

RE.WORK Cities says urban innovation is key to sustainable future

By Lisa A. Chase | on December 14, 2013 | 0 Comment



The future lies in the world's cities. With an expanding and increasingly mobile global population, policy-makers, developers and designers are focusing on the urban landscape. Yet there are daunting challenges in the prospect of more than half the world's projected nine billion people living, working and doing business in cities from New York to Shanghai.

By 2030, twelve megacities will each be home to more than 20 million people. Whether in highly industrialized nations or in developing economies, municipal governments are financially and politically constrained in their ability to accommodate these rapidly expanding populations.

At the same time, the planet faces critical natural resource scarcity and potentially devastating climate-related impacts. How can urban planners, politicians and designers reconcile these competing and conflicting trends to craft cities that are vibrant, efficient, and both socially and environmentally sustainable?

On December 13 at London's historic Tobacco Dock, RE.WORK Cities explored these questions, along with some provocative – and potentially surprising – solutions for crafting the 21st century urban landscape. Moderators included *The Guardian's* Jemima Kiss and the BBC's Simon Frantz, along with thought-leaders from academia, business and the public sector.

Participants explored how design and technology are shaping intelligently designed, highly livable and environmentally balanced cities. Among those on hand to envision the future of the global built environment were policy-makers, entrepreneurial technologists and designers such as Mischa Dohler

of King's College London; Marc Pous, founder of Things.io; and Carlo Ratti, director of MIT's SENSEable City Lab; as well as experts from Columbia University, the BBC and IBM. The topics they explored included the future of urban mobility, environmental efficiency and sustainability, the role of the internet in creating smarter and more equitable cities, and the concept of the urban center as a living, breathing, biological ecosystem.

Increased urbanization is challenging cities to provide resilient infrastructure and public services while reducing natural resource use and environmental impacts. However, RE.WORK Cities believes there is also a rich potential to create more efficient, and more socially and environmentally equitable urban spaces. As a result, the RE.WORK Cities event aimed to focus on creative and intellectually collaborative solutions, rather than on high-volume keynote speeches and personalities.

The global challenges of a highly urbanized future are urgent. Yet the possibilities are limitless. RE.WORK Cities believes the future of the world's cities will be shaped by bold and disruptive thinking.

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