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"Yes, and we have no dentists"

'I am shocked by the scaffolding. Your scaffolding in London is so heavy, so dangerous. It shows human labour is cheap here, and human life too.'

First year undergraduate student, from Denmark, after a first lecture, responding to the lecturer's request for first impressions of London, about 2004

'Why don't we build housing? That's a good question but the answer is simply that we don't get asked to.'

Richard Rogers, answering a question from a student after a Bartlett lecture 1988.

The last 4 decades of education at the Bartlett School have seen a counter-revolution of professions and disciplines in which the early promise of a fertile dissolution of boundaries has been almost totally suppressed.

When Richard Llewelyn Davies merged the UCL schools of architecture and planning and assorted research centres in 1970, adding scientists, engineers and social scientists to the mix, it was part of a project to weaken the inherited division of labour among built environment practitioners and foster innovations. It brought with it new freedoms and responsibilities for individual students to select and mix their topics of study. These changes met with some active resistance from staff, but primarily with inertia and passive aggression. The time-honoured curricula of distinct professions were being replaced with nothing but a supermarket. In a highly effective bid to help students and staff deal constructively with these dissolving boundaries, Llewelyn-Davies recruited the eminent group analytic psychotherapist Jane Abercrombie. Announcing this at a faculty board, he observed that the school had no psychologists on its staff and was met with a *sotto voce* comment from Dr Bruno Schläffenberg (planning officer of Camden and a visiting teacher) 'Yes, and we have no dentists'.

The experimental syllabus operated for perhaps a decade, gaining some momentum from the simple fact of co-locating the factions in the new Wates House in 1976 (though still segregating them floor-by-floor) and surviving for a while after Llewelyn-Davies himself lost interest. The two people who could have kept up some momentum disappeared - Duccio Turin to die on the autostrada after launching UN Habitat and Reyner Banham to profess in California. From that point onwards the professions and disciplines began to strengthen, re-group and assert themselves.

If some future historian tests these recollections against documentary evidence I think they'll find that by the late 1980s there were distinct curricula for architecture, planning and construction with virtually no overlap and even more tightly circumscribed curricula for Masters students. Teaching

styles too had substantially reverted with students of planning doing essays and group projects, architecture students working individually in the competitive creative culture of 'crits' and 'juries', construction students visiting sites, assimilating bullet points and passing exams.

Two safety valves survived to enable difficult individuals to escape the silos of the packaged programmes: undergraduates remained free to opt out of the professionally-accredited compulsory programmes and mix their own diet; a small minority continue to do so. At postgraduate level some masters programmes offered critical and highly intellectual material which could be taken instead of or as well as the narrower professional packages.

For the last two decades the undergraduate programme has contained just one course aiming to build some understanding of the built environment as a social product, shared among all the student body, and this survives despite some active and passive denigration and is still the only faculty-wide activity for most students (Edwards et al 2009). This course has often started with a provocation from Adrian Forty: a micro-lecture arguing that professional identities are essential to the learning process and the effective social division of professional labour - right down to the self-referential private languages, dress codes and contemptuous stereotyping of the other professions. It is a good debate but there is nowhere to hold it beyond a first year classroom.

This history is a great defeat for those of us who have always hoped that a university education would enable society to be continuously self-critical, enabling students to combine specialised skills with a good grasp of the world they are making. The problem has been exacerbated by the marketisation of universities and the pressure on marketable subject fields to grow and grow. Since the production of the built environment plays a central role in the capital accumulation strategies of the 1% across the world, it is no surprise that our 'product' is selling so well. But the challenge of maintaining and developing a critical debate on what we are collectively achieving is ever harder. Furthermore the UK's stance on the Bologna Declaration—to standardise masters level study at 1 year while the rest of Europe settled for 2 years—has surely tended to dumb-down what can be achieved and cut out breadth and adventure in the choice of subjects.

This string of reminiscence has so far been entirely negative: the grumpy old man speaks. However I do consider that there are some gleams of hope.

Within UCL we have in recent years seen a great flowering of cross-cutting initiatives, mainly affecting research but with some influence on teaching. One example is the UCL Urban Lab which brings together staff and postgrads not just from all parts of the Bartlett but from other departments and faculties for discussions, joint projects, film screenings and research initiatives. It has proved to be instrumental in getting the UCL 'management' to listen to scholars in its deliberations on whether and where to establish a second London campus and claims some credit for the decision not to chose a site which displaces a settled community.

Within the Bartlett we see the launch of an interesting new programme which enables students to draw upon the hitherto segregated strands of teaching about urban design which take place in four sections of the faculty.

Finally I am cheered by the strong and spontaneous interest shown by students volunteering to work alongside and for community groups and activist networks in London, contributing to public debates and decision making at City Hall, borough and neighbourhood levels. This activity, supported in part by UCL's Public Engagement Unit, re-frames the city through the experiences, priorities and organisations of Londoners struggling with the intensifying attacks on material conditions and social life. Students discover in this work which of their skills and which areas of their intellectual apparatus are most useful in new contexts. It may be mapping or statistics or air quality monitoring but it may equally be a strong historical grasp of London's social geography. Among these students I commonly have to ask (if I want to know) whether an individual is based in geography, architecture, planning or engineering and that feels like progress (UCL Just Space).

A unified social science remains elusive. The quest for an integrated social understanding of the production of the built environment which preoccupied many of us in the 80s fizzled out in the 90s (BISS 1979-96). The society and the city are fraught with contradictions and so it's no surprise that within our own institution we find retrograde and emancipatory tendencies side by side.

The quotation from Richard Rogers at the start of this article shows just how naive this great architect was in mid-career about the political economy of his role in society. A decade later Mr Prescott appointed him to chair the Urban Task Force whose (1999) report completely failed to grasp the economics of gentrification and has contributed to the dispossession and displacement of so many Londoners. Since then he has been asked to do some housing.

Professions and academic disciplines continue to drift apart and become further removed from any shared understanding of their social role. We have achieved very little.

BISS (1979-1996) Bartlett International Summer Schools on the Production of the Built Environment, *Proceedings*, Annual, London UCL

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<http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/15579/> Publisher's version at www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/transactions/index.php

UCL Just Space <http://ucljustspace.wordpress.com>

Urban Task Force (Richard Rogers, chairman) (1999) *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, London: Routledge