Transcript: Inclusive Space: Exploring gender inequality in the built environment

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

Inclusive Spaces, gender, equality, built environment

**SPEAKERS**

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**Paroj Banerjee**: Hello everyone, thank you very much for joining us we'll be starting very soon.

**Sherin Aminossehe**: Afternoon!

**Paroj**: Thank you everyone for joining, welcome to the Inclusive Spaces seminar series at The Bartlett, the Faculty of the Built Environment here at the UCL. I am Dr Paroj Banerjee and I´m a member of the Faculty, part of the Development Planning Unit, also at The Bartlett. My research and teaching broadly focus on the urban built environment and issues of exclusion and dispossession and injustice within it, as well as various responses to these injustices so I’m personally really interested and invested in the seminar series that is committed to asking how systemic inequalities are embedded within the built environment and what can be done to make the built environment fair, just and equitable for everyone, but particularly those who have been historically disadvantaged. So, I´m really glad and really delighted that so many of you have joined us and really glad that Sherin is here with us today to take this conversation further, as we have a really interesting discussion lined up for you today, and we are really fortunate to have a Bartlett alumna Sherin Aminossehe here, who is currently the director of infrastructure and race champion in the UK Ministry of Defense. And in this event, as we explore gender inequality in the built environment Sherin is going to specifically talk about her experiences in a male dominated industry, both at The Bartlett and in a professional career.

A few housekeeping information before we begin and I need to let you know that the session will be recorded and added to the faculty YouTube channel, The Bartlett website and forwarded to registered attendees. We encourage you to submit a question at the at any point during the lecture by clicking on the Q&A function at the bottom of your screen. Feel free to submit your own questions or upload others, we will hear Sherin´s presentation during the first half of the session and begin the Q&A in the second half, and the program will end at 2pm so Sherin without further delay I am going to really invite you and ask you to take the stage.

**Sherin**: Thank you so much for that kind introduction and you know really delighted to actually be invited to speak to this day it's always particularly special when, you know, your home university ask you to come and speak, so thank you very much. Just a little bit of an introduction so I’m going to talk a little bit about how. As when I was invited to speak how I ended up becoming an architect, and then up at the Ministry of Defence, so this is a little bit of a life story chapters, but interspersed with things from my own experience on how we can make our profession, particularly in terms of architecture, but also occasionally varying towards broader property, which is what I do these days, more inclusive and more diverse in really all of its meanings and I want to talk about five areas.

One is talking about the very foundation, so about how we can encourage that diversity and inclusion in different ways of thinking. And people into the profession right from childhood, so those very early years. The second area is about architectural education. And the third is very much about the workplace, and I will talk a little bit about my time as an architect, but also starting in in the sort of second bit so, really about my time in the civil service and the fifth area or the four sort of more global area is really about what I’m calling external bodies, so the role of the press, media, professional bodies, but also the role of the client, to which is kind of where I see myself now.

So, a little bit about myself I’m going to start from childhood, but don't forget, don't worry this isn't going to be some long story. So, I was actually born in Iran, I speak Farsi, I still speak Farsi fluently. And I lived in Iran until the age of six where my parents decided to move to the UK because they didn't want me to grow up in that kind of environment. Now my mother is an architect, my father is a civil engineer, and they had a property development company in Iran. And so, they left all that, because of me and came to the UK to London a little bit more, just to make you smile, family background here my grandfather was fair and my other grandfather was in civil servants, so you could say I didn't really stand much of a chance. And, as I was growing up, I suppose I had those role models around me a family, having done these kinds of things. Even so, I still sort of aspired to become an astronaut, doctor or briefly a lawyer I’m not quite sure what came into me but there we go. Briefly, a lawyer and I even at one stage thought that I might go want to go into the diplomatic service. But anyway, I ended up as an architect, and I remember from an early age, seeing my parents, bringing work home, my mother bringing drawings home, and I was always really attracted to that area. The other thing I want to talk about is actually so based on my own childhood, when I was growing up, some my favourite toys were Lego you'd probably not be particularly surprised, but in my day, Lego wasn't this gendered type that you see now so Lego friends with pink and purple and flowers and do nice things. It was all one kind of thing and that's one of the things I want to go on in my first area which I’m calling diverse foundations.

I believe in encouraging children, really, really young, this is my personal opinion, and some of you will disagree with this. I personally have a bit of an issue with gendered toys which are for girls and toys which are for boys and I, and I find that not particularly helpful and also in the areas of construction. And Lego is one of those fundamental toys that starts you in that creative journey of building and putting things together. And it's a shame that we have to say that there are girls things, and there are boys things rather than just allowing children to be children and doing that bit of creativity. And I think the first story besides Lego I’m going to talk about is an architect Barbie. Now I’m not sure how many of you know, architect Barbie and for those of you who haven't seen her you can just imagine her. So, architect Barbie has a sort of frozen style frosted blue dress with pink fluffy things around the area and the thing which personally upsets me most is she has a pink drawing tube. And a little miniature pink model of a Barbie doll packs now, whilst I really applaud the idea of actually encouraging girls to go in that area and be encouraged to do architecture through adult like Barbie and I think there's several problems with this because, within this you're actually already limiting people into thinking okay well you're just going to design houses and this is what game look like and because it's the girls it's got to be pink. I was actually thinking of wearing a pink top today, but thought I was not going to be particularly nice to that Barbie, so I thought I’d go for a more neutral black. But it's something that we need to consider and actually if you think about the diversity and inclusion until relatively recently Barbie has got that various stereotyped white, blonde certain figure kind of look to it, and personally I don't find that helpful.

So, it's about looking at those variety of things that are available to children fairly early on, I did a little bit of a Google search, as I was also preparing for this talk to say that if you have let's say a younger child primary school  age we're just going on to secondary school what kind of resources are available for them to start learning about architecture and the wider world, besides sort of looking at books and so on, so forth, so I looked at, workshops and I did find a good RIBA workshop called Design Quest for 7 to 10 year olds, which I was quite encouraged about. Something that the AA is doing and the occasional workshop by the Royal Academy. And, and I know personally of things that the V&A, for example, does, but they were few and far between. So, who and this is my next question, who is filling that vacuum of encouraging those children who don't necessarily know about architecture, who you are not like me to have privileged access to lots of people who've done this before and to help them actually along their way into a profession and actually make our profession a bit more diverse from the ground up. What is the role of schools within that, how much do they really know to encourage kids beyond making spaghetti bridges, you know once in a while. How are we, encouraging them to go through it and I remember a time when I was doing my education, discussion about architecture, you might do about the pyramids you do about classical architecture, when you studied Renaissance, Italy, but the more global side was very much missing.

So, it's about again if we're going to that diverse more inclusive space, how can you encourage children from different backgrounds to feel that it is a place for them. Rather than a place, and if they do, through you, to be expected to design neo-Palladian villas, for the rest of their life, not that there's anything wrong with neo-Palladian villas, I hasten to add.

I also wanted to talk about outreach, so outreach as an early stage, I think it would be good if we start looking at a greater outreach process from universities, as well as for professional bodies say becomes much more part of the course rather than the occasional thing that is put on, and I know some people are reaching towards that area, but there needs to be more done to fill that gap. So just going on to my own experience, I spent most of my educational life at The Bartlett, I did my degree, I did a master's in property development and planning. I spent a little bit of time part at the GPU doing a couple of unit modules which I absolutely adored and I also did my professional practice exam so you know, probably if you cut me through it will say Bartlett at some point. And I think part of our issue with architectural education and how inclusive it is or not to certain parts of society is partly the length of the course which I’m sure many of you have seen discussed in magazines and newspapers, but also, I would say the cost. See if you start going through the cost of an architectural education beyond the fees that you have to pay - if you think about laptops, software, materials, printing, printers and model making and so on, so forth, and that doesn't include, then the cost of trips and so on, so forth, and if you happen to be London based, living in London and so on. It really becomes quite prohibitive after a while and things like The Bartlett scholarship bursary is a really good start, but we need that to be much more across the board if we're going to be as inclusive as possible.

The other thing I wanted to touch on with generally architectural education as a whole, architecture is usually much more subjective rather than objective and during my time at the Bartlett you could probably get through the whole course without having ever designed a single building. And some of you who are here, currently can tell me whether you could still get away with that or not I’d be quite intrigued to know, but I definitely had those. On the same year as me who definitely did get through a whole five years of architectural education and never touched the building. Which is quite interesting, and you know and speaking positively about it, it is about a creative thought process, which is a really interesting way of teaching people. And it teaches you to think differently, and it teaches you also because of the type of architectural education that we are giving about becoming much more confident being able to talk about your designs much more articulately. I think those positive points, though, can also create a barrier for those who aren't as well versed in that role world so again I go back to role models which I will come back to it briefly, but also the way that we teach does encourage that and more confident person, the one who is more articulate it teaches you know the cult of personality which then goes on to the workplace that can be off putting. Some increase in their nature can be quite adversarial and you know I can say positive things I can say negative things about it as well. And I’ve learned a lot from critics, I’ve become a much more resilient and robust person as a result of it as very little that phases me.

But, also, that kind of education is not necessarily for everyone, so in terms of and I’m saying I’m using inclusion in its broadest sense now but what are we doing to actually prepare people in terms of speaking skills confidence and growing that confidence before, for example, they stopped on their first script. And it would be interesting to hear about your experiences of that sort of pre teaching if it now goes on. Before you go through that experience what is the support for students who don't feel as comfortable talking and actually feel anxious in those kinds of settings so I’m talking more about neurodiversity, for example in that experience, but also people who just don't frankly like it, you know, not everybody likes being in front of a camera or standing in front of 20 of their peers cross tutors in terms of doing that. And also, I think, if you don't see people like you on your course or people who are teaching you or have a certain structure of society, you will also think you know is that a place for me as well. And it's again through that bottom up, encouraging, but also that recruitment of a more diverse roster of tutors as well, and then the other thing I would say is in terms of encouraging that broader inclusion, how do we teach about different cultures and when we do history of architecture, for example, and again I’m talking from my day, which was a while ago.

So, again, I would hope that this has changed, but how much do we talk about architecture of other cultures of other countries, and so on, so forth. Rather than a set standard that goes through, I don't see even now, when I go into the bookshop or other places, you don't see that many publications about really diverse architecture it's still have a certain type that is considered to be accepted, rather than others so again I, I would say that that could be off putting so mixture of cost role models seeing people like yourself and seeing that growth. But it's not just I would say education it's also when we go into the workplace, and this is what I want you to if possible start putting some thoughts about what criteria you'd like your ideal role model to have, what are the positive personality traits not the negative ones, please, what would make you look up to a role model architect, or otherwise, that you want to mould your talent towards the gate you know. I see that person aren't they amazing, this is why I want to be like them, so what are those traits so I’m looking at the sidebar to see your thoughts and I’ll bring that in a second.

So, after I did my time at the Bartlett's I worked in a variety of architectural practices from the more sort of personality-driven at Terry Farrell, where I learned a lot about urban design, to a much broader-faced like HAK, where I did a lot of international travel and learned a lot about how to deal with clients and do project management - two very, very different sides of the same thing. And workplace, we know that actually the statistics on diversity and inclusion gets much worse as you go into the workplace, for example, there is more women in architectural education but, as you go through the ranks in the workplace, they start reducing. And that's down to a variety of facts again those people who are far more learned than me who have spoken about this quite articulately. But have we really truly embraced flexible working for example as a profession, the pandemic I think has certainly helped, but probably some of you on the call I read horror stories about people made to work through furlough, for example, and even now there is very much a culture of presenteeism I would say, is in a number of practices that we need to get after if we want a more diverse profession. And also, I don't think face to face is always good but it's not always best to one of the things that I thought was always good in our in a showcase we had a telepresence room where we worked with our international colleagues in different parts of the world and you could do a lot of collaborative drawing on a ginormous whiteboard and so on, so forth, and developed projects and I’ve actually spent three days in that room with breaks, I hasten to add  and actually it was it was a really, really enriching process and that can be done through a normal laptop you don't have to have an extremely expensive equipped room to do that thing.

So, that was the other thing I just wanted to mention in terms of looking at the way we work, but also it's about the language you use so when I first started working at Chapman Taylor was I was wearing a T shirt which I absolutely adored and somebody turned around to me and said I didn't know trick tower had a cantilever. And I was making that person, a cup of coffee at the time, you can imagine what I threatened to do to the cup of coffee if that comment was ever mentioned again, but you know. This is, this is one of a general thing that women have to put up within the workplace, but also, you know other protected characteristics will have their own set of comments that some of you may want to talk about as well. And I’ve also as a client I am somebody who I was working with talk, I mentioned that I was a bird I was a with a colleague of mine, and he referred to us as birds and I exchanged an interesting letter with that individual and I reminded him that birds don't chair meetings birds don't run countries, as you know, female prime ministers and presidents and birds most definitely don't pay his consultant fees. So, our relationship did improve but it's shocking that actually even in this day and age, that people can do that kind of thing and think that it's all right. And of course we have that whole thing the elephant in the room, particularly around women about child care as well, but If we also look more broadly in terms of other characteristics, we know that there is still a certain degree of racism in the profession, especially if you, for example, look at the AJ survey, which is not really what we should be after I can't see many comments on ideal role models and characters. So hopefully that's not a negative you don't think there is there is too much going on.

And I just want to throw out some ideas about a more diverse workplace and the civil service, we have something called the summer diversity in terms, so people who would not normally think about going into the civil service or a certain department. We host them for about six to eight weeks, and they get a flavour of what it's like, but they have to be from a diverse background, so it's actually encouraging so whether it's social, you call it, economic, whether it is you know, ethnic minorities, etc, etc. And you know there's quite a high hit rate of people who actually when they are experiencing it for themselves, they actually think this is quite an interesting career. Why don't we think about doing something like that, with architecture for students who are doing GCSE and A-levels and open their eyes to what that kind of creativity should be about. Rather than just, you know the child of a parent who works in a practice where you are just actually, you're doing the same thing it's about people who have access, rather than people growing that interest. it would be lovely to see more apprenticeships again so that diversity and flexibility and actually one of the things that I don't think we do very well as architects within companies is talent program and career progression and actually looking at all, rather than just following people who are in the same mould as we are and there's my front doorbell seen the joys of flexible working.

The final bit, I want to get to in the last few minutes is sort of my transition as an architect over to the dark side, as it were. So, in late 2011 I made the move from going from an architect into the civil service, now I always will be an architect, you know, deep down in my heart so it's not as if I’ve left the profession, but one of the things that made me change my mind and decide that I wanted to do something different, is, I had a group of Saturday clients who were brilliant, by the way, but I got caught in a one in 1000 year floods and we were actually doing the design to stop the flooding and then of course the flooding records were swept away because they're in a basement because there was a flood, and you know you can't really make it up. And it got me thinking about what my priorities were about all doing all these grandiose master plans and different parts of the world, and whether they were really leading to a change or not. And that was really, I was going to say watershed moment, but that's probably a pun too far, it was a time for me where I thought about what I wanted to do and the civil service we're looking at their property portfolio at the time and I applied and, as they say, the rest is history.

So, I started off in Cabinet Office, where I was the executive, where I ended up being the executive director for the government property unit. And then also I then did a sabbatical in 2018 and 2019 where I re-joined the private sector, again on the client side working for the developer lend lease to decide whether I want to stay in the private sector will go back to the civil service. But I decided that I actually missed the complexity and actually really the sense of purpose that the civil service gave me, so I ended up in all places, and one of my mentors that actually said to me don’t go into it, you really won't like it. But clearly I’m terrible at taking advice, so I applied for the job, and my daughter and it's been a really rich and really brilliant experience working with some very committed and very driven people so I’m really enjoying myself, but one of the things that that has started to get me to think about during these years, is also the responsibility of what I now consider myself as a client and I think there's some things that we can do, but also we can link into the workplace area as well, so when I was in the Cabinet Office, they're all institution chartered surveyors we're running a diversity and inclusion charter which we were one of the founding members of  I would love to see the RIBA, for example, doing that and it's not just about diversity as we might think about it, but it's also about inclusion, so how you get each and every employee to feel involved within the decision making to a reasonable extent within the organization, so people feel that they're invested in, and they are listened to. And it would be good if we could do that for the built environment in general but also architects, in particular.

I also think clients have a role in terms of procurement so asking for diverse teams, looking at the constituent members, rather than what some people always do is give me a load of people in grey suits who will look the same of a certain age, not that there's anything wrong with that if they're the best suited for the job, but you do kind of wonder and get a bit suspicious why they always look the same. And usually, they look the same as the managing director and the chief, so that probably tells you something, but we should be driving more in that area. I also want to see more I think coming up from the ARB and the RIBA and I know they do a certain amount in this area already, but a talk that was given by the ARB at my part three course always stays with me, it was literally an hour somebody very, very serious came into the room and spent an hour just telling us all the terrible things that would happen to us if we break the professional conduct code, so they did a really good job because it stayed with me to this day. But wouldn't it be good if we can think about the more positive aspects as well, so when you're regulating a profession to think about all the positive things that you can regulate as well, not just the negative. And then I wanted to also talk about the press and there's some really good things happening, so I wanted to particularly give a shout out to Sam McClary and Damien Wild from the states, because Sam in particular has been driving a lot of talent programs through the state, because that talks about future leaders and doing a lot about diversity and also the same in property week as well, but these are two sort of property broadsheets.

On the architect side, the Architects Journal has also been doing quite a bit of work in this area, but you probably will notice that I’ve just said three titles at least three that I’m aware of and it would be good to see some of the more hashed light foot fashion high end of architecture magazines also being a little bit more overt in this area. About talking about the diversity and inclusion in its broader sense, and also in terms of design it doesn't again have to be about personalities, it can be more broad and the other thing that I just wanted to talk about in terms of responsibilities more broadly as clients is about the relationships that you want to create with those who you work with and also having that mindset of wanting to develop those relationships and the growth behind them. I think it's really important that those in those positions encouraged things such as mentoring and coaching but also, more importantly, something that we don't see as often is sponsorship, particularly in a diversity context. And sponsorship I think is very much overlooked in place of mentoring or coaching because sponsorship, to my mind, is much more active and is a natural progression of mentoring, where you start actually going round for the person that you are mentoring and saying I know this person, they are really good, you should consider them for the job. And some people have said, oh, but you know I don't think that's right, I don't feel it's comfortable… Well frankly we've been doing it, since the beginning of time, the old boys network, a lot of getting work is about contacts and there's nothing wrong with that, but the issue becomes when you don't have those contacts, when you don't have the background, when you don't have the privilege, when you don't have that access, you are disadvantaged. And this is where sponsorship is really, really important, and one of the things that, particularly those in a position of authority and power can do really well and it's their time to give back. So, talking about giving back I’m just over the half hour I’ve taken you through some of my thoughts about diversity and inclusion and how we can make more inclusive spaces, but more inclusive profession and I’d be really, really keen to hear your thoughts, thank you for listening.

**Paroj**: Thank you for sharing that because there was so much process from that and I’m glad that it's recorded because you know, then I can sort of go back and listen to, because if you have so many concrete steps action points in the family to look for what. We are excited to get some questions in the Q&A and you've had one person ask about the traits in a mentor but before that I would like to ask you a question about you know across your rich experience of working across sectors and you also have your own experience from within The Bartlett or you know, in the workplaces, my question is: it's one thing and all institutions now have institutionalized the you know, the process of complains and procedures right but not everyone feels confident to go up to the point of a complaint stage in case of a you know unpleasant situation. How do you think, well what other support networks should be encouraged, or should exist in order to sort of help people, even people like you, cope with what they're experiencing or someone else is experiencing?

**Sherin**: yeah, and I can personally sympathize with that because I’ve been in that position, myself and it's really difficult, you know, should I speak to, should I even speak up? And the way we create these situations, usually you have to go to HR and make a complaint, there is very little sort of middle way and I think that is really a shame, because it discourages people from doing so because you're worried really about your career, or if you're an educational establishment what might happen to your grades, and so on, so forth. So, I think there's several ways of tackling that I think it would be helpful to have a group of if it's in a workplace, a sort of an employee-led body that you can go to anonymously and actually talk about your concerns, rather than going straight to HR. And they can almost effectively mediate between you but create a much more comfortable and safe space to do it if it's within academia, I think, a small student body like that would be helpful. Or actually have people if the workplaces have a certain size that can carry it, people like, for example, as you know, as I am in the media race champion for example race network around it, or you know for gender or diversity and inclusion champion. Or if it is not, you know related to that generally an employee representative and I’m not talking about trade unions here, but it could be that somebody can go to and actually have that safe conversation before deciding whether they want to make the next step, or whether they want somebody to mediate for them behind it there shouldn't be that black and white choice of oh, I have to go and complain about something.

**Paroj**: Thanks, Sherin now there are a few questions coming in and really interesting and thought provoking one so, if I’m not taking any particular questions that's because similar questions have been asked and replying to you, for the sake of time we’re trying to sort of merge them together. One question that Alexandra is asking is how do you think the regulators could be introducing positive brushes.

**Sherin**: I’m going to wave to Pam here, hi Pam so I know Pam from a while ago and I think it's okay I’ll probably get shot for this as a member of the ARB.  I think what would be helpful, is the ARB has got a really important code of conduct that us as architects and also the RIBA does as well that we have to abide by and that's right I think it's probably time to look at the code of conduct and think how to bring it probably more up to date to include some of the things that we have been talking about. But also, I think it's doing the narrative in a different way, so rather than it the conversation again.  When I experienced this talk was a number of years ago, so my information could be a bit out of date. But when you're talking about these you can reframe it in a positive way So what are the positive characteristics that we are looking for in an architect, rather than just talking about all the things you shouldn't do now, you have to be in a regulatory context, you have to be clear about all the stuff you're not allowed to do. Because that's how the conduct proceedings and stuff take place, I totally get that, but I think there is also a place but looking at the positive narrative of you know the previous conversation we talked about role models and what do you look up to is, what are the characteristics that we are looking for in a good architect what they should be good at personality wise, what are we looking for you know those traits rather than saying that you know if you do this terrible things will happen to you.

**Paroj**: Okay, thank you, Sherin we have to some other questions, and they're asking in light of your discussion what advice would you give to those considering or about to enter the built environment profession, with one more protected characteristics and the related question is what age, do you think it's appropriate to introduce this at school age children?

**Sherin**: I think it's never too early and I’ll come back to the other question as well as I don't think it's ever too early, you know if a child can hold a pencil and draw a house basically, then you can start having a conversation with them, of course, it different ages, you will have different understandings of you know what that might mean. But it is, it is never too early to talk about a profession and built environment that I probably would question what a five year old might understand about becoming quantity surveyor, for example, but you know you never know they might like counting their Lego bricks and I think you can have the conversation in different ways, you know, I was slightly speaking tongue in cheek about building those bridges, but those spaghetti bridges are a start, but it's also encouraging them through different types of their curriculum, for example. And when you do different topics about bringing in architecture and built environment, what it means to be living in an urban environment, rural environment, etc, etc, but you know geared towards that understanding your child and also the role of an of an architect, or something that architects have progressively complained about is the role of the architect sort of decreasing in the past few decades, but there it's a really good opportunity to say that actually architecture is really exciting because it's one of the only careers, that you can have that actually hopefully positively impact the built environment to make a change and that's not just physically, but also from a socio economic point of view as well. And it has a lasting legacy, how many other professions, can you say that you actually leave a legacy and to actually better that place that you are part of a little bit like the Athenian oath, if you like.

And in terms of the advice for people coming in from a different ethnic background as obviously I was myself.  So, I think I would say, the most important thing is to have confidence in your own ability, I think that is really important, if you've got onto an architecture course or you're thinking of going into it, then you must have some really good traits and talents to be able to consider that, so you know you're going to be artistic you can be reasonably numerous. You will have you have an ability to think in three dimensions all of that is actually quite an impressive group of skills in the first place so believe in yourself. The other thing is to be really proactive in the way that you develop your networks so look at different areas, they Asian Women overachievement do a Property Awards that also considers architects the RICS will be very happy to speak with you, there are lots of people out there, and if anyone wants to contact me by my Twitter channel I'm happy to give them contacts of places they could go to but start building your contacts, even before. Say A) you get a sense of what the industry is like, B) what area of the industry you want to go to because even architecture is hugely broad, and you can do lots of different things in it. And also look at the kind of places, you may want to work in so always be that step ahead but that's also the same advice I would give to anyone from any background going into architecture. But I would say contacts is key, think about the support network and start getting those sponsors and mentors in for yourself early and never be put off never be pushed off believe in yourself.

**Paroj**: I think that's the hardest. Believing that you know what you're trained in or would it capable of is actually worth, and I think this is the first time, we need to face. We have a question regarding how good the ARB and force better work life balance, to ensure women can look up to the children and continue in architecture.

**Sherin**: That's a tough question, I am not… I don't think there is an easy answer, because I think the only way you could probably enforce it is looking at I don't know. I wonder, and I’m just so forgive me for the person who's asked this question I’m sort of thinking as I’m speaking as I’m thinking, I wonder whether it is through existing diversity and inclusion laws that we have in place, so the fact that you know you have to treat everyone equally and so on so forth. But, to be perfectly honest I’m not sure how that fits in with the regulatory remit of the RIBA and I think act of Parliament that is linked to it, I think that's probably pay people better but it's a very interesting question, and it would be intriguing to consider how possible, that would be and actually therefore what the impacts of it would be as well, I would probably say it is better to get companies to actually understand the importance of women in the workforce and flexible working, not just for women, actually everybody. And it's better, but it takes longer.

**Paroj**: You have a question from Michelle young was also earlier resonated a lot with experiences that you've had I’m going to read the question our sake of time. And it is, do you think enough is done with education of architects in terms of showing the variety of direction your career can take.

**Sherin**: So, in my experience, I don't think, at least in my day it wasn't I he came across sort of urban regeneration, urban design and master planning, not because I really studied at university, but because  I was quite intrigued about working for Terry Pharrell and incited a spark in me that wasn't there when I was just designing objects even I thought that's where my future lay so I don't think we do, and sometimes we are too object orientated, I would say in courses, you see, you do see bigger you know the sort of end of year shows you do see bigger projects and sort of more grandiose stuff but, quite often there isn't that much context because you're very much focusing on that beautiful drawing, which is important in terms of learning presentation skills, but I don't think we sufficiently teach young people and graduate about what parts are it to them, and I remember, even in my time when I went ended courses and heaven forbid on the fourth floor, which was where the planners were at the time. It was literally Sharon you've gone to the dark side; you know, how could you speak spending a year doing property and development masters and actually it was best decision I made. It broaden my horizon say we should definitely be doing well, but then that goes through the you know the curriculum and the cost structure that we have that needs to allow for it.

**Paroj**: yeah, absolutely we have a question from Sonia who has a similar question. So, when you're asking about what role, do you think architects have liaising with Commissioners of public spaces such as schools to encourage participation and inclusion of the children and young people who will inhabit the space, as well as the staff in the design process, and how can such spaces, be made more gender inclusive? My extension to the question is in terms of our predictive categories, how do you bring these questions in as someone who's practicing and maybe sort of how do you resolve conflict because the built environment is so protecting so contested and there, and there is a tendency to think of predict categories as homogenous but you come across way, I mean I’m sure that that's been experienced but the lesson is actually complex when you're working on the ground, how do you address some of these questions?

**Sherin**: I would do actually a bit further back, so I say that actually you've got to think about that collaboration and inclusion right from the early days, architectural education. Because we don't encompass that idea sufficiently so actually I … if that's Michael Edwards I’m going to say something, because, so in that property development course so Michael was the main course Professor there one of the really interesting units that we did was about that inclusion and the stakeholders. And I didn't think I fully appreciate the time but as I’ve been practicing it's become a lot more clear to me, and that that course has always resonated with me is how you can take residents in question, the people who are going to be using the buildings, but also those who are surrounding it, as part of the process. It goes back to the adversarial nature, you were taught that you know as architects, you are about design guru in that perfect vision is yours and therefore you know you should have the mindset. In fact, do because you're not designing a building for yourself and that's what you should always remember it's not about you. It's about those who use it, those who will see it every day, those who you are, as you said, Sonia the school, you will learn in it, live in it it's not about you at all in fact now you're probably the least important person in terms of you're there to guide, you're there to you know for best practice and the standards and to use your skills and the best way, so I think actually one of the things I have learned, is it you really should not be a tail end thing, which is, I think what happens, sometimes it should be right at the very outset and I’m really pro actually collaborative brief development, which I think is really important, so actually developing the brief with the client right from the outset and the users and those who are going to be impacted with it, so you actually start in a positive way and actually I think if people did more of that when it comes to things like planning permissions which goes back to your point about the adversarial stages of building. Actually developers and architects would find that they have a much more positive relationship and impact when it came to that point now, you can only also collaborate to a certain extent you can't completely designed by committee. But you can definitely give a much bigger boys and just think you know if you're designing a school What should those children learn from actually being able to design their own classrooms having a say what their schools could be used for and actually there could be stuff that we would overlook, especially as adults or you know people who are from a different background that we might not think about.

**Paroj**: yeah, absolutely we have a question about I think online talks, as well as meetings and courses like this fantastic one really encouraged greater inclusion, or, for example, people with carrying responsibilities and people living far away I’m disappointed at some events now returning doing in person only I would really appreciate that a hybrid form remains in place so that a greater number of people can participate. It's a really it's more of a comment but it's an extension of what you've been discussing in terms of inclusion and the flexibility and in terms of how you involve people with the different responsibilities, be it carrying responsibility or other responsibilities. A question from Jackie to Nova is in terms of characteristics of the built environment, how would you envision, for example, a city block design with gender equality in mind.

**Sherin**: So brilliant question, it could probably be the subject of a thesis couldn’t it, rather than one minute response. And look, I think I think there's people far more qualified than me to answer that question but there's you know, a whole body of work going to early 20th century about the way that kitchens were designed and so on, so forth, but I think it goes beyond design and, and the reason I’m saying it goes beyond design is you know you can make the designers gender inclusive as you may like so there's certain things you can do about safety, security and so on, so forth, but actually if you haven't resolved the intrinsic issues in society, these things will help, but they will never really fully address it so whilst I’d love to say as an architect design is the answer, I think there is a wider context, to be resolved. But as I said, I’m sure there's many people on this call, who better place than me towards that.

**Paroj**: We recommend, starting with Jane Jacobs.

**Sherin**: Absolutely Jane Jacobs, I think, is a really, really good start and there's lots of architecture and actually Paroj you've written on this as well.

**Paroj**: and next question, Emma says that, following your comment and collaborative thinking, would you say a bit more about what about the governments or landings legislation has had on your work.

**Sherin**: So when I was in Cabinet Office, we used to have actually facilities management and brought us off landings as part of our remit, but then it moved over to the Crown commercial service so I was involved in the early development of that and so as a Ministry of Defense obviously we work with Cabinet Office and crown commercial service on this area and all the contracts that we do are linked to that it's something I’m actually less involved in these days, but if you do want a more detailed answer, I can definitely get a more detailed answer to you, but also being Defence, the answer is going to be slightly different because sometimes of security things we do things slightly differently, but we do collaborate as much as we want and we and we collaborate as much as we can, on things like soft landings and actually adhere to the message of the of the guidance there.

**Paroj**: Thank you, thank you, Sherin. I was just wondering, we have had a good thing, questions are really interesting, and you've been able to sort of take this into various directions. And just wondering if there are any, you talked about role model, and we have heard from only one person about attributes of your model, maybe you would like to as your final you know words talk a little bit about, you know as when, particularly when you were young student what kind of role model, did you miss having?

**Sherin**: So, I'll answer that in two ways, if I may I think the role models that were missing most for me in the work place were having strong female role models in senior positions, and I would say that's still there, to this day I’ve been from sort of literally one male dominated area to another that's been the trajectory of my career. But, in a way, I will say, been lucky that I’ve had you know I come from a long line as my husband would say of scary women so quite strong women, so I think that did slightly make up for it, but I do feel a bit, it is a shame that they weren't there, and as a bit, and I think but a reason, so the other way I would talk about it is, I think that absence made me much more determined that it was important to succeed and do better, so in a way that spurred me on so I knew that wouldn't necessarily work for everyone, but also I’ve been really lucky in terms of having a number of you know, really good male mentors in my career. So, at Chapman Taylor, I’ve had men who have supported me and championed my career and made introductions and so I’ve been really, really lucky in I think what we don't celebrate, though, is that to have more people going out of their way, as I said earlier, to do that on a more regular basis, and I don't see as much emphasis in architecture. In mentoring and sponsorship and coaching, as I see in some of the other areas, and I think it's something that could really help greatly.

But I am really grateful to those who did support me. And who continue to do so.

**Paroj**: Thank you so much for sharing and thank you to everyone who's joined us.  And as you can see in the chat that Inclusive Spaces is back on Wednesday, the 27th of April with Inclusive Space Currency and Inclusive Attention Economy, which would be constipated with Dr Barbara limits and Dr john Romano both in the Development Planning Unit, so the final details are in the chat.

And we hope to see as many of you as you here today over there, and with this we come to an end of the event, thank you so much Sherin again, and thank you so much to organizers, Stephen Armor and especially a huge thank you to everyone who's joined us today so have a good have a good evening.

**Sherin**: Thank you, bye.