

Collaboration

The authority of the institutions would increase exponentially if they presented a shared view on major matters of public interest. Areas for such collaboration would include:

- **On industry reform:** developing a shared vision of how structured reform of the industry might improve efficiency and the offer to clients and society; securing buy-in to the vision; and developing an action plan for its implementation.
- **On climate change:** developing the policies and industry capabilities and skills necessary to respond to the impact of the built environment on climate change (mitigation) and the impact of climate change on the built environment (adaptation); establishing a joint cross-institutional policy position; and publishing cross-disciplinary recommended guidance for their members.
- **On building performance:** tackling the divide between what is promised by the industry and what is delivered – the performance gap, taking responsibility for the whole-life of projects, developing common metrics; and committing to measurement and evaluation, and the dissemination of findings. There can hardly be a cause more deserving of cross-industry collective contemplation and action than the constant failure of its product.

The report of the Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism will be published on the 18th May 2015 and will be available for download from www.edgedebate.com

The Edge is a multi-disciplinary think tank that works on issues that impact on the built environment as a whole, including its professions and institutions, The Edge promotes collaboration between disciplines and an evidence-based approach to design and problem solving.

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Collaboration for Change

The Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism

In 2014 the Edge invited Paul Morrell, Government Chief Construction Advisor from 2009-2012, to chair a Commission of Inquiry into the future of professionalism in the built environment/construction industry. The resulting report explores the key issues facing professionals and their institutions at this 'moment for change'.



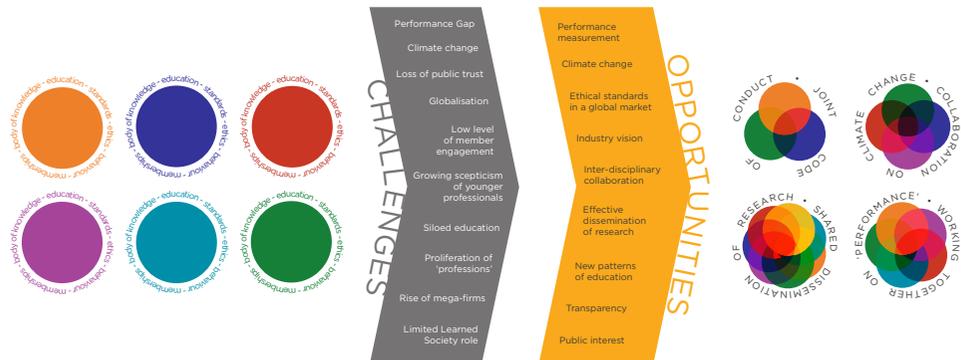
The value of institutions, and pressures for change

It is clear that professional institutions continue to perform a valuable role, chiefly in setting standards of competence and conduct for members, setting standards and frameworks for education, regulating members, improving the standing of members in the market (particularly internationally), providing industry leadership and aspiring to serve the public interest. They confer on their members a badge of membership/status that should demonstrate that they have attained an entry level of competence and will be bound by a code of conduct, as well as providing fellowship and collegiate support.

The institutions have also shown themselves to be adaptable, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue to be so. However, the standing and perceived value of the professions is being challenged, with detractors seeing in their conduct and practice a tendency towards protectionism, resistance to change, the reinforcement of silos and the preservation of hierarchies.

There is a risk that the institutions lose control of the very things that are claimed to differentiate their members from those lacking a professional designation: quality control and oversight of educational standards; a transparent and enforced code of ethics; a defined duty to serve the public interest; the development and dissemination of a relevant body of knowledge; and a demonstration of leadership on some of the great issues that reach across the whole of the built environment.

It is one of the conclusions of the Commission that the threats and pressures for change that the professions face, if not yet existential, are real and profound, and demand change. This is, however, balanced by an equally powerful conviction that there is an opportunity for the professions to find a new position for themselves that captures the best of the values of their past, while being relevant to 21st century circumstances and the challenges we face, and valuable to both their members and society.



Key recommendations

The report identifies six areas where institutions could, by joint action, demonstrate their effectiveness and thereby enhance their relevance and value:

- **Ethics and the public interest** and a shared code of conduct
- **Education and competence**
- **Research and a body of knowledge**
- Collaboration on major challenges, including **industry reform** in the interests of a better offer to clients, **climate change** and **building performance**

Ethics, the public interest and a shared code of conduct

All institutions claim adherence to a code of ethics and an obligation to serve the public interest as a special quality that differentiates their members from those lacking a professional designation. There is, however, confusion between ethics and the public interest, which institutions should resolve by clarifying and codifying a rigorous, shared understanding of expectations at individual, corporate and institutional levels - raising awareness, providing guidance to members, operating a transparent sanctioning process, and moving from a tendency to exclusivity (centred on members' interests) to one of inclusivity (centred on the public interest).

Education and competence

The siloed nature of the built environment's education system needs to be reviewed, on a cross-disciplinary basis to see how institutions can use their badging to promote construction as a career of choice in a way that engages current and future generations, demonstrating relevance, encouraging greater integration and preparing future professionals for work in a multi-disciplinary environment.

Hand-in-hand with this, there is a need to improve the 'professional guarantee' and increase client and public confidence in the competence of accredited professionals by appropriate control of qualifications and entry to the profession, benchmarking the expertise of members, transparent sanctions and possibly becoming agents for disclosure (perhaps through a public feedback system like TripAdvisor?).

Research and a body of knowledge

Institutions should recognise the importance for their future of re-establishing a working body of knowledge, and of disseminating research and best practice - for example, by establishing a joint think tank, a 'King's Fund' for construction, to conduct, develop, curate and disseminate research, and to develop policy for the industry.