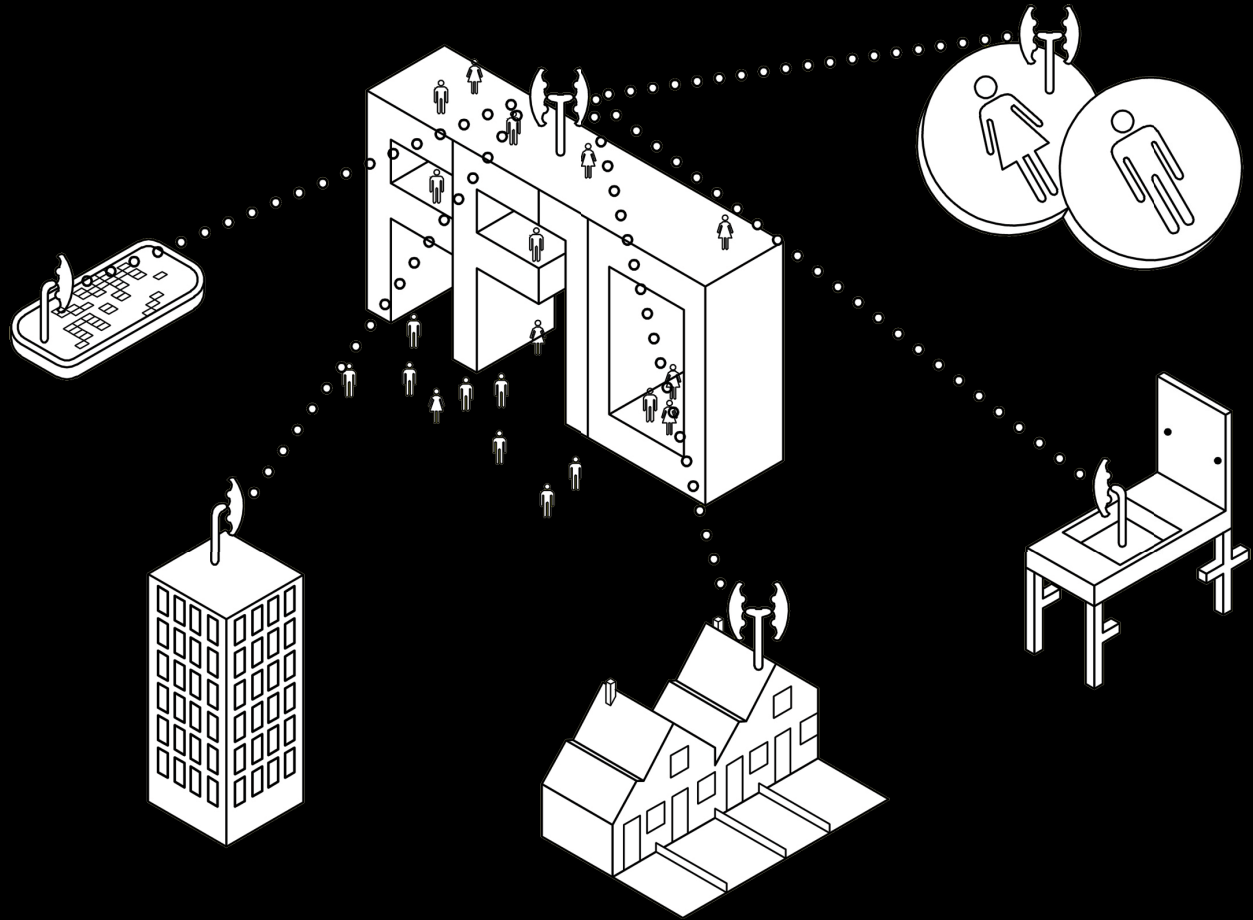


Futures Fair ¹⁰



Building Futures' Flagship Event for the Year

In association with New London Architecture

Let's not just adapt to survive, but adapt to thrive.

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Futures Fair 10

2nd June 2010 - The Building Centre - London

Given the current economic condition, the architecture profession is under pressure to develop its modes of practice, its business models and its collaborative links. Over the past 12 months there has been increasing speculation and suggestion as to how the profession might start to morph into new guises, and what skills architects might need to make these changes.

Futures Fair 10 was a one day conference chaired by Peter Murray that gathered together built environment professionals with people leading innovation in other fields in an event that planted the seeds for new ways of working and fresh collaborations. The fast-paced day included presentations from challenging speakers representing 5 key themes: *technological advancement and its potential impact on the built environment; innovative modes of business and entrepreneurship; landscape resilience; learning from design in different sectors and; emergent forms of community engagement and their place in development.*

Attendees played an active role in the day- with frequent opportunities for discussion and interaction over 5 distinct seminar sessions, a keynote contribution from Richard Wentworth and a unique 'speed date' networking event.



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Advancement

Professor Derek Clements-Croome – Reading University

Technology progresses at such a fast rate that the built environment can struggle to keep up. Professor Derek Clement-Croome opened the advancement session by stating that the technological provisions in buildings are often out of date by the time the building is completed, however most modern buildings are adaptable enough to cope with these changes. Technologies that allow us to measure blood sugar levels, and devices that monitor energy consumption in the home are examples of advancements being driven by improvements in quality of life and environmental sustainability, with the possibility of further technological developments that may include the harvesting of energy generated by human movement, security devices that can recognize you based on your body, and bars that sense your mood and mix drink accordingly! Smart technology in the building construction industry may see smart concrete containing nanotubes to enhance strength, decrease weight and provide self healing and self cleaning properties. At a more fundamental level buildings will be more sensitive- responding to people by BSN (body sensor networks).

Ximo Peris – Crystal CG

Ximo Peris of Crystal CG explored advancements in 3D technologies, and how these are improving the design of the built environment. Referencing the considerable computer generated work on display during the Beijing Olympics; Peris asked 'where does this leave the 'real' world?' Improvements in crowd analysis technology are also affecting the built environment. New technologies are allowing us to test scenarios- from the everyday to emergency



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procedures, within simulated proposals of buildings and public spaces. This is providing us the opportunity to test and improve our built spaces before they exist. Alongside these new tools, Peris explored the concept of the avatar. This online representation of an alternative self implies a whole world of people who live life through fictional characters in a fictional online world. This is doubt over how a life lived online could affect a person- and how this begins to relate to our use of real spaces and places.

Dr Jake Desyllas – Intelligent Space, Atkins Global

Dr Jake Desyllas further explored the benefits of virtual-world analysis on the real world, with a focus on how the visual elements of a design influence the way we navigate a building or space. He referred to the successful re-design of the Oxford Circus crossing as a prime example of visibility analysis done right, blaming 'a massive imbalance in the use of space' for the poor functionality of its previous incarnation.

By creating a virtual equivalent of Oxford Circus' new diagonal crossing, his team was able to simulate user reactions with the space and explore numerous variables. Questions were raised about the functionality of the design, including 'will people bump into each other in the middle?', but the strength of the visibility analysis software answered these questions. Desyllas stated that virtual analysis would continue to become more integrated with architecture and urban design, and could even be used to solve problems within existing buildings. Referencing Clements-Croome's discussion around technological provisions within building design, Desyllas predicted a world where information systems would be less integrated into buildings, as we will have access to a world of information through handheld devices.



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Business

David Marks

- Macro economic situation and recent developments have forced business models to change
- Now business must reflect the pressing need to reduce its reliance on debt
- Businesses need to be encouraged (by regulation, incentives?) to find a new relationship between investment and debt – need to end the beneficial accounting of debt as opposed to investment
- The aim should be to encourage entrepreneurial activity, SMEs, increase stability, create sustainable growth and reward innovation



Geoff McCormick

- Growing realisation that the design process should be shaped and driven by people's experiences (for both consumer product and building design)
- Increasing requirement for designers to specify more clearly, particularly in an outsourced global market with diffuse centres of design, production and sales
- Specification and user experience-based design lead to lean innovation and responsible design, based on real user needs

Dave Hampton

- Critical importance of tackling carbon – the new business imperative
- Reducing carbon makes business sense – lower costs, less energy use, added value, PR and CSR, and insulates business against future rises in energy costs
- Businesses need to take a creative and human approach to reducing energy use to achieve large reductions

Ian Chance

- A new creative and cultural leadership is emerging – ‘creative entrepreneurs’
- Creative entrepreneurs are about maximising social and cultural benefits, not just commercial opportunities
- This holds challenges for architecture as traditionally architecture practices are narrow in their ways of working, and there is little encouragement of entrepreneurship in architectural training

Overarching Message – the power that design has to improve people’s lives at the same time as delivering business success

Q+As

Q) How to get carbon challenge communicated to Government?

- Seek to identify creative approaches – cannot be business as usual
- It can’t just be reliant on Government
- Society/business need believable role models
- Challenge wasteful systems
- Challenge the client

Q) Does bureaucracy and regulation affect creative entrepreneurs?

- Creativity and entrepreneurship are the same thing
- Don’t let regulation get in the way – take chances and work around problems
- E.g. the London Eye was originally a losing entry to an ideas competition but is now a commercial, internationally renowned iconic success story

Observations

- A growing gap between graduates in the UK and what is needed in the global market (not just among architects)
- Greater crossover between faculties, and between education and business is needed (through programmes, and co-location)
- Question whether architects leave university with the required business skills.



Competition

Key Speaker – Professor Marcial Echenique, Cambridge University

Professor Echenique outlined key findings from the Foresight Land Use Futures Report, explaining how land use will come under pressure from 3 key pressures over the coming years:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Changing demography
- New regulatory commitments



Land is a unique and valuable asset, of which less than 10% is currently developed (i.e. housing, infrastructure etc)- there is a misconception that 50% or more of our land is developed (over half of those surveyed believed this to be the case). There is a considerable mismatch between growth of jobs and allocation of housing, and volatility in land-prices as a result of the economy. Next steps: there is a need to establish UK-wide objectives and priorities, ensuring clear decisions at local regional and national levels. Decisions need to reflect a broader concept of the value generated by land – and be applied consistently. There need to be appropriate incentives to guide decisions on land use and land management – that are aligned with national objectives.

Corinne Swain – ARUP Fellow

Corrine Swain drew three key conclusions from her analysis of the report: there is a need to think strategically over longer timescales; there is also a need to find a better system for resolving conflict between competing land uses; and we should future proof decisions e.g. on release of open land.



Fenella Collins - Country Land & Business Association

Fenella Collins emphasised the use of land for food production, and the tensions this can cause, describing land as a versatile asset- and the interdependence of food security and environmental security a key challenge. Much land is in private ownership- there is a disconnect between institutional arrangements and private ownership; there is also a need for a better understand of the way that land is valued.

Design

Richard Wentworth - Sculptor in conversation with Tom Emerson - 6a

Richard Wentworth and Tom Emerson discussed the importance of recognising your culture's past when thinking about contemporary design. Both expressed a fluid view of time, with Wentworth saying 'it's very funny how the future becomes the past very quickly', and Emerson expressing a similar statement, saying: 'the future, like the past, exists in the present'.



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They explored the cedar-burning traditions of Japanese architecture and how designers are continuing to use this ancient method when creating modern, mainstream architecture that maintains strong ties to Asian culture. The burned cedar cladding is used on the outside of the building from the first floor up, with both designers expressing an appreciation of the process of wear and tear, and the suggestions of a past, present and a future for the material. It was questioned how we can get continuity within design between past, present and future, and if it was more important to maintain the spirit of a culture, rather than recreating old working methods. The relationship between a building and its surroundings was explored through 6a's Peckham gallery, which aims to be open and inviting during the day, yet 'like Fort Knox' during the night due to its location and its relationship with estate with management- this was considered a paradox representative of contemporary urban life.

Julian Hakes – Hakes Associates



Julian Hakes represented a timely illustration of the evolving role of the architect, describing his recent shoe design inspired by his practice's work with bridges. Taking a creative de-tour, Hakes found himself asking: 'when was the last time the flip-flop was reinvented?', and after exploring weight transference across the foot, and much rapid-prototyping, a wrap-around flip flop with

a sole only on the heel and ball of the foot was created. The design received global press coverage fuelled both by innovative design and a refusal to allow anyone to be

photographed wearing it. By working in a different medium to usual architectural practice, it was possible to reinterpret footwear, calling the piece 'a reaction against a style applied to a foot, [and] more about a process of support and materiality.' On the current climate for architects, Hakes believes 'You can't wait for the clients, you just have to do your own thing', an attitude encapsulated perfectly by his footwear design.

Gabby Shawcross – Jason Bruges Studio

An architect with a background in set design, Gabby Shawcross further demonstrated the broadening of contemporary architectural practice with his work involving responsive light installations. Tasked to create an untraditional, interactive lobby space, a wall of light containing cameras that respond to the movement of the body and colours in the environment was created. A visitor's movements within the lobby affect the motions of light, and the colours of clothing begin to seep into the displays. A similar installation using cameras and lighting was designed for the V&A, as well as a touring pavilion which displays a panoramic time-based image with movements based on the interactions of those nearby. This particular project took on an even larger audience- streamed in real-time on the O2 website.

Further discussion suggested that the broadening of architectural practice could only be a positive thing, with responsive architecture dubbed 'the future of architecture'. The collaborative approach on display from all four speakers was also praised, as was the pragmatism shown by Hakes during the design of his shoe. However, this also led to a bigger question: are architects being driven to different industries out of a desire for instant gratification that the architecture industry can't give them?



Engagement

Joost Beunderman – Zero Zero Architecture

Joost Beunderman presents the move in public services towards self organisation and empowerment, which is more bottom up from previous approaches. This is supported by powerful digital tools and empowered citizens being more demanding of the state- creating a more powerful agency. As an architecture practice we can design types of spaces that allow this type of creative potential and self motivation and initiative to occur- for example the hub project. This could lead to a different house building model- the right to build model- through community land trust and community enterprises taking the lead with local communities. There are three central behaviours that are interesting and could be very powerful in the future:



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- The producer/consumer (prosumer) i.e. renewable energy/housing
- Working on existing assets and using them in a better way with technology i.e. street car.
- Citizen as investor i.e. people contributing small amounts of money/skills/time for local benefit.

Ian Drysdale – Think Public



Ian Drysdale described the work of Think Public in the service design sector- using public service as a platform for the public to work with one another rather than as a service that we provide for somebody. Gordon Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares might be an analogy for how we work- taking an existing business and service, analysing it and trying to improve it, both front of house as well as backstage and the customers. Observation and involving the users are key parts to improving service. Ian described in detail a project with the Alzheimers Society- enabling patients

and carers to actively control the research as an ongoing process rather than consultation then design.

Steve McAdam – Fluid/Soundings

Steve McAdam described the journey from a purely architecture practice in Fluid, to the broader practice of Soundings. After many years of building frivolous architecture that was quickly replaced and did not seem to have resonance, a more meaningful approach was taken, with the city taken as a starting point. Over many years, through teaching and a range of projects Fluid became more involved in community, regeneration, urban and research projects – particularly those that work with people. Soundings came out of that work as an independent business working as 'independent community experts' - practicing on the edge of architecture but without the baggage of it. Soundings has managed to bring in other types of skills such as anthropologists, sociologists etc, so support to work of architects, planners and developers. Curiously, by removing ourselves from the architectural mantel, we find ourselves appreciated more- not less.

Mandeep Hothi – The Young Foundation

Mandeep Hothi presented the Young Foundation's work on Community 2.0- how communities interact with web 2.0, social media, smart phones and apps. The amount of people creating content on the web has double over the past two years- but what are the implications of this? Dialogue is one of the best outcomes and twitter is a great example of this- people talking about their local area. There is a surge in local communities creating their own social networks using Ning- mobilising themselves. There is an ongoing debate about how to engage people online in decision making, a new tool called Dwellant that allows residents within a block to organise themselves- and this is something worth exploring. Ask Bristol is a good example of the public sector taking huge risks and consulting using digital technologies to reach more widely and reach more people than they usually do, to ask them about the issues that affect their lives. These are the things that we won't be talking about in a few years time because they will be mainstream.

