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*How significant a figure is the individual architect?
How do you see architecture's impact on the individual evolving over your lifetime?*

The role of the architect has become more defined over the years and hence architects are more accredited for their work as compared to the past. Over the years, architects have increasingly become almost inseparable with their work, probably because they are part of the process from the very beginning up to the realization of their vision. In contrast, architects in the past couldn't really claim their work, as the process took time. The Cologne Cathedral in Germany for instance took 640 years to complete. This time frame makes it is nearly impossible to assign credit to one individual for the realization of this renowned monument of Gothic architecture.

Whereas some agree that the role of the architect has significantly increased over the years, others maintain that the role of the architect has in fact diminished. "Architects come up with ideas. We're trained to create. We've spent years studying and perfecting our craft," Jody Brown, an architect says. She later goes on to say, "We're trained to create, but, we're asked to facilitate." Architects in the past had more control and creative liberty over what they wanted to design or create. They had the capacity to set the trend by which future forms of architecture would have to conform to. At present though, architects are subject to what their clients want, or forms of architecture that already exist. The clients pay for the service, and not for the vision. Although some element of their personal architectural style may be reflected in what they design, more often than not, they are forced to stick to what the client requires.

One of the marvels of architecture certainly is its ability to relate to individuals in a very profound way. Buildings or other architectural structures are always going to have one

form of effect or another on its occupants, psychologically or physiologically but this is not to say that individuals do not determine the influence of architecture. In their paper, “The Social Value of Public Spaces,” Ken Worpole, a writer and environmentalist, and Katharine Knox, a Principal Research Manager – Housing and Neighbourhoods at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation write, “...people make places, more than places make people.” This statement is valid in the sense that buildings, no matter the purpose for which they are built, can be converted to suit different functions by tweaking through renovation or interior design, as far as the initial building still stands. We can often find school campuses made from the refurbishing of old factories or printing presses made from abandoned residential buildings or even apartments made out of an old football stadium as in the case of the Highbury Stadium in London. Ultimately, the factor which determines the functionality of architectural structures is the need of the society and that is why society is often inclined to improvising and being innovative with the infrastructure available.

However, one cannot write off the power of an architectural design. Research has it that carefully planned out public or common spaces have therapeutic effects on the occupiers of the space. One prominent example of such common spaces is the famous Trafalgar Square in London, which creates a sense of community and belonging. The planning and architecture of common spaces therefore influence people to a large extent. But then again, the success of a particular public space is not solely in the hands of the architect, urban designer or town planner; it relies also on people adopting, using and managing the space; a phenomenon illustrated by the often subjective use of some public spaces in different places, be it a quad in a school campus or a courtyard within the confines of its dormitories. The architect can only do so much but then the true value of the common space depends on the people. Even laws are often a big factor affected the manner in which a public space is used because of some controversial use of common spaces termed, ‘abuse.’

There may also be some laws and protocols in place restricting the kind of designs made by an architect.

In discussions of architecture, the extent to which the architect is a significant figure remains unclear. However, the impact of architecture is rarely in question. There is more to architecture than just buildings. It is intentional. Good architecture is targeted. It seeks out more than just cognitive recognition of its existence, but also brings about emotive responses and ultimately has a conscious or subconscious effect on individuals.