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## Occupational Identity and Authority in High Modernity: the Case of the Professions in the English Building Industry

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## **OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY IN HIGH MODERNITY: THE CASE OF THE PROFESSIONS IN THE ENGLISH BUILDING INDUSTRY**

### **ABSTRACT**

Giddens (1990, 1991, 1994) envisages the replacement of professions through the creation of expert systems in late (high) modernity, which recreate expert knowledge into replicable systems capable of easy transfer between individuals through formulaic rules of procedure. This paper examines this perspective of occupational knowledge in the English building industry, an area long held to exhibit very weak occupational control (jurisdiction) by professions. Rather than Giddens' weak authority over expertise, the paper describes how professional identity is being used to create an occupational authority that is stronger and better articulated than the traditional literature portrays.

**Keywords:** occupational knowledge, occupational identity, professional identity, occupational authority

### **Introduction**

Giddens (1991) argues that late modernity sees the globalisation of modernity, and its extension into all spheres of life. In the case of professions, this follows a long drawn out death and their replacement with knowledge-based, expert workers (see for example Reed 1996). Within the building industry, this occurs within occupations that retain almost feudal modes of production (see for example Emmerson 1962, Ball 1988, Latham 1994, Egan 2002). Professions within the building industry would seem to be particularly susceptible to the powerful globalising tendencies of high modernity. Late modern seems, therefore, to explain neatly a decline in the concept of professions and their occupational control, rising sceptical attitudes towards elite groups and shifts in working practices. Modernity is also to be welcomed into an otherwise archaic and inefficient industry (Woudhuysen and Abley 2004).

However, as the following analysis of the English building industry discusses, knowledge is not characterised as the submissive, provisional and prejudiced form that Giddens expects. Nor are the expert systems that he describes to be found imposed upon occupations. Rather, professional associations engage in maintaining occupational control, and do so in alliance with both clients and the State. Whilst there are processes of change at work within

traditional working arrangements, these are both instigated and controlled by associations. Professions create a determinant authority within occupations precisely because they offer an identity of permanence and security, and create a dominating authority that derives from regulated competence and consumer protection.

### **Methodology**

The paper adopts an interpretivist approach; occupational experiences are constructed by the individual and each has their own subjective perceptions. The research explores this understanding and establishes the interactions and characteristics of expert work. It follows Normann (1970) in drawing out generalisations from the patterns and meaning uncovered, and sets about this in two ways (see also Gummesson 1991). The first considers the secondary literature on the nature of occupational identity and how professions create a dominating authoritative position within their late modern existence by creating an identity that is disseminated, and taken up by others acting as their agents. This involves an archival analysis of trade and technical literature, examining how professionals discuss and describe the nature of their occupations, how they perceive their place within a social and economic hierarchy, how they present this to clients, and what power they wield. The second derives from empirical investigation of practising professionals within the surveying and architecture professions (and others operating within the English building industry) and asks them directly about their work experiences, organisation and identity.

Sutherland and Dawson (2002) refer to a sensemaking perspective as a means of establishing how individuals interpret reality. In this case, it was decided to use interview data with individual professionals and their association executives to examine the dialogues between and the experiences within the professional community in order to examine the construction of expertise and the evolution of professional jurisdictions in late modernity. This examination of practitioners on their sense of identity, how they organise their work and their experiences of the routine of occupational (and professional) life interrogates, reinforces and contrasts with the secondary material, in which similar practitioners have discussed the same.

The study examined all peer groups within the English building industry, and not just those accorded 'Charter' status or regarded as professional (rather than trade) associations. Interviews took place with 16 designers (not all were registered with the Architects Registration Board to use the title 'architect', but all were producing architecture), 23 chartered surveyors, eight other 'professionals', three representatives of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), four representatives of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), one each with the Association of Building Engineers (ABE), Architects Registration Board (ARB) and Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), and seven other professional and trade associations. Unstructured interviews were carried out in order to allow the interviewees' own experiences, ideas and interpretations to construct a response to the research question. A short briefing note was prepared and given out prior to interview in order to allow the respondent to prepare and consider their thoughts. This was identical in all cases, setting out the purpose of the research to encourage reflection prior to the interview and devised so as not to bias the evidence. Interviews were of varying lengths, from 30 minutes through to 2 hours, subject to the wishes of the interviewee. The unstructured interview was selected so as not to bias the respondent over where to direct their dialogue over identity and the wider sensemaking perspectives of

their occupations. Whilst this makes comparison of responses more difficult, it ensures that interviewees determine the creation of the data rather than any implicit bias by the researcher.

Respondents are identified by their occupation or as representative of which professional body. For example, interviewee RIBA1 is a representative of RIBA, and is randomly assigned as number 1 (of three), whilst Architect15 is a practising architect and assigned the number 15 (of 16).

The data is representative and reliable since professions exhibit a uniform gestalt (for example Bosk 1979) and can be tested through relatively small samples. This is particularly so in the building industry since the site-based nature of the work concentrates interests within a single sense of mission, work activities, methodology and techniques, and relationship to the to the laity. There is no evidence of the segmentisation suggested by Bucher and Strauss (1961) within some professions. Building professionals operate in teams because of the project-based nature of their work, located on discrete building sites.

### **Jurisdiction**

There are far too many interpretations of what defines a profession to discuss here. However, a primary theme in many approaches is with the idea of a discrete body of knowledge (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933, Millerson 1964), the esoteric nature of its implementation within actual occupations and work situations (Larson 1977) and its jurisdictional control (Abbott 1988, 1991). Global modernity's 'attack' on knowledge renders the concept of jurisdiction useful to examine shifts in occupational control within late modernity. Jurisdiction concerns occupational control through the organisation of what is done, and how it is done. Burrage (2006) regards the definition and defence of a jurisdiction as one of the four activities that professions engage with. Therefore, how jurisdictions are created and defended within high modernity explains the dominance, or lack thereof, of their authority. It illustrates how professions create an identity that can then be used to create occupational distance between members of the profession and those 'quacks' working in the same field, but outside the regulated safety and evaluated competence of the professionals.

Abbott (1988) uses the concept of jurisdiction to describe a profession as a system of associations that have demarked areas of expertise and recognise each others domination and exclusivity. Within the UK there is some clear evidence for such a system in the form of the UK Privy Council. This controls the award of Royal Charters, which it awards to associations that "represent a field of activity which is unique and not covered by other professional bodies" (Privy Council 2008). Whether this actually represents a system of control, or is simply a historic 'badge' that bestows a certain prestige without real power is rather more problematic. Certainly in the building industry, there have been a number of organisational squabbles between groups over the award of charters, and the Privy Council generally seems to prefer to adopt a passive and uncritical acceptance of what they are presented with. However, it is not necessary to be quite so precise concerning the exact form of a systemised division of expert labour, in order to recognise the importance of knowledge to occupational control. Professional associations engage in creating 'good' or 'best practice', they create professionally validated modes of working, perhaps backed by professional indemnity insurance expectations, and statutory enforcement might enforce professional control.

### The UK Building Industry Professions

Within the literature of the sociology of the professions, there has been a continual stream of description of decline including "deprofessionalization" (Toren 1975, Rothman 1984), "transition" (Curran 1986), "changing role" (Brint 1994), "reborn" (Freidson 1994), "revolution" (Perkin 1996), "death" (Krause 1996), and "the end" (Broadbent et al 1997). This reflects the progressive nature of modernity and the redundant nature of archaic structures such as professions. However, at the same time, new professions are still created and more individuals still join; rather at odds with the idea of a decline (Fournier 2000). Terminology has also shifted towards so-called knowledge workers (see for example Blackler et al 1993, Alvesson 2000, May et al 2002), experts (see for example Reed 1996) and intellectual workers (see for example Connell et al 2005) in this new knowledge-based economy (see for example Ackroyd 1996), and away from professions.

This is reflected within the building professions, probably amplified by the wider problems within the industry, which is criticised for being highly inefficient, with a poor record on employment and training, profitability, quality, speed, flexibility and mechanisation (see for example Emmerson 1962, Higgin and Jessop 1965, NEDO 1978, Ball 1988, Gann 1989, Woudhuysen and Abley 2004). Indeed, the industry is perceived as operating within a unique industrial structure and has led to the *backwards* thesis (see for example Higgin and Jessop 1965, NEDO 1978, Gann 1989, Baldry 1997, Ball 1988, Roy and Cochrane 1999, Moore 2001 and Woudhuysen and Abley 2004). This argues that construction, unlike other capitalist industries, failed to develop into a mature, technically advanced, modern industry. The metaphor sees it as a mentally retarded industrial child. To the wider environment the image of the 'cowboy builder' is prevalent; the immigrant, frequently Polish, site worker is a second.

This lack of development also impinges upon the professions, who are similarly disorganised and exhibit very weak occupational control. This renders them susceptible to external environmental events, particularly economic slumps. Middlehurst and Kennie (1997: 54) describe fundamental occupational changes in the decade 1985 to 1995, including job insecurity, commercialisation and the introduction of 'business' culture over 'professional ethics', skills changes caused by computerisation and increased global competition.

Various, the market, clients or commercial imperatives are recognised as placing strains on what is perceived as a 'Victorian' model of gentleman-professional operatives. This pressures the professional to create profit rather than serve a public good and has led to a deal of wailing about how much better things used to be. Some typical examples include Anstey (1992) and his concerns with "declining standards of ethical behaviour", Ayton's (1992) endemic malaise throughout society, and Turner's (1993) 'professional prostitution'. Equally, the professional trade journals are very willing to weigh in with such views; see for example the issue of Harding's (1999) regular column concerning architects' tendencies to specify inappropriate materials, to blame others for their mistakes, not accept budget constraints nor understand buildability. All of this is reinforced by the lack of any statutory regulation. Only the term 'architect' is protected, by the Architects Act 1997, but even this does not prevent anyone designing a building. Legally, anyone can do any job and carry out any function within the building industry.

### **Inability to Control: Failure of Jurisdiction?**

In order to illustrate this apparent weakness of occupational control, an overview of the changing nature of the role of the architect is offered by way of a simplified example, presented in Table 1. Architects present more visibly the results of occupational change. The modes of finance, clients, building materials, technological improvements, new product demands and the like mean that both a building and the process by which it is made have changed over the decades – although not as much as some might wish. The role of the architect has been under sustained attack for a number of decades for their inability to deal with these changes and this has led to other occupational groups taking over aspects of building design. Table 1 illustrates how functions traditionally falling within the jurisdiction of the architect are now claimed by other occupational groups.

Whilst the architectural profession is regarded as responsible for the design and creation of a building, in reality many groups claim to be equal (or better) in many of the tasks that make up this occupation. Prospective clients do not care for the traditional fragmentation of the process of getting a building. They simply want a product, and not to engage in a complex, expensive and disputative procurement process (Egan 2002). Whoever can offer that will be given the work. Why the design and the production of the building product should be so separated is a frequent source of query, and builders regularly offer a ‘design and build’ service to reflect this. Customers wish to purchase buildings in exactly the same manner in which they purchase a car. However, architects can only offer them a service, that of designing a building, and not the product itself. Others can and do offer this product, replacing the need for architect design services.

Outside the narrow confines of design, new occupations are also emerging in response to the changing environment. For example, the following proposals for ‘new’ professionals have recently been mooted to improve standards: Access Consultant (Building Engineer 2002), now Inclusive Environment Consultant (RICS Business 2007); Demolition Expert (Williamson 2007); Low Carbon Consultant (Building Engineer 2007), Heritage Consultant; Fire Engineer (Horton 2003), Design Manager (Olcato 2006). Once again, each of these is a direct occupational conflict on the role, or tasks therein, of the architect.

Finally, the architect is faced with two occupational authorities. Whilst RIBA might be the leading professional association in England and Wales, Scotland has a separate association. In addition, the Architects Registration Board regulates the title ‘architect’. “The Architects Act 1997 gives the Architects Registration Board (ARB) the responsibility for prescribing the qualifications and practical training experience required for entry onto the UK Register of Architects. The prescription of qualifications is key to ARB’s dual mandate, to protect the consumer and to safeguard the reputation of architects” (ARB 2009). Therefore, in the UK, a professional has to register with ARB to be able to be identified as an ‘architect’, although there is no statutory protection for the actual role. Anyone can design a building; only those on the register can be called an architect. None of this falls within the remit of RIBA, which is a non-statutory professional association. Membership of RIBA does not allow the member to be called an architect. This leaves large areas of occupational control as an area for conflict between the two concerning how to educate, regulate and develop best practice (see for example Booth 2002, Building Design 2002). Each has an annual subscription charge, one allows use of the professional designation ‘RIBA’, the other the occupational title ‘architect’. Neither can actually control who designs buildings. This is regarded as the right of a client to

decide within a globalised market environment, which fits perfectly the Late Modern interpretation of knowledge workers.

**Table 1: Occupational Insurgencies**

| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Jurisdictional Competition</b>  |
|--|--|
| <b>Design</b>  | There is no statutory requirement to employ an architect, and others claim to be able to design buildings, especially building surveyors and architectural technologists. The latter used to be technicians to architects, but now have their own Royal Charter (Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists, CIAT). RICS has campaigned within EU political circles for the acceptance of the chartered building surveyor as equivalent to an architect (see for example Davis 2005). There is even a Chartered Society of Designers, which means that the UK Privy Council has awarded <i>them</i> primary status within the occupation of design |
| <b>Design specialist components</b>                            | Architects usually rely upon specialists to design specialist parts of a building, sometimes even trade contractors, and utilise prefabrication to specialise bespoke factory manufactured parts. In effect, the architect chooses from a catalogue  |
| <b>Designs mechanical, electrical and engineering services</b> | Again the complicated nature of mechanical and electrical engineering is now its own occupation, with their own professional and trade associations (such as the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers, the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, and the Electrical Contractors Association)  |
| <b>Deals with town planning issues</b>                         | Town planning is a unique profession with its own chartered association, the Royal Town Planning Institute.  |
| <b>Manages the project</b>                                     | Again, architects are far less frequently involved in managing the design and the project than they used to be. Many other professions carry out these tasks, including Project Managers (Association of Project Managers) and construction managers (Chartered Institute of Building, CIOB)   |
| <b>Cost planning</b>   | Usually the role of the quantity surveyor. Generally, the architect is regarded as a poor cost planner   |
| <b>“Carbon footprinting”</b>                                   | A new demand, this is an area of contention and many again claim to be able to offer this service. Many occupational groups are battling over proving expertise in this new area of work. RIBA did not join in the creation of the Chartered Environmentalist, discussed later, and which provides a wide-ranging attack on expertise in a range of sustainability issues.   |
| <b>Landscaping and External Works</b>                          | There is a Landscape Architect profession, which “champions well-designed and well-managed urban and rural landscape” (Landscape Institute 2009)   |

In summary, English building professions operate in a fragmented industry, which appears to be defenceless against the globalised forces of modernity and its reorganisation of knowledge. And yet professions are still here. Whilst occupations are changing, professions are utilising this evolution to create new identities and imbue themselves with renewed occupational authority and control.

### Good architecture

Faced with the invasion of their jurisdiction by others, and the changes to the design occupation created by a range of external factors, architects have not simply given in. Rather, they have moved beyond design or architecture into creating the concept of 'good architecture'. RIBA's mission is "to demonstrate the benefits of good architecture" (RIBA 2008). In this they have been assisted by government and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. "CABE works on behalf of the public. That's why we're determined to inspire people to demand more from buildings and spaces. They, after all, are the people left behind after the planners and architects have moved on" (CABE 2008). CABE has power and it is using this to promote architects. "Cabe ... helps local authorities make the best choices for their newly designed schools" (BBC News 2008).

The central part of RIBA's 'good architecture', however, is that whilst it might serve the wider needs of the community, the concept is informally judged and created by architects. Good architecture requires 'vision' and 'the eye' that only architects can develop through training, with experience and by the interaction of their peer community. This 'eye' is an evaluative judgement that a building company's 'design and build' service can never achieve. Therefore, in order to create 'good architecture' there is a need to employ someone proved competent by their peers, that is an architect, a member of RIBA. 'The eye' creates occupational distance. It is an esoteric design service, rather than simply producing a building. It requires the employment of someone who has such vision, and it demands that a client trust to their professional judgement. It creates occupational control since RIBA provides the peer community that engage in the evaluation of the competence of the individual architect's vision. And government, through CABE, endorses this. BBC News (2009) reports that "Architects ... will vet design plans" for the Government's schools construction program. Clients must appoint from within RIBA and trust in what they will receive. In return, RIBA offers guarantees of professional competence. Despite economic recession and cuts to public building projects, and a change in UK government, the power of this occupational authority remains as the new government is equally convinced of the need for RIBA's expertise and engages in a similar dialogue (Hopkirk 2010).

Whilst this construction of competence to create occupational control cannot take place without some degree of corporate patronage (Johnson 1972), it is with State mediation that 'good architecture' has been established. Architects are able to provide government with the support it requires for its wider socio-environmental interests. Thus an alliance is born. Government recognises the authority of architects, whilst they endorse the government's political aspirations. CABE reinforces the position of both. "A Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) spokesman said it was looking carefully at introducing a minimum design threshold in BSF and that it was working with Cabe ... to explore how to establish an agreed objective set of measures" (BBC News 2008). Government's own projects



employ architects as designers and, whilst they cannot impose upon the private sector, they can encourage through the planning system, the award of grants and simply raising levels of expectation in the wider environment. “That is why we have been working closely with Cabe's enablers - who have offered expert advice to all local authority BSF teams - as well as its review panel, which has more recently tracked how design proposals are faring” (BBC News 2008). RIBA is also able to act as an authority within this wider global market – international clients, international corporate property companies, global investors are all looking for some guarantee of competence and of some quality branding that will make their investment products (buildings) that much more attractive to the discerning global investor. TV reinforces this to the wider general public promoting ‘grand design’ and the construction of architecture rather than property (Dychoff 2010).

Similar jurisdictions are being established throughout the industry, by trade associations as well as professions. They incorporate ethical and customer protection issues, too. The concept is to create a ‘good’ product or service, rather than a ‘mere’ good or service. And this ‘good’ aspect is one that is created by these occupational groups, and marketed to clients as a different product or service to the normal. In the case of RIBA’s ‘good architecture’, there is an ethereal quality in the difference between a design and a ‘good design’, and any evaluation of the difference is highly subjective. However, even those who deal with more concrete products are engaged with this form of occupational control. The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) creates the idea of “master building” as a separate service to the general builder, and backs this up with an insurance-backed quality guarantee: employ a FMB member and the customer gets guaranteed satisfaction through the MasterBond scheme, which is part of the UK government’s TrustMark scheme (FMB 2008). Similarly, the National Federation of Roofing Contractors describes a “good roofing” service obtained from their membership, rather than simply roofing from non-members (Interviewee NFRC1). Like architectural design, these in part are concrete, physical products that exist, but what is being added is the concept of the ‘good’ design, ‘good’ roof, and the ‘good’ (master) building. This creates a distinct identity and thereby occupational difference. This grants authority and control.

In interview, all the architectural respondents stressed their role as ‘designers’. There were various interpretations of their roles as leaders and project managers, but this derived from their central position as designer. And all respondents strongly identified with their ability to create an esoteric designing service that was quite different to those builders or surveyors claiming to be designers. Both CABE and the idea of ‘good architecture’ were continually referred to. This resided, firstly, in a body of knowledge, but also in what a peer group adds to that knowledge. “There is a recognised body of knowledge and skill which requires serious time and study to acquire. That needs organisation in order that people can become part of that profession. And you need to maintain it through continuous professional development. And you need a code of conduct by which you operate as a safety net and for guidance” (Interviewee RIBA1).

Interviewee RIBA2 reinforced this, that RIBA is concerned with architecture in the public environment, about a subject engaging with a wider audience, and about a public interest. So, architectural training is openly more than just about creating and maintaining a competent peer group, but of creating a socially constructed design expertise; “the eye” (Interviewee Architect15). This requires control by the association, because there is more involved than straightforward technical training. It is about generating a peer ethos on the nature of ‘good

architecture', about excluding others and it is about educating clients directly and the wider public more generally to encourage the insistence on the utilisation of this service, rather than that of mundane design.

There is difference between RIBA and other commentators upon architectural education. This reflects the role RIBA places upon training in establishing its own exclusivity and the dominance of its 'eye', rather than the wider preference to a more rational and co-ordinated approach to the built environment. For example, the Economic Development Committee for Building (1984) argued for integrating professional education between different professional disciplines. The Urban Taskforce Report, the government's Urban White Paper, calling for an urban renaissance, included the need for inter-professional education to forge the new multidisciplinary working relationships required (Urban Task Force 2005). However, RIBA and the architectural community have been keen to ensure that these concepts reinforce 'good architecture' rather than dilute it. Lord Rogers maintained that architects are the "natural leaders of the multidisciplinary team" (Spring 2000). Controlling 'good architecture' means controlling more disciplines. The later Egan Review (Egan 2004) maintained this theme. RIBA supported its findings and committed itself to participate actively as key leaders: control through engagement with government and authorship of reports setting out political vision. Architectural respondents within this research saw only themselves as possessing this omnipotence over the building process.

Architecture here, then, is the creation of the concept of 'good architecture', the jurisdiction of RIBA since they can generate this in the public interest, as opposed to the commercial building of ugly square boxes on cheapest cost grounds. This is their conceptual ideal to reclaim control over the design of buildings. 'Good architecture' requires architects, it is highly subjective but it is endorsed by government through CABI. It requires "the eye". This is equivalent to NFRC1's conceptualisation of 'good roofing' and FMB's "master building". However, trade associations are essentially interested in 'efficient' roofing, rather than architecture's socially created 'good architecture'. NFRC roofs do not leak. RIBA architects design 'well', centring upon the profession as a service to the public good. RIBA respondents focussed on this as a key distinction of a professional from a trade association. "I wonder if all the people who call themselves professional would recognise that part of what they do is supposed to be for the public good? I don't think that is the case" (Interviewee RIBA2). However, this lack of certainty ensures a degree of elusiveness in being able to quantify 'good' design, which is more than just safe, warm, weatherproof design. And this generates additional control over an 'efficient' roof. As Interviewee RIBA2 admits "People consider with scepticism bodies' claims to professionalism because setting standards and doing the right thing can also be self-serving. Part of the reason we promote the value of architecture is precisely because if good architecture is valued then that would mean commissions for our members."

Whilst 'good architecture' is good for RIBA members, interviewees stressed that it is not simply a desired commercial outcome. "We think there is a virtuous circle. By doing the right thing as a professional body we're also helping our members get the commissions which will enable them to run effective businesses. You start with the altruism but it serves the members interests as well" (Interviewee RIBA1).

Interviewees are again unanimous in that the purpose is to create a group of individuals with aspirations to profess about architecture, whose association enables them to create a social organisation to carry out architecture as they wish, whilst providing a superior

service to society. This is the jurisdiction created and defended by modern RIBA, of 'good architecture'. It represents the gestalt of architects, whilst providing them with occupational control and accrued economic benefits. By establishing this meaning to architecture, the occupation of design becomes one that only RIBA members can produce, and only they can measure success.

The result is that, rather than fight a losing war over the issue of design, RIBA has created a new occupation, that of "good architecture". This not only includes a professional and competent design process, but also ethical issues and especially sustainability principles. Indeed, this return to ethics within professions is another key component of their construction of new jurisdictions, and their defence of the old. Customers, governments and the wider public are seen as embracing ethical concerns, and thus willing to engage with non-market organisations such as professional associations in order to obtain them.

### **Ethics: Doing What is Right and the Sustainability Drive**

Modernity is discontinuous with pre-Modern such that the present is no longer accepting of the past. Professional ethics become redundant and archaic 'Victorian' byelaws, created for a different society. Modern clients require market-based consultancy services and not tired old codes of practice. However, there is now a mainstream literature that suggests that clients require exactly these ethical services and that ethics is a useful product characteristic. Professions have seized upon this, and constructed an identity of themselves centred on what was previously regarded as a relic of an earlier identity. Now being 'not of the market' is used as a means of creating this ethical dimension, validated and regulated by quasi-independent professional associations and distanced from 'pure' market services.

Professions have always claimed that they operate in a wider environment than simply serving a client; they serve the 'public good'. Associations are granted Royal Charters on the basis of a number of criteria, but working for the general good, rather than self-interested clients is one parameter (Privy Council 2008). However, it is one for which little evidence of compliance exists, and which has been pushed to the back of the professional consciousness in the Modern environment. It does not fit the shifting power of economic forces and it was accepted wisdom that professions had to 'change with the times' (see for example Friedman & Mason 2004). Associations have recognised that wider stakeholder groups are utilising late modern "dilemmas" (Giddens 1991) to create new authorities and demand environmental and other non-core actions from businesses. As non-market associations, professions have recreated an identity working towards these aims and the 'public good' is seen as a valid aim once again. This allows them to create new services and establish occupational authority. Clients look to professions to validate that services are, indeed, considering the public good. Professions are responding to this and proving themselves to be determinant authorities of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' within certain technical jurisdictions.

One example of this is 'the environment' and how associations are now 'going green', and providing this public good when carrying out their work. RICS produced its first environmental strategy in 1996 (RICS 1996). Prior to this there was no mention of the environment, no requirement for universities to teach it, and no view on 'green' aspects of competence (Eccles 1994). Yet *now* every environmental aspect of land, property and construction is included within a dialogue of chartered surveying jurisdiction (see for example GVA Grimley 2009, Symes-Thompson 2009). Surveyors do not simply 'develop'; they create

sustainable and appropriate developments, considering communities and users of projects, and not simply profitability. Posters to aspiring members now show local 'native' South Americans living harmoniously with cleared industrial areas; the surveyor cares for resources *and* cultures is the message. Hence, RICS creates the occupation of "environmental surveying", and not simple self-interested surveying. Members are encouraged to "get on the bandwagon" (Dixon 2009: 6).

RICS has also allied with 23 other associations in negotiating co-operation in this new area of expertise. The UK now has the Chartered Environmentalist profession. The Society for the Environment is unusual in that it is not an awarding body in itself, but is organised by twenty three member bodies. Each of these bodies may present members to the Society for the award CEnv. The principle here is that rather than allow a new body to establish control over this potentially extremely valuable occupational area, existing associations allied together and created a new body, presenting it to the Privy Council and establishing themselves as equal professional environmentalists. RICS, CIOB and CIAT are all members, though RIBA is not. This does suggest that there is some level of organisation amongst professional associations, if not an actual system, and that they possess the determinant authority, control and confidence to create these new identities for themselves.

The concept of a chartered environmentalist now has UK state recognition, but is controlled by professional associations. They create the identity of a chartered environmentalist and utilise this in creating occupational distance from those outsiders without state validation or the evaluation of competence that chartered environmentalists must undertake. RICS has also launched a 'transparency working group' to underpin the ethically transparent nature of how chartered surveyors work (RICS 2009).

All respondents in this research referred to the ethical 'requirements' of a professional association's Code of Conduct. Many pointed to the traits and characteristics of a profession that included such conduct (following, for example, Greenwood 1957). Others also pointed to the Royal Charters of their association, which each refer to the need to protect the 'common good' and to work in 'the public interest'. However, whilst this might have been an abstract ideal, indeed some presented almost a formula or list, respondents did also describe the need for their businesses to operate within an ethical and responsible business framework. Sustainability was the most mentioned feature of this, but the responsibility to the 'public good' also included the quality of design, the involvement of as many stakeholders in the wider community affected by a building project, working only during 'business hours' and with civility to neighbours.

The 'ethical' context did cause respondents some difficulty with regard to their clients. It was generally assumed that working 'ethically' and for the client was not contradictory. However, most interviewees, especially those with greater experience, did accept that tensions might occur. Not all clients cared about the wider interest, some wanted 'profitable' rather than 'green' buildings and most respondents had examples of varying degrees of the unethical to the outright illegal requirements of clients. This brought the greatest variance in responses, though it did also show why the face-to-face interview has advantages over other forms of research, as respondents were remarkably honest. Most accepted that, in the abstract, ethical behaviour was non-negotiable. However, when faced with the potential loss of a client, responses were more variable. Some admitted turning a blind eye to illegal practices; one, for example, had allowed, through inaction, the destruction of a listed building interior. Others created "horrible" buildings, "boxes" that they would deny being associated with, because the fees were good and

their client wanted to maximise profit. All the interviewees agreed that whilst they would encourage clients to be 'green', none would resign over it. They acted for their client primarily, and not for a general public. However, respondents were articulate and persuasive in describing this issue as one open to negotiation, rather than clear cut. Clients did not inherently demand the illegal or unethical, and solutions were always possible. As professionals, they felt that they provided that direction. Thus professions are actively engaged in creating an 'ethical' service, rather than simply a service and are using this identity to create occupational difference. Professional associations are now positively enacting their Royal Charters to discuss the public good and thereby create a mythical or fictional service. Mythical in that what it offers is difficult to measure, but it is part of a dialogue of difference. This dialogue is a deliberate story told by professional associations to re-establish their control over the occupational legend that is their commercial services offered by members.

### **Consumer Protection**

Respondents regarded consumer protection as a major concern for governments, and one that they found difficult to resist. It involves both economic and safety protection. The first is achieved by deregulation, in order to protect consumers from economic harm. The economic 'harm' caused by monopoly has been a continuous criticism of professions (for example DoE 1993). The second concerns wider health and safety issues. As one interviewee suggested, "consumer protection taking the front, health and safety running a close second and then price fixing. Everything that the government says is bad for the consumer" (Interviewee NFRC1). Again, professions have turned these attacks into a new self-identity as a means of defending their expertise. Whilst attacking monopoly might be seen as an attack on professions, associations have engaged with this dialogue in order to defend and create new areas of occupational control. The government-backed TrustMark scheme was discussed above, as trade associations employ this to create a distinction between their members and others. The purpose is to create difference, exclusivity of service. Trade associations produce insurance-backed guarantees of competence as a means of creating a different product to non-members. This creates more demand and allows a higher price to be charged, since it is a 'better' service. The insurance guarantee is a brand, which identifies those who are 'in' and those who are not. It regulates competence directly and offers guarantees to consumers. It distinguishes between those providing a regulated service and the 'quacks', the uninsured, the 'cowboys', the unregulated that do not. At the same time, the associations interviewed described how they only allow membership to those who are able to provide this level of validated service; otherwise, the insurance guarantee will be unable to cope with the demands upon it. Hence, it does regulate conduct, but for reasons of creating occupational this identity of 'protected' products and services. And it works because of the financial realities of the scheme: the insurance simply cannot afford to pay out repeatedly, and so poorer firms are excluded from the scheme. Professional associations repeat this within their more esoteric services.

One way to ensure a safe service is standardisation, and professional associations have engaged with this in order to place their own systems as the occupational standards. Giddens argues that repetitive systems encourage ease of transfer of ideas and this destroys jurisdiction. In practice, professionals have utilised this to negotiate agreements with UK Courts and professional indemnity insurers about what a competent service looks like. Both have welcomed central guidance from an informed body, and deem it a safeguard against negligence.

This creates consumer protection. The government too endorses this view, typified with its 'competent person' legislation (such as with electricians, see for example Ambrose 2005). The result is that professions create the standard procedure, regulate it and ensure that the entire occupation is organised according to its rules. Professionals control the process and create occupational control. They identify themselves as consumer champions.

One such example is the government deregulation that removed building control from local authorities and allowed competition in order to reduce costs and improve service. Building control involves the inspection of new buildings in order to ensure that they are constructed to appropriate standards. Removing this as a function of the State, and allowing private firms to undertake the work raised obvious potential difficulties. How was the quality of the inspection to be guaranteed? The answer is by ensuring that only a 'competent person' is allowed to undertake the work (DETR 1997, 1999a, 1999b). How is this competency to be measured? Through membership of a professional body. Hence, government retrenched professional associations whilst freeing up an occupation to market competition.

Safety is also a primary concern within the building industry and recently led to the creation of a planning supervisor role to resolve the issue of too many accidents. A number of innovatory changes were heralded to resolve construction's poor safety record, including creating a single person responsible for site safety. The intention was that an existing professional working upon each project would assume this mantle. However, instead, the planning supervisor was created, with their own association the Association of Planning Supervisors (see for example APS 1997). Again, an occupational obtains control over an area of work through providing a particular aspect of the work; in this case "safe construction".

Most respondents believed that being a member of a professional association offered minimum guarantees of quality. Whilst most did not preclude the fact that non-members might provide an equally good service, professions offer an evaluation of competence. This was also a highly informed and self-aware selection of respondents that suggest that professions are aware of the limitations of membership entrance qualifications. These only test competence upon entry. All respondents accepted the need for continuing professional development and lifelong testing of their abilities. Architectural respondents were keen to engage with the idea that their work should be audited by other designers to test for its fitness – though, of course, they expected this to generate work for another professional. What this means is that professionals are willing to engage with continuous education and auditing regimes in order to create an identity of competence and safety for clients, backed by professional regulation and insurance guarantees. Professions are constructing an image of consumer protection, a name and a 'badge' that are synonymous with guaranteed satisfaction.

Trade associations are similarly engaged with government in the interests of their members. Associations can generate monopolised occupational jurisdiction where it serves wider purposes. In this case, a representative of the National Federation of Roofing Contractors discussed how the association was achieving this. "Our prime aim for our members is to get them more business" (Interviewee NFRC1). They will assist their members to produce quality and safe roofing where this confirms with government intentions and creates more work. Thus the associations engage with government to create jurisdictions, in this case 'safe roofing'. Whilst associations do not describe themselves as creating markets, this is exactly what they are doing, or at least allying with the State to do so. Additional legislation then adds a further purpose to the associations, and further encourages firms to join. Obtaining work is

one thing, but the work itself is becoming more complicated to understand with increased UK and EU regulation. This complexity is precisely what helps defend jurisdiction. Interviewee NFRC1 described how NFRC is also able to engage in the creation of these standards and keep members informed of the repercussions and new requirements because they “become semi-professional” and “organised to deal in Brussels”. Lobbying for the interests of members balances “laws are passed with the best intentions” with the reality that “people that make rules aren’t always the most practical.” Trade associations can engage in discussion and consultation over these issues, and provide training and dissemination of the results. Interviewee NFRC1 gave one specific example of how this is working.

“We didn’t do much lobbying until about four years ago ... It was the public liability insurance ... Guys, who were paying £10,000 annually, suddenly it went up to £80,000 ... One MP said to me “you lot are just a load of cowboys and fall off roofs”. We lobbied, we got two DWP papers, a couple of debates in parliament and we raised awareness tremendously. The reports compliment us in trying to raise standards.” The association formalised this one result, recognising the need to continue with this work on behalf of their members. “More recently, we formed an all party parliamentary group for roofing which was a bit of a coup. We didn’t think roofing would be sexy enough.”

## Conclusions

Sensemaking offers a means of examining how professionals interpret their environments. The ‘sense’ individual professionals and those managing their institutions ‘make’ of their evolving occupations together with the secondary literature generated by them creates a strong sense of identity, promoting competence, ethics, sustainability and consumer protection. Whilst late modernity describes contingent professions, the evidence describes authoritative professions dynamically engaged in the creation of new fictions concerning expertise. Whilst these are not removed from the wider social contexts, these do take up dominating themes and utilise them for jurisdictional purposes. The idea of ‘good architecture’ is perhaps the most determined and independent of the three categories discussed here, since it is essentially subjective and less motivated by any single driver. On the other hand, Government is driving sustainability for a number of political reasons, and professions are responding to this by offering ‘ethical’ services. The current Government is also particularly keen that consumers must be protected, hence professions provide ‘protection guarantees’. This level of corporate organisation between State and what were once seen as monopoly professions also points to an active management by professional associations.

Giddens’ (1990, 1994) analysis of the state of knowledge in late modernity is persuasive and certainly reflects a generally held view of the state of professions in a deeply sceptical world. However, associations are actively engaged in creating identity, establishing dialogues and creating and recreating technical and ideological jurisdictions. These are not abstract systems, alien to the individual, but are collectively created by a peer community. Within the construction industry, expertise, professional ethics and consumer protection are all vehicles to generate authority that allows these peer collectives to control their occupations. Simplistic expectations of the demise of professions that might have been developed from the globalisation of modernity are inaccurate. Professions have proven surprisingly adaptable in the past, able to create alliances within any social context. They also provide a sense of power and of purpose, and mediate commodification. Giddens (1991) recognises the limits to late

modernity, for example that standardised clothing manufacture does not prevent individuality in dress. However, here the example is that professional associations seem to be acting more directly in the very process of creating Modernity. Whilst Giddens recognises the existence of dominating authorities, the professions here are engaged in rebuilding themselves as a single, determinant authority. This situation continues as professional associations and their membership generate new ideologies and strategies to fit into a late modern world.



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