

Accelerating SDG's in Cities through  
**De-colonizing  
architecture's  
curriculum**

Harriet Harriss  
Pratt Institute School of Architecture

**UN**  **HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

**Pratt**

**Pratt  
SoA**

# Pratt's Strategic Plan 2019-2021

- (1) Diversity, equity, and inclusion**  
SDG5: Gender Equality  
SDG10: Reducing Inequality
- (2) Global education**
- (3) Academic excellence**
- (4) Student success**  
SDG4: Quality Education  
SDG13: Climate Action
- (5) Civic Engagement**  
SD11: Sustainable Cities & Communities  
SDG17: Partnerships









Pratt

# Why should architectures curricula deliver the SDG's?



Keil Moe, *The Empire State & Building*, Actar Press, 2017

How can decolonizing architectures curricula  
deliver the SDG's?

# Decolonizing the curriculum Def<sup>n</sup>;

A fundamental interrogation of what the subject matter is, who is teaching it and how it's being taught.

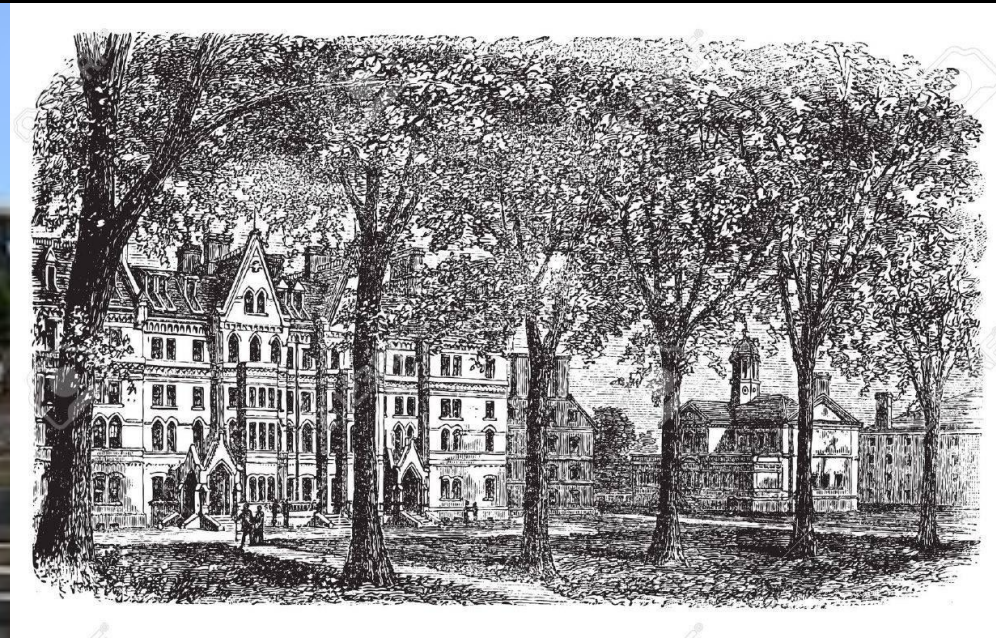
A confrontation of the established and previously unchallenged institutionally generated power structures, systems of privileging, and claims of ownership of authoritative, avant-garde, and world-leading forms of knowledge and culture.



# 1 // Acknowledgement of the origins of academic endowments

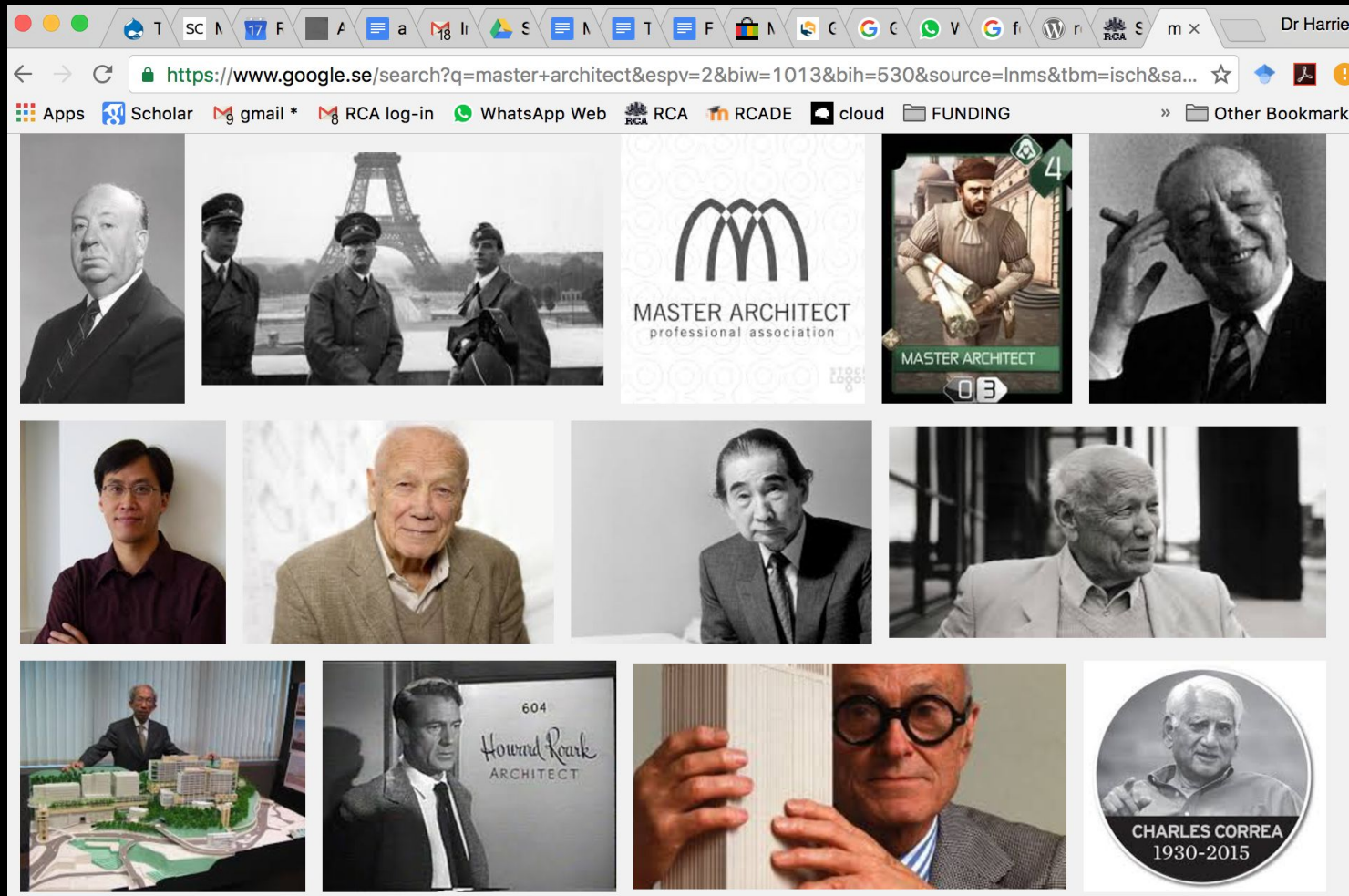


Rhodes Must Fall,  
South Africa 2015



Harvard College buildings, 1767, funded by  
slavery

# 2// Curriculum // knowledge & mastery



21<sup>st</sup> Century Master Architects:  
A recent Google images search for 'Master Architect' revealed no female faces

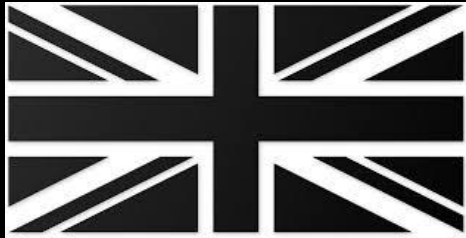
### 3// Affordability is a diversity issue

“Less than 10% of children from working-class families graduate from university compared to 60% of middle-class and wealthy families.”

“The wealth of the median black family in the US had fallen to a mere 10% that of its white counterpart. Put another way, in 1953”

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2018 Working Paper

## 4// Gender, representation and leadership



**1:3**

**female/male architectural  
educators (UK)**

**HOWEVER!**

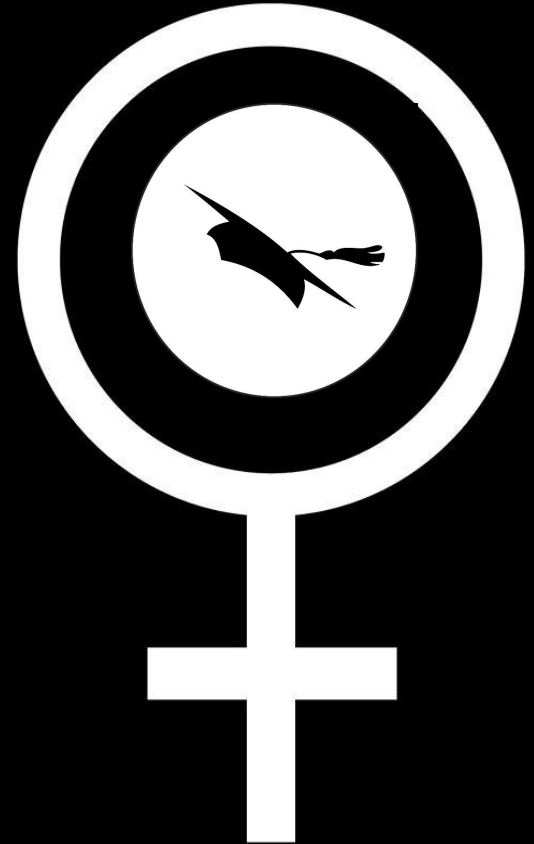
**Only 2.5% (1:40) of UK  
Architecture faculty is  
female at Dean level**



**1:4**

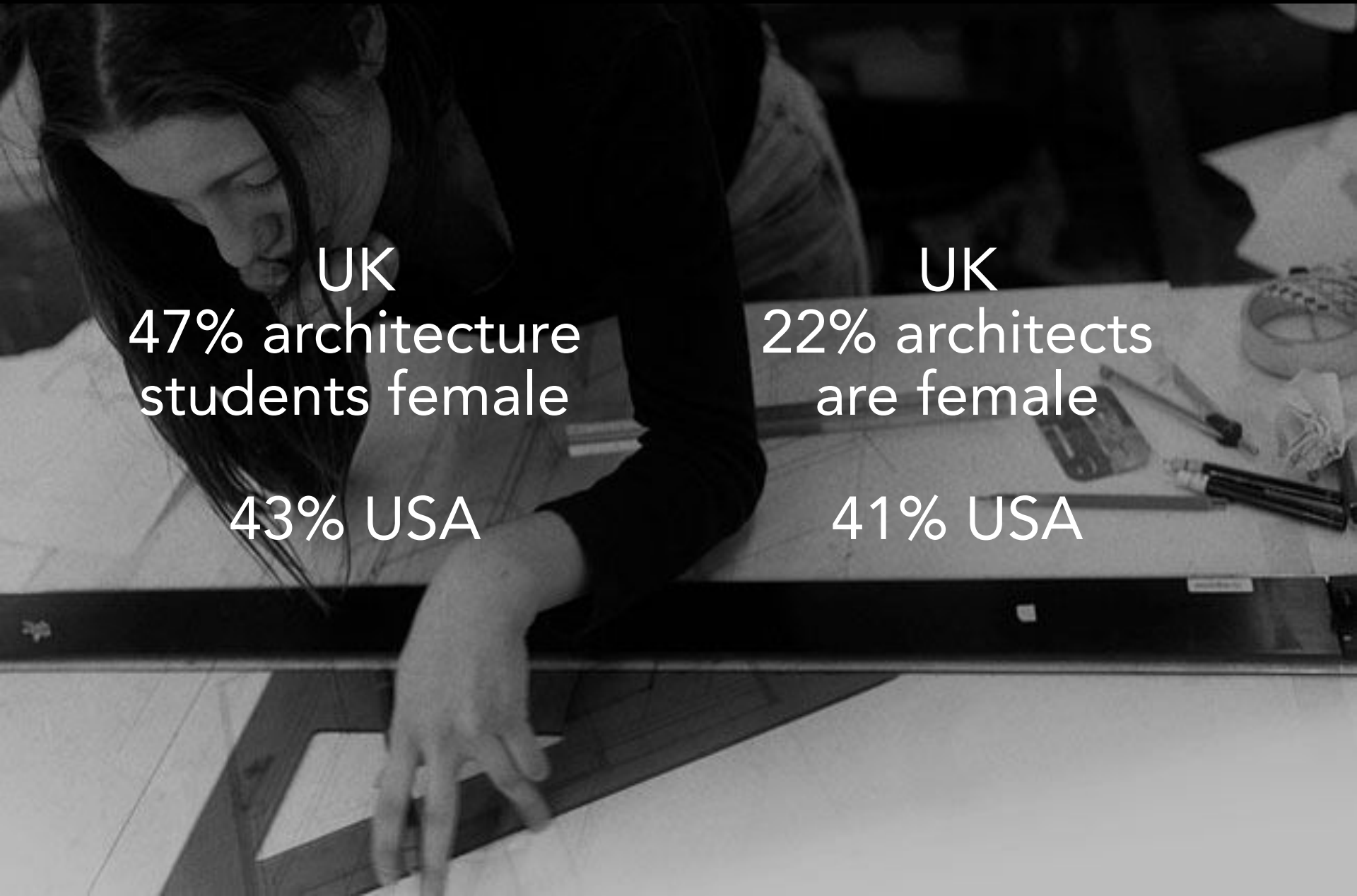
**female/male architectural  
educators (USA)**

**20% (1:5) at Dean level**



**\* A recent US study concluded women  
academics work a 100-hour week when  
childcare is factored in to their workload.**

# 5// Recruitment and progression imbalances



UK

47% architecture students female

43% USA

UK

22% architects are female

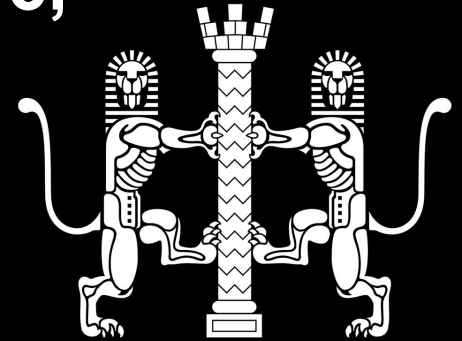
41% USA

## 6// Retention imbalances

**50% drop out rate for students from 'non-white' backgrounds (RIBA 2016, UK)**

**43% feel they need to out-perform Caucasian students in order to be taken Seriously (AJ Survey, 2018).**


**Minority students are 1.5 times more likely to drop out than their counterparts despite 50% of the student population.  
(The Chronicle, Feb 2019)**




# 7// Unconscious bias

ThinkProgress [Follow](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Sign in / Sign up](#)

[HOME](#) [CLIMATE](#) [POLITICS](#) [HEALTH CARE](#) [ECONOMY](#) [IMMIGRATION](#) [FEATURES](#) [VIDEO](#) | [RESOURCES](#)

 **Aviva Shen** [Follow](#)  
New Orleans-based journalist, focusing on criminal justice.  
Feb 7, 2015 · 3 min read

## Students see male professors as brilliant geniuses, female professors as bossy and annoying



CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK

Students tend to think their male professors are “geniuses,” while their female professors are “bossy,” a new [interactive chart](#) reveals. Using data from RateMyProfessors.com, a popular forum for griping or raving about classes, Benjamin Schmidt, a Northeastern University professor, was able to [clearly map out students’ biases](#).

**2018 study of the different language students use to categorize their professors performance on ratemyprofessor.com**

## 8// Linguistic relativity



**Gendered language disadvantages women, and also affects the way in which everyone interprets the world around them.**

Prewitt-Freilino, Casswell, Laakso, 2011, p.268



9 // cultural subjectivity of learning / pedagogic privileging



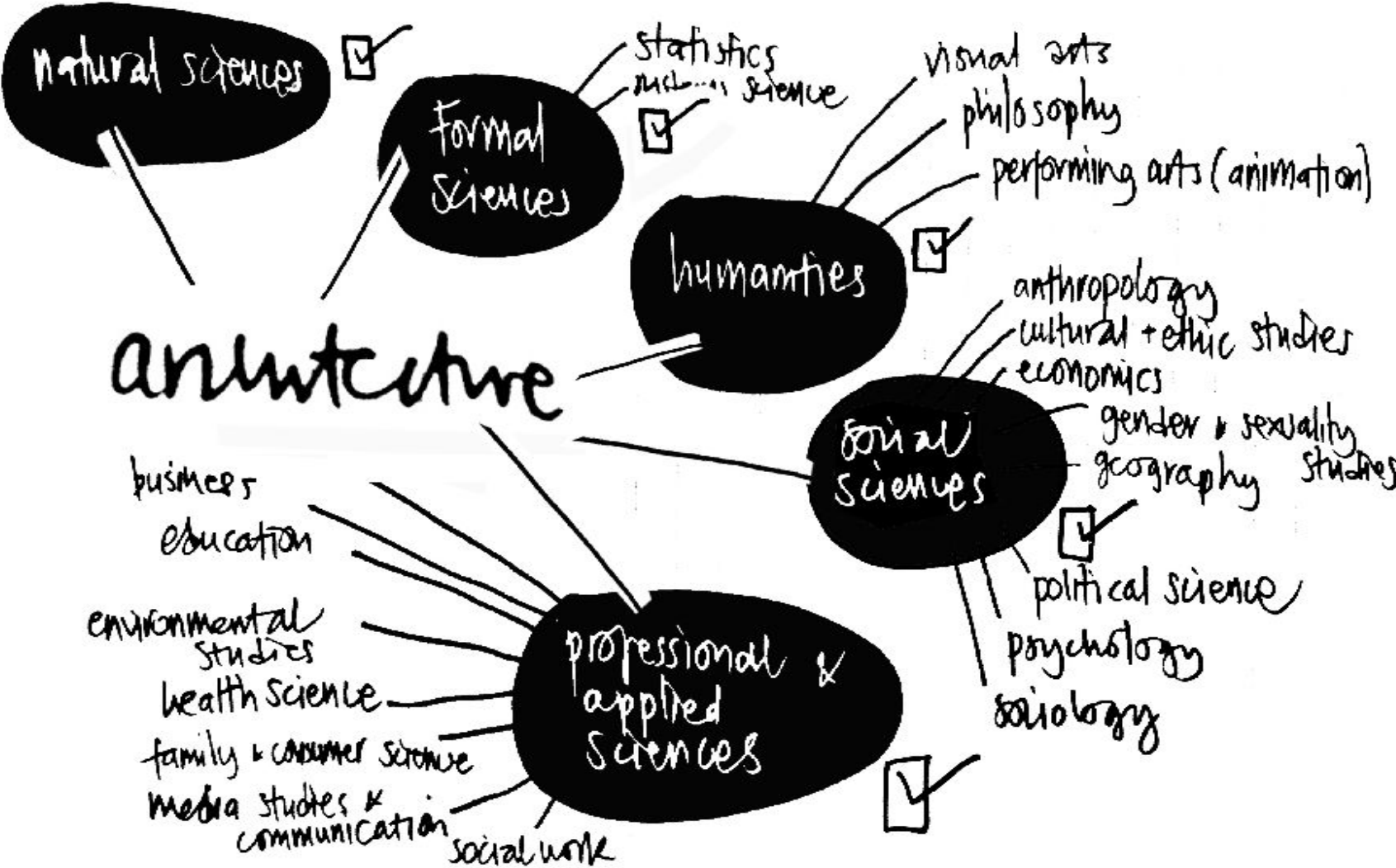
10 // Meanwhile, colonization continues



# Designing a decolonised curriculum as a prerequisite to delivering the SDG's in schools, and then ultimately, into industry



# The epistemological 'DNA' of Architecture?



Abbott, Andrew (2001) 'The Chaos of Disciplines'  
 Oleson, A., Voss, J. (1979) 'The Organisation of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920'



**Thank you.**