accommodated in a former shop on a city-centre high-street: from this address, the Project Office offers design services at all project stages, embedding community participation throughout the entire process in order to open up the production of the built environment to more diverse voices: "*clients benefit from the creativity and innovation of SSoA graduates, supported by the Live Works core team*" (Butterworth 2016b).

The Leeds Beckett 'Project Office,' founded in 2009, is a more independently focused, business-oriented operation. Its accreditation as a RIBA Chartered Practice "*sends a strong signal to clients, employees and the wider construction industry and shows that your business is committed to excellence in design and service*

*delivery*" (RIBA 2021c), and requires the Project Office to hold Professional Indemnity Insurance, to maintain a quality assurance system, and to abide by a Code of Practice (RIBA 2021a). Having initially proved its financial viability to the university's satisfaction, there is now less emphasis upon turnover and greater interest in the local impact of the projects undertaken (more than 25 to date, including the winner of a prestigious Social Economic Environment Design award in 2017). In terms of its educational function[64], the Leeds Beckett Project Office shares Sheffield's social agenda: students learn to become critical agents of change through "*embedding themselves within their local community and working with regional partners to bridge the pedagogic gap between practice and academia. Thus the role of universities becomes one intent on advancing society for the greater good through the productive output of student endeavour, in addition to the classic creation and dispersion of knowledge*" (Stott and Warren 2020:74).

While they may serve as inspirational precedents (bridging the gap between practice and community by deploying deeply embedded positions within the UK architectural educational system), Project Offices can equip only a tiny minority of students with the "*the collaborative and participatory skills that are essential to future practice*" (Butterworth 2013:02). How the majority of architecture students are to be prepared for combining practice management with community engagement is not the only question that remains unresolved, however: the underlying issue in relation to this thesis is how to enable practices to achieve the same objectives without requiring all members of staff to perform teaching duties within a School of Architecture. Fortunately, the recent development of architectural apprenticeships as a route to qualification promises to address both questions at once.

Having explored the extent to which architectural practice can be embedded within the academy, it is appropriate to consider also how architectural education can be delivered within practice – especially education in respect of the social value of architecture (observed in Chapter 1 to represent a challenging commitment for practices to fulfil). The UK system for architects' education, prescribed by the ARB (2010) in conjunction with the RIBA, demands a minimum of two years' practice-based learning as part of the route[65] towards qualification to join the register – ideally separating three stages of academic activity:

- undergraduate level – addressing 'general criteria' and attributes defined as ARB/RIBA Part 1.
- postgraduate level – addressing the same criteria but associated with more developed attributes, defined as ARB/RIBA Part 2.
- qualification level – with separate 'professional criteria' defined as ARB/RIBA Part 3.

In the interests of reducing the time and expense (and consequent mental health problems[66] – see p.105 above) associated with architectural education, which result in loss of diversity in terms of entrants to the profession, a more comfortable route towards qualification is now available in the form of 'degree apprenticeships'. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Training has defined 'standards' (IfA 2018a, 2018b) that cover the full scope of learning required by the ARB/RIBA in terms of two 'integrated degrees':

- NVQ Level 6: Architectural Assistant Apprenticeship – corresponding to ARB/RIBA Part 1.
- NVQ Level 7: Architect Apprenticeship – corresponding to ARB/RIBA Parts 2-3.

Over the four years associated with the main parts of each of these (with no requirement for a break between them), the principle is that apprentices spend 20% of their time in employment engaged

in 'off the job' studying, and that their employers actively support their learning through some of their work-based activities. This pattern of activity, enabling candidates to 'earn while they learn', helps overcome the separation of practice from academia (which is otherwise reinforced by describing the breaks between Parts 1-3 as two 'years out'), and provides entrants to the profession with more experience of actual projects (accelerating their ability to manage projects and practices of their own). What is less clear, however, is how – unless they happen to be located in community-orientated practices – apprentices can develop appreciation of how social value can be achieved in respect of their design projects through community engagement in the development process.

Although social context, impact on existing communities and obligations to stakeholders are all included within the prescribed curriculum for architects, apprentices have little time available 'off-the job' (in an academic environment) in which to learn – through the presence on campus of socially-engaged teachers – about interacting meaningfully with community groups. Providing apprentices with relevant learning experience (based upon design processes rather than theory or history) is a challenge that can nevertheless be met in the context of commitment to community across the higher education sector as a whole.

If the divergent interests of practice and community are to be reconciled through educational actvity, it is advantageous for the whole academic institution supporting a School of Architecture to perform a role that explicitly relates to its civic context:

> "*there is a 'soft' boundary between the academy and society at large, which will shift constantly as the university responds to new demands… lessons and insights will be brought back across the soft boundary and used to create improvements in teaching and research*" (Goddard, et al. 2016:7).

A 'civic university' is one that plays the training and development roles demanded of it by public and private sector employers and professional bodies (and by their students) in the context of citizen-centred innovation policy, involving "*different forms and levels of coproduction with consumers, customers and citizens*" (Arnkil, et al. 2010:6). In terms of preparing graduates to qualify as architects, the current emphasis is heavily biased towards the transactional: whether entering the architectural profession from a degree award or from an apprenticeship, records and reflections upon office-based experience are required to be categorised in terms of the ARB/RIBA Part 3 criteria – in which concern for social value features as an aspect of professional ethics, a theoretical aspiration, rather than as an integral feature of project delivery. To some extent, this weakness may be attributed to the absence of legislation or standard contractual clauses demanding accountability and transparency in respect of community impact, reflecting short-term (political) lack of appetite for such considerations. If, on the other hand, universities were to adopt such standards as their *raison d'être*, engaging the collaborative efforts of teachers and researchers in all departments (and in other universities), any encounter with the academy – on the part of students, apprentices or employers – would be endowed with a sense of cumulative purpose in terms of social impact. This is not to advocate a return to Kerr's 'multiversity' which "*serves society almost slavishly*" (Kerr 1963), but to identify the kind of strategic context in which practice and community can be effectively integrated. Chapter 5 of this document therefore builds upon this insight and considers its implications in terms of architectural practice strategy.

# 5. IMPLEMENTATION: looking and moving forward

### *Practice Development*

This final Chapter pulls together a response to the question of how architectural practices may develop in terms of their business alongside effective engagement with community groups. Discussion throughout this document has endeavoured to maintain a check on the validity of conclusions drawn, ensuring they have been derived from cumulative research findings rather than predetermined either by the wording of the research question (due to assumptions contained within its key terms) or through the methodologies deployed in response to it. Concern to remain constantly open to unexpected insights represented a major tension in the production of this document, the very act of identifying material for discussion often being experienced as an intimidating point of no return. This anxiety is familiar to architects wrestling to reconcile conflicting design parameters, however (Moneo 2004): with more time, they fancy, creative individuals can always identify opportunities for improvement (habits of hesitancy prior to commitment help explain also why it took seven years to arrive at this point in the Professional Doctorate programme). More detailed discussion of the overall production process is reserved for Doc 6 ('Critical Reflection'), but the main indicator that the ensuing conclusions were not premeditated is simply the surprise in discovering 'education' as a potential meeting-ground for the interests of practice and community. This idea was almost entirely absent from Doc 1, the original research proposal – the

exception being the observation (see p.38 above) of a possible relationship between the absence of literature on how to develop an architectural business "*in conjunction with community projects*" (Doc 1 page 12) and the notion of a 'gap' between practice and education. It is appropriate therefore to begin by returning to the meaning of 'practice' in the context of this research: being rooted in the practicalities of architecture as a business, the objective is not merely to offer pertinent recommendations, but to identify readily acceptable means of implementation. This demands a return to the intended beneficiaries of this research, as practices all have different development needs.

As explained in p.20 above, the purpose of this thesis is less to influence the behaviour of practitioners already implementing community-related objectives, than to indicate possible strategies for firms wishing to enhance their profile in terms of social value – especially the smaller ones of up to 50 staff which comprise 90% of UK architectural practices[67]. Larger (more 'developed') practices are usually associated with higher profitability because the levels of expertise (and associated risk) required for addressing more complex design challenges generate sufficient income to delegate administrative functions to non-technical (less costly) staff, or to deploy more sophisticated software that improves business efficiency. To the extent that it is related to profitability, the motive for a practice wishing to 'develop' in terms of size (providing more time for architects to spend on design-related activities rather than administration) is entirely rational, and may even prove conducive to social value as larger practices can appoint teams specialising in community engagement. Major development proposals (suggesting the appointment of larger multidisciplinary design practices) often require a 'Statement of Community Engagement' as part of their planning application.

Smaller firms may accordingly identify roles for themselves, it is observed at p.81 above, in providing specialist community engagement services as consultants or in partnership with larger practices. The difficulty is identifying which context offers the most productive opportunity for smaller firms to exercise the associated skills – legal, political, economic or academic (the latter being already associated with another interpretation of 'development'). In the following discussion, each context for practice is therefore briefly re-examined in turn, demonstrating the logical sequence of considerations that suggests a main focus upon the role of architectural education in relation to practice management: studio-based insight into the appropriate 'listening style' for interaction with clients and stakeholders can unlock effective business management strategy.

### *Legislative Imperatives*

The obligation to take social value into account when designing the built environment would be less of an issue (being no longer a matter of choice) for private sector clients if it were mandated through parliamentary legislation. In liberal democracies, albeit subject to threat from concentrated media ownership (Herman and Chomsky 1988) and populism, the development of law tends to follow rather than lead public opinion, reinforcing the argument for "*marriage between state and market*" (Lee 2017:469). Having observed how market forces often run counter to social value (see p.17 above), especially when community engagement is regarded as an 'extra' service to be performed for developers (in return for higher fees to pay for the additional time required), the current lack of appetite for public participation in the design process is readily understandable (on the part of both producers and

consumers in a capitalist economy). Political pressure – especially further to the integrated concerns expressed through the global SDGs (UN 2015) discussed on p.50 above – might in the future prompt government proposals to expand the scope of legislation related to the social impact of built environment proposals. A member survey conducted by the RIBA in 2020, for example, found 82% of participants agreeing that their organisation "*believes the UK Government must legislate for higher standards*" (Rowlands 2020:20).

Revision of two existing Acts of Parliament could readily compel developers to engage local communities more deeply in the decision-taking associated with their design proposals:

a) the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 – mentioned in p.20 above – requires "*public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts*" (UK Parliament 2012 ch.3). Having made evaluation of social value an explicit requirement when commissioning services in the public sector, the logical next step would be to extend such considerations to the private sector also (typically by demanding inclusion of community-related criteria in invitations to tender for large-scale work). There are already signs that the government is considering expansion of the existing legislation – aiming initially to "*encourage more charities, mutuals, cooperatives and social enterprises to apply for and win central government contracts*" (Kay 2018).
b) the currently limited effectiveness of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in balancing the interests of private sector capital against local authority policy is discussed extensively in pp.28-32 above. The government is currently considering a White Paper for radical reform of the planning system:

> "*our proposals seek a significantly simpler, faster and more predictable system… (in which) communities will be reconnected to a planning process that is supposed to serve them, with residents more engaged over what happens in their area*" (MHCLG 2020:8).

The primary motive for the proposed new legislation is to increase the supply of housing through removing obstacles confronting private developers (suggesting the reduction of opportunity for local influence over design decisions[68]). To overcome the threatened 'democratic deficit', the new legislation could identify 'social value' as a mandatory ingredient of Design and Access Statements attached to planning applications – not merely as a possible interpretation of the current requirement to "*demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account*" (MHCLG 2018a), but through explicit reference to how local community groups have influenced design proposals.

In the context of current government priorities, accordingly, there is little prospect of changes in the law providing practitioners with an opportunity for increased community-based activity. The lobbying tactics adopted by the RIBA on behalf of its members therefore need to be carefully considered.

Political activism represents one possible direction for architects to take in order to promote community engagement as an essential element within development proposals (although pressing for such objectives could generate cynical accusations of self-interest rather than expressions of gratitude from the relatively disempowered neighbours of a new project site). The principles of nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein 2009:451 - introduced in Doc 4 page 36) suggest that subtler contributions to public debate

could be more effective: writing about the need for greater involvement of community groups in development decisions (as this thesis does), or talking about it as an educationalist (treating the academy as an open-ended Latourian 'mediator'), is likely to influence opinion more effectively, and more consistently with the non-authoritarian ethos underpinning this whole thesis. The reference to ethos, the moral sentiment guiding professional behaviour (even in the absence of legal obligation or empowerment) suggests reconsideration of the enunciation regime through which the RIBA helps its members enhance the social value of their output.

### *Professional Incentives*

It was suggested on p.32 above that architects are better positioned than cash-strapped local planning authorities to ensure that development schemes achieve social value for the communities affected by them. As discussed on p.27 above, the incentive to provide social value is enshrined in architects' Codes of Conduct, and the RIBA currently identifies itself as a body committed to active promotion of commitment to social objectives as a primary feature of a practice's services – particularly further to the ESDC report (RIBA Practice and Profession Committee 2018) discussed on p.26 above, which reminds members that 'social sustainability' is an integral dimension of environmental sustainability – in line with the 2030 SDGs (UN 2015).

The ESDC report offers recommendations in six areas of practice further to an overarching aim to locate "*public interest, social purpose and sustainable development at the heart of the Institute's activities*" (RIBA Practice and Profession Committee 2018):

- make commitment to the public interest a 'core requirement' of RIBA membership.
- engage with commissioning, funding and insurance bodies, and lobbying 'legislative organisations,' in order to stimulate initiatives conducive to greater spatial justice and environmental responsibility.
- make tools and guidance readily accessible to members, especially in respect of POE (identified pp.84-85 above as a foundation for evidence-based design if outcomes and data can be shared).
- amplify the quantity and quality of ethical and environmental education within Schools of Architecture, practitioners' CPD, and of research literacy across the profession.
- build global professional capacity for driving sustainable development and raising standards.
- establish mechanisms for demonstrating the Institute's alignment with the principles of the UN Global Compact and of social responsibility (such as ISO 26000).

While all the above recommendations could be regarded as contributions to an answer to the research question underpinning this thesis (the author having been a member of the ESDC consultative group), some of them merit more detailed examination in terms of implementation.

Significantly in relation to this thesis, one outcome of the ESDC's recommendations is the RIBA's production[70] of a 'Social Value Toolkit for Architecture' (SVT) with a clearly defined objective and research-based methodology:

> "*to make it simple to demonstrate and evaluate the impact of design on people and communities…* (by reference to) *a library of questions for practitioners to use in the duration of projects and to revisit them once built. The questions are based on assessing existing research on key indicators of*

> *wellbeing. It argues that the social value of architecture is revealed in the extent to which it fosters positive emotions*" (Samuel 2020:3).

The focus upon POE (with its scope based on prior research and consultation) as the critical point at which social value may be demonstrated reinforces material reviewed on pp.84-86 above. Survey questions (adapted to suit different project settings) are suggested only in relation to RIBA Plan of work stage 7, however, and the SVT is unhelpful in relation to ongoing project development:

> *"Ideally social value should be monitored before and after the design intervention so the extent of change can be ascertained. Where it is not possible to identify a baseline, it is necessary to find another way to work out how much of the social value can be attributed to changes made. This can be done through the inclusion of questions about the extent to which respondents feel that the change has come about as a result of the building project*" (Samuel 2020:11).

Retrospective POE findings may contribute to an evidence-base for use (by those permitted access to the information) in relation to future projects, but only if practitioners begin to treat all design challenges as homologous – conflicting with the idea at the heart of this thesis that architects should stimulate and maintain a democratically localised sensitivity to development proposals throughout the associated decision-taking processes. Community engagement activity at Plan of Work stages 0 or 1 would provide a more appropriate context for devising POE questions about social value.

The SVT identifies participation in the design process as merely one of several dimensions of social value[70], which is mostly related to the supply-chain – ignoring ethical arguments on the demand side for encouraging citizens rather than professionals to determine where 'value' resides (see pp.41-42 above). Even the

suggested POE questions on participation are only "*to be used if the community has been involved in the project*" (Samuel 2020:15) – implying that community engagement is an option which can be relinquished if considered 'unaffordable' or likely to generate inconvenient outcomes. In providing guidance to its members, the RIBA forgets the ESDC's recommendation that social and environmental sustainability need to be developed alongside one another, and instead accords a higher profile to concern about climate change[71].

While the SVT is defined in the RIBA's 'Sustainable Outcomes Guide' as the principal basis for measuring "*the positive impacts of good placemaking on a local economy*" (RIBA Sustainable Futures Group 2019b:11), other tools related to social impact developed independently of the Institute are also identified (alongside reference to the planning system, as discussed in p.120 above), including the BREEAM[72] benchmarking system for third-party certification of a development project's performance. The 'BREEAM Communities' tool, serving "*to improve, measure and certify the social, environmental and economic sustainability of large-scale development plans*" (BRE Global 2017a), specifically awards credits (under the heading 'governance' – albeit with a relatively low weighting) for schemes which promote "*community involvement in decisions affecting the design, construction, operation and long-term stewardship of the development*" (BRE Global 2017b). Being an internationally recognized and highly respected standard, the rating to be awarded for a project's sustainability can easily be specified by clients at the Briefing stage, providing criteria (such as social impact) for assessment upon a project's completion. In the interests of flexibility, however, BREEAM adopts a 'balanced score-card' approach to assessment – meaning that low ratings in one area can be offset

through high ratings in another, with the overall effect that community engagement can be reduced if sufficient other steps are taken to achieve the overall percentage associated with the client's target rating. BREEAM therefore provides a widely accepted (but difficult to scrutinize) standard for driving and achieving impact in specific projects. Involvement mostly in 'Excellent' or 'Outstanding' projects could be identified as a practice strategy, but clearer indication of a practice's specific commitment to social responsibility can be provided through its application of principles outlined in ISO26000.

Although nominally identified as an international standard, ISO26000:2010 ('Guidance on Social Responsibility') serves only as a reference document offering broad guidance or inspiration. Architecture practices cannot claim their procedures 'conform to the standard' as it requires no particular actions and contains no specific instructions. This means also that the RIBA cannot demand externally verified 'registration' to the standard as, for example, a condition of being identified as a 'Chartered Practice' – although the 'RIBA Governance' section of the ESDC report, which includes an overview of the standard as an Appendix (RIBA Practice and Profession Committee 2018:78), sets a precedent for practitioners by suggesting reference to the principles outlined in ISO26000 as a basis for improving the Institute's own transparency and accountability. Among the "*seven core subjects of social responsibility defined in the standard*" (ISO 2018:9), is 'community involvement and development', which deconstructed in terms of seven distinct issues:

- Community involvement
- Education and culture
- Employment creation and skills development
- Technology development and access

- Wealth and income creation
- Health
- Social investment.

Headings such as these may at least be adopted (further to internal discussion with staff) as a checklist for self-assessment in respect of practice policy[73]. While it is inappropriate for a practice to assert how it has 'implemented' ISO 26000, accordingly, the associated 'communication protocol' (Sandberg 2012) recommends public reference to the standard as a framework for integrating social responsibility into a practice's activities.

If a clearer 'badge' for branding the practice is sought in evidence of its commitment to social objectives, there exist two additional possibilities:

a) Certification as a 'B Corporation' – confirming practice-wide adherence to standards of social and environmental performance set by B Lab, a non-profit organization founded in USA in 2006:

   "*Certified B Corps are a new kind of business that balances purpose and profit. They are legally required to consider the impact of their decisions on their workers, customers, suppliers, community and the environment*" (B Lab 2021).

   Over 400 'B Corps' (out of 3720 worldwide in 74 countries) are UK-based, in over 40 different industries – five of which are architectural practices (one being a participant in the Doc 3 research study associated with this thesis).

b) Membership of 'Social Value UK' (part of the 'Social Value International network and itself a Certified B Corporation, based in Liverpool since 2007 when it was founded as the Social Return on Investment Network) – an organisation which has identified seven principles as criteria to help people take decisions that respect equality, wellbeing and environmental

sustainability – the very first being an injunction to involve stakeholders:

"*we work with our members to increase the accounting, measuring and maximising of social value from the perspective of those affected by an organisation's activities… We believe in a world where a broader definition of value will change decision making and ultimately decrease inequality and environmental degradation*" (Carpenter 2020).

About 200 individuals and 100 organisations are members (for a small annual fee) – none identifying themselves as architects, however.

Having either of these kinds of organisation as clients would require an architectural practice to operate a community-centred agenda, but even a strategy to win commissions from them would incentivise a practice to raise the profile of community engagement within its promotional literature – improving its chances of success in winning public sector work also, further to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 discussed on p.119 above). The more challenging focus of this thesis, however, is (as rehearsed at p.20 above) the difficulty faced by practices with clients who do not initially share their architects' interest in a social agenda.

### *Commercial Opportunity*

As observed in p.24 above, community engagement needs somehow to be 'sold' as a benefit to a sceptical client, as it will be difficult to persuade them to sponsor such activity through appeals to long-term value, ethical conscience, or concern for public image. Winning support for community engagement within projects for clients who lack commitment to social value demands a subtler approach than simply 'educating' them into changing their view

about priorities. The central argument of this thesis is that there is a critical difference between output-based education (in which the teacher is the 'expert' in possession of knowledge and skills which they are required to transfer to others) and process-based education facilitated by 'participative practitioner-teachers' (the concept introduced on p.96 above), adopting the dialogic approach found to be common to both community engagement and design-teaching within a School of Architecture – in which the outcome is unpredictable 'transformation' of those involved (all around the table). It would be an unwise marketing strategy for architects to advise potential clients that they do not consider themselves 'experts' in their field, or that they see their role as the 'transformation' of their clients' values, as the commercial context demands delivery of a specified service by one party in return for payment of fees by the other – both hoping to benefit from the exchange. Clients' satisfaction is achieved when they perceive they have derived greater value than expected from the arrangement, which suggests the architect must be seen to deliver part of their service 'for free' (or at least for less than its cost to the client). Giving clients something they will value, without charging for it, must therefore represent a key technique for practices seeking to turn prospective 'leads' into confirmed project opportunities. A practice cannot expect community engagement to be welcomed as a feature of its service delivery, even if at no extra cost, if its clients attribute no value to the exercise. Rather than seeking to teach their clients about social value, in the hope of changing their minds about its importance, the socially committed practitioner must explain that the way they work requires the clients' continuous engagement in the design process. By defining 'design' in terms of taking account of as many factors as possible – the client's functional and budgetary requirements, the site and local policies about its potential for development, legal constraints

in the interests of environmental sustainability, health and safety, etc – a practice can promote the idea that architecture involves processes of recognition, inclusion and integration. Drawing clients and other stakeholders jointly into the professionals' decision-taking in respect of design, promoting the idea that all parties possess knowledge that can usefully be shared with colleagues, will in itself provide the 'education through/about participation' that enables clients to understand the relevance of local community groups. In negotiating with potential clients for appointment as their architect, accordingly, the 'sales pitch' can therefore consist simply of inviting them to accept a 'free' seminar about participation in the design process – not advocating any particular firm to undertake the project but providing advice that the client will find useful irrespective of whom they finally appoint. An invitation to return with questions if further advice is required will incentivize a client to renew contact with the practitioner: through charging a small sum for such further information, and again inviting further questions if required, the architect may gradually secure the desired commission (on terms that the client will have already come to understand). The professional deploys knowledge as sustained dialogue rather than as specialist expertise.

In negotiating the scope of an appointment in this incremental manner, a practice will find RIBA Plan of Work stages 0 and 7 (considered in conjunction with one another) particularly useful in terms of the opportunities they afford for embedding the benefits of community engagement into proposals for design services:

a) at stage 0 by exploring potential sources of funding (possibly from charities – see p.84 above), expertise (provided by specialists such as Locality – see p.99 above), or simply research-time (perhaps commissioning students to undertake the required investigations – see p.85 above).

b) at stage 7, as also noted on p.86 above, by confirming the anticipated benefits of the exercise (demonstrating success in relation to client aspirations) in addition to learning lessons for the future (representing a form of development for the architectural practice, enabling it to meet client aspirations even more effectively in subsequent projects).

Having used the RIBA's 'Sustainable Outcomes Guide' (see p.124 above) to set realistic targets for measurement upon a project's completion, the activities required at each Plan of Work stage to mitigate risks to the intended performance of the finished building are systematically identified in the RIBA's recently published 'Plan for Use Guide' – designed "*to encourage a more outcome-based approach to design, both within the architectural profession and (by extension ) to the construction industry as a whole*" (RIBA 2021b:6). This Guide provides a useful framework for the 'free' advice-sessions (suggested at p.14 and p.129 above) initially offered to prospective clients, although considerable customisation will be required – not merely to adapt its language to non-professional readers, but more importantly to address the lack of reference (noted in pp.123-124 above) to the development of community-orientated targets through the design process (on the grounds that setting them independently would be self-contradictory). The participative design approach appropriate to community development requires design outcomes (and how they will be measured) to be shaped through processes of interaction with stakeholders rather than entirely predetermined as technical performance objectives. The RIBA's aspiration that the Plan for Use Guide (in its current form) should "*strengthen design and learning within the profession*" (RIBA 2021b:10) ignores the opportunity – in the true interests of 'sustainable communities and social value' – of expanding design-related learning <u>outside</u> the profession. It is therefore to the more general educational

functions of practice that this thesis must return for an answer to the research question.

### *Practice and Community Development*

The notion that practitioners can themselves learn through engagement with community groups during the design process is not how 'practice development' is primarily interpreted in this thesis. As practitioners need to learn from the people likely to be affected by development proposals in order to invest their schemes with social sustainability, the challenge is how to enable this learning to take place in the context of conventional practice (defined as private-sector work for profit-orientated clients). This thesis has demonstrated that running design projects as a form of participative action-research enables architects to learn and to spread learning at the same time, ethically returning something of value to a community (empowerment through knowledge, skills and confidence) in exchange for benefits accruing to their projects (such as locally valued ideas embedded in a development's form, content or construction). Recognition of the pedagogical value of participatory design processes suggests that further benefits can stem from involving local architecture students in a practice's interaction with a community:

- using their study-time (and associated ideas and energy) as a project-related resource.
- deriving minor income from teaching appointments.
- acquiring insights and understanding, and developing skills, possibly formalized as academy-based research – enhancing the practitioner's earning capacity.

The emerging image is a virtuous circle (see FIGURE 7 overleaf), in which 'participation' (acts of articulating and sharing) operates as a

Latourian 'mediator' for practice-development as the product of the associated design process, how it is described, and what is learned as an outcome:

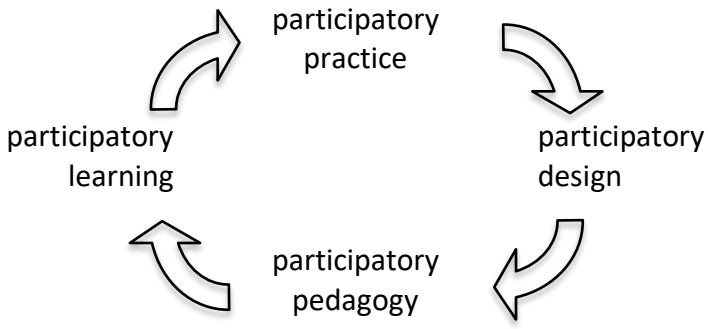



FIGURE 7: **Participatory practice as the driver**
(a virtuous circle linking design approach, pedagogic style, and learning from the learners)

In terms of preparing practitioners of the future for community-engaged designing, it has been proposed (in pp.104-105 above) that students can best develop the appropriate understanding and attitudes through combining observation of precedent (set by the participatory practitioner-teacher) with practice in terms of 'live' projects involving off-campus clients. The problem, however, is that only a tiny minority of architecture students have access to this kind of opportunity – primarily because so few Schools of Architecture operate 'project offices' capable of ensuring continuity of community engagement (the absence of which would raise ethical questions about exploiting communities as vehicles for the students' educational advantage rather than addressing issues stemming from an imbalance of power or knowledge).

It has also been observed (p.114 above) that architectural apprenticeships offer even less opportunity for experience-based learning related to community engagement[74], as participants spend only 20% of their time on academic activities (permitting a good balance of practice-related learning, and eliminating anxiety about

funding their studies). From their practices' viewpoint, the reduced availability of apprentices for fee-earning activity has two significant implications:

a) it is easier to deploy apprentices on the less lucrative (because more time-consuming) work associated with community engagement: being a cheaper resource, there are commercial advantages in giving apprentices the main responsibility for liaison with community groups – enabling the practice to offer this service at minimal expense, at the same time as helping fulfil its training obligations in respect of apprentice learning.
b) there is room for extensive negotiation around the nature and content of individuals' work-based learning activity in the quarterly review meetings required between their 'employment mentor' (appointed by the practice) and their 'workplace tutor' (representing the academic institution) – allowing the latter to stress expectations about embedding social value in all design projects.

Employers will more readily understand and accept such expectations if they are conscious (and supportive) of the university's strategic role as an anchor institution[75] in relation to the local economy, and of its consequent commitment to approaches such as "*developing more and better structured opportunities for our students, colleagues and alumni to make meaningful contributions to the challenges faced by our local communities*" – quoting, for example, from the strategy permitting sponsorship of this whole thesis (NTU 2021). The place-based leadership function of such a 'civic university' is performed, accordingly, not merely through mechanisms such as the 'workplace review meetings' associated with apprenticeships (facilitating direct engagement between practitioners and academics committed to goals such as 'enriching society'), but also

through the attitudes and enthusiasms imported into a practice by the apprentices themselves (also performing as Latourian 'mediators'):

- by expressing commitment to the principle of community engagement (picked up from its recurrence as a theme running through all course documentation).
- by developing techniques for incorporating community engagement into their own approaches to design project management, and reflecting on their effectiveness.
- by gathering and disseminating evidence demonstrating the practice-related benefits of community engagement (and developing recommendations for improved procedures).

By identifying their workplace as a 'training practice' committed to supporting apprentices, identifying education and research as missions to be accomplished alongside architectural design, architects make it possible for the interests of 'Practice' and 'Community' to interact to each other's mutual benefit. While not every School of Architecture may be willing to host a 'Project Office' as a means of ensuring a steady stream of community-orientated design challenges, it remains possible for every practice to operate as if it were an (education-orientated) Project Office – and thereby to incorporate consideration for the community in all its design projects without prejudice to its business interests.

# CONCLUSION: Evaluation of the Research

## *Contributions to Knowledge*

Having been developed in the context of Professional Doctorate research, Chapter 5 has offered a variety of responses to the thesis question that may be found relevant to architectural practice: community-responsive business strategy can be rooted in the contexts of legislation, politics, marketing or education (or in combinations of them), suggesting that education offers the most effective and practicable vehicle for mutually beneficial transformation. This coda to the document identifies and explains which research conclusions represent significant contributions to knowledge in general, and expands their professional relevance to the education sector.

Latour's thinking requires exploration of ideas such as 'business' and 'community' by reference to visible/reportable manifestations rather than their adoption as ready-to-hand explanatory frameworks (with causes and consequences) for objectives and activity. Achieving 'social value' through architectural practice has therefore been interpreted in terms of engaging local communities in the design process – the effectiveness of the exercise being demonstrated through evidence of change (symptomized typically in terms of people's confidence, expressed through new kinds of activity). The outcome has been to find that participative action-research represents a reliably instructive tool for monitoring such effectiveness.

As change can be verified only in retrospect, the didactive question is to distinguish between which factors acted as 'intermediaries' – defined by Latour (2005:39) as "*what transports meaning or force without transformation*" – in contributing to it, and which acted as 'mediators' (themselves undergoing change in the very process of carrying meaning or function). If 'practice' and 'community' are treated not as pre-defined contexts or aspirations, but as fields for extensive interaction between disparate elements, the research focus must be upon the glue of 'association' connecting them.

Chapter 5 rehearsed potential roles served mostly by Latourian intermediaries: 'practice development' can be interpreted in terms wider than mere finance-related growth, clients' briefs can 'overflow' their original constraints, and recommendations for legislative and political change can be promoted through lobbying or activism. The more sustainably valuable outcomes are achieved, however, when practitioners contribute as mediators, through their performance of a transformatively educational function.

The kind of 'capacity-building' required for effective community engagement (and client development) has been shown to benefit both practitioner-facilitators and participants. In particular, Schools of Architecture provide an appropriate base for architects' development of social sensitivity, this thesis has argued, through facilitating continuous two-way interaction between practitioners and academics – encouraging the former to validate their approach to projects by reference to academic standards, the latter to root their students' design experience in the context of local people's ideas about their neighbourhoods. The identification by Anderson and Priest (2014) of members of a community-group as useful 'external collaborators' in relation to students' architectural

education has accordingly been expanded by reference in this thesis to the additional involvement of professional practitioners to work alongside the teaching staff as 'internal collaborators' – with developmental benefits to themselves also (particularly if their experience is formalised as an Action Research exercise and subsequently disseminated for the benefit of others).

This insight is enshrined in TABLE 3 (page 98), which represents a significant development of Arnstein's well-known 'ladder of citizen participation' (1969) – previously quoted in Document 4 (page 21):

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| • | **citizen control** | *user-owned* | **FULL PARTICIPATION** |
| • | **delegated power** | *user-led* | |
| • | **partnership** | *user-partnered* | DEGREES OF CITIZEN POWER |
| • | **placation** | *user-involved* | |
| • | **consultation** | *user-consulted* | DEGREES OF TOKENISM |
| • | **informing** | *user-informed* | |
| • | **therapy** | *user-placated* | **NON-PARTICIPATION** |
| • | **manipulation** | *user-manipulated (a ploy)* | |

TABLE 4: Sherry Arnstein's **'LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION'** concept

Arnstein's notion was that public involvement in planning-related decision-taking may be described in terms of varying degrees of inclusivity. What this thesis has suggested is that practitioners can achieve correspondingly increasing degrees of citizen empowerment through adopting the ethos associated with different qualities of 'internal collaborator.'

The literature review initiating this thesis (Doc 2: 2016) observed that there was no shortage of guidance about how to run a business efficiently, nor about how to run workshops that enable members of a community to contribute effectively to the development of their physical surroundings, but nothing about combining the two objectives. This justified raising the research

question, as the answer could represent useful new knowledge – not just for the author's own practice[76], but for fellow-professionals everywhere. Reassuringly, since commencing this research, the professional press (and RIBA policy) has reflected architects' steadily increasing concern for the social impact of their design proposals. In that sense (as noted on p.11), this thesis represents a contribution to ongoing discourse within the profession, offering fresh perspective rather than original insight: its relevance stems from how the business viability of community engagement has until now remained largely unexplored.

## NOTES

**01** Within academic discourse also, the case for social value has been related both to strategic management (Vitolla, Rubino and Garzoni 2017) and to moral philosophy (Knight 2019).

**02** The identification of vocational 'training' (defined in relation to specified competencies) through involving students in practice as an inferior alternative to 'education' in a discipline characterized by intellectual content reflects not merely an inappropriate separation of knowledge from skills (Jeffcutt 1988, Young, M. 1993), but a long tradition (in the UK) of class-related cultural prejudice.

**03** Even if their fees are based upon a percentage of anticipated construction costs, architects' main 'business' consists of interpreting and fulfilling client expectations within whatever time-frame the project income makes affordable. Business development may be defined, accordingly, as improving client satisfaction in parallel with augmenting practice revenue.

**04** Research surveys (RIBA Client Liaison Group 2015, 2016) confirm how developers tend to adopt conservative attitudes revolving around strict adherence to budget, often following minimization of capital costs and consultants' fees (thereby placing significant constraints upon the time afforded for design processes).

**05** Familiarity with the broad range of criteria by which architectural projects are judged equips practitioners to endorse Elkington's (1994) suggestion that 'business development' should be assessed in terms of 'triple bottom-line' (TBL) accounting, which requires "people, planet and profitability" factors to be balanced against one another. In modern parlance, 'sustainable investment' is now measured in terms of a company's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance. Lack of agreement on criteria, however, has led to inflated claims – identified as 'greenwashing' (Westerveld 1986) or, in specific relation to community engagement, 'social washing'.

**06** Community engagement is regarded not as a proxy for social value (suggesting association with particular kinds of outcome or intervention), but as a signal of action being intentionally responsive to localised human context – the principle being that "*we cannot deliver social value without understanding local needs and engaging communities*" (Cox 2020).

**07** Developers rarely commission studies of local opinion in advance of design. Were they to treat local people as stakeholders in their project, developers would be required to sustain dialogue with them (paid for and communicated) through its whole life-cycle – comprising design, construction, maintenance and even, as observed by Mulholland, Chan

and Canning (2019), the de-commissioning of a built environment at the end of its life.

**08** A more nuanced distinction is expressed in the observation that "*co-design is born out of collaboration and partnership, whereas participatory design invites it in*" (de Sousa 2019:151). De Sousa identifies the value of 'community-led design' in terms of the benefits it can provide for enjoyment in the longer term by people not involved in the original exercise.

**09** Guidance on options in terms of participation processes is widely available – notably through organisations such as The Glass-House Community-Led Design (de Sousa 2020) and Locality (Wallis 2020), and in a variety of handbooks (Malone 2018, Hofmann 2014, Wates 2014, Sanoff 2000, Forester 1999).

**10** Community-oriented practices face difficulties in terms of profitability in that community groups – or the 'third sector' comprising non-profit, voluntary organisations (Frumkin 2005) – are usually poorly funded and often lacking also in focus or consistency of commitment. At a tactical level (in contrast to the strategic view addressed in this thesis), practitioners therefore require:

a) skills in adapting the scope of their activities to the budget available (including techniques for drawing disparate, and often suspicious, participants into the design process – and for keeping them engaged in it).
b) awareness of potential funding sources and of the support available from the charitable sector, which has accordingly spawned a new breed of specialists offering to operate as consultants alongside the architect (potentially enhancing the practitioner's own community engagement skills and experience).

**11** Architectural activity undertaken merely to fulfil 'corporate and social responsibility' (CSR) targets – as if to offset projects that are relatively lacking in terms of social value – is therefore disregarded in this study. CSR policies committing architectural practices to *pro bono* work (of all kinds, not necessarily architecture-related) with explicit public benefits serve marketing objectives rather than financial ones, but may also be regarded as an investment in terms of corporate learning (rehearsing now to embed social engagement more deeply in mainstream practice). Such activity is encouraged even in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by initiatives such as 'Business in the Community' (BITC 2020) as a vehicle for meeting the 'social' dimension of a company's ESG or TBL performance targets.

**12** "*If you ask a potential architecture student why they want to study architecture, the most common response is along the lines of 'I want to design buildings and make the world a better place'*" (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011:37). Reviewing the context of practice, however, the 2007 'Alternate Currents' symposium revealed a general sense that "*mainstream architecture is not engaged enough with political and social contexts"* but is "*unravelling… in front of our very eyes, most poignantly*

*in the form of the global environmental crisis and the accompanying social divisions*" (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011:26-27).

**13** By translating its assets into revenue and capital costs, the internal function of a business can be understood in terms of 'return on investment.' Marx (2013 [1867]: ch.8) has observed that, under capitalism, the latter incorporates 'surplus value' appropriated as profit from paying employees slightly less than the income generated by charging fees for their output. Description of a firm's business situation is incomplete, however, if the larger (external) context is ignored – for example, by failing to consider 'social return on investment' (SROI). The possibility of measuring such impact may be ignored, however, when the objective is to explore the strategic implications of embedding concern with social value as a feature of mainstream architectural practice (expressed, for example, through engagement with the community as part of the design process).

**14** The development of professional standards for architects originated in the context of nineteenth century industrialization, when several professions sought to define themselves in terms of public-orientated mission: proclaiming a role for architects as educators, the 1834 foundational charter of the RIBA defined its purpose as being for "*the general advancement of Architecture, and for promoting and facilitating the acquirement of the knowledge of the various arts and sciences connected therewith*" (RIBA 2019b). The institute's focus was initially upon the development of rules governing its members' fees, conduct, and competence – the latter soon associated with qualification examinations and the identification of the knowledge and skills associated with professionalism.

**15** Under the Architects Act (UK Parliament 1997 ch.22), only those named in a list published by the Architects Registration Board (ARB) are permitted to use the title 'architect'. The main basis for inclusion in the Register is a prescribed mixture of education and experience (corresponding to the RIBA's 3-stage process) and compliance with a broadly similar Code of Conduct (ARB 2017).

**16** When this research project started, the first page of the Institute's website asserted that it "*champions better buildings, communities and the environment through architecture and our members*" (RIBA 2015), and the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct demanded that its members "*have a proper concern and due regard for the effect that their work may have on its users and the local community*" (RIBA 2005: principle 3.1). A major shift of emphasis may be inferred from the current re-wording of the Institute's frontispiece:

> "*we serve our members and society in order to deliver better buildings and places, stronger communities and a sustainable environment. Being inclusive, ethical, environmentally aware and collaborative underpins all that we do*" (RIBA 2019a).

**17** The 'International Task Group' was initially established to explore how the RIBA should engage with communities affected by natural

disaster or conflict, but its remit was expanded in response to a jolt to the profession when the RIBA nearly lost its charitable status. Following complaints about anti-Semitism when the RIBA Council passed a motion condemning Israel's occupation of the West Bank, the Charity Commission issued a formal reminder to the Institute that its resolutions should be related exclusively to 'the advancement of architecture.' The Task Group was therefore asked to look also at how – in accordance with government advice (Leather and Younger 2008) – the Institute's engagement with political issues should not be ruffled by moral opinion. The subsequent report accurately anticipated the different axes along which RIBA discussion of professionalism subsequently extended:

> "*We recognise the importance of social responsibility and human rights as issues which are relevant to our profession and with which the Institute should become more engaged"* (Oborn 2014).

**18** The ESDC was established (under the same chairman as the International Task Group) in July 2017 as the RIBA's initial response to the seventeen global 'Sustainable Development Goals' (UN 2015) for 2030 – one of which relates specifically to 'Sustainable Cities and Communities'. In the partnership of environmental and social sustainability, however, the focus of attention has been on the former – being easier to reduce to scientifically quantifiable (and therefore financially measurable) targets.

**19** Vitruvius does not include social value alongside his classic commitments to "*firmness, commodity and delight,*" although it might be associated with the principle he identifies as "*propriety*" (Vitruvius 1999 [40 bce]: 2.5). Consideration of social need is embedded, however, in the Modern Movement principles which, since the time of the Bauhaus, continue to provide the normative (and now internationalised) basis for formation and judgement within Schools of Architecture.

**20** Even where the local economy is thriving, however, the legislation permits planning authorities to 'win' (through the exercise of considerable skill and tact) local community benefits from developers in return for granting consent for schemes intended primarily to serve private-sector interests. Provision via legal agreement for such 'planning gain' is contained in s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (UK Parliament 1990), or through the more open-ended Community Infrastructure Levy regulations (DCLG 2010), enacted via s.11 of the 2008 Planning Act (UK Parliament 2008). There is a parallel here with the idea that some practices may regard 'community architecture' merely as spin-off from their mainstream (income-generating) projects – in token fulfilment, for example, of their CSR policies (see **09** above).

**21** Localised opposition to development proposals is typically dismissed (off the record) by reference to clichés such as 'not in my back yard' (NIMBY) attitudes – to quote a term originating from Gates (1980), or even 'build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone' (BANANA) preferences - a term first encountered in 1993 (NYT Archive).

**22** Latour's pioneering adoption of actor-network-theory (ANT) as a vehicle for revealing in a pluralistic evidence-base something 'greater than the sum of its parts' has immediate appeal in relation to architects' objectives, and resonates especially well with practitioners concerned with "*how to bring the collective together*" (Latour 2004:53) through "*the art of governing without mastery*" (Latour 2004:235). Interest in the emergent 'assemblage' is reminiscent of Rowe's advocacy of messily inclusive collage as a design technique (Rowe and Koetter 1978) – see p.34 above. While Latour now distances himself from ANT on the grounds of its limited capacity for multi-realist ontology (Tummons 2021) as an approach towards the objectification of knowledge, the underlying principles continue to provide a useful toolkit for addressing research into the connectors between architectural practice (in terms of materialistic business development) and community engagement (in terms of people's active involvement in the design processes affecting their built environment).

**23** Writing from an 'emic' perspective (Pike 1967) already embedded in practice, the definition of 'community' – and associated concepts – is of particular interest, as this idea represents the 'object' identified for incorporation into a practice-related perspective (rather than vice-versa).

**24** Premature definition of concepts such as 'practice' and 'community' has been avoided in accordance with Latour's observation that "*instead of taking a reasonable position and imposing some order beforehand, ANT claims to be able to find order much better <u>after</u> having let the actors deploy the full range of controversies in which they are immersed*" (2005:23).

**25** Constructing communities' identity in the face of uncertainty whilst also counteracting the pathological effects of individuation, Baumann argues, requires consideration of both "*equality of resources necessary to recast the fate of individuals* de jure *into the capacities of individuals* de facto, *and collective insurance against individual incapacities and misfortunes*" (Baumann 2001:149). In the context of a practice-based professional doctorate especially, this brand of ethico-politics suggests an account of community that – by virtue of its call to action – outclasses mere description as a phenomenon associated with social psychology tradition of Tönnies (1957 [1887]), Durkheim (1964 [1893]), and Giddens (1971).

**26** Studdert (2005:19) has observed that Delanty's view contradicts the assumptions of both "*'radicals' like Marx and 'conservatives' like Compte*" that notions of community would be undermined by developments in technology.

**27** Dilnot observes that "*design, ipso facto, is embroiled in relations and it cannot be other, no matter what degree of 'relative autonomy' it claims*" (Fisher and Gamman 2019:xv), acknowledging that this is exactly what Latour has long asserted in identifying social situations as 'assemblages' that demand reference to the ethical.

**28** Kimbell goes so far as to advocate 'anti-heroic design' when "*taking on issues facing communities and societies at different scales, moving beyond ... entanglement with consumer culture and technological innovation towards actively reconstituting ways of living and being in ways that aim to be participatory, ethical and political*" (Kimbell 2019:145).

**29** 'Social multiplicity' relates to the Latourian notion, developed from Whitehead (1978 [1929]), that "*rather than appeal to a multiplicity of social relations that rest on a bedrock unity in a singular material world, …the material world needs to be deployed as multiple*" (Witmore 2009:529): the environment, and everything within it, is ontologically informed by diverse connections, including social ties.

**30** In response to the joint industry/government publication of a Strategy for Sustainable Construction (BERR 2008), the Building Research Establishment developed BES6001 as a standard for 'responsible' sourcing of construction products, helping demonstrate the achievement of certain sustainability ratings for building and infrastructure projects. Amongst the 19 principles of responsible sourcing identified in the standard is "*liaise effectively with the local community and strive to develop mutual understanding and respect*" (BRE 2014:36), but the standard is difficult to apply in relation to components involving composite materials and electrical equipment (especially in supply chains that extend beyond the UK). Glass notes, furthermore, that 'ethical' sourcing goes beyond 'responsible' practice in relation to standards and policies – placing "*higher importance on collaborative, supportive and morally robust supply-chain practices… the way we are using this term foregrounds the social dimension of procurement practices, such as human rights and working conditions*" (Glass 2015). Ethical sourcing is clearly defined in terms of a 'base code' developed by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI 2016), but this contains no reference to stakeholders' participation in decision-taking – only to "*freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining*".

**31** Being an established charity, it is perhaps not difficult for organisations such as The Glass House to procure work from other non-profit organisations, although de Sousa (2019) does not discuss this. The implication that architectural practices engage in community projects as an act of charity, or even that they develop into charitable organisations themselves in order to become more closely associated with such work, is an alternative outside the scope of this thesis, although the associated practice structure (typically non-hierarchical or employee-led) offers an important precedent as a fertile context for embedding community engagement into design projects.

**32** In addition to serving journalistic purposes, 'narrative structure' reflects the Gestalt-oriented move that Arnheim (1974) identifies as common to all creativity. Combining this insight with Latour's critical realist demand for 'reassembly of the social' through identifying material connections "*between things that are not in themselves social*" (Latour 2005:5), it was a short step to appreciate that 'narrative analysis' could

prove a productive but appropriately distanced lens through which to identify links (forged inadvertently by the interviewees in the course of relaxed conversation) between practice development and community engagement.

**33** The plan/action/observation/re-framing cycle stems from the development first by Zuber-Skerrit (1996) and then by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) of Lewin's originally linear methodology (1946) consisting simply of plan/act/evaluate.

**34** An alternative means of reducing the risk of what Herr and Anderson (2015) have identified as the risk of 'spin' within action-research might have been to disseminate reports of dOSH meetings more frequently and openly, as recommended by Norton (2009), but the group requested that confidentiality should be maintained due to the commercially sensitive nature of some of their discussions

**35** Latour demands that the researcher becomes "*the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming towards it*" (2005:46) – not a source of action but a participant caught up in an actor-network characterised by "*uncertainties and controversies about who and what is acting… and there is of course no way to decide whether this source of uncertainty resides in the analyst or the actor*" (2005:45).

**36** In relation to the creative arts, 'active listening' refers not to a Rogerian psychotherapeutic technique of attempting empathetically "*to demonstrate unconditional acceptance and unbiased reflection*" (Weger, Castle and Emmett 2010:35), but to a sense of craftsmanship where "*in all matter, there is an invisible hand that pushes back the moment you push against it*" (Jansen 2007:219).

**37** The RIBA proclaims research to be "*more than just a potential source of revenue: it goes right to the heart of what it means to be a professional and, for the RIBA, is at the heart of what it means to be a learned institute*" (Fraser 2014:2).

**38** In 1893, the current 'RIBAJ' (briefly rebranded as 'The Architect' in 1986-87) was created through the merger of the institute's original 'Transactions' and 'Proceedings' (Pearman 2013:106). For scholarly articles, 'Transactions' was briefly revived between 1982 and 1987, and since 1995 the RIBA has also overseen the publication (by Routledge) of the bimonthly 'Journal of Architecture'.

**39** The RIBA's 'Find an Architect' website (RIBA Client Services 2017) does not help clients seeking to commission research rather than design (the only available search-options relate to specific building-types in specific locations).

**40** One practice interviewed in conjunction with Research Study 1 (Doc 3 p.49) confessed that they still tend to invest more time and effort in such exercises than justified by the associated income – reflecting ambitions to make "*a real, viable long-term investment in public space*"

(and generating useful teaching-material), but acknowledging this to represent "*a terrible business model.*" Research Study 1 noted that spin-off for this firm's reputation, however, included growth in terms both of intellectual credentials and the number of staff employed, leading to regular invitations by both local authorities and commercial developers to "*deliver something meaningful*" – and enabling them to relate fee proposals with increasing accuracy to the scope of their involvement in a project.

**41** Archer's definition of research as "*systematic inquiry whose goal is communicable knowledge*" (1995:6) fails only to meet Cryer's (2000:195-6) demand for originality.

**42** Although 'research' is not mentioned in the website footer amongst "other RIBA services" that the institute provides, the 'research funding for architects' page of the www.architecture.com website ("*who is offering grants and how can architects apply?*") advises practices that "*the R&D tax credits alone can make a serious contribution to small practice income*" (Morris 2019) and a completely separate page (RIBA Business 2019) provides access to a '*Guide to R&D Tax Credits*'. As if to reinforce emphasis upon commercial considerations, however, the link to this form of tax relief points practitioners towards the appointment of BDO LLP – with whom "*RIBA Business is working in partnership*" (RIBA Business 2020) – as specialist financial consultants to assist in such claims.

**43** In relation to practitioners becoming involved in Schools of Architecture, Samuel observes that Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (brokered by Innovate UK) are less useful as sources of funding, but can provide other benefits to a practice: "*the process of application involves considerable feedback from the funding body and can therefore be an important source of learning but it does require investment from the practice*" (Samuel 2017:6). It is because small practices are less likely to be able to afford such investment that they need to collaborate either with other practices or with Schools of Architecture (or both).

**44** A policy paper produced by the RIBA suggesting that "*regular building evaluation should be standard in public sector capital funding programmes*" observes that "*POEs add between 0.1%-2.5% to upfront costs – outweighed by the benefits that they can provide to building design and management*" (RIBA 2017:2).

**45** A POE Report can also capture the unanticipated social benefits of a development project. In the interests of credibility, it is important for the research to be conducted with sufficient rigour to avoid selectivity or exaggeration (favouring evidence that supports a firm's self-promotional objectives) – which is why the involvement of academia, as an independent third party, can provide reassurance. It is difficult, however, for a POE study to observe its own effects, as "*people's behaviour changes when they are aware that they are being observed*" (Letrud and Hernes 2019).

**46** A good example is 'Architecture is Participation' (Hofmann 2014) – an instructional self-study of the methods and projects of the German practice *Die Baupiloten BDA* (tellingly, founded in 2003 as a cooperative involving architecture students from the Technical University Berlin).

**47** Recognising the importance of balancing 'hard' managerial or technological considerations against 'soft' social or humanities-related concerns (the motivation for this thesis), Till advocates research as a means of resisting the profession's marginalisation, which he attributes to the way architecture is "*increasingly used to provide a velvet glove of aesthetics for the iron fist of the instrumental production of the capitalist built environment*" (Till 2007).

**48** Thirty-five years ago, Schön noted that "*as tuition fees have risen and students have become more concentrated on the wish to prepare for employment, the calls for 'relevance' have become more strident, as has the academic backlash against vocationalism*" (Schön 1985:95).

**49** Disagreement about 'realism' in respect of architectural projects (which always involve fictional projections onto the future) may relate largely to timescales. Academics seeking to equip their students to perform a usefully longer-term function in relation to the built environment (requiring 'transferrable' skills and knowledge rather than those that employers might judge relevant in today's context) argue that critique of current practice is not synonymous with disengagement (Parsons and Frick 2008). Liam Young, for example, explains his speculative 'design-futures' practice as "*thinking about worlds as the medium of operating, as opposed to products, characters, buildings and so on*," (Young, L. 2019:113), and accordingly frames the disjunction between practice and academia in existential terms: "*school is caught up with ideas of what architects are supposed to be, without acknowledging how they actually have to operate in the world*" (quoted in Stott and Warren 2015).

**50** The key text on 'Architecture Live Projects' (drawing on an international symposium organised in 2012) introduces them as occupying *"the borderlands between the simulacra which architectural education favours – the speculative project, supported by lecture and seminar-based exercises, and the trial by fire of professional practice. Because of this position, Live Projects as a vehicle for providing teaching and service simultaneously have the potential to recalibrate the contesting claims that both academia and professionals make on architecture*" (Harriss and Widder 2014:1).

**51** Tellingly, the pedagogical benefits of 'live projects' are mostly identified in terms of skills and processes rather than products. Even those that take the physical form of design/build projects, enabling students to learn from direct interaction with construction materials and techniques, are advocated by Van Schaik for their effectiveness in "*exercising and developing spatial intelligence, a skill and understanding that is absolutely central to architectural education*" (quoted in Stott and Warren 2015). Sara observes how live projects enable students to

"*develop skills in communication, negotiation and professionalism that are otherwise hard to simulate within the academy*" (Sara 2011:8). Similarly, Morrow identifies the educational benefits of interacting with "*a wide variety of people implicated in architectural processes… particularly those outside the architect's normal sphere,*" (Morrow 2014:xix-xx), which requires the deployment also of skills such as marketing, dealing with contingency, and social media promotion – raising conflicting views about the authority to pass judgement (which stimulate consideration of the nature and value of architectural practice generally).

**52** Brown (2014) traces the pedagogical foundations of the live project via Dewey (1963) to Kolb's 'Experiential Learning Model' (1984), comprising a cycle of concrete experience / reflective observation / abstract conceptualization (arriving at a new or revised idea) / active experimentation (applying the new perception to practice in order to see what happens). The parallel with AR's plan/action/observation/re-framing cycle described in note **33** above is no coincidence, the common objective being the construction of knowledge out of engagement in projects (Blumenfeld, et al. 1991).

**53** Flora Samuel has observed that "*large numbers of practitioners teach part-time, but there is not as much communication as there could be between them and researchers in schools of architecture*" (Morris 2019).

**54** In prescribing the learning outcomes to be met at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, the ARB advises that "*no weightings are given to the areas within the General Criteria with the exception of Design, which is to constitute at least half of assessed work at Part 1 and Part 2 levels*" (ARB 2010:3).

**55** *"The architectural studio is one of the few forms of traditional higher education centred on making things – namely, the representations of things to be built … It begins with problematic situations, in which there are initially more variables than one can handle – often, where one does not know the names of the relevant variables – and it involves an attempt to construct an understandable coherence through moves which can never have only the effects anticipated for them. Materials 'talk back,' when the maker is prepared to listen, provoking a reinterpretation of results and a reframing of the vision to be realized or the problem to be solved*" (Schön 1985:94).

**56** Globally shared views of the university primarily as community in contrast to garden, family, factory or prison have been identified by Firat and Yurdakal (2012). In terms of the alternative metaphors distinguished by McShane (2002), the relationship advocated in this thesis – being concerned with development (in terms of business growth and community empowerment) – may be identified as that of team-players. The roles of teacher-as-coach / learner-as-participant preclude perceptions of knowledge as objects that need somehow to be contained and collected, or built up and pulled together, or of teaching as an activity involving persuasion or performance.

**57** Mental health problems have been attributed partly to stress due to the high costs (relative to other courses) of engaging in an architecture programme – as a result of which many architecture students feel obliged to undertake part-time employment alongside their full-time study commitments (leaving them physically exhausted), and partly to the intellectual strain associated with the discipline itself.

**58** Warren (2015) observes that "*for many students, perhaps in part because of their induction to the design-studio, thoughts of social responsibility remain disconnected or at least dormant. They are taught that the focus is mostly on the 'self', the figurehead-designer, and this is perpetuated by the architecture journals and websites they readily absorb. This, as we know is not the reality in a world wrestling with global imperatives of climate change, energy depletion, increasing population and an ever-increasing divide between rich and poor*."

**59** Freire argues that "*education must begin with solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously students and teachers*." Introducing a third party, with other forms of knowledge and other ways of articulating it, into the relationship between teacher and student represents a highly effective way of 'flattening' it: in Latour's terminology, it is through focus upon the connection (neither opposition nor reconciliation) between polar extremes that one may arrive at an inclusive 'truth-regime'. Awan et al (2011:26) observe that "*in any binary structure, the alternative becomes bound by exactly the terms of reference that it would wish to escape… the result is that the alternative is inevitably defined by the norm, whilst the norm remains largely undisturbed by the irritant it overshadows*."

**60** Research Study 2 suggested that other university programmes associated with professions such as law, health and social care, could also benefit from the availability of such a community-based outpost, bringing the academy to the suburbs as a 'light touch' alternative to expecting members of the public to overcome their inhibitions about visiting the university campus.

**61** In terms of the pedagogic value of live projects "*as a bridge towards teaching conceptual thinking*," Anderson and Priest (2012:53) identify Hejduk as a pioneer with his 1998 student-built 'Writing the City' project in Stockholm, but this is pre-dated by the renowned work of community-based year-2 students within Samuel Mockbee's 'Rural Studio' at Auburn University, Alabama, from 1993 onwards (Dean 2002).

**62** Under the initial direction of Anne Markey, when it was known as the Architecture and Spatial Design (ASD) Project Office, the London Met unit sought to define a broad role for itself in terms of international capacity-building, in conjunction with the RIBA and a variety of other organisations: *"to mark its launch and to share best practice in teaching architecture through live projects, ASD Projects held a conference on International Project Offices in November 2005"* (Markey 2012:75).

**63** In 2011, the Portsmouth project office was reorganised in conjunction with restructuring their Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture course (Graves and Andrews 2011), its new aim being described – again in somewhat fanciful terms – as the initiation of 'real' design projects for students "*with the possibility for some of them to extend their involvement as paid summer work as ' interns' employed and directed by the Project Office*" (Farrelly 2012:13).

**64** The Leeds Beckett Project Office does not regard itself as a competitor to other practices in the region, its output being identified as "*design and research for organisations such as charities and community groups who are unable to afford standard architectural consultancy"* (Stott and Warren 2019). The Office achieves its objectives by harnessing "*the one resource we have in abundance… the student*" (Stott and Warren 2015), claiming to provide the students in return with "*a fantastic learning experience relating to real world complexities through the vehicle of live projects, whilst simultaneously supporting the needs of socially conscious organisations*" (Stott and Warren 2019).

**65** If the academic stages are undertaken as full-time study, the minimum time taken to qualify as an architect is seven years. It has been found however that UK students take, on average, over ten years between starting an architecture course and qualifying as a practitioner (with some 30% dropping out of the process part-way through, although this need not be regarded as a problem because so many of the skills associated with the discipline are easily transferable to other forms of activity).

**66** The prohibitive expense of a traditional full-time route to architectural qualification is due not only to the number of years involved but also to the requirement for access to relatively expensive drawing equipment, software and model-making materials. Mental health problems arise as, having taken on paid employment in their 'spare' time in order to defray expenses, students then struggle to meet coursework deadlines except through occasional 'all-nighters' – a culture of working 24 hours a day in the run-up to design project deadlines which easily overflows into practice expectations also.

**67** As the smaller practices of up to 50 staff (comprising 90% of UK total) earn only 42% of the profession's revenue (The Fees Bureau 2020b), there is clearly scope for development in terms of size or financial efficiency. A cultural factor may also be present, however: the predominance of small practices has been attributed to the idea that "*many architects are not confident about being businessmen and women. Running a business has not been a subject of much consideration traditionally, and … having an interest in business matters, in particular profit, is considered rather distasteful to some*" (Butcher 2010).

**68** Although little detail has yet been published about the contents of the White Paper, it has nevertheless generated considerable scepticism in

relation to its democratic effectiveness: it has been predicted that proposed simplification of the framework for environmental assessments (within which social impact is already treated as a subsidiary aspect of environmental sustainability) will "*attract fierce debate and opposition if there is any hint that the UK's environmental standards will be weakened*" (Hellier 2021).

**69** Surrounded by controversy and being but one of twenty-nine bills announced at the start of the 2021 parliamentary session, the proposed revision to planning legislation is considered unlikely to reach the statute books (even in diluted form) in advance of the next general election.

**70** Alongside "*designing with the community*", the SVT (Samuel 2020:6) identifies other 'dimensions of social value in the context of the built environment' which relate mostly to potential societal benefits from the procurement process. It is acknowledged that "*underlying the SVT is a pragmatism about the need to demonstrate value quantitatively in a culture of key performance targets and metrics*" (Samuel 2020:6) – enabling them all (even subjective responses related to 'wellbeing') to be monetized through reference to SROI financial proxies (see 1.03 above) for easy integration into economic calculations associated with development appraisal. The recommended basis for quantifying people's valuation of non-market goods is the HACT Social Value Bank (Trotter, et al. 2014) - an open-access source developed in specific relation to housing.

**71** In May 2019, all surviving Stirling Prize winning practices signed an initial 'Architects Declare' manifesto, calling for coordinated action in response to climate change and species extinction. Over 1100 UK-based practices (out of about 3650) have subsequently committed themselves to the same objectives, but – regrettably – none of them refer explicitly to social value or communities. The RIBA Council immediately supported this initiative by voting to join the global declaration of climate emergency, committing the Institute "*to develop an action plan towards a net zero-carbon environment*" (Pearman 2019:49). The outcome was the 'RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge' (RIBA Sustainable Futures Group 2019a), suggesting a few technical (and therefore easily measurable) targets. To support this document, a subsequent 'Sustainable Outcomes Guide' (RIBA Sustainable Futures Group 2019b) adds a few further goals, including 'sustainable communities and social value.' The latter (with 'performance verification' achieved through POE questionnaire) is defined in terms of design objectives rather than processes, however, and there is no reference to the added value of engaging local communities in the associated decision-taking (RIBA Sustainable Futures Group 2019b:42)

**72** Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, established in 1990, offers scientific standards that exceed current regulations and practice as an incentive for both technical innovation in terms of design and construction and increased asset value for clients and investors: "*BREEAM does this through third-party certification of the assessment of an asset's environmental, social and*

*economic sustainability performance, using standards developed by BRE. This means BREEAM-rated developments are more sustainable environments that enhance the well-being of the people who live and work in them, help protect natural resources and make for more attractive property investments*" (BRE Global 2020).

**73** The identification of evidence demonstrating achievement of targets associated with CSR policy enables a practice to articulate its values and principles (as an inspiration for everyone they work with, in addition to promoting themselves to potential clients). Integrating social responsibility throughout a practice can provide not only enhanced learning and economic development opportunities for local communities but the satisfaction also of meaningful work for staff (perhaps reflected in greater productivity further to observation of their positive impact upon the lives of stakeholders).

**74** Appointing employees of university-based project offices as apprentices has been discussed (Stott 2021) with the directors at Leeds-Beckett University (being the practice perhaps best positioned to employ apprentices of its own), but this possibility is not yet under consideration.

**75** The term 'anchor institution' refers to an organization that, "*alongside its main function, plays a significant role in a locality by making a strategic contribution to the local economy*" (Mosavi 2015) by virtue of its combination of size, purchasing power and spatial immobility. Typically taking the form of not-for-profit organizations such as universities, anchor institutions originated in the USA as a defence against the complex socio-economic challenges faced by US urban communities in the 1960s, when their wellbeing "*came under threat from deindustrialization, globalisation and neo-liberal trade policies that placed the domestic manufacturing sector under pressure*" (Mosavi 2015). Delanty points out the wisdom of such a strategy:

> "*the university is the institution in society most capable of linking the requirements of industry, technology and market forces with the demands of citizenship. Given the enormous dependence of these forces on university-based experts, the university is in fact in a position of strength, not of weakness. While it is true that the new production of knowledge is dominated by the instrumentalization of knowledge and that as a result the traditional role of the university has been undermined, it is now in a position to serve social goals more fully than previously when other goals were more prominent*" (Delanty 2001:113)

The Witty Review (2013) called on UK universities to develop a "*third mission alongside Research and Education*" – going beyond knowledge transfer and "*reshaping local economies in a way which supports people and places to develop in a socially, economically and environmentally just manner*" (Centre for Local Economic Strategies 2019:40) – a place-based leadership concept now familiar as 'the civic university.'

**76** Unsurprisingly, this thesis and the research processes underpinning its development has provided also a significant contribution to the author's personal knowledge. As noted on p.116, this is discussed in the

accompanying Doc 6 ('Critical Reflection'), in which the focus is upon outcomes in terms of intellectual development rather than the improvement of technical skills associated with information processing and communication: as with the thesis itself, the concern is less with an ability to perform more effectively in the context of current circumstances, and more with a change of world-view that looks confidently towards a different future.

**APPENDIX A** (originally Appendix C in Doc 4)

Proposal for the establishment of an architectural project office

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# Future-Focus for NTU:
# Proposal for a Community Engagement Hub

The Old School Hall, Sneinton

**Chris Heuvel** (NTU School of Architecture)

January 2018

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a proposal for NTU to pioneer a new approach to community engaged education and social sustainability through the purchase, refurbishment and management of a former educational building in Sneinton, about two miles from the university's City campus. The building is about to be offered for sale by Nottingham City Council, and the inhabitants of the area, who have used the building for community-related activities until two years ago, would be keen for NTU to take it over as a hub for interaction with them.

# OVERVIEW

This document makes the following observations:

### Stakeholders:

- Nottingham City Council identified Old School Hall, Sneinton, as surplus to requirements in November 2016, and wishes to sell the building at a low cost to investors with a socially sustainable business plan for its refurbishment and operation.
- Nottingham City Council recognised the building as an Asset of Community Value in June 2017, and is seeking continued community benefit.
- Through staff in the School of Architecture, NTU has a strong relationship with key community stakeholders – Sneinton Neighbourhood Forum, Sneinton Alchemy, Growin' Spaces, the Old School Hall Community Association, and the Develop Old School Hall (dOSH) working party. These are all active and constituted community groups with an interest in the Hall's continuing social function.

### Challenges:

- The building requires an investment of about £0.6m to purchase and refurbish (this sum is not readily available from heritage or charitable funding or through local fundraising).
- The NTU School of Architecture has developed a distinctive ethos of working with communities and live clients on a regular basis, but lacks the kind of 'Project Office' that some of its competitors have established as a base from which to coordinate such activity.
- The NTU School of Architecture has established a strong relationship with the Sneinton community but has no permanent presence in the neighbourhood.

### Proposed Solution:

- NTU purchases Old School Hall from Nottingham City Council (it is understood that offers in excess of £40k are to be invited early in 2018).
- NTU refurbishes the building as a Project Office in order to provide a community-facing base for future student work and research activity.
- NTU manages the building with local community involvement in order to generate income from letting the main Hall for locally organised events.

### Timescale:

- After the building comes to the market (early in 2018), there will be a six-month moratorium to allow community groups to bid for its purchase –dOSH is hoping that NTU will be interested in working in partnership with them on this bid.
- The sale of Old School Hall is expected to be complete by late 2018 (or the building faces demolition).
- NTU could open Old School Hall as a community-based Project Office in summer 2020.

### Benefits:

- Investment in this redundant community building in Sneinton would demonstrate NTU's commitment to its 'Enriching Society' ambitions.
- Management of Old School Hall as a Project Office would provide a future-oriented-centre for NTU student work and research activity.

# PROSPECTUS

## 1. *Ethical Positioning*

NTU has established a strong reputation for projects in which students operate alongside or on behalf of both emerging and well-established commercial or professional organisations, helping them to maintain their current effectiveness in the context of adverse economic conditions if not to develop competitive advantage. This is a proposal for an off-campus 'Project Office' which, by contrast, would concentrate on the social and economic development of communities left behind as a consequence of excessive focus upon emergent or already successful operations. For this reason, the venture would involve no conflicts of interest either with existing or future KTP or Hive activities, or with the interests of existing businesses in the East Midlands. The Project Office would provide a new kind of 'engaged' learning environment – based upon respect for 'citizen-knowledge' and enabling students to develop new ways of 'inclusive' working, related to economic circumstances characterised by sustainability and mutual support rather than by blind faith in the notion of ever-expanding growth. The Project Office would also provide small groups of students with closely monitored employment experience, allowing NTU to develop elements of apprenticeship learning in advance of other educational institutions.

## 2. *An Innovative Precedent in terms of Higher Education*

The opportunity for NTU to establish this new kind of community-oriented learning environment has been identified as a possible response to the availability of a former community centre that is about to be offered for sale by Nottingham City Council (offers in excess of £40k are expected). Old School Hall (OSH), Sneinton, was closed down by the City Council in 2016 on the grounds of the building's poor condition (attributed locally to the Council's own neglect of the property). The building, dating from 18xx, is located next to Green's Windmill – a notable Nottingham landmark in which the University of Nottingham has already invested, and is a half-hour walk from NTU's City campus. The possibility of NTU's purchase and refurbishment of OSH as a means of involving itself more directly in the vibrancy of the Sneinton area would be warmly welcomed by the local community, who are actively seeking a partner for the building's future operation and maintenance. From NTU's point of view, it is suggested that this future-looking opportunity to extend its impact upon the local community through working with people (rather than simply on behalf of them) could represent a nationally significant precedent in terms of civic engagement.

## **3.** *Accepting an Invitation*

In response to the local outcry that immediately followed the closure of OSH, a community group (calling itself 'develop Old School Hall – dOSH) was formed to secure a future for the building as a community asset. The group succeeded in persuading Nottingham City Council formally to list the buildings as an 'Asset of Community Value' on 19th June last year (ref. 17/00244/ASCMVL), and has subsequently started preparing a business plan for its purchase, refurbishment, re-opening for community-related activities, and ongoing future maintenance. Having estimated the capital investment required to be in the region of £0.6m, dOSH has always recognised that the future community-oriented operation of this building would need to be secured upon the basis of some kind of income-generating activity. A local arts-company, specialising in puppetry, was accordingly drawn into business plan discussions, but about a month ago came to the reluctant conclusion that they would prefer to stay in their current location nearer the city-centre. The alternative suggestion that NTU might be interested in establishing an outpost within OSH was put (confidentially) to the dOSH committee just before Christmas 2017, and was warmly welcomed as a much preferable option, as it would lend a special prestige to the neighbourhood, strengthen its relationship to Nottingham city centre. It is believed that Nottingham City Council would also be enthusiastic about any proposal by NTU to save the building for continuing use into the future.

## **4.** *An Off-Campus Drop-in Centre*

Being a wholly new kind of HE enterprise, the concept of an 'OSH Project Office' would not only contribute to NTU's distinctive reputation for civic sustainability but could also provide an ongoing focus for research of all kinds – related, for example, to educational effectiveness (the value derived by students from social engagement), marketing impact (reducing the mystique of academia by pioneering citizen-led HE), and economic vitality (generating community-conscious business development in peripheral or isolated pockets throughout the East Midlands). In between local community bookings, the main hall of OSH could be used by NTU for:

- launching community-oriented student projects of all kinds;
- exhibiting student work for the benefit of local people (and in the interests of student satisfaction);
- running community-related volunteering activities (for both students and staff) related to nutritional, fitness or language education.
- regular discussions or seminar-sessions featuring the interaction of students and local people. The hall could also serve as a base for voluntary educational, social and professional activities – for example, extending the Legal Aid or Business Advisory sessions currently offered on-campus by the Law School and Business School, or the entrepreneurial services of The Hive. Through maintaining an open-door policy, encouraging local people to visit

OSH on the grounds that 'there's always something interesting going on there', and knowing they'll find a welcome there (with refreshment facilities adjacent to a sitting-area), the building could represent a vibrant hub for off-campus civic impact.

## 5. *Civic engagement comes of Age*

From NTU's viewpoint, the prospect of running a community-oriented 'project office' could fit in well with a vision for equipping students (and staff) to learn and develop through increased 'live' interaction with groups of people outside the university. The suggestion is that the **OSH Project Office** should contain a full-time base for one or two NTU teaching staff working with half a dozen student 'internees' (perhaps on six-month placements) in one part of the building – featuring offices equipped with workstations, while community groups and local people use the other part – the main hall and kitchen – on a drop-in or bookable basis. Being the 'owners' of the building, the NTU team would bear responsibility for its daily security and upkeep, and for the timetabling of activities in the main hall, but all planned through fortnightly meetings of a management committee involving one or two local residents and members of the NTU team.

## 6. *Towards a Social Architecture*

The identification of OSH as the location for a community-oriented Project-Office could be related in particular to the aspiration of the School of Architecture to build upon the strong links it has already established over the last few years with the Sneinton neighbourhood – particularly through the activities of Chris Heuvel and Dr Tom Hughes, both residents of the area and leaders of BArch year 1 and year 2 respectively (in addition to being co-directors of a small architectural practice based in Sneinton). As a matter of Architecture School policy, both research and teaching activities have continuously been undertaken in relation to this specific community, conscious of the need to avoid giving local people the impression they are being objectified for the purposes of 'neutral' observation or used as 'guinea pigs' for short-term experimentation, with no lasting benefits to themselves. The aspiration now is that, by making its presence more obvious in the midst of the Sneinton community (not merely geographically and physically but more importantly in terms of daily interaction with the inhabitants), the School of Architecture would be better able to demonstrate to its students the importance of a socially engaged architecture, giving its courses a more distinctive, highly relevant and ethically 'responsible' character. Chris and Tom are therefore proposing that OSH should be refurbished as a community-oriented 'Project Office', and then managed as an architectural practice undertaking 'real' commissions on behalf of local charities, community associations and other cash-poor (but time-rich) groups. The bulk of any design-related work would be carried out by NTU architecture

students (as a learning exercise for them) – thereby making design projects achievable within a notoriously disempowered and therefore disaffected sector (at the same time as avoiding competition with established architectural practices in the Nottingham area, who prefer to work for clients with an ability to pay for their services more directly).

## 7. *Revival of the community architecture tradition*

There are many highly successful precedents for the kind of architectural Project Office being proposed here. In the 1970s, around the time of what became known as the 'community architecture' movement, Ralph Erskine located his practice in a walk-in cornershop in the centre of a huge housing redevelopment scheme in Newcastle upon Tyne, from where his practice (in conjunction with the inhabitants of the area) developed the world-famous Byker Wall housing project. From similar beginnings in Black Road, Macclesfield, the architect Dr Rod Hackney pioneered the development of communities around their own renewal of the built environment, before becoming President of the RIBA and declaring "all architects should be community architects." These exemplars led to the foundation, in several of the more important UK Schools of Architecture, of community-based 'Project Offices' – the most famous currently being Sheffield, Newcastle and Leeds Beckett. Nearly every School of Architecture likes to engage in 'live' projects wherever possible (as an alternative to fictitious scenarios invented by the tutors involved) – in the interests of helping their students appreciate the social impact of their activities and adding a sense of 'realism' to their endeavours.

## 8. *Apprenticeships – the Future of Architectural Education*

Architectural education has recently been the subject of a significant review by the RIBA, in response to concern about the length and cost of university-based courses. The outcome is a push for professional qualification to happen at the end of a more integrated, continuous programme. Currently, the system comprises three parts, normally taking the form of:

- an undergraduate degree (3 years) followed by a year in practice, then
- a masters degree (2 years) followed by at least one more year in practice,
- before candidates present themselves for final examinations (involving professional examiners appointed by the RIBA).

Through the Apprenticeship levy, the government is now encouraging larger practices (working alongside established academic institutions) to perform a 'training' role for architecture students, who are thus able to 'earn and learn' at the same time. This pattern has been said to work better in cities such as London and Manchester where there is a greater range of practices than in more provincial capitals (such as Nottingham) where there are fewer

architectural practices of a scale that enables them to run a teaching function alongside their design projects. The proposed OSH Project Office could represent a kind of 'halfway house', performing a coordinated training and employment function, perhaps serving the particular needs of graduates who have been unwilling or unable to find full-time work following completion of their full-time university-based studies, but providing all architectural undergraduates with an exemplar of practice. Through working also with local schools, the Project Office could also provide a 'taster' experience for Nottingham-based teenagers (and others who express interest) to gain insights into the realities of professional practice.

## **9.** *Building upon Commitment to Community Engagement*

This proposal does not represent some kind of idealistic vision for an untested mode of working, but is firmly grounded upon a tradition underpinned by policy: the idea of establishing the OSH Project Office would simply enable the School of Architecture to perform certain core functions more effectively, implementing some of NTU's general objectives in an appropriately creative and interesting way. NTU's School of Architecture has already run several 'live' projects in the Sneinton area – in conjunction, for example, with a local organisation called 'Growin'Spaces'* (involving year 1 BArch students in the design of low-technology timber buildings for self-build on local allotments). Last term, BArch year 2 students undertook a study of the Old School Hall building in particular, looking at opportunities for its redevelopment around occupation by a team of community-oriented puppeteers. Both the year 1 and year 2 BArch tutors (Chris Heuvel and Dr Tom Hughes respectively) are active members of the community-based working party exploring options for securing a long-term future for the Old School Hall building as a community asset – this whole proposal forms part of their endeavour.

* *The Growin' Spaces team deploys long-term unemployed people on the restoration of allotments and mixes the vegetables and fruit grown there with food surplus from supermarkets to cook for regular social eating events in a local church hall.*

## **10.** *Building upon Current Research*

Chris Heuvel, in particular, is currently undertaking Professional Doctorate research into 'Practice and Community' on behalf of the School of Architecture: his main thesis is expected to involve a detailed study of Project Offices related to architecture schools, having identified this mode of practice as the most appropriate way of enabling architects to meet their community-oriented obligations. Chris has recently submitted a bid for SPUR funding to draw architecture students into some of the preparatory background research. This activity builds upon previous engagement with

Sneinton in the ongoing 'Mapping Nottingham's Identity' project led by Dr Ana Souto – assisted in summer 2016 by Dasha Spasovich, which involved the local community (working alongside NTU students) in the design and construction of street furniture for use in their summer festival, followed by a public exhibition in Nottingham Central Library.

## **11.** *Building upon a Reputation for Successful Activism*

This proposal is thus based upon a combination of long-term experience, expertise and commitment in relation to engagement with the Sneinton community in relation to their built environment. The suggestion is that, in due course, NTU proceeds to appoint two or three tutors from the School of Architecture to take specific responsibility for running a continuous stream of 'live' projects from a base within the Old School Hall building, providing permanent opportunities for students to gain experience of real practice within an office environment (located in one part of the building), and using the main hall space for a mixture of community activities (such as local community group meetings) and architectural exhibition space – for the purposes both of academic review and public engagement (ideally in combination with one another, in the interests of opening up NTU activities to the public). To date, students' Sneinton-related work has been displayed in a local church hall and in the back room of a public house (or in the NTU architecture studio itself – requiring visitors from Sneinton to come to NTU.

## 12. *Next Steps – Forwards through Interaction*

Our conclusion is that the imminent availability of OSH could represent an ideal opportunity for NTU to exercise its civic engagement mission, pushing at open doors in terms of local social and political support, at the same time as advancing the interests of its students by associating the School of Architecture with a community asset capable of giving its curriculum a demonstrable and distinctive (and highly relevant) edge. Being key members of the working party involved in seeking a future for OSH, Chris Heuvel and Tom Hughes hope to be able to report back on NTU's positive response to the above ideas towards the end of January. Chris is currently charged with development of the business plan for the building's future, a central feature of which needs to be the involvement of an 'anchor tenant' capable of funding the required refurbishment and then operating the premises in close conjunction with the local community's needs and aspirations. If NTU is not interested in participating, an alternative potential developer will need quickly to be identified, although the dOSH working party would regard this as a relatively disappointing outcome. It is on their behalf that this prospectus is therefore offered for the Vice-Chancellor's consideration.

# APPENDIX B

Comparison of UK Schools of Architecture offering 'Project Office' Experience

| BASE | NAME | SCOPE | DELIVERY | METHOD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Birmingham City University: | **Collaborative Laboratory** (since 2011) | 5 themes: a) product development; b) installation & intervention; c) pedagogy & research in practice; d) communal engagement; e) creative transdisciplinary collaboration. | typical project jointly and collaboratively led by an academic tutor + an external client/group. | an in-house office running Co.LAB module projects (cross-disciplinary UG & PG groups + some extra- curricular). |
| Leeds Beckett University: | **Project Office** (since 2009) | business consultancy offering full range of architectural services (incl. contract administration, design, feasibility studies, research, advocacy, fabrication and construction) for charities and community associations. | a design and research collaboration of staff and students making ethical, social and resilient architecture | a RIBA Chartered Practice using the power of student-led design and research, located in UG & PG Design Studio, Technology and Professional Studies modules, and paid extracurricular time. |
| London Metropolitan University: | **The Projects Office** (since 2004) | providing access to a broad network of academics, professionals and stakeholders (favouring projects with a clear social purpose, but incl. diagnostics, consultancy, training and short courses). | independent but embedded in School: architects employed by ASD are supported by students | (formerly a RIBA Chartered Practice, generating income for the Faculty): a professional environment to support staff and students in live projects, research and consultancy. |
| University of Newcastle upon Tyne | **Design Office** (since 1970s) | architectural and urban design consultancy and services for individuals, organisations, and corporations (specialising in design projects that contain research challenges and helping knowledge transfer). | outputs include built projects, and books, academic papers, comics, collages, and social media. | a research-led architecture and urban design practice, often collaborating with existing design firms and facilitating participatory workshops with stakeholders. |
| Oxford Brookes University | **OB1 Live** (since 2007) | via links with LAs, NGOs, developers, local cultural organisations and the leisure industry, offering to design and make work for real clients, with real budgets, sites and construction constraints. | originally for year 1 students only, but now extended as a curriculum opportunity open to all students. | a programme of live projects commissioned by community-based clients and created by students. |
| University of Sheffield | **Live Works** (since 2014) | Project Office delivers services at all project stages with community participation embedded (incl. participation toolkits, websites, feasibility studies, detailed design and small-scale installations). | enabling UG & PG students and researchers to engage with community partners in co-production of buildings, streets & neighbourhoods. | an off-campus site operated as Urban Room (for teaching, community events and exhibitions), Project Office (architectural/urban design services for community, third sector and public sector clients), and Research base. |

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